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**Montage Aesthetics:  
Narrative, Adaptation and Urban  
Modernity in Alfred Döblin's  
*Berlin Alexanderplatz***

**by**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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## **Declaration**

The thesis contains no material submitted for examination at another institution. The thesis is the candidate's own work.

A minor part of Chapter Two is a revision of an article: Sluga, Mario. 2010. "An Asymmetry of Implicit Fictional Narrators in Literature and Film." *Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics* 7:2, pp. 26-37.

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## Abstract

Alfred Döblin's famous 1929 novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* has often been discussed in terms of the appropriation of film poetics by the medium of literature and is said to abound with examples of literary montage. In most post-war discussions of literary montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, however, the device is regularly understood as an umbrella term for anything of stylistic interest. Deploying 1920s and 1930s literary and film criticism I demonstrate that this regularly leads to anachronisms and terminological over-inflation. I thus offer a historically informed definition of literary montage in precise narratological, stylistic and experiential categories. Montage rests on the identification of intradiegetically unmotivated ready-mades *and* the perceived experiential similarities between the novel, Soviet montage films, and Dadaist photomontage. The lack of motivation affords the experience of disruption which, I demonstrate, has within the Benjaminian "modernity thesis" too often been extrapolated to characterize all film editing. My analysis shows that contemporary critics regularly discriminated between different types of editing on at least three *experiential* axes – tempo and dynamism, confusion, and disruption. My proposed definition of literary montage thus also allows me to analyse the novel in terms of the key narratological novelties that literary montage introduces: the global proliferation of heterodiegetic zero-level narrators accompanied with the local elimination of zero-level narrators altogether. In other words, Döblin accomplishes in literary fiction what holds for film fiction in general – the absence of a narrator held to be fictionally in control of the whole of the text. Conversely, through the use of intertitles and the particular type of voice-over interjections, Fassbinder's adaptation endeavours to emulate the reciprocal commonplace of literary fiction – the narrator's continuous presence. Paired with Fassbinder's film, Jutzi's adaptation demonstrates how visual and sound film montage both differ from literary montage. Whereas literary montage hinges on disruptive stylistic shifts, film montage rests on disruptive spatio-temporal dislocation.

## Introduction

If we take the amount of scholarship generated by a work as a measure of its cultural relevance, then Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte von Franz Biberkopf*/*Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf* certainly fares well. Since its publication in book form in 1929, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* has prompted numerous readings. Contemporary reviewers rushed to read Franz as a Faustian figure, to determine whether the novel was proletarian or bourgeois, political or not, to tease out the ontological position of the modern man and his relation to society and nature, and to ruminate over the role of fate in the novel and its similarities to Greek tragedy. In the post-war era, Fritz Martini (1954) renewed the interest in the novel by emphasizing chaos as Döblin's intended world view. 1961 saw the novel's republication accompanied by Walter Muschg's afterword which identified *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as Döblin's first Christian fable. Since then, the novel has been the focus of many dissertations, primarily written at German universities, including Helmut Schwimmer (1960), Helmut Becker (1962), Volker Klotz (1969), Klaus Müller-Salget (1972) and Harald Jähner (1984). The 1980s saw a shift to the production of articles, with more and more contributions coming from Anglo-American academia. Despite the impressive size of this corpus, however, the dominant approach has remained interpretative. The novel's formal properties, although regularly acknowledged, have played only a minor role in the project. Until recently, scholarship has largely focused on giving a coherent account of the novel's ending, which has been characterized as problematic ever since the novel's earliest reviews.

As far as the claim to interpretative authority is concerned, efforts have gone in two directions. Earlier work mostly presented itself as the authoritative reading of the text. This tendency was epitomized by Müller-Salget (1972: 294, 344), who excoriated the idea that Döblin represented the world as chaos as “[t]he most widespread misapprehension” (“Der am weitesten verbreitete Irrtum”) and “a grotesque misunderstanding” (“[e]in groteskes Mißverständnis”).<sup>1</sup> The other tendency has been to add to the debate by producing another reading and to do so by applying a theoretical framework of one’s preference (psychoanalytic, structuralist, post-structuralist, feminist, etc.). Although kinder to their fellow interpreters, these contributors have also been quite happy to chastise any inattention to aspects of the novel they find crucial.

My thesis does not add to any of this work; rather, it follows Susan Sontag’s (1966) plea for greater attention to form. However, whereas Sontag criticizes interpretation for the destructive and falsifying force it exerts over an artwork, I argue that the problem lies in the institutional position interpretation commands in the humanities. The problem, I claim, is twofold. Its core is embedded in the demand for “original and important contribution”, the gold standard of scholarly achievement in academic institutions. The first problem, therefore, pertains to interpretation’s paradoxical relation to original work that academe demands of its members. The second problem concerns the use of interpretation as a means of legitimizing academic work as important.

Once interpretations are understood as adaptations, tensions with the originality requirement the academic publishing industry makes of its members

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<sup>1</sup> Where the texts are unavailable in English the translations are mine and are followed by the original version in the footnotes. Where the existing translations are not as precise as one would like them to be, I offer mine.

become inevitable. Adaptation here is not meant as word play. I am not talking of adaptation in Dudley Andrew's (1984) broad sense when he claims that every representation can be understood as an adaptation. Interpretations are adaptations in the strict sense that they reconstruct the work's content, "the meaning of a given work" or, better yet, "what a given work is about". This may, although most often does not, boil down to the reconstruction of the fabula and the work's programmatic thesis.<sup>2</sup>

Sontag calls interpretations translations but I believe adaptation is a better term, for it does not merely denote the transfer of content, but also the transfer across what Seymour Chatman (1990) calls text types.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, fidelity is still seen as an asset in translation studies, whereas in adaptation this is far less the case. Interpretations are exegeses which, in our case, transform linguistic or audio-visual narrative texts into argumentative written ones.<sup>4</sup> In that sense, they are also the dullest of adaptations for their crucial point is to faithfully reproduce the source text. But if they reproduce "what a given work is about" then their claim to originality suffers. The only claim to originality then appears to be that that the interpretation is a different text type than the work interpreted, but that is hardly the originality demanded by the academy.

The other part of the academic requirement – "importance" – often has to do with what Sontag has dubbed the revamping of the source text. Under this view, the

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<sup>2</sup> Here is how Rainer Werner Fassbinder, the director of the 1980 film adaptation of Döblin's novel, interprets the novel: "The essence of 'Berlin Alexanderplatz' is not its story [...] – the essence is quite simply how the outrageously banal and the incredible are narrated in the story". "Das Wesentliche an 'Berlin Alexanderplatz' ist also nicht seine Geschichte [...] – das Wesentliche ist ganz einfach, wie das ungeheuerlich Banale und Unglaubwürdige an Handlung erzählt wird" (Fassbinder 1980).

<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that, for instance, a translation of a poem does not run into formal issues such as rhyming, syllable count or phonemic properties. However, translations are across languages but do not cross the boundaries of Chatman's text types.

<sup>4</sup> The following argument applies to interpretations of non-narrative texts such as poems and paintings as well.

canonical text needs to be updated to meet the demands of contemporary relevance. Translated to the current situation in academia, cultural studies perform much of this task by turning to canonical texts to produce readings along ontological, philosophical, social, political, ethnic, gender, sexual, minority and similar axes. Moreover, interpretative work is bound to appear more relevant and more culturally invested than work that focuses on a text's formal features. One might think that the shifts in interpretative slant along the aforementioned axes do not amount to standard interpretations insofar as they are upfront that they focus on only one aspect of the text. However, even a relativist interpretation which allows for multivalent takes on the same texts offers itself as, although partial, the bearer of the meaning of the text. As such it does not escape the above-described dilemma.

It would appear that much of Döblin scholarship (and literary and film criticism in general) overlooks or simply turns a blind eye to the paradox embedded in the originality requirement. There is definitely good reason to do so, for if one is unable to demonstrate one's impact on policy-making and/or the economy, excelling in culturally relevant interpretative work appears to be a reasonable way out. Among Döblin scholars, for instance, it is Günther Anders (1984) who has no equal in the pursuit of lofty articulations of human ontology.

Instruction by way of Anders might also shed some light on the general preference given to interpretation over formal analysis. It is as though formal analysis is not doing any real work for it merely describes the form that, in the classical form and content dichotomy, is (on) the outside. The content, by contrast, is what is (the) inside, and it is only interpretative work that penetrates deep enough to discover it. This attitude is even more apparent in the literature on the novel's film adaptations. There, formal properties such as colour, lighting, framing, and camera movement are,

as per the dichotomy, directly perceivable on the surface. The meaning and the fabula, on the other hand, need to be reconstructed from the surface precept, and thus lie somewhere beneath. The tacit assumption seems to be that interpretative work, unlike formal analysis, requires heavy digging. In other words, interpretative work is not only more important than formal analysis but more arduous as well. Even a fleeting glance at the use of the key formal term in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* criticism – montage – however, reveals that the scope of the concept varies widely. This suggests that producing a formal description is not as easy as one might first think.

It must be admitted that the work on *Berlin Alexanderplatz* has not been exclusively interpretative. Ever since contemporary reviews, the scholarship has been well aware of the importance of style in the novel and has repeatedly referred to the novel's formal devices to emphasize their congruence with the content. The exemplary device of montage, however, almost ubiquitously referred to since Martini's revival of the interest in the novel, has been invoked as if its meaning were self-apparent. Providing a working definition of the concept has been the exception rather than the rule. And even then, once we move away from the definition and examine the manner in which the critic uses the term it becomes readily apparent that montage denotes whatever the scholar in question finds stylistically interesting. Although various devices employed do deserve attention for their innovative character and phenomenological effects, they do not amount to montage. The reason is simple – to call them montage would amount to an anachronism.

Shifts in focalization, rapid jumps in space and time, fluctuations in the level of narrator's knowledge, changes between dialogue, narration and free indirect speech, parallel stories, syntactic breaks, onomatopoeic permutations, employment of different speech registers, and polyphony among others are all devices well known

before Döblin's novel. Nobody, however, discussed them in terms of montage before the twentieth century. The reason is simple – there was no montage at the time to compare these devices to. The fact that contemporary German reviews of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* were among the first to start using terms such as “montage” and “photomontage” in order to describe a literary work, together with the introduction of these terms into German approximately at the same time in the second half of the 1920s suggest that there is a novel stylistic device particular to Döblin's novel. The claim is further supported by the fact that these terms are absent in the reviews of contemporary German translations of *Ulysses* and *Manhattan Transfer*, which both appeared in 1927. It is in teasing out the use of these terms, in construing their connections to Dada and film practices, and in a detailed experiential, stylistic and narratological treatment of montage that I see real space for contribution to *Berlin Alexanderplatz* scholarship.

An important point here is that formal analysis, unlike content analysis, is not interpretative but descriptive. Formal analysis does not reconstruct what a text is about; rather it traces a text's stylistic devices and articulates their phenomenological effects. It is not interested in hidden meanings but in the immediate interaction between the text and the reader. As such it does not fall prey to the interpreter's dilemma. It is true that formal analysis privileges the text, and in this sense it does not differ from interpretation construed as adaptation. However, formal analysis privileges the text's form rather than its content, and in doing so escapes the problem posed for interpretation by the originality requirement. Put in the vocabulary of the form and content dichotomy, the content of the source text and the content of interpretation are identical, whereas the content of formal analysis is the source text's



form. The originality requirement is satisfied through the articulation of specific formal properties, rather than through exegesis.

Another way to distinguish between formal analysis and interpretation is to examine formal and interpretative statements from the aspect of language games. Different statement types require different language games. What distinguishes these language games are the rules which we follow to reach agreement or express disagreement about statements, and the level of agreement needed for those statements to circulate freely. The most common components of formal analysis are phenomenological (e.g. “The effect is one of shock” or “It is boring”) and empirical statements (e.g. “This is direct speech” or “That is a low angle shot”).<sup>5</sup> Interpretative statements are far less factual and depend on chains of reasoning often employing numerous tacit assumptions (e.g. “*Berlin Alexanderplatz* is a didactic fable” or “Franz and Reinhold are homoerotically attracted to each other”). In short, it is easier to arrive at an agreement on an empirical than on a phenomenological statement, and on a formal one than on an interpretative one. Furthermore, the easier it is to agree on a statement the more its counterfactuals are censored in the space of exchange and vice versa. Therefore it is no wonder that interpretations proliferate in the scholarship geared toward the production of originality. What is curious, however, is that uses of montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* scholarship more often resemble interpretative statements than formal ones. This thesis may be thought of as an effort to correct this trend.

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<sup>5</sup> Empirical and phenomenological statements overlap to a good extent. For instance, the statement “X is green” is both empirical and phenomenological. However, such overlapping statements are often susceptible to quantification and have a strictly empirical counterpart: “The wavelength that colour X affects is 500nm.” The difference is that for empirical statements, unlike for phenomenological ones, there are precisely defined procedures on how to reach agreement. These procedures usually boil down to some form of quantification. Below it will be shown that the definition of montage consists of both empirical and phenomenological statements.

The thesis is organized into four chapters and a literature review. In the Literature Review, I offer an overview of the existing scholarship on film montage, on montage more broadly construed, and on the understanding of literary montage in Döblin scholarship. I show that literary montage has on most occasions been inflated anachronistically to include the devices such as shifts in focalization and others listed above. This survey allows me to articulate my own historically informed definition of literary montage based on three conditions: the ready-made condition, the experiential condition and condition of the absence of narrative control. In the last section of the review I tackle recent adaptation theory and look at the work done on Piel Jutzi's and Rainer Werner Fassbinder's adaptations of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. I conclude with the claim that even the rare authors who opt for formal analysis instead of interpretation misconstrue the relation between classical Hollywood editing and Soviet-influenced montage. Whereas the editing in Fassbinder is regularly misconstrued as following the classical Hollywood norm, the opening montage-sequence's disruptive quality in Jutzi is inadequately explained with recourse to shifts in tempo and focalization only.

In Chapter One I look at the discourse surrounding contemporary visual practices in Weimar Germany during the second half of the 1920s to provide an explanation of how various derivatives of the term "montage" came to be appropriated by the reviewers of Döblin's novel. Although the comparison of literature with film was nothing new and can be traced back to at least early 1910s, I argue that the recourse to "montage" exclusive to contemporary reviews of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* hinges on the perceived similarity with the experience of disruption introduced by the new "Russian films". Unlike either the experience of tempo and dynamism characteristic of American "adventure films", or the experience of confusion accompanying editing techniques of "Querschnitt" films, Sergei M.

Eisenstein and Vsevolod I. Pudovkin ushered in a special type of editing which contemporary critics perceived as “shock-like” and disruptive of visual continuity they were accustomed to. A similar experience, I demonstrate, was engendered by the photomontages of the Berlin Dadaists. I offer my argument as a corrective to one of the key claims the “modernity thesis” makes about the cinema – that cinema is *like* the experience of modernity.<sup>6</sup> In other words, although there certainly are films which emulate the experience of modernity, the proponents of the “modernity thesis”, through inattention to the contemporary reception, failed to distinguish between various forms of this experience. My analysis, by contrast, shows that contemporary critics regularly discriminated between different types of editing on at least three *experiential* axes – tempo and dynamism, confusion, and disruption. This contradicts Walter Benjamin’s generalization regarding editing, often cited to prop up the “modernity thesis”: “In its shock-effect the film approaches this [distracted] form of reception.”<sup>7</sup>

Having investigated the contemporary discourse on film and photomontage to articulate the experiential condition for identifying literary montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, in Chapter Two I turn to contemporary literary criticism in order to explicate all three conditions further. By looking at the contemporary reviews of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, *Ulysses* and *Manhattan Transfer* available in German, I demonstrate that the use of ready-mades alone was not sufficient to identify a textual segment as montage. I concede that the reviewers of both *Ulysses* and *Manhattan*

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<sup>6</sup> The term “modernity thesis” was initially introduced by David Bordwell (1997) to describe and criticize the work of cinema scholars such as Tom Gunning and Miriam Hansen who, in some sense, saw the style of early cinema as influenced by the experience of modernity. The most important contributions to the debate are by Charlie Keil, (2001, 2004, 2006), Miriam Hansen (1999), Noël Carroll (2001), Bordwell (2005), Ben Singer (2001), Tom Gunning (2004, 2006), and Malcolm Turvey (2008, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> “In seiner Schockwirkung kommt der Film dieser Rezeptionsform entgegen” (Benjamin 1989: 381).

*Transfer* make references to ready-mades – citations or paraphrases of “linguistic genres” which may but need not amount to actually pre-existing texts. Crucially, however, it is only when these ready-mades are perceived as disruptive – as in the case in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* – that they are invoked as instances of montage. I argue that the experience of disruption hinges on the absence of intradiegetic motivation for the ready-mades. This, I claim further, amounts to the shift in the narrative voice in command of the text. Moreover, it is only from the narratological point of view that one can appreciate the key novelty that literary montage introduces. In order to fully explicate this novelty and push beyond the standard explanation of “Berlin recounting itself”, I digress to demonstrate that controlling fictional narrators – narrators who are fictionally in control of the whole of the text – can be found in almost all literary fiction. I do so with recourse to the Benvenistian concept of deixis and methods borrowed from analytic philosophy. Once controlling fictional narrators are identified as near-ubiquitous, literary montage can be construed as a novel way of eliminating such entities from literary fiction. In the analysis of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* I demonstrate that this elimination is accomplished in two ways. The first amounts to the proliferation of heterodiegetic zero-level narrators in Genettian typology. The second is even more radical as it involves the elimination of zero-level narrators altogether. As such, in its use of literary montage, the novel on occasions even succeeds in emulating one of the key narratological properties of fiction film – the absence of controlling fictional narrators.

Chapter Three takes a closer look at the first film adaptation of Döblin’s novel – Piel Jutzi’s 1931 début in sound production. I open with a more detailed discussion of the themes raised in the introduction. I argue that academic interpretation falls under the definition of adaptation offered by the contemporary theory of adaptation.

Moreover, such definition does not suffer from the type of inflation common to the use of montage in critical discourse. Once this is settled, I proceed to elaborate why formal analysis is not hamstrung by the originality requirement in the same way interpretative work is. The second part of the chapter provides a detailed formal analysis of two montage sequences identified by contemporary critics – the tram-ride and the Alexanderplatz hawking sequence. Whereas in the former I articulate the experience of disruption on the basis of visual spatio-temporal relations across the shots, in the latter I investigate the possibility of sound montage. On both occasions, I conclude, montage can be construed as a non-conventional form of spatio-temporal dislocation.

In the final chapter I return to the larger stakes that the status of the controlling fictional narrators holds for literary and film fiction. I open the chapter with a critique of a premise commonly accepted by film theorists and narratologists – the existence of controlling fictional narrators. I demonstrate that this premise is based on the misapplication of linguistic concepts to the medium of film. I also argue against the latest defence of the premise proposed from an analytic philosophy perspective. In short, I claim that although narrators who are in full control of the image and the sound are a possibility in fiction film, they are a rare occurrence. A formal analysis of Fassbinder's adaptation comprises the remainder of the chapter. Contrary to common wisdom, I not only demonstrate that the epilogue's editing is not faster than that in the foregoing film/series, but that the latter does not conform to classical Hollywood patterns any more than the former. I proceed to discuss the manner in which literary montage has been appropriated by film in both disruptive (e.g. voice-over montage) and non-disruptive (e.g. character discourse) fashion. I also elaborate on independent types of montage including flashbacks, associative montage, intertitles, and visual in-

shot montage. Whereas in literature one way of articulating the experience of disruption involves recourse to the stylistic shift introduced by intradiegetically unmotivated “language genres”, in film this is possible with recourse to spatio-temporal dislocations diverging from classical Hollywood norms. I conclude with an analysis of one occasion on which it can be said that the voice-over narrator exhibits control over both the sound and the image – the first appearance of Fassbinder’s voice-over accompanied by a “freeze frame” of Franz and Nachum. Although not an instance of montage proper, together with the use of intertitles, it does point towards Fassbinder’s attempt to emulate the key narratological property of literary fiction – the presence of the controlling fictional narrator. The reciprocity between Döblin and Fassbinder is, therefore, striking. Whereas the former attempted and managed to present textual segments without the intervention of a controlling narrator in the manner of fiction film, the latter attempted and managed to present parts of the filmic text through a controlling narrator after the fashion of literary fiction.

## Literature Review

Alfred Döblin's work, especially his famous novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, has often been discussed as an example of appropriation of film poetics by the literary medium. The idea that Döblin is a writer influenced by film, circulated from the earliest critical reception of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, has been traditionally accepted. More recently, Erik Kleinschmidt (2004) has argued that Döblin's poetics is independent from that of film and that it was developed exclusively for Döblin's alternative conception of the novel as a "new epic art form". Regardless of which argument is favoured, the concept of montage remains at the core of the discussion.

Because this thesis is heavily invested in clarifying the connection (and differences) between visual and literary montage, I shall begin with an historical overview of the theoretical articulation of the concept of montage as it relates to various artistic practices. Focusing mainly on sources in German, Russian, and English I shall pay special attention to film theory of the 1920s, not only because it was the first to articulate montage as the key (artistic) principle of an art medium, but also because the early reception of Döblin's literary technique placed particular stress on its indebtedness to film. I shall also tackle the regularly invoked, essentially Hegelian idea, first espoused in mid-1930s in the writings of Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin, that montage as an artistic principle is a response to critical changes occurring in society. Having determined the broader context of Weimar modernity and having identified phenomenological similarities of montage practices across media, I shall focus on the reception of Döblin's novel. Finally, I shall discuss the novel's film adaptations by Piel Jutzi and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, giving special attention to the questions of adaptation and the relationship between narrative voice and montage.

## SCHOLARSHIP ON MONTAGE

### MONTAGE IN FILM

Montage is a term that has been appropriated by art theory from the sphere of industry and technology where, originally in French, it denoted “the composition of separate parts into a finished product”.<sup>8</sup> This is no coincidence, for the practitioners of both photomontage and film montage saw themselves less as artists than as workers, engineers, and mechanics. From the perspective of the technological process, moreover, “the composition of separate parts into a finished product” was precisely what took place in the handwork production of photomontage and multi-shot film. Already in the 1910s in Russian discourse on film, however, “montage” (“montazh”) began to denote not merely the technological process but an artistic principle as well. Lev V. Kuleshov, for instance, in his 1918 essay “The Art of Cinema” drew an equivalence between montage in film and both composition in painting and harmony in music. By 1922 and his essay “Americanism”, montage would for Kuleshov become both the essence of film and the method of attaining the greatest possible effect on the spectator.

The 1920s in the newly formed USSR would witness the articulation of a full-fledged theory of film with montage at its basis. The key filmmakers of this period – Kuleshov, Dziga Vertov, Vsevolod I. Pudovkin, and Sergei M. Eisenstein – would also act as the key theoreticians of what would become known as the Soviet montage school. Much of the impetus for their own work (both practical and theoretical) came from what, in comparison to domestic film production, they perceived as far more rapid and dynamic alternations of shots in contemporary American cinema. In his

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<sup>8</sup> “Zusammensetzung von Einzelteilen zum fertigen Erzeugnis” (Harald Fricke 2007: 632).



manifesto of 1922, published in the same issue of *Kino-fot* as the aforementioned “Americanism”, Vertov, for example, expresses gratitude for the American adventure film’s introduction of “showy dynamism, rapid shot changes and close-up” (Vertov 1984c: 6). Although there are a number of differences among the theorists of the Soviet montage school, which I shall explore in more detail in my first chapter, two key points should be taken from this preliminary introduction.

First, for all of the Soviet montage school members it is the effect on the spectator, i.e. the reception of the device rather than its technological execution which lies at the core of montage. Second, despite the reverence for American cinema evident in their writings – Pudovkin’s 1926 monograph *Film Technique*, Kuleshov’s book *Art of the Cinema* of 1929, as well as a number of articles by Eisenstein including his 1924 “Montage of Film Attractions” and 1944 “Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today”, to name just the most influential pieces – all of the members of the montage school see montage proper as going further than the editing techniques of the classical Hollywood period such as scene dissection or parallel cutting, as elaborated in detail by Kuleshov (1974) and later by David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Janet Staiger (1985). For Kuleshov (1974) montage also allows for the construction of impossible spaces, non-existent bodies, and non-acted emotions (the Kuleshov effect). Pudovkin (1928) differentiates between five types of montage – contrast (of subjects represented across adjacent shots), parallelism (of contrastive narrative threads which need not meet), symbolism, simultaneity (of narrative threads which do meet in a dramatic climax) and leitmotif (as a reiteration of a theme). Among these at least symbolism (which corresponded to a combination of Eisenstein’s emotional and intellectual montage elaborated below) was not to be found in the classical Hollywood production of the time.

The most influential typologies of montage can be found in Eisenstein's writing (1998b, 1998c, and 1998e). The first (1998b and 1998c) is developed according to the dynamization of the image: 1) technical production of motion through sequencing of film frames; 2) artificial production of motion (logical and illogical alike) exemplified by the "rising" of the lion statue in *Bronenosets Potyomkin/Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, USSR, 1925); 3) emotional dynamization producing associations exemplified by the famous *Stachka/Strike* sequence (Eisenstein, USSR, 1925) in which the shots of slain strikers are juxtaposed with those of a bull being butchered (Pudovkin used the same example for symbolism); and 4) intellectual dynamization as exemplified by Kornilov's march on Petersburg under the banner of God and accompanied by shots of various deities which work towards the destruction of the very idea of God in *Oktyabr/October* (Eisenstein, USSR, 1928).

Eisenstein (1998b, 1998c) also introduced a typology based on the type of collisions between fragments entering into montage and thus enabled montage to appear not only across but within the shots. Here, Eisenstein lists nine types of collisions: graphic, of planes, of volumes, of space, of light, of tempo, of subject matter and shot angle, of subject matter and its spatial nature (through the distortion of the lens), and of an event and its temporal nature (through the employment of slow-motion and stop-motion). Finally, the introduction of sound leads to another possible juxtaposition – that of optical and acoustic experience (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Grigori V. Aleksandrov 2004). A similar typology can be found in Vertov's discussions of "the quantifiable correlations," which provide the core of his understanding of the visual "interval" and montage (1984a: 90).

Eisenstein's (1998d) last regularly cited typology distinguishes the following four types: 1) metric montage as a conflict between shot lengths; 2) rhythmic montage as a conflict between shot lengths and transpositions (understood as in-shot movements and eye movements along the shot content); 3) tonal montage as a conflict between the results of rhythmic montage and tonal movement (understood as variations of light); and 4) overtone montage as a conflict between the results of tonal montage and all remaining shot stimuli.

Eisenstein's writings have proven to be the most influential as far as the definition of film montage is concerned and have entered into standard textbooks (Susan Hayward 2006: 109-113, Pam Cook 2007: 533) and specialized encyclopaedias (Yuri Tsivian 2014b). Although, as the typology demonstrates, montage for Eisenstein may appear within as well as across shots, it is the latter type that has exercised far more influence. The widely cited definition of montage as "*an idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another*" (Eisenstein 1998c: 163, italics and block capitals in the original) may be schematized as follows. Montage is a formal device, consisting of a juxtaposition of shots whose spatio-temporal relationship is often irrelevant, that produces an idea and an effect absent from the reading of the iconic contents of the individual shots. In doing so it unites distinct shots in a qualitative and not merely quantitative manner. Here, quantitative stands for tempo and scale, whereas qualitative stands for the production of a novel concept, emotion, or perception on the part of the spectator. As such montage is also a subclass of editing conceived more generally as the stringing together of separate shots and distinguished from Griffith-style parallel editing which, according to Eisenstein, merely affords quantitative unity.

Since Eisenstein, no seismic shifts as far as the definition of montage is concerned have taken place in film theory. Subsequent key theoreticians have focused more on criticizing montage as a device specific to the medium when advocating cinema's realistic affinities (André Bazin 2005, Siegfried Kracauer 1960, Jean Mitry 1997, and V. F. Perkins 1972) or at least emphasized the importance of other means of filmic expression when subscribing to cinema's anti-realism (Béla Balázs 1984, Rudolf Arnheim 1932). A further tendency has been to provide more detailed typologies of editing, among which Soviet montage always find its place (Arnheim 1932, Gilles Deleuze 1986, Mitry 1997), and to further argue for the in-shot possibility of montage (Mitry 1997).<sup>9</sup>

#### MONTAGE ACROSS ARTS

“Montage”, however, did not remain exclusive to film theory but quickly spread into other artistic discourses as well. Already in the 1920s, initially in the USSR but quickly thereafter in Weimar Germany and other countries, it would variously come to denote a technological process, an end product, and an artistic principle of the composite photographs known as “photomontages”. “Montage” would only briefly remain the exclusive term of visual arts theory; already in 1923 Eisenstein had developed a theory of theatre in his essay “Montage of Attractions.”<sup>10</sup> With the 1928 translation of Pudovkin's *Film Technique* appearing under the title *Filmregie und Filmmanuskript*, as Frank Kessler (2002) has demonstrated, “Montage” would come

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<sup>9</sup> Most recently, Timothy Barnard (2014) has argued that the emphasis on the post-production editing process, particularly in the English language scholarship, has undermined importance of pre-production shot and camera setup planning in film production.

<sup>10</sup> In the same year Aleksei Gastev (1978), the founder of the Central Institute of Labour in the USSR, had already spoken of “montage culture”. Such culture was, however, primarily technological rather than artistic.

to replace “Schnitt” (“cut”) as the dominant term for editing in German language discourse on film. Only a year later, the publication of Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* prompted the application of “montage” to literature characterised by the use of ready-made material and the phenomenology of disruption.<sup>11</sup> By the time Ernst Bloch first published his 1935 philosophical monograph *Erbschaft dieser Zeit/The Heritage of our Times*, “montage” would explode to denote not only developments in popular entertainment and modern arts (including jazz, revue, late cabaret, photomontage, Expressionism, and Surrealism), but those in philosophy as well (in the works of Ernst Mach, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger among others).

Bloch (1991: 3) was certainly not the first to (over)extend the term “montage” by speaking of it as a “break[ing] off [of the] parts from collapsed contexts and the various relativisms of the time in order to combine them into new figures.” Eisenstein (1998b, 1998c) had already argued as much and in some sense gone even further than Bloch in arguing that all art rests on montage. Bloch reserved the term only for contemporary developments in the arts and the society characterized by late capitalism which, according to him, lead to hollowing out of social space and intellectual relativism. Eisenstein, on the other hand, wanted to see montage broadly understood as a conflict at the core of all art and on occasions even beyond it, viz. in Japanese ideograms.

Writing around the same time as Bloch, Walter Benjamin demonstrated greater restraint and terminological precision. He provided perhaps the clearest articulation of (literary) montage in his review of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (Benjamin 1930) by explaining the device in terms of the experience of disruption and documentary

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<sup>11</sup> This process as well as its key terms will be analysed in detail in the first and second chapter of my thesis.

material, features also common to “Russian film” and Dada art of the time. By late 1930s, however, he would also go on to apply montage to the understanding of history as well as to a plethora of phenomena including Bertolt Brecht’s Epic Theatre. Whereas Benjamin, Bloch and Brecht all perceived at least some positive aspects of montage and its political potential, another key left-wing literary critic – György Lukács (1955) – would in his 1937 monograph *Der historische Roman/The Historical Novel* completely dismiss montage as superficial naturalism and pure formalism rid of all interest in man’s fate. This view was typical not only of the official Stalinist ideology of Socialist Realism, but also of the Nationalist Socialists’ view of much of Weimar art as “decadent”.

By the late 1950s, “montage” was included in the second edition of Gero von Wilpert’s *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur/Literary Dictionary*. “Collage” – a competing term in the denotation of similar literary practices that would prove dominant in the English language scholarship – was included in the dictionary’s fifth edition in 1969.<sup>12</sup> “Collage” as a term originally appeared in French in the late 1910s to denote a technique and its product, popularized by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, of pasting together various materials traditionally regarded as non-artistic onto a single surface. These materials included newspaper clippings, theatre tickets, post stamps, etc. (figures 0.1 and 0.2).

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<sup>12</sup> The latest editions of both *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* and *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* include entries only for collage and none for montage.



**Figure 0.1** *Head* (1914), Pablo Picasso



**Figure 0.2** *Fruit Dish and Glass* (1912), Georges Braque

Like “montage”, “collage” was appropriated into discussions of other arts. As can be seen from the titles of some of the key texts from between late 1950s and late 1960s pertaining to this thesis – Reinhold Grimm’s 1958 “Montierte Lyrik” and Franz Mon’s 1968 “Collage in der Literatur” – similar phenomena across literary genres were already being discussed in terms of both montage and collage. Moreover, as early as 1968 Mon and Heinz Neidel edited a volume in which “collage” was applied to both theatre and music next to literature.

“Quotation” (“Zitat”) is the last key term connected to artistic phenomena referred to as both collage and montage. As Wilpert explains in the case of literature, collage is “an experimental literary technique which displaces the text through allusions, quotations of other authors and existing phrases (from foreign languages as well).”<sup>13</sup> As a more general principle in the arts, and at the time analysed in more detail in music (Zofia Lissa 1966, Elmar Budde 1972), “quotation” referred to any

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<sup>13</sup> “[Collage ist] eine experimentelle lit. Technik, die den Text mit Anspielungen, Zitaten anderen Autoren und vorgeprägten Wendungen (auch aus fremden Sprachen) versetzt” (1989: 155).

practice of exact or near-exact reproduction of parts of other authors' works in one's own.

Peter Bürger's 1974 *Theorie der Avantgarde/Theory of the Avant-Garde* drew substantially on Theodor Adorno's posthumously published *Ästhetische Theorie/Theory of Aesthetics* and presented an important development in the articulation of montage. In the tradition of Bloch and Eisenstein, Adorno deployed a sweeping understanding of montage but now as constitutive of modern art (starting with Baudelaire and continuing up to at least the 1960s):

[T]he aesthetic principle of construction, the blunt primacy of a planned whole over the details and their interconnection in the microstructure; in terms of this microstructure all modern art may be called montage. [...] [the] principle of montage was conceived as an act against a surreptitiously achieved organic unity; it was meant to shock (Adorno 2002: 155-156).

Bürger would in fact restrict the concept of montage to apply "only" to the avant-garde which he identified as beginning in the 1910s and which, according to him, sets itself apart from the bourgeois art of the second half of the nineteenth century by radically attacking the idea of autonomy and the institution of art. Bürger would also endeavour to elucidate the distinction between the organic and the non-organic work of art. Unlike the organic work which is, according to both him and Adorno, characterized by a unity of meaning and an impression of naturalness, the non-organic work exposes itself for what it is – an artificial construct. "To this extent," so Bürger claims (1984: 72), "montage may be considered the key principle of avant-gardiste art". Furthermore, montage ought to be understood as a more precise articulation of Benjamin's concept of allegory. For Benjamin, according to Bürger, allegory is characterized by four aspects: 1) the allegorist isolates fragments from the totality of life, 2) joins them to produce new meaning, 3) expresses melancholy in



doing so, and 4) causes the recipient to perceive allegory as the decline of history. Most importantly, the two constitutive principles of allegory/montage include the negation of synthesis as a negation of meaning (introduced already by Adorno) and the emancipation of the work's parts from the whole, which, in the domain of reception, result in replacing the search for meaning with a focus on the principle of construction.

Since Bürger's goal is primarily theoretical, he only paves the way for the analysis of montage in particular works of art. By concerning himself with montage as an artistic principle and not as a technological process, he dismisses film as the point of origin for the discussion of montage's development.<sup>14</sup> He also places John Heartfield's photomontages outside the domain of montage proper, both because of their clear meaning and explicit political message and because of the difficulty of spotting the "breaks" and "edges" – effectively the disruptions – between separate photographs making up the piece. It is more difficult still, he contends, to identify the small spatial dislocations in the film frames' content during projection. The point of departure for the articulation of montage, according to Bürger, ought to be the collages of Braque and Picasso.<sup>15</sup>

Bürger's monograph prompted a number of attempts to articulate the concept of montage in more precise terms, both theoretically and as reflected in particular examples. In a volume of replies to Bürger's theory of avant-garde, Ansgar Hillach (1976) attempted to define montage on the basis of Benjamin's writings. Interestingly, although Bürger spends some time vindicating his use of a term that Benjamin had originally developed for the analysis of German Baroque, he is inattentive to

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<sup>14</sup> He did, however, admit that Eisensteinian montage amounts to montage proper.

<sup>15</sup> For a seminal history and pre-history of collage see Herta Wescher (1968).

Benjamin's initial very precise understanding of montage. In other words, there is no need to articulate Benjamin's allegory as montage, since he gives a precise definition of montage in his review of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

Annegret Jürgens-Kirchhoff (1978) analyses various types of montage which use "fragments of reality" ("Realitätsfragmente"). Construing "fragments of reality" broadly she allows for "painterly" montage in Futurism, Expressionism, and Surrealism, examples including Georg Grosz' paintings and Umberto Boccioni's *The Street Enters the House* (figures 0.3 and 0.4). She is particularly critical of Bürger's dismissal of Heartfield-like photomontages (figures 0.5 and 0.6) which she finds to be based on a narrow-minded formalist demand for noticeable edges between the originally separate images and an equally narrow conception of the non-organic work of art as that which does not allow for clear-cut meaning.



**Figure 0.3** *The Street Enters the House* (1913),  
Umberto Boccioni

**Figure 0.4** *Explosion* (1917), Georg Grosz



**Figure 0.5** *The Meaning of Hitler's Salute* (1932), John Heartfield



**Figure 0.6** *Fathers and Sons* (1924), John Heartfield

Ulrich Meier (1982), in contrast to Jürgens-Kirchhoff, argues that the montage examples from literature and music cannot be accommodated under the understanding of montage as an expression of antagonism between fiction and actuality where “fragments of reality” are seen as actual and other elements of the work as fictional. For instance, the commonly cited examples of literary montage such as James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) and Louis Aragon’s *Le paysan de Paris/The Peasant of Paris* (1926) are not actual but fictional through and through. Moreover, it is unlikely, as Meier argues, that the industrial sounds in the compositions of Luigi Nono exhibited the same materiality as the extra-aesthetic material in collages.<sup>16</sup> In order to accommodate these examples, Meier returns to Bürger’s concept of the non-organic work understood as both a dysfunctional and an episodic whole.

<sup>16</sup> For an analysis of *The Peasant of Paris* and another French surrealist novel of the time – André Breton’s 1926 *Nadja* – in terms of literary montage and collage construed broadly see Franz-Josef Albersmeier (1982).

Volker Klotz (1976) is the first to emphasize the historical link between montage as an artistic principle and montage as a technological process of joining prefabricated stand-alone parts into functional units, advocated particularly by Jürgens-Kirchhoff. Klotz argues that montage first appeared in the popular sphere (press and film) and defines it as “the activity of assembling ready-made parts into a whole”.<sup>17</sup> According to Klotz, ready-mades (“vorgefertigte Teile”) need not be quotations from other authors (as in Igor Stravinski’s 1911 *Petrushka* or T. S. Eliot’s 1922 *The Waste Land*) but may also be self-quotations (as in films or Max Ernst’s collages). More importantly, for Klotz, quotations are not the only available ready-mades; montage may depict objects simultaneously presented from different perspectives (Cubism), in different temporal positions (Futurism), and existing on separate planes such as dream and reality (Surrealism).

Klotz attempts to separate “quotation”, “montage”, and “collage” by referring to quotation as the standard material (though not the necessary one) of a process called “montage” which often (though not always) results in a collage. Ulrich Weisstein (1978) opts for a different approach by dismissing both authorial intentions and audience reception from the equation and choosing to distinguish montage from collage on the basis of the finished product only. For Weisstein, an art work, ontologically speaking, potentially consists of 1) the author’s original contribution, 2) borrowed elements from other art works, and 3) real-life elements. It is the integration of real-life elements that opens up a continuum between art as reality and art as illusion, bookended by found objects such as Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917) on the reality end and trompe l’œil on the illusion end. Collage, Weisstein argues, may be found at the centre of this continuum; montage, by contrast, should be reserved for

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<sup>17</sup> “Montage ist die Tätigkeit, vorgefertigte Teile zu einem Ganzen zusammensetzen” (1976: 259).

techniques which do not incorporate real-life elements. These include Soviet montage techniques and some literary examples. The agricultural show scene in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* where Rodolpho's wooing of Emma is interspersed with dialogue fragments coming from the show is one such case.

Volker Hage (1984) recognizes the conflict between the artificial, semantic policing of a term which has already entered into wide circulation and the over-inflation of the term's meaning due to its proliferation of use. Focusing specifically on literature, and on the basis of an analogy with visual arts he describes collages as those works which clearly integrate recognizable quotations, whereas he proposes that montage be a superordinate term. Hage also cautions that breaks, flashbacks, recesses, and parallel motifs have existed in literature for a long time. Therefore, to follow Eisenstein's or Weisstein's lead in calling a number of literary devices, including examples from Dickens and Flaubert, montage would be out of place. He concludes with a non-exhaustive typology of literary montage.

From this short overview, the types of problems Adorno and Bürger introduced by postulating montage as the key art principle of modern and avant-garde art, respectively, can easily be perceived. One of the key issues concerns whether or not montage can accommodate artworks with clear messages, such as Heartfield's political photomontages. The other and, for this thesis, more important question is how to identify precisely what the material of montage actually is. What are the fragments plucked out of the totality of life which Bürger refers to? What are the relations between these fragments? Is the collision between them alone sufficient to give rise to montage, as Eisenstein claims? Or do these fragments need to have a special ontological relation towards reality? Must the raw materials of montage be prefabricated? One final question, again crucial for this thesis, is whether the over-

inflation of the term is simply unavoidable if it is to be made applicable to art forms as varied as pictorial art, film, theatre, literature, and music.

Viktor Žmegač (1987) provides us with the best tools for resolving these questions. First, he proposes a definition of montage based solely on a text's formal and phenomenological properties and thus avoids the essentially interpretative problems introduced by debate about the meaningfulness (or meaninglessness) of montage. Second, in conceptualizing the relations between montage and quotation as precisely as he does, and in explaining their joint relation to ready-mades ("Fertigteilen") he gives a clear articulation of what the material of montage is. Third, Žmegač's articulation both significantly restricts the term's application (though, as I shall argue, further restrictions on historical grounds are necessary), and points to these very historical grounds, i.e. to the initial understanding of literary montage in contemporary reception of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Finally, in distinguishing between hidden and open montage, Žmegač provides hints of how to account for the break between the prehistory and history of montage in phenomenological terms without recourse to interpretative problems of meaning.

Montage, in Žmegač's view, is the use of readily available parts of other texts – ready-mades – in one's own. These ready-mades need not be verbatim "quotations", rather extensive correspondences with the source text will suffice. Depending on whether or not inserts can be identified as actually belonging to another text, open montage can be distinguished from its hidden equivalent. What characterizes open montage is its metapoetic and disruptive effect on the reader. This is why the analysis of montage is not simply a question of formal analysis but a problem of reception as well. According to Žmegač, montage can be identified in both the arts and literature, in poetry (*The Waste Land*), theatre (Karl Kraus' *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit/The*

*Last Days of Humanity*), and the novel (*Ulysses*, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* and *USA* trilogy).

Building on Žmegač's work is the most detailed and thorough study of "montage/collage" in the arts before 1933 – Hanno Möbius' 500-page study *Montage und Collage*. Möbius largely dispenses with artificial attempts to distinguish montage and collage: though he prefers to use "collage" when talking of pictorial arts, and "montage" when talking of film, it is clear that the terms denote the same artistic principle and the same end product.<sup>18</sup> One of Möbius' greatest strengths is the precision with which he distinguishes between historical antecedents and montage proper. He does so mainly with recourse to Žmegač's definition and the identification of ready-mades, or foreign parts ("Fremdteilen") as Möbius calls them. Accordingly he dismisses all talk about the supposed elements of montage in Flaubert and Dickens (cf. Eisenstein 1949) as terminologically and theoretically imprecise. He does so simply by pointing out that these texts lack ready-mades understood as narratively unmediated foreign quotations.

In discussing forms like cento and quodlibet – both effectively compilations (of parts) of pre-existing texts – which span literature, painting, music, and theatre, Möbius is capable of distinguishing various forms of quotation from montage proper.<sup>19</sup> Because all of these works are effectively instances of Žmegač's open montage he correctly realizes the need for a further criterion for identifying montage proper which would secure its disruptive experiential nature – "[t]he caesuras which

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<sup>18</sup> I shall continue using these terms in the same vein.

<sup>19</sup> For examples see Möbius (2000: 48-53).

were not always smoothed, the different linguistic style, including perspectival fractures allow for the quotation to be recognized as foreign part of the text”.<sup>20</sup>

Möbius is also right to argue that the principle of montage/collage does not originate with film (or with Picasso’s and Braque’s 1912 collages for that matter) but that it developed across different arts from a diverse array of antecedents at approximately the same time. These include various forms of integration between text and picture (e.g. Raoul Hausmann’s 1918 poster poem *fmsbw*), text and photography (e.g. early Dadaist photomontages), text and music (e.g. Hausmann’s 1919 sound poem *kp’eriousm*), as well as montages in cabaret (e.g. Cabaret Voltaire), theatre (e.g. 1920s productions of the Moscow Proletkult Theatre), and film (e.g. D. W. Griffith’s parallel montage, in development since at least 1908).

Like Žmegač, however, Möbius does not appreciate the importance that the appropriation of “montage” from film discourse that took place in German just before the publication of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (and which was almost immediately applied to literature) had for distinguishing between Döblin’s work and two others which are regularly described in terms of montage – Joyce’s 1922 *Ulysses* and Dos Passos’ 1925 *Manhattan Transfer*. For instance, in his discussion of *Ulysses* Möbius likens all techniques effecting poly-perspective and the impression of simultaneity – stream of consciousness, word games, typographic interventions, etc. – to montage. The same, by extension, applies to his analysis of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

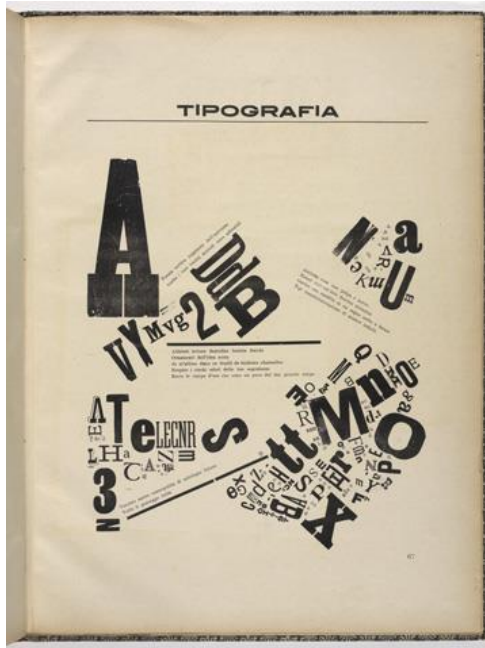
These and other moments point to two key problems in Möbius’ otherwise impressive account of montage/collage: the excessive importance given to the effect of simultaneity and the construal of foreign parts. As for the latter point, Möbius’ oft-

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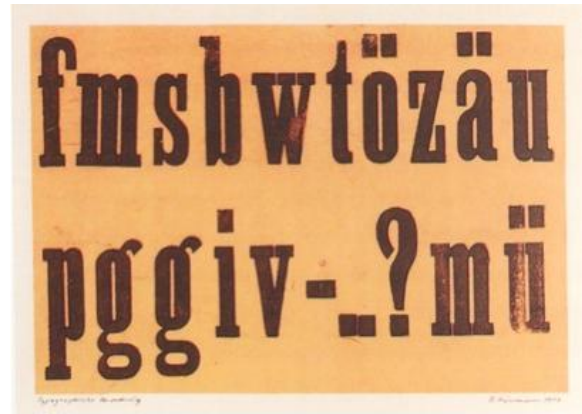
<sup>20</sup> “Die nicht immer geglätteten Zäsuren, der andere Sprachstil bis hin zu perspektivischen Brüchen machen das Zitat als fremden Textbestandteil kenntlich” (Ibid. 54).



repeated claim that the technical reproducibility of work decreases the montage-effect existing in the manuscript or original photomontage, suggests that he finds it difficult to rid himself of the notion, inherent in the material status of collages, that the privileged materials of montage/collage are tangible. At the very least, Möbius believes that emphasizing one aspect of an art which has traditionally downplayed that aspect results in montage. According to his logic, the poster poem *fmsbw* is an instance of montage because in it the graphic representation, traditionally downplayed in poetry, becomes at least as important as the phonetics and the (absence) of semantics. Yet, unlike in Ardengo Soffici's work, all of the letters in Hausmann's *fmsbw* are in the same font, size, colour, orientation, and spread across straight lines; they do not appear as though they were cut out and pasted (figures 0.7 and 0.8). Although the poem's graphic layout is emphasized, there is still no justification for speaking of montage/collage. And even if *fmsbw* were more like Soffici's *graphic* montages, this would still not make the poem an instance of *literary* montage since the phonemes "f", "m", "s", "b", "w", are not turned into foreign parts just because their graphic forms are. Finally, the fact of the work's material heterogeneity – i.e. comparable emphasis on graphic and phonetic and semantic aspects of the poem alike – does not amount to the foreignness of those materials. The same objection essentially applies to describing simultaneous poems as montage for the resulting chaos and confusion does not mean that the elements of that confusion are foreign parts.



**Figure 0.7** *Typography* (1917), Ardengo Soffici



**Figure 0.8** *fmsbw* (1918), Raoul Hausmann

This brings us to Möbius' undue emphasis on simultaneity as a factor in identifying montage, visible, for instance, in his singling out of Johann Nestroy's plays as precursors to montage and in his discussion of Griffith's parallel editing as montage. Whereas in Nestroy's plays the stage is divided into two or more parts on which events take place concurrently, Griffith's parallel editing usually represents two events taking place simultaneously. If, as Möbius (2000: 278) insists, the foreign material is constitutive of montage then it is hard to see how to reconcile these two examples with montage for neither of them includes any foreign material.

Möbius' emphasis on simultaneity directs us towards the connection commonly drawn between montage and the radical social changes that modernity and urbanization had ushered in. The great majority of both practitioners and theoreticians of montage have seen the principle in terms of a Hegelian paradigm of correspondence between art and the spirit of the epoch, with Silvio Vietta (1974),

Sabine Becker (1993) and Möbius (2000) giving perhaps the most extensive discussions of its connection to urbanization. Borrowing a term from a debate in cinema studies we might call this notion the “modernity thesis”. Moreover, by substituting “montage” for “cinema” in Ben Singer’s (2001) review of the same debate we may explain the thesis as follows: 1) montage is *like* modernity, 2) montage is *a part* of modernity, and 3) montage is *a consequence* of modernity. Whereas the second claim certainly holds, the first and the third have engendered considerable debate. All three claims reappear in academic writing on Döblin’s novel as well. As I elaborate in the next section, and in more detail in the first two chapters of my thesis, the first claim conceals at least as much as it uncovers: by accounting for the experience of montage in general terms of the experience of the modernity whose classical articulation may be found in the writings of Charles Baudelaire (1995), Georg Simmel (1903) and Siegfried Kracauer (2005b), it obstructs a more precise analysis of the experience of montage as a form of disruption. The experience of disruption, although a subset of the experience of modernity, is not particular to modernity.

## **SCHOLARSHIP ON MONTAGE IN ALFRED DÖBLIN’S *BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ***

### **BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND COMPANIONS**

Scholarship on Döblin’s work, and even that focusing on his critically and publicly most acclaimed novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, appears daunting at first.<sup>21</sup> There are two

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<sup>21</sup> *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was initially partially published in 29 instalments from September 8 to October 11, 1929 in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and then in book format at the beginning of October of the same year (Gabriele Sander 2004: 43).

extensive bibliographies of scholarship on Döblin, one covering the period up to 1970 (Louis Huguet 1972), and the other the period between 1990 and 2013 (Gabriele Sander 2014). Three compendiums bring together contemporary reviews of Döblin's work: although both Matthias Prangel (1975) and Sander (1998) focus on the reception of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* exclusively, Ingrid Schuster and Ingrid Bode (1973) give the most detailed account of contemporary *Berlin Alexanderplatz* reception. Relatively recently, two overviews of scholarly work on Döblin have also appeared in print. In separate sections Wulf Koepke (2003) discusses the reception of the novel before and after 1933, Döblin scholarship in general and finally proceeds to outline work done on all of Döblin's major novels. Sander (1998), by contrast, focuses exclusively on *Berlin Alexanderplatz* scholarship.

Focusing on specific aspects of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* provides a point of entry into the vast scholarship on Döblin. Koepke (2003) organizes the discussion of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* into the following sections: the experience of the metropolis/modernity; the possible influence of James Joyce and John Dos Passos; the controversial ending; mythology; the modern media; montage; irony; and the English translation. The most pertinent to my thesis are: 1) the discussions of montage (Joyce's or Dos Passos' influences are important to the extent that their technique is understood in terms of montage), 2) the influence of new media (film and photomontage), and 3) the experience of the metropolis/modernity. Koepke's discussion of montage, however, proves disappointing as it focuses on Otto Keller (1980) who, in his book length study of Döblin's "Montageroman", never explicitly defines montage but implicitly construes it as a network of motifs. More pertinent overviews of ideas of montage in connection to the idea of filmic writing, going back

to Döblin's own idea of Kinostil (1989a), are given by Matthias Hurst (1996) and Kleinschmidt (2004).

## PRE-WAR DISCUSSION OF MONTAGE

The identification of montage as *Berlin Alexanderplatz*'s key technique goes back to the first reviews of the novel. Before proceeding with the analysis of the novel's early reception, however, it is worth giving a brief overview of Döblin's own understanding of the new epic form he was trying to bring about.<sup>22</sup> The most succinct account of his poetics is given by Žmegač (1968), who focuses on three key Döblin texts on the topic: "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker" (1989a), "Futuristische Worttechnik" (1989b), and most importantly "Der Bau des epischen Werks" (1989c), written at the time of the completion of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.<sup>23</sup> In his open letter to Marinetti (1989b), Döblin denounced Futurism in favour of "Döblinism".<sup>24</sup> In the Berlin Program (1989a) Žmegač identifies three key aspects of this eponymous philosophy: 1) anti-psychologism, as abandonment of standard novelistic practices which drew on emotions such as love and hate as motivations for human action; 2) "Kinostil" ("cinematic style"), as a means of describing simultaneous experiences without giving the impression that they are told ("gesprochen") rather that they are present ("vorhanden"); and 3) "steinerner Stil" ("stony style"), as a way of eliminating the narrator's voice from the novel and a connection to Zola's naturalism.

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<sup>22</sup> To my knowledge, Döblin only explicitly uses "montage" to describe the technique of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* on one occasion, in a letter to a certain Lüth in 1947 (Prangel 1975: 48).

<sup>23</sup> Four if we count the discussion of "Der historische Roman und wir" (1989d). It is, however, unimportant for my thesis.

<sup>24</sup> Döblin's main objection to the Futurists was not so much their adoration of the world of things in the age of machines, as their lack of artistic consistency for he found that they employed conventional imagery.

The most important change Döblin (1989c) would introduce to his poetics was to abandon the stony style in favour of freedom of narrative agency. Here, Žmegač turns a blind eye to the conflation of the author and the narrator clearly present in Döblin (and contemporary reviews of the novel), by immediately translating Döblin's discussion of the author into a discussion of the narrator. Although it does not prove crucial for Žmegač's points at the time, once he turns his attention to montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (Žmegač 1987) he conflates what he believes to be a single narrative voice in command of various montage elements with the real-life author who indeed compiled all of these elements into the novel.

This conflation of author and narrator also appears to be the reason why, in contemporary reviews, the technique of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is often compared to the stream of consciousness and free association techniques of *Ulysses*. In the absence of a narratological distinction between a fictional narrator and a real-life author, the perceivable shifts in style (deriving from advertisement, newspaper, and various other inserts) cannot be accounted for in terms of changes in narrative voices. Contemporary reviewers attempted to explain these shifts by identifying their motivation either intra-diegetically as Franz's streams of thoughts or, alternatively, as the author's thought patterns.<sup>25</sup> Writing in 1930, Benjamin (1972b) was perhaps the first to clearly distinguish *Ulysses* from *Berlin Alexanderplatz* by pointing out that montage, the novel's key stylistic device, has nothing to do with Joyce's type of interior monologue. Montage, according to Benjamin is based on the document, and is, as such, connected to Dada and film practices. In the case of Dada art montage pertains to the employment of material from everyday life. In the case of film, again

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<sup>25</sup> Carl Franz Weiskopf (1975) finds that Franz subconsciously enumerated tram stations. Friedrich Muckermann (1975) allows for both options.

according to Benjamin, the effective use of montage consists in its ability to accustom us to the authenticity of such material.

Benjamin does not, however, give a precise account of what a document is. Although everyday material is certainly among the examples included, biblical material also makes its way onto the list. This suggests that, for Benjamin, the document relates to what Žmegač (1987) later refers to as the textual ready-made which, at least in the case of open montage, appears as a piece of text characterized by stylistic difference from its textual environment. Indeed, implicit understanding of montage in these terms had been present even before Benjamin, at least as early as in Kurt Fischer's 1929 review.

The novel's contemporary reviewers do not speak only of its documentary nature when they speak of montage. The other important aspect of montage is the phenomenology of shock or disruption. Although Benjamin (1989) connects both film and Dada art to this phenomenology, it is Herbert Ihering (1975) who first explicitly talks of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as a word film primarily by virtue of having various disruptive elements cut in, which produce an experience of jolting. Alex Eggebrecht (1975), also writing in 1929 and prior to Benjamin, talks of the experience of shock in relation to Döblin's abrupt changes in style. This discourse of phenomenology of disruption is present in many other contemporary reviews. It is not exclusively documentary material that is identified as the cause of shock, but, for instance, abrupt changes in perspective as well. Taken together, however, documentary material and abrupt shifts in style (as identifiable in ready-made inserts) form the basis of comparisons between the novel to film montage (and Dada) practices in its early reception history.

## POST-WAR DISCUSSION OF MONTAGE

It is interesting to note that despite the almost ubiquitous discussion of montage in relation to *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in the post-war scholarship starting with Fritz Martini (1954), the concept itself most often remains undefined, leaving the reader with the task of reconstructing its meaning.<sup>26</sup>

The great majority of scholars use montage as a convenient umbrella term for the novel's stylistic devices and for passages they deem particularly interesting. The following is a sample of devices and passages misidentified as montage: the use of different speech registers (Martini 1954, Klaus Müller-Salget 1972); simultaneity (Walter Muschg 1961, Hermann Burger 1980); the combination of realistic, surrealist, and symbolic elements (Müller-Salget 1972); shifts between dialogue and monologue (Müller-Salget 1972, Burger 1980); futurist-like speed and "kaleidoscopic film techniques" (Uli Zimmermann 1979); the combination of literary techniques analogous to fast motion, slow motion, close up, flashback and flash forward (Burger 1980); literary allusions and interpolated narratives (Helmut Schwimmer 1973, Kathleen Komar 1981); compulsion to repeat (Harald Jähner 1984); shifts in focalization, perspective, and epistemic access (David Dollenmayer 1988, Klaus Scherpe 1988, David Midgley 1993, Sabine Hake 1994a and 2008, Hurst 1996); representation of future events in the story of Max Rust (Dollenmayer 1988, Becker 1993); the opening of Book Two (Dollenmayer 1988, Midgley 1993, Becker 1993, Andrew Webber 2008) and Book Four (Dollenmayer 1988); parallel narrative threads (Joachim Paech 1988, Helmuth Kiesel 1993); the story of an elderly homosexual (Becker 1993); the story of Zannowich (Dietrich Schunnemann 1996); Bakhtinian polyphony (Michael Jennings 1998); the opening tram-ride sequence (Janet Ward

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<sup>26</sup> Leo Kreutzer (1970), interestingly, is among the rare ones who does not mention montage at all.



2001, Stephanie Bird 2009); and the stream of consciousness and the parodies of ancient Greek literature (Christian Schärf 2001).

Erich Hülse's definition appears to articulate how the scholars referred to in the previous paragraph perceive the device: "[‘montage’] means the joining of the most diverse elements into a whole where the parts of this whole are often clearly distinguishable as separate members, yet as often blend seamlessly into each other".<sup>27</sup> Though scholars often emphasize the importance of the experience of disruption, they are willing to disregard it when a particular device needs to be categorized under montage. Hülse's definition of montage, moreover, encapsulates not only ready-mades but also widely used devices such as epic narration, interior monologue, stream of consciousness, free indirect speech, dialogue, and lyricisms, so long as they are combined frequently. Narratologically speaking, the point of montage for Hülse is to elicit shifts in narrative perspective. Poly-perspective alone, however, regardless of whether it is stylistic, spatio-temporal, epistemic or that of focalization or Bakhtinian polyphony, cannot amount to montage. If this were the case then epistolary novels could easily be said to deploy montage and so could any novel in which a Genettian extradiegetic narrator lends the voice to other characters. But it is surely anachronistic to think that all of these texts make use of montage. Nor can we suppose that rapid juxtapositions and spatio-temporal dislocations alone amount to literary montage, for then we are missing the ready-made aspect. What we need is to retain both the phenomenological effect of disruption that translates across media and the understanding of the nature of the document. The latter, I suggest, boils down to a noticeable stylistic shift. It is important to note that both *Ulysses* and *Manhattan*

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<sup>27</sup> “[‘Montage’] bedeutet die Verbindung der verschiedenartigsten Elemente zu einem Ganzen, wobei die Teile dieses Ganzen häufig als Glieder deutlich unterscheidbar sind, vielfach jedoch nahtlos ineinander übergehen” (Hülse 1979: 60).

*Transfer*, despite a plethora of academic articles testifying to the contrary, fail to meet at least one criterion for literary montage: the former because the oft-cited Wandering Rocks and Molly's Monologue chapters lack the ready-made aspect and because the stylistic shifts present in *The Oxen of the Sun* are insufficiently disruptive and imply a single narrative voice modulating its expression;<sup>28</sup> the latter because the intradiegetic motivation of ready-made material eliminates disruption.<sup>29</sup> Döblin's novel meets both criteria and in doing so produces an effect of disruption to be tracked on the experiential, stylistic and narratological levels, respectively.

As David Trotter (2007) has demonstrated in the sphere of English literature, the recourse to cinematic techniques with montage at their forefront has emerged as an influential model for explaining literary modernism. Ekkehart Kaemmerling (1975), who has coined the term "filmic writing" ("filmische Schreibweise"), stands as the most vocal proponent of this approach in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* scholarship.<sup>30</sup> Because he applies the notion of film montage to literature too loosely, however, he has difficulties in understanding literary montage.<sup>31</sup> For instance, it suffices for Kaemmerling (1975: 194) for events to take place simultaneously to proclaim them to be instances of literary montage. More generally, Kaemmerling fails to see the importance of ready-mades in identifying literary montage.

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<sup>28</sup> For a book-length study of *Ulysses* in terms of montage broadly conceived to include poly-perspectivity, literary simulation of camera positions and jumps in focalization among other things see Craig Wallace Barrow (1980). For a more exhaustive bibliography of such work see David Trotter (2007: 88).

<sup>29</sup> For examples of broad understandings of literary montage in *Manhattan Transfer* see, for instance, E. D. Lowry (1969), Gretchen Foster (1986) and Bart Keunen (2001).

<sup>30</sup> This model has been used for Döblin's early stories (Mirjana Stančić 1991) as well as *Berge Meere und Giganten* (Andrea Melcher 1996).

<sup>31</sup> For a more general critique of "filmic writing" see Hurst (1996: 253-263). For a general critique of using film montage as a model for modernist writing in English language scholarship see Trotter (2007).

Paech (1988) devotes a monograph to “filmic writing” but, interestingly, claims that this is merely a convenient term for describing a number of literary techniques which developed at least with Dickens and certainly prior to the invention of cinema. Montage for him originates in literature rather than film and is intimately related to the “modernity thesis”. According to Paech’s (1988: 129-130) broad definition, montage may mean three different things: 1) imitation of montage-like experienced urban reality, 2) construction of meaning out of various fragments, and 3) deconstruction of an existing coherence and its dissolution into fragments. Such a definition allows Paech to connect various films and examples of both nineteenth- and twentieth- century literature to the experience of urbanization. This, however, comes at a cost of over-inflating the term and muddling the distinction between various types of film editing, all of which he sees as articulations of the experience of urbanization.

Most of the critics like Paech see film as only one among many of the influences on literary montage. For the most part they also recognize one of the two necessary conditions of literary montage – the experience of disruption. A number of them, including Martini (1954), Werner Welzig (1967), Klotz (1969), Kiesel (1993), Schärf (2001), and Jelavich (2003), however, fail much like Kaemmerling and Paech to recognize the ready-made condition as the additional criterion.

Among those who do take notice of the second condition, moreover, several end up misconstruing the nature of the ready-made. When, for instance, Klotz (1976) proposes a definition of montage which includes ready-mades, he counts historical figures and events among them. A similar inclusion of historical phenomena takes place in Roger Hillman (1991). This approach betrays the idea that ready-mades are identified primarily by their potential documentary function, rather than by their mere status as quotations. The approach’s most explicit proponent is Devine Fore (2001).

Pursuing the logic of his argument to its final conclusion Fore is forced to count even free indirect speech as an instance of literary montage. In a variant of this approach Todd Heidt (2009) seeks to understand ready-mades as quotations of actually pre-existing texts. He, however, fails to see that the *appearance* of an actual quotation suffices for a segment to amount to a ready-made.

A minority of scholars articulates, either implicitly or explicitly, both the experiential and the ready-made condition for identifying montage.<sup>32</sup> One of the most astute representatives of this group – Dominique Pleimling (2010) – uses Žmegač's definition to highlight how literary montage differs from the filmic one. Sander (1998, 2004) provides not only a typology but identifies the actual sources Döblin used for his literary montages. The two of them like others in this group, however, appear to think that the distinction between the ready-mades introduced as parts of characters' thought or vision and those lacking such intradiegetic motivation plays no role in determining the status of literary montage. In other words, identifying Žmegač's open montage is sufficient for these critics to establish the presence of literary montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. As the more detailed analysis in Chapter Two will demonstrate, however, this contradicts contemporary accounts of literary montage. Put succinctly, *Manhattan Transfer* in which, unlike in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, ready-mades are almost exclusively intradiegetically motivated is never identified as employing literary montage.

Pleimling's approach can also serve us as a negative example for how to produce a more historically informed discussion of literary montage. Whereas Pleimling first defines literary montage, then proceeds to give a definition of film

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<sup>32</sup> For those who do so implicitly see Theodore Ziolkowski (1969), Osman Durrani (1987), Harro Segeberg (2003a, 2003b), and Sander (2004, 2007). For explicit engagement with the matter see Albrecht Schöne (1963), Hage (1984), Becker (1993), Stefanie Harris (2009), and Dominique Pleimling (2010). This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

montage and finally compares the two, we first ought to arrive at a definition of film montage and photomontage and only then provide a definition of literary montage. Stefanie Harris (2009: 108-111) identifies this general methodological misstep but her account is based on considerations of theoretical texts which were either unavailable in German (Eisenstein 1988, 1998b, 1998e) in the 1920s or are only broadly descriptive of the novel's general technique (Döblin 1989b). We need to focus on Weimar reception of Soviet theory and practice in order to determine how contemporary critics grounded the connection between film montage and Döblin's novel. This, I argue, is the experiential effect of disruption *together* with the device's ready-made nature. For it was in the Weimar reception of the novel *immediately following* the exposure to Soviet film theory and practice and Dada photomontage (rather than to the cinema of D. W. Griffith) that the concept of literary montage was initially formulated. Although, as Möbius demonstrates, the principle of montage/collage existed in the arts at least since the 1910s, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was not only the first major novel where its literary version appeared but also the first major literary novel which was *identified* as employing literary montage.

The failure to discriminate between the two types of open montage also precludes scholars from producing systematic articulations of the idea that a singular narrator might *not* be in control of the whole of the text. Albrecht Schöne (1963) is the first to raise this possibility by inquiring to whom the voice responsible for conveying ready-made inserts belongs. The only other critics, to my knowledge, to follow Schöne's lead are Jürgen Stenzel (1966), Günther Anders (1984), Jennings, Hurst, Möbius, and Fotis Jannidis (2006). Among them it is only Stenzel and Jannidis who understand that the intradiegetically unmotivated montage affords systematic engagement with the possibility proposed by Schöne.

Writing as early as 1966, Stenzel was in fact the first to articulate all of the three key elements for identifying literary montage: 1) the ready-made *appears* to be a quotation rather than actually being one, and 2) its independence from the narrative voice is secured by 3) the absence of the typographically marked introduction (colons and font changes). Whereas the first element speaks to the “documentary nature” of ready-mades, the third one secures the disruptive experiential effect of montage. The second element goes even further than contemporary reviews and begins to explain the narratological effects of montage. This definition, however, was not only left on the side-lines but did not even engender a terminological debate (notable exceptions being Hage and Becker). Instead, Stenzel’s essay was only referred to for its investigation of the collage structure of Döblin’s manuscript, i.e. the fact that the manuscript contains actual letters and postcards. Moreover, Stenzel-influenced and very insightful formal analysis of montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* by Hage (1984) is even less well-known and has not elicited a single reference among the commentators I consulted.<sup>33</sup>

Although, as can be seen from the preceding pages, there are notions of narrator-less montage inserts, there is only one systematic narratological analysis of the relation between the definition of montage and the presence of the narrator (Jannidis 2006).<sup>34</sup> The most important reasons for this are, as we have seen, imprecise articulations of literary montage in the post-war period. An additional reason is that the notion corresponding to the “controlling fictional narrator” (Gregory Currie 1995) remains obfuscated by terms such as “personal narrator” (Stenzel), “authorial/auktorial narrator” (Jennings and Hurst), “narrator” (Schöne, Stenzel, Becker, and Möbius) or “Döblin the author” (Hage). With Currie we can finally

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<sup>33</sup> Another rare commentator who takes Stenzel’s narratological analysis seriously is Heidt (2009).

<sup>34</sup> I shall discuss this analysis in more detail in the second chapter.

clearly state that the controlling fictional narrator is a fictional agency, separate from both the author and the implied author, whose narrating coincides with the whole of the text and not merely a part of it.<sup>35</sup>

This thesis, although “simply” a reorganization of the semantic field, not the generation of a new concept, is not a theoretical exercise for its own purpose, but is grounded in reception theory and historical circumstances which ushered in the concept of literary montage. It is precisely this historical bent that sets my analysis apart from that of Stenzel, Hage, Möbius and Jannidis. I seek to demonstrate that the phenomenology of disruption *together* with the nature of the ready-made were the key for introducing the term into literary scholarship. Also, with reference to film, I will show that what is readily described as disruptive and/or confusing today was not necessarily the case in the contemporary reception. That is why simple analogies to films like *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt/Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (Walter Ruttmann, Germany, 1927) cannot yield a compelling concept of montage, and why a more detailed narratological explanation of literary montage will be necessary. This narratological explanation, simply put, amounts to construing montage inserts as textual segments in which the controlling narrative voice is replaced by another or is simply eliminated altogether.<sup>36</sup>

I take cues from Schöne and other critics who concern themselves with the muting of narrative voice as well as from Kleinschmidt who finds the goal of Döblin’s Kinostil is to simulate the presentation of images without a narrator. I propose that montage is the key device for reaching the goal of a novel way of eliminating the

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<sup>35</sup> In Chapter Two I demonstrate how Currie’s concept differs from Gérard Genette’s (1980) extradiegetic narrator and why it is a more powerful tool for analysis.

<sup>36</sup> This is what is usually referred to in vague and metaphorical formulations such as “it [the city] narrates itself” and “Döblin lets the city speak on its own”. For an example see Becker (2007: 118-119).

controlling fictional narrator. Döblin's novel is thus extremely interesting from a narratological point of view not only for the various properties already discussed, but also because the presence of a controlling fictional narrator may be demonstrated in almost all literary fiction (Mario Sluga 2010).

This is also a good place to spell out the procedure I propose for identifying whether a textual insert is a montage: 1) the insert is an instance of Žmegač's open montage (the ready-made condition); 2) the insert is not diegetically motivated (the experiential condition); and 3) the style of the insert is neither ironic or parodic (the condition of the absence of narrative control). My procedure differs somewhat from Stenzel's because, as I demonstrate in Chapter Two, there are examples of literary montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* which satisfy Stenzel's third condition but not his second one.



## SCHOLARSHIP ON FILM ADAPTATIONS OF *BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ*

### ADAPTATION IN GENERAL

Shortly before the broadcast of the first episode of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's adaptation of the novel aired in October 1980, Fassbinder's own text – "Die Städte des Menschen und seiner Seele" ("The Cities of Men and Their Souls") – appeared in *Die Zeit*. Therein Fassbinder reminisced about his adolescent reading of the novel at the centre of which was the non-acknowledged non-sexual love between its two main protagonists – Franz Biberkopf and Reinhold. This text has proven to be a departure point for much of academic work on Fassbinder's adaptation. On the one hand, it has paved the way for quasi-biographical readings whose main interpretative goal was to correlate the author's personal experiences and drives with the effects of the filmic text. On the other, it fed into the already existing discussions about the nature of adaptation, particularly what it means to make a successful adaptation. According to Jane Shattuc (1995), the status of authorship over the adaptation and the figure of Fassbinder himself filled many column inches in the German press that year.<sup>37</sup>

Wolfram Schütte's article (1981) brought both of these approaches together. He identified Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as a self-willed and narcissistic reading of the original novel and at the same time "the great confession, the settlement of debt, the fulfilment of a dream, and the summing up of all his previous artistic effort" (Schütte 1981: 99). Susan Sontag (1983) similarly saw *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as the compendium and pinnacle of Fassbinder's body of work, but focused more on the problem of adaptation understood as "[a] game of recycling". Paech (1988) and Heinz Brüggermann (1989), on the other hand, voiced criticism of

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<sup>37</sup> The third theme Shattuc identifies is the relation of art cinema to the institutional status of public television.

Fassbinder for failing to find filmic equivalents to modernist devices such as literary montage. Achim Haag (1993) and Andreas Rost (1993) criticized Brüggermann and Paech for looking no further than the absence of Soviet-like montage in Fassbinder to reach that conclusion. Haag and Rost identified a number of other filmic devices, which, according to them, ought to be understood as modernist (though, admittedly, they did not elicit the experience of disruption). Both, however, misapprehended the concept of film montage. Following Paech and Weisstein, Haag gave montage too broad a definition, whereas Rost identified it with rapid shot alterations, i.e. with the experience of tempo and dynamism (which is even more ironic for he had criticized Brüggermann for failing to understand the historical meaning of Döblin's "Kinostil" and its connection to film montage).

Fassbinder himself weighed in on the question of fidelity to the original text. In both his *Die Zeit* article and the introductory note to the published script of *Querelle* (1982, Germany/France) Fassbinder (1982) diverged from the traditional view – espoused first in relation to Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in scolding critique by Burger (1980) – that an adaptation has to be faithful to the true meaning or the "spirit" of the original. Schärf (2001) echoed Fassbinder's thoughts when he concluded that most of the critics were unduly concerned with identifying the "spirit" of the original text – here construed as the extensive use of modernist devices – in the filmic adaptation.

Fassbinder's idea can already be seen in the founding monograph of adaptation studies – George Bluestone's 1957 *Novels into Film*. Bluestone called for the rejection of the fidelity discourse based on its implicit judgment that the novel is the norm and deviations from it are therefore perilous. Bluestone (1957: 6) further argued that claiming a book is better or worse than a film is akin to claiming that

“Wright’s Johnson’s Wax Building [is] better or worse than Tchaikowsky’s *Swan Lake*”.<sup>38</sup> The two are simply incommensurable. Bluestone bases his argument on the “medium specificity thesis” typical of modernist art theory but which may be found as early as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s 1766 *Laocoön*. In its weaker version the thesis may be described as a view that every art has its own specific medium and that the medium’s devices are constrained by the medium’s material and stylistic properties. In its stronger version the thesis makes an additional demand for “purity”. In other words, the excellence of an artwork hinges upon the use of devices which are inherently specific to the medium. To cite Lessing’s classic example, poetry should only deal with temporal representations because it unfolds in time, whereas painting, existing in space, should only seek to represent spatial phenomena.

Subsequent calls for the rejection of the fidelity discourse have come from numerous scholars including: Dudley Andrew (1984), on the basis that there is no singular “spirit” of the novel in the sense there is (usually) a legal precedent for the interpretation of a law; Seymour Chatman (1990), on the basis that it tells us nothing of how narrative problems are solved in different media; James Naremore (2000), on the basis that it detracts from inquiring about more interesting political, cultural, and ideological aspects of adaptations; Robert B. Ray (2000), on the basis of its blindness to intratextuality, as well as more general misapprehensions about the “naturalness” of narrative cinema, and its proliferation due to the “publish or perish” principle present in academia;<sup>39</sup> Robert Stam (2005), on the basis of its implicit moral evaluations

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<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that indignation about the illustration of written texts and a plea for the use of media specific techniques in filmic adaptations may be found already in Kracauer (2005a), and even earlier in the *Autorenfilm* period in 1910s. Heinz-Bernd Heller (1985: 84-85), for instance, notes that the reviewers of one of the earliest *Autorenfilme* – *Atlantis* (August Blom, Germany, 1913) – criticized the adaptation of Gerhart Hauptmann’s novel for not recognizing the difference between filmic and literary representation.

<sup>39</sup> Ray notes that the establishment of *Literature/Film Quarterly*, a key journal dealing with adaptation studies, in 1973 coincided with the considerable worsening of the academic job market.

discernable in the vocabulary employed; Linda Hutcheon (2006), on the basis of its assumption that the only function of adaptation is the reproduction of the existing text; and Thomas Leitch (2007: 6), on the basis of its blindness to the fact that “fidelity as a criterion of knowledge is based on a marketplace of competing models”.

Recently, in a special issue of *M/C Journal* on adaptation, J. D. Connor (2007) raised a very interesting question: why does the obsession with fidelity persist in spite of numerous convincing arguments against it? The answer he proposed is that, contrary to commonly held opinion, fidelity discourse need not harbour evaluative judgements; on the contrary, indeed, it makes comparisons in order to sidestep those judgements. Seen in this light, arguments against fidelity discourse are a way to avoid serious engagement with issues concerning judgement. It would appear, however, that Connor’s question is better answered with recourse to the “publish or perish” principle for Connor’s understanding of fidelity boils down to questions of (mis)matching, i.e. “the ability to recognize the systematicity [*sic*] of the differences *between* source and adaptation” (2007, italics in the original). Connor’s understanding of fidelity is better applied to Andrew’s project of finding equivalences between sign systems and Chatman’s problem-solving across media, than to standard applications of fidelity discourse which always harbour evaluative stances insofar they regularly find adaptations to be lacking in some way.<sup>40</sup>

As we have seen, the rejection of fidelity discourse goes hand in hand with proposals for how to reorganize the field of adaptation studies in the future. Andrew calls for an investigation into how adaptations influenced the history of film style and suggests the field takes a social turn. Naremore echoes this suggestion and Leitch

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<sup>40</sup> Even Bazin (1997) who argued that the more important question for the adaptation is who it is made for rather than whether it is cinematic or not, takes part in this kind of fidelity discourse.

follows it up by analysing production and distribution practices of *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, USA, 1939) and *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* (Peter Jackson, USA, 2001-2003).<sup>41</sup> Ray calls for an examination of the relation between words and images, noting that today the dominance of the literary sign is being replaced by the dominance of the visual one. This suggestion is taken up by Kamilla Elliott (2004) who notes that theorists of the novel have consistently failed to recognize that novels were regularly illustrated, whereas film theorists have consistently (and erroneously) insisted on film as a primarily visual medium, dismissing the role that voice and intertitles played in the development of montage practices. Hutcheon, taking a prompt from Andrew that all representation might be thought of as adaptation, expands the field of adaptation to include all arts as well as video games and amusement parks. Leitch (2007: 127), finally, proposes that a far better question than whether an adaptation is faithful or not is “why does this particular adaptation aim to be faithful?”

There have been exchanges of fire across camps. The most pertinent to my thesis are Naremore’s and Ray’s objections to the modernist “medium specificity” stances exemplified by Bluestone (1957) and Chatman (1978, 1990). Naremore argues that these stances devalue adaptation and joins Ray (later followed by Hutcheon and Stam) in criticising claims made about what films can or cannot do as opposed to novels as folly. As far as the first point is concerned, Naremore’s view that a claim to “medium specificity” is a claim to cultural capital which necessarily bestows greater cultural capital to the prior medium (literature in this case) does not hold. Although a claim to “medium specificity” bestows cultural capital to all media perceived as art, it does not necessarily bestow it relative to temporal priority. If

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<sup>41</sup> Admittedly, already Bluestone stresses the importance of the differences in film and literature production practices paying a lot of attention to the conditions of Hollywood industry and self-imposed censorship of the Hayes Production Code.

Bluestone, against whom the attack is directed, makes a blunder in this vein, Lessing or Hugo Münsterberg (1916), another proponent of the “medium specificity”, certainly do not. In the case of Naremore’s second point, although in agreement with it, I must stress that there is nothing wrong *in principle* with discussing what an art form *was* (un)able to do. So long as these investigations focus on the history of the medium and do not project their findings into the medium’s future, get their histories right, and refrain from invoking the “purity” of the medium as the key norm for evaluation, medium specific approaches are perfectly legitimate.

Although all of the aforementioned approaches are valid, I stand closest to the framework outlined by the weaker version of the “medium specificity thesis”.<sup>42</sup> From the outset, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* has been discussed in terms of formal devices and effects characteristic of other media, especially film. With this in mind, a formal analysis that pays attention to medium specificities and different solutions to narrative problems, especially the question of voice as it relates to montage, remains the best method to analyse the distinctions in the deployment of these devices in on-screen adaptations. Moreover, as I explain in more detail in Chapter Three, formal analysis evades the problems inherent in interpretation once interpretation is understood as adaptation in the narrow sense.

#### RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER’S ADAPTATION

Since Sontag’s essay and starting with the translation of Schütte’s article, the academic reception of Fassbinder’s adaptation in English has mostly moved away from the questions of both adaptation and authorial intent. The person of Fassbinder –

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<sup>42</sup> Kracauer (2005a) is close to this position when he demands that film adaptations only harvest elements from the literary originals, rather than slavishly copying scene after scene from them.

the guiding preoccupation of the auteur theory approach – remained a spectre that haunted the most well-known readings of the film: Eric Rentschler (1986), Kaja Silverman (1992) and Thomas Elsaesser (1996).

Whereas Schütte focuses on the sublime love between Franz and Reinhold, Rentschler concentrates on the voiceless women who serve as means of exchange between the two men. He also claims that we should understand the characters' bodies as texts, upon which meaning is inscribed through violence. Silverman's work on Fassbinder has been contextualized within a broader discussion of male subjectivity and its relation to violence. She applies Freudian ideas to her analysis of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*'s epilogue as the staging of the "ruination of masculinity" and argues that Franz was bound to Reinhold through masochistic ecstasy. Elsaesser essentially recounts the story of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in order to demonstrate particular interpretative claims within a psychoanalytical and structuralist framework. These included discussions of the double, sexual exchange, binary oppositions, repetition, repressed homosexuality, the hand as a gift, the status of the phallus, fetishism and the Greimasian semantic square.

Other notable additions to the discussion of Fassbinder include Wallace Steadman Watson (1996), Christian Brad Thomsen (1997), Webber (2008), Elena del Rio (2012), and Paul Coates (2012). Both Watson and Thomsen work within the auteur theory framework, which is understandable given that both their articles are parts of larger books on Fassbinder. However, both opened themselves to criticism for giving too much weight to authorial intentions and psychology. Watson's contribution is characterized by its comparison with the novel. Thomsen draws on Freudian motifs to claim that *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is a vehicle for Fassbinder to examine the crisis of his own identity through the crisis of the German nation in the 1970s. Interestingly

enough, he is one of the few critics to argue against the usual claim that there is an obvious homoerotic undertone in the relation between Franz and Reinhold. He concludes by criticising the epilogue for trying to make Franz's inner struggle explicit. Webber's essay is part of a larger project which maps the collective and individual imaginary onto the topography of Berlin. Conceptualized within a psychoanalytic framework, it focuses on the interiorization of the city and its relation to the characters' psyches. Del Rio's and Coates' readings of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* appear in the most recent companion to Fassbinder edited by Brigitte Peucker. Whereas del Rio focuses on the flashbacks of Ida's murder and the relation between Franz and Mieke to elaborate various forms of oscillation, volition, and violence in the film within a Deleuze-Guattari framework, Coates reads Fassbinder's adaptation through psychoanalytically informed theories of Sigmund Freud and Juliet Flower MacCannell.

However they might differ in approach and focus, what connects all of the aforementioned analyses (all written in English) is the absence of any sustained formal analysis.<sup>43</sup> One would think that the medium of film affords something besides the instantiation of a narrative which can then be discussed in terms of representation of structure, gender, history, politics, author or psychoanalysis. Judging by the work of his Anglophone critics, one would think that Fassbinder rewrote the novel rather than shot a film. And this is why, again, I find it necessary to undertake a medium specific approach which takes into account that we are dealing with a film/television series and not a novel.

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<sup>43</sup> Webber's (2008: 222-224) analysis of the encounter between Franz and Mieke in front of Achinger's presents a noteworthy exception.



Shattuc (1995) appears to have been the first to break the mould among academics writing in English. She produces narrative and genre analyses in order to explain how *Berlin Alexanderplatz* operates on the border between generic melodrama (characterised by a transparent classical Hollywood style) and art-cinema (characterised by procedures which draw attention to themselves). She identifies four main narrative agencies (film itself, history, fate, and author) and three main stylistic procedures (usage of soundtrack and two types of camera movement – one obstructive and the other following visual patterns). She is also one of the first commentators to discuss the manner in which Döblin's montages are incorporated into the storyline of the film. Unfortunately, Shattuc misses an opportunity to discuss atypical editing patterns and film montage proper. Klaus Ulrich Militz (2006) is the other author published in English who has paid sustained attention to form. Even he, however, does not go much beyond providing typologies of sound and visual devices.

Formal analysis seems to come more naturally to critics publishing in German. Hanno Möbius and Guntram Vogt (1990) build on Wilhelm Roth's comments (1985) who is, together with Burger, among the first to draw attention to sound in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Möbius and Vogt focus on the film's first sequence (Franz's exit from jail) to describe the importance of sounds, Franz's loudness (or lack thereof), and voice-over. Hurst (1996) also takes Franz's exit from prison as a point of departure to describe what he calls the personal narratorial position. Haag (1992) produces the most detailed analysis of sound in the film by discussing leitmotifs, mood techniques, mixed music forms, and what he calls sound montage in the epilogue.<sup>44</sup> Yet all of the four analyses, and Haag's in particular, remain within the confines of auteur theory

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<sup>44</sup> Burger (1980: 186) finds sound montage to be present throughout the film in the simultaneous use of various sounds and forms of speech. As I have demonstrated earlier, however, simultaneity on its own cannot amount to montage.

and psychology. Bae's (2005) continuation of Haag's project, in which more attention is paid to the manner in which Fassbinder articulates his subjectivity in visual form, is no exception.

The most detailed formal analysis of Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is certainly Pleimling's *Film als Lektüre* (2010) which unfortunately still remains without an English translation. This book is a much more detailed version of the rest of Haag's formal analyses (including mise-en-scène, actors and montage) and follows Andrew's and Chatman's advice on what the role of an adaptation study should be. As such it identifies the manner in which montage procedures from Döblin's novel were incorporated into and transformed in the film.

The fourth chapter of Pleimling's monograph is perhaps the most original work on *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, even if the idea can also be found in one of Haag's footnotes. It focuses on the manner in which the film simulates literary experience, i.e. the way in which it inverts Döblin's simulation of film experience. Pleimling claims that the inserts and their fade-in introduction and fade-out elimination simulate the turning of book pages and transform the spectator into a reader. He also finds that the dark shots and freeze-frames, during which Fassbinder's voice-over dominates, turn the spectator into a listener of the literary text. In a painstakingly close reading, Elke Siegel (2012) reaches a similar conclusion regarding Fassbinder's adaptation of *Effi Briest*. Curiously, however, she denies this peculiar relation between the novel and the film in Fassbinder's other adaptations, even though both *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and *Querelle* use variations of the same techniques.

Many authors have made the point that the Epilogue strongly diverges aesthetically from the rest of the movie (both Haag and Pleimling dedicated whole chapters to it because of this). I intend to oppose this claim by providing an average

shot-length analysis and by criticizing Haag's claims about sound montage. I further claim that film editing (with the exception of intertitles, flashbacks and examples of associative montage) has been ubiquitously and incorrectly understood to instantiate classical Hollywood style. I believe this warrants reinterpretation because the atypical structuring of dialogue, i.e. of what is readily described as shot/counter-shot procedure has not been recognized. Interestingly, Pleimling has failed to see that the allegedly unique Job-sequence is not much different in structure from many other dialogue sequences. Finally, work remains to be done on the various types of voice-overs which, in Pleimling's analysis, have mostly been confined to Fassbinder's voice.

The aforementioned analyses feed into the overarching issues of narrative voice and the presence of the controlling fictional narrator which I have already raised in the discussion of Döblin scholarship and which organize my understanding of the relation between Döblin's and Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. As far as the narrator's presence in film is concerned Kleinschmidt found Döblin to be wrong when he identified none of this presence. As such Kleinschmidt is in line with film theoreticians of a more continental philosophical persuasion, such as Tom Gunning (1991), Francesco Casetti (1998), André Gaudreault and François Jost (1999), and Gaudreault (2009), all of whom maintain allegiance with Christian Metz's (1991) final version of the filmic narrator. Moreover, these authors have, relatively successfully, criticized David Bordwell's (1985) and Edward R. Branigan's (1984, 1992) early accounts of narration in fiction films for their elimination of the extradiegetic narrator. Recent debates in analytic philosophy circles, heralded by Noël Carroll (2006, 2008a), have made a strong defence of Bordwell's and Branigan's proposal. Analytic thinkers (Carroll 2006, 2008a, Chatman 1990, Currie 1995, 2010,

Berys Gaut 2004, 2010, Andrew Kania 2005, Jerrold Levinson 1996) are primarily concerned with the ontological status of the existence of the narrator based strictly on textual evidence. The continental camp, although laying claims to performing textual analysis, provides results better read as metaphorical descriptions of the spectator's engagement with film (Slugan 2011).

With the above in mind, the overarching thesis may be spelled out in the following terms. The effect of the deployment of montage in Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is the destruction of the controlling fictional narrator, which emulates the ontological properties of standard fiction film – the absence of the controlling fictional narrator. In contrast, montage in Fassbinder's adaptation (intertitles and non-transparent shot/counter-shot procedures), together with the plethora of narrative voice-overs, strives to emulate the ontological properties of standard literary fiction – the ubiquity of the controlling fictional narrator.

#### PIEL JUTZI'S ADAPTATION

Between the novel and its two film adaptations, Piel Jutzi's 1931 film has commanded the least academic attention over the years. Helga Balach and Hans-Michael Bock (1996) edited a volume which combines the film's complete script (co-authored by Hans Wilhelm and Döblin), a selection of contemporary reviews and interviews, and an exhaustive account of the film's production history by Yvone Rehhahn.

The aforementioned pieces by Möbius and Vogt (1990) and Hurst (1996) are parts of larger works discussing the relation of Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* to its adaptations. Möbius and Vogt (as well as Vogt 2001) pay particular attention to the opening tram sequence which, to their mind, relates Franz's feeling of confusion and

disorientation through montage and music. The tram sequence, they argue, achieves the effects already present in the novel through filmic means. Hurst is more critical, finding that the film falls short of producing the narratological dynamization inherent in the novel. Yet Hurst focuses only on the sequence preceding the representation of the tram ride – Franz’s release from prison. The narratological distinction between the authorial and personal perspective informs both Möbius and Vogt’s and Hurst’s work. Jutzi’s adaptation also receives a mention in Kracauer’s (1947) study of Weimer cinema where it is identified as embodying an anti-authoritarian disposition which, unfortunately, was not strong enough to educate the spectator to act against the impending political retrogression.

In another valuable contribution, Sander (1998), building on Kiesel’s (1993) work, gives an overview of the literature on the film beginning with its contemporary reception. According to both Sander and Kiesel, Jutzi’s adaptation was seen at the time as an experiment which fell short of the novel. Among the film’s most vocal critics were Ihering (1931) and Kracauer (1931) who were disappointed by the formally conservative treatment of an extremely filmic source material, the end result of which was an almost exclusive focus on Franz. Subsequent scholarship beginning with Leo Kreutzer (1977) would echo these conclusions. Unlike others such as Schärf (2001), however, Kreutzer already gave significant attention to Jutzi’s use of sound and offered a positive re-evaluation of the film’s montage sequences.

Eggo Müller (1992), focuses on the *intended* use of sound by looking at the film’s script. He finds that the sound was primarily envisaged as a device of continuity, in direct contrast with the novel’s use of disruptive montages. Müller’s work appears to have paved the way for Harro Segeberg’s (2003a, 2003b) attempt at a re-evaluation of the whole film (and not just the interspersed montage sequences).

Segeberg claims that the contemporary reviewers dismissed Jutzi's film in good part due to their lingering allegiance to the aesthetics of silent cinema. These aesthetics, he insists, are inapplicable to the film which, from the perspective of Döblin's authorial intentions, has to be regarded as an exercise in the new sound film medium. Segeberg, however, fails to acknowledge that contemporary reviewers, Kracauer included, regularly praised the film for its command of sound. Their criticism of the film was precisely the obverse of what Segeberg takes it to be – when sound was taken out of the equation it appeared as a run-of-the-mill gangster film.

Perhaps the best adaptation study of Jutzi's film is that by Peter Jelavich (2003, 2006). Jelavich explains the disappearance of the city from the film and the focus on Franz, a focal shift unanimously lamented by the critics, with recourse to economic, aesthetic and political reasons: the Depression and a decline in audience attendance, the star status of the lead Heinrich George, and rising censorship.

What I believe remains to be added to these discussions is a more medium specific approach and an investigation of sound montage in the Alexanderplatz hawking sequence. A more detailed analysis of the opening tram-sequence is also required because, according to critics, the experience of disruption and disorientation were only accomplished through an increased tempo and shifts in focalization. If this were the case, however, then the instances of parallel editing in Griffith-style chase sequences would have produced the same effect. In my first chapter I demonstrate that they did not.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Towards a Historical Phenomenology of Montage Practices:**

#### **Discourses on Film Montage and Photomontage in 1920s Germany**

One of the earliest references to montage as a key stylistic device in the poetics of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* can be found in a 1929 review of the novel by E. Kurt Fischer:

Based on the principle of pictorial montage [“Bildmontage”], out of news reports, hit songs, Berlin idioms, contemporaneous in their lavish abundance, out of interspersed Bible verses, out of scientific propositions, out of statistical materials, he [Döblin] constructs the factual skeleton for the production of multiple associations and into this skeleton he presses the fate of Franz Biberkopf and his world.<sup>45</sup>

Although references to “photomontage” can also be found in contemporary reviews of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, “montage” remains the dominant term used to describe the stylistic peculiarities of the novel in post-war scholarship (with some notable exceptions such as Albrecht Schöne (1963) who prefers “collage”). The reasons are, I suspect, manifold. The first is the weight that the author's word carries. In the oft-cited “Berliner Program”, Döblin (1989a) made the comparison to film explicit by referring to his style of writing as cinematic, i.e. as “Kinostil”. We can cite the authority attached to a renowned critic's opinion on the matter as another reason. In his influential 1930 review of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Walter Benjamin (1972b) spoke of “montage” rather than “photomontage” or “collage”. The third reason could

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<sup>45</sup> “Er baut nach dem Prinzip der Bildmontage aus Zeitungsberichten, Schlagern, Berliner Redensarten, die ihm in verschwenderischer Fülle gegenwärtig sind, aus eingestreuten Bibelworten, aus wissenschaftlichen Thesen, aus statischem Material ein sachliches Gerippe zur Erzeugung mannigfacher Assoziationen, und in dieses Gerippe hinein preßt er das Schicksal des Franz Biberkopf und seiner Welt” (Fischer 1975: 69).

have to do with the availability of theoretical models. In short, no theoretical articulations of collage and photomontage were produced between the wars that paralleled in breadth and scope the Soviet montage school accounts of film montage. Another reason is the influential works of Theodor Adorno (1970) and Peter Bürger (1974) who have construed the concept of montage as the key artistic principle of modern and avant-garde art, respectively. Finally, the preference given to montage might reflect the influence that film has exerted in the public sphere in the twentieth century, one which has arguably overtaken the influence of other pictorial arts.

The reasons behind the preference for montage also help us to identify the blind spots in the scholarly discussion of literary montage. Two general problems can be identified: the sequence in which the definition of montage is undertaken and the breadth of the term's application. In the first case, on the rare occasions when a definition of literary montage is given at all, it typically precedes the discussion of film montage, which is supplied later for merely comparative purposes. In the second case, montage is often understood in the spirit of Adorno and Bürger as an umbrella term for all of the formally interesting devices present in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

Common to the above cited practices in Döblin scholarship is a general lack of interest in the historical specificities of the appearance of montage as a *stylistic device* in films, on the one hand, and as a *term* applied to describe different stylistic devices in various arts, on the other. It is rarely, if ever, mentioned, that “montage” in German began to denote particular stylistic devices only around 1928, i.e. at the time of the first distribution of Soviet films and the publication of Soviet directors' writings in Weimar Germany. The concept of montage thus initially appeared in film discourse, then in literary discourse, and shortly thereafter in the discourse on other arts as well. Soviet films introduced montage as *the* editing principle of modern cinema and their



directors elaborated the concept in writing. To my knowledge only Helmut Schwimmer (1973) and Stefanie Harris (2009) have incorporated these historical details into their definitions of literary montage. Though interested in the alleged influence of montage on Döblin, i.e. in the production of the novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, other scholars have regularly ignored the impact that Soviet cinema and its associated writings had on the *reception* of the novel in Germany.

Similarly, those who have applied montage as an umbrella term for all of the novel's stylistic devices have inflated the term, often a-historically, to cover devices as varied as rapid spatio-temporal dislocations, shifts in focalization, alterations between dialects and languages (e.g. Berlin dialect, Yiddish), changes in types of speech (e.g. indirect, direct, free indirect speech), variations in narratorial perspectives (e.g. authorial, personal and "I"), juxtapositions of objective situations and subjective states, oscillations in the level of narrator's knowledge, and stream of consciousness. By including literary allusions, inserted stories, onomatopoeic segments, orthographic representation of dialect, and the use of actual people in fictional contexts the concept of montage has become almost impossible to apply meaningfully.<sup>46</sup>

This same insensitivity to the historicity of montage also motivates the other two reasons for the preference of montage I have proposed above. In the case of describing Döblin's writing style as cinematic, it is only Peter Jelavich (2006) who recognizes that editing practices at the time of the writing of the "Berliner Programm" in 1913 were a far cry from montage as employed by the Soviet montage school directors. The most famous device at the time was in fact parallel editing, as popularized by D. W. Griffith. In the case of Benjamin's preferred vocabulary, when

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<sup>46</sup> Hanno Möbius (2000) is particularly careful to distinguish precursor forms of montage from those of montage proper. He does not, however, fully recognize the importance of the Soviet cinema and theory for the historical articulation of "literary montage". For more details see the Literature Review.

he is (mistakenly) credited with introducing montage into the discussion of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* to further legitimize the use of the term this is done not because he was somebody who paid close attention to the developments in Soviet cinema in the 1920s but because of his status as a figure of authority in Weimar scholarship.

With the above in mind, my argument is relatively straightforward. If “montage” along with “photomontage” was introduced to literary criticism and theory only with the reception of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and if that happened only after film montage and photomontage had enjoyed substantial circulation in the Weimar cultural and public sphere, then the first step in providing the definition of literary montage is to provide definitions of montage and photomontage. This definitional work should be followed by the specification of the common ground which allowed contemporary critics to draw connections between both film montage and photomontage and the literary devices employed in Döblin’s novel. As I shall argue in more detail below, this common ground is primarily the experience of disruption and, in the case of photomontage, the use of the ready-made material as well. Only once this work is done shall we be able to produce a definition of literary montage sufficiently sensitive to the history of the understanding and practice of montage. A crucial intermediary step in the process will be to distinguish between the experience of modernity and that of disruption. Without this, we shall not be able to explain the common ground between montage practices in the visual arts and those in the literary ones with adequate precision.

All of this, of course, is not to deny that artistic principle behind montage could have been found in other arts before Soviet cinema, in Pablo Picasso’s or George Braque’s papier collés, for instance. It is also not to deny the possibility that

literary montage appeared in poetry before it did in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.<sup>47</sup> But it is to question whether literary montage is really a significant device in novels preceding *Berlin Alexanderplatz* such as James Joyce's 1922 *Ulysses*, John Dos Passos' 1925 *Manhattan Transfer*, Louis Aragon's 1926 *The Peasant of Paris* and André Breton's 1928 *Nadja*.<sup>48</sup> And it is to emphasize that such stylistic devices, even if present in the poetry of 1910s and early 1920s, were not recognized as montage at the time. Moreover, as I shall argue, it was only with the reception of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and subsequent blossoming of interest in montage and photomontage in cultural discourses that the same principles were *perceived* to be in operation in Soviet cinema, visual art, and literature. Finally, it is also in this reception that, in contrast with Adorno's and Bürger's proposals, a precise articulation of montage would arise. Such articulation would be applicable to various arts but without inflating the term to a point of evacuating all clear criteria necessary for the devices' identification.

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<sup>47</sup> Most of the alleged montage examples in poetry that Sabine Becker (1993) and Möbius (2000) put forward, however, emphasize only the visual aspect of the poem (Kurt Schwitters' poster poem *fmsbw*), go no further than visual montage (Raoul Hausmann's *Kp'erioum* or Ardengo Soffici's *BIF & ZF + 18*), remain on the level of the production of cacophony (simultaneous or sound poems), or fail to use ready-mades (Walter Mehrings' poems like *Berlin simultan/Berlin Simultaneously* and *Die Reklame bemächtigt sich das Leben/Ad Seizes Life*). As for another oft-cited example, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Wolfgang Iser (1966) has demonstrated that it abounds with "collisions of poetic images". These poetic images, however, do not generally amount to montage. The reason is that the citations are, for the most part, integrated inconspicuously into the voice speaking and once the voices do change these shifts are marked with quotation marks. Only at the end of the poem, starting with line 426 does montage proper break out fully. It does so in citations from other works inserted without an attempt at integration with the voice speaking at that point. For a broader attempt at describing early twentieth-century English language poetry in terms of montage and collage see Andrew M. Clearfield (1984).

<sup>48</sup> *Manhattan Transfer* and *The Paris Peasant* fail for the same reason – foreign materials are regularly introduced either through character discourse (on most occasions in *Manhattan Transfer*, characters read newspaper materials that make up a part of the novel) or by the voice in command of the whole of the text (as are virtually all of the instances of foreign inserts in *The Paris Peasant*). *Nadja* simply uses photographs where older novels used drawings for illustrations. For reasons why *Ulysses* fails to meet criteria for literary montage see the Literature Review.

## FILM MONTAGE

Although “editing” and “montage” are often used interchangeably in ordinary language, it has become generally accepted in specialized film studies that montage represents a special case of editing (Susan Hayward 2006: 109).<sup>49</sup> In this sense, the members of the Soviet montage school – Lev V. Kuleshov, Vsevolod I. Pudovkin, Sergei M. Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov – may be seen as the first to develop the theory of montage in the early 1920s and apply it in practice over the course of the decade. The lively reception of their films and writings in Weimar Germany is of special importance for this thesis.

The films of the Soviet montage school, referred to as “Russian films” by contemporary German audiences and reviewers, enjoyed great financial and critical success in the Weimar Republic during the second half of the 1920s. The writings of Soviet directors also became available in German at this time. Pudovkin’s *Film Technique* was translated into German in 1928; the joint statement by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Grigori V. Aleksandrov on sound montage was published initially in *Die Lichtbild-Bühne* as “‘Achtung! Goldgrube!’ Gedanken über die Zukunft des Hörfilms” in the same year; and one of Eisenstein’s crucial articles on film montage was originally written in German in 1929 under the title “Dramaturgie der Filmform”.<sup>50</sup> Finally, both Eisenstein and Vertov visited Berlin in the late 1920s

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<sup>49</sup> Another use of “montage” pertains to a classical Hollywood device wherein a series of short shots allows for the condensation of narrative. For instance, it is a standard procedure to depict an acquisition of some skill by showing incremental improvement over a series of short shots.

<sup>50</sup> Pudovkin’s book was accompanied by Sergei Timoshenko’s essay “Filmkunst und Filmschnitt”/“Film Art and Film Editing”. It was published sometime between July 28, 1928 (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Aleksandrov 2004) and September 30, 1928 (Kracauer 2004b: 118-121).

(Eisenstein in 1926 and 1929, and Vertov in 1929), occasions that received considerable media and specialized press attention.<sup>51</sup>

Around the same time three books appeared in Germany which, although not attaching as much importance to montage as the Soviet montage theorists did, devoted significant attention to the device. These were *Der sichtbare Mensch (Visible Man)* from 1924 and *Der Geist des Films (The Spirit of Film)* from 1930 by Béla Balázs (1982, 1984), and *Film als Kunst (Film as Art)* by Rudolf Arnheim (1932).<sup>52</sup> In this section, I shall concentrate on these three books and the 1920s writings of Soviet montage theorists in order to arrive at a concept of montage which would resonate with Weimar audiences. It is important to remember that all three texts were published roughly contemporaneously with *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and its initial reviews. I shall emphasize the understanding of montage not as a process or a taxonomy of the end-product of that process, as I have already done that in the review section, but as the effect-producing quality of cinema. In other words, I shall focus on the experiential effects that montage elicited among audiences, rather than on its purported “meaning”. More specifically, I shall demonstrate that the continuity-disruption opposition was already articulated in contemporary theory and reception.

As early as 1918 Kuleshov has proposed that montage – consisting in “the rhythmical succession of individual still frames or short sequences conveying motion”

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<sup>51</sup> Oksana Bulgakowa (1998) documents Eisenstein’s relationship with Germany. A chapter is devoted to Dziga Vertov’s visit to Germany in May 1929 in Bulgakowa’s volume on the relationship between Soviet and Weimar cinema (Thomas Tode 1995); a contemporary account of it by Kracauer (2004b: 258-59) and a brief correspondence between the two can be found in Yuri Tsivian (2004: 378-380). A report from *Film-Kurier* dated August 30, 1929 documents a dinner held in Berlin in honour of Eisenstein frequented by various notable literati, including Döblin. From this account, it can be gathered that Eisenstein responded to, among others’, Döblin’s views on Russian film and found them to be mistaken. The brief report, however, gives no reason to believe that formal aspects such as montage were discussed, rather that the indiscriminate positive evaluation of all Russian films was chastised by Eisenstein. I have not been able to track the content of Döblin’s address.

<sup>52</sup> I am focusing on the original 1932 version of Arnheim’s monograph and not on the 1957 reworked one usually referred to.

(Kuleshov 1988c: 46)<sup>53</sup> – was a device specific to cinema and, therefore, the defining trait of cinema. Kuleshov (1988b) would soon refine this idea of montage by including the response it engendered among audiences in the very definition of the concept. Montage, he now claimed, was a technique for organizing the viewer’s attention and a method for achieving the maximum effect on the viewer (Kuleshov 1988a). As early as in 1918 Kuleshov credited American directors as the only ones who demonstrated a practical understanding of this method; fast-moving, American-made “detective pictures” (a broad term for action films), he further claimed, exhibited montage at its best (Kuleshov 1988a).

In his most detailed account of montage written in 1929, Kuleshov (1974) rearticulates the notion of montage as a film device whose primary function is to impress the audience in a particular way. He recounts that his group’s initial search for cinema-specificity in the late 1910s took them to cinema theatres to observe the audience and their reactions to particular films and devices. He concludes that American films made a considerably greater impact on audiences than their European and Russian counterparts. The reason for this, he claims, lies in the far greater number of shots, in the greater variation of positions from which these shots were taken, in the focus on details through variation of shot scales, in their rapid alterations and, finally, in their intensity. The crucial point to note here is that until this point in his monograph, Kuleshov effectively assumes the position of an early theorist of what would later be called the classical Hollywood style. He talks of editing in that style and, more specifically, of the decomposition of a single scene into multiple shots. Only later does he focus on the specific montage properties discovered by his group,

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<sup>53</sup> In the same article the absence of sound and the non-stereoscopic quality, i.e. the contraction of depth, are heralded as the other two cinema-specific properties.

namely the ability of montage to alter the material of the shot. For Kuleshov, montage can form a new space from shots filmed at distinct locations through nothing more than the preservation of the direction of movement. It can construct a new individual out of close ups of various persons' body parts. It can also alter the meaning of the actor's facial expression (the famous Kuleshov experiment). However, and this is crucial for my thesis, what in Kuleshov's analysis remains common to all editing practices regardless of whether they are found in fast-paced, dynamic American films, in slow-paced Russian ones, or in the more experimental work Kuleshov himself undertook, is that such practices, if done successfully, produce smooth transitions from one shot to another.<sup>54</sup> Success, for him, usually depends on cutting on action, retaining movement direction and establishing eye-line matches.

Although Kuleshov's writings were not available in German in the 1920s, the 1928 German translation of Pudovkin's *Film Technique* contained practically all of Kuleshov's key ideas. Therein the shot is understood as the raw material of film, and montage as the specific means of organizing that material according to the principle of maximum spectatorial effect. American filmmakers are identified as the first to have systematically employed montage. They have understood how to produce the greatest effect and how to focus the attention of the spectator by eliminating unnecessary distractions through the decomposition of a scene into rapidly alternating shots of various scales and different positions. Pudovkin also identifies the modification of filmic material as the key property of montage. The effects Pudovkin pays the most attention to are, as with Kuleshov, tempo, dynamism and shot salience, with the

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<sup>54</sup> "When we began making our own films, constructed on this principle of montage, we were set upon with cries of: 'Have pity, you crazy futurists! You show films comprised of the tiniest segments. In the eyes of the viewer the result is utter chaos. Segments jump after each other so quickly that it is thoroughly impossible to understand the action!' We listened to this and began to think what method we could adopt to combine shots so as to avoid these abrupt shifts and flashes" (Kuleshov 1974: 55).

experience of continuity underlining the transitions between shots even in the case of Kuleshov-style experiments.

There are cases of montage practices, however, which for Pudovkin elude the continuity principle and are given special attention as such. These include instances in which the shots bear no iconic resemblance to the effects produced by their alternations and those in which cut-on-action and direction of movement rules are deliberately broken. As *Film Technique* discusses only the former I shall turn to the article “S. M. Eisenstein” written in 1928 which discusses both (Pudovkin 1988). The former is in fact exemplified by the shots of the lion statues “rising” at the end of the fourth reel of *Battleship Potemkin*. Much more important than this production of movement for Pudovkin, however, is the disruptive quality of the introduction of the shots which amplifies the adjacent shots of the Odessa theatre explosion:

Those unusual jumps of bronze and stone, suddenly interrupting the flight of clouds of smoke and the collapse of stone columns, were so stunningly unexpected in their emotional effect, they matched so perfectly the shots of the explosion that the effect on the audience was one of unprecedented force (Ibid.199).

Pudovkin identifies a similar effect of disruptive unexpectedness in the sequence of bridges being raised in *October*. He attributes it to the abandonment of standard editing practices which always respect the temporal directionality of movement. Eisenstein opts not to depict the bridge raising one increment at a time but strings shots together in which the bridge is alternately raised and lowered. On another level, analogous to the manner in which Kuleshov produced “unreal” cinematic spaces, this produces an “unreal” cinematic time. Pudovkin identifies a similar effect in shots of Kerensky ascending the same part of the staircase in



*October*, intercut by intertitles which bestow higher and higher titles upon the head of the provisional government.

Whereas Kuleshev understands the experience of disruption only as a sign of editing done poorly, Pudovkin sees it as crucial to some of the most striking and successful editing practices. Eisenstein gives even more importance to the experience of disruption once he highlights it as a productive aspect of montage. For him the experience is inextricably bound with that of attraction, an idea which he first develops in 1923 in the context of theatre productions:

*An attraction [...] is any aggressive aspect of the theatre, i.e. any element of it that subjects the spectator to a sensual or psychological influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in their proper order within the whole* (Eisenstein 1988: 34, italics in the original).

The term “shock” adds overtones of the experience of disruption to the more specific experience of intensity, partiality and salience that Kuleshov and Pudovkin had already written about. Already by the following year, Eisenstein (1998e) would apply this notion of “attraction” from theatre to film. Eisenstein emphasizes that whereas in theatre the attraction is secured by an actually occurring fact (i.e. by an on-stage presence), in film it is brought about by virtue of the decomposition of a scene into shots.

On first inspection, this produces a tension with the writings of Kuleshov and Pudovkin for it seems that, unlike them, Eisenstein attributes the experience of disruption to American editing practices. One way to resolve this tension is to distinguish between the plane of the represented and the representational device and say that the shock together with its disruptive aspect should be attributed to what is

represented – the shot content – and not the representational – editing.<sup>55</sup> Eisenstein's later remark that America “does not ‘parade’ the figurative character of its montage but shows honestly what is happening” provides evidence in support of this interpretation (1998a: 72).

Yet it would be unfair to say that we can always clearly distinguish between the representational and the represented in Eisenstein's writings and that the shock aspect of attraction does not spill over to the representational as well. Eisenstein himself clarifies that the dichotomy of the shot and montage is overcome once the concepts of conflict and juxtaposition between the shots are abstracted and applied both to the organization of film material and that of material itself (Eisenstein 1998b, 1998c). Here, it is important to note that conflict and juxtaposition are introduced as re-articulations of the concept of attraction and that they entail a whole array of contrasting effects. These effects, while retaining the salience and intensity of conflict and juxtaposition, assuage their shock aspect. Moreover, the concept of conflict is abstracted not simply to resolve the dichotomy between shot and montage but to be placed at the very core of all arts. At this point it becomes clear that both the shock aspects and the experience of disruption disappear in the process as necessary experiential conditions for identifying conflict and juxtaposition. Thus, although Eisenstein describes practices as diverse as Suprematism, Italian Futurism, paintings of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, kabuki acting, haiku writing and montage in terms of conflict, it is obvious that only very specific editing practices, regardless of whether they take place within or across shots, retain the shock aspect of attraction and its accompanying disruptive nature. These practices include those listed in the Literature

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<sup>55</sup> This distinction will be necessary to understand the notion of cinema of attractions outlined later in the chapter.

Review: 1) technical production of motion, 2) artificial production of motion, 3) emotional dynamization, and 4) intellectual dynamization.<sup>56</sup>

As I suggested in the Literature Review, Vertov remains somewhat removed from the rest of the Soviet montage theorists insofar as he never attributes the essence of cinema exclusively to montage. It is clear from his call for the purification of cinema of external influences from the other arts that he is a proponent of the “medium specificity thesis” (Vertov 1984c). Vertov, however, never disregards the importance of the shot material and the movement within it, as others do in their most polemical moments. He recognizes the dynamism, tempo, and alternation of shot scale of American films, but, unlike others, he immediately criticises such practices for rendering poor copies of movement (Vertov 1984c). Although he speaks of the construction of “unreal” cinematic spaces, individuals and times in his own work (Vertov 1984b), their production does not depend exclusively on montage but can include technological capabilities of the apparatus including slow-motion or fast-forward techniques.

Like Kuleshov and Pudovkin, however, Vertov does define montage as early as 1922 with reference to the ideal observer. Like them also, he finds that the underlying experience ought to be one of continuity. This can be derived from the vocabulary of harmony, rhythm and order he uses:

Kinochestvo is the art of organizing the necessary movements of objects in space as a rhythmical artistic whole, in harmony with the properties of the material and the internal rhythm of each object (Vertov 1984c: 8).

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<sup>56</sup> As we have seen, Pudovkin explicitly identifies artificial production of motion (the Odessa lions) and intellectual dynamization (the Kerensky ascent) as disruptive. Although he lists emotional dynamization among five editing practices which produce specific effects on the audience, the experience of disruption is not mentioned in the description.

It is only in his most extended discussion of montage that Vertov (1984a) allows the concept of conflict to enter into his description. This takes place in the discussion of various relations of movements between the shots. It is interesting that these relations form a subset of Eisenstein's list of formal juxtapositions mentioned in the Literature Review. Although we cannot say that Vertov ever explicitly identifies the experience of disruption as an aspect of montage which is exclusively productive as Eisenstein does, Vertov hints at this experiences when he speaks of "montage battle" in examples almost identical to Eisenstein's montage.

In his first book-length study of film Balázs devotes a chapter to "die Bilderführung" ("visual linkage"), i.e. "the succession of shots and their tempo [which] corresponds to style in literature".<sup>57</sup> From there it can be gathered that Balázs generally uses "visual linkage" to denote the end-product of editing, whereas he uses derivatives of "to cut" ("schneiden") to denote the technological process itself. The chapter on editing reveals Balázs' concern with effects as different as tempo and perception of the duration of time, on the one hand, and narrative comprehension and expression of internal states, on the other. However, what underlines all of these editing practices is "visual continuity" ("die visuelle Kontinuität") as the necessary (though not sufficient) criterion for their success. Although visual continuity allows for the attraction of the represented, on the level of representation it eliminates all disruptive effects. According to Balázs, intertitles pose the greatest threat to this visual continuity.

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<sup>57</sup> "Die Bilderführung, das ist die Reihenfolge der Bilder und ihr Tempo und entspricht dem Stil in der Literatur" (Balázs 1984: 117). "Visual linkage" is Rodney Livingstone's translation for "die Bilderführung". Timothy Barnard (2014) is correct to say that the more literal translation would be "shot direction". Contrary to what he thinks, however, this does not mean that in speaking of "die Bilderführung" Balázs speaks of pre-production rather than post-production. That the emphasis is on editing rather than on the planning of camera positions can be seen from the importance given to visual continuity. The latter can only be really accomplished at the editing table.

Although the term “montage” is nowhere to be found in Balázs’ first monograph, in the second it appears throughout. The titles of chapters on editing are “Montage” and “Montage ohne Schnitt” (“Montage” and “Montage without a Cut”), respectively.<sup>58</sup> Therein, Eisenstein’s (1998a) objections expressed in the article “Bela Forgets the Scissors” are implicitly taken into consideration. Whereas before Balázs identified photography and camera work as cardinal for the construction of meaning, in his 1930 monograph he revises his position identifying montage as the key representational technique for this construction. Moreover, whereas in *Visible Man* Balázs discussed the organization of shots mostly in terms of narrative comprehension, now he investigates them in terms of their ability to produce associative meaning beyond that of narrative.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, Balázs uses “montage” to refer both to visual linkage and new developments in editing practices.

Under the influence of psychoanalytic theories, Balázs now connects montage to association, a necessarily occurring psychological process resulting in a stream of connections between stimuli. Balázs construes a successful instance of montage as one which intentionally produces certain types of connection. These include the establishment of similes and the formulation of clear ideas and are almost identical to Eisenstein’s emotional and intellectual dynamization, respectively. Most importantly for this thesis, according to Balázs filmic associations operate primarily on the level of representation and not the represented. Moreover, Balázs identifies Soviet films as

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<sup>58</sup> “Schnitt” and “Montage” are generally used interchangeably in the second book. Exceptionally, in “Montage ohne Schnitt” chapter “Schnitt” is used in a narrower sense of a sharp transition between shots. Particular types of montage dubbed “Montage ohne Schnitt” include other types of shot transitions such as fade outs and dissolves. In other words, in this particular chapter “Montage” denotes editing in general and “Schnitt” only that type of editing in which the transition between shots is not gradual.

<sup>59</sup> Balázs is clear, however, that the division of montage into unproductive and productive does not mean that the former only affords narrative comprehension and that the latter goes exclusively beyond it. Strictly speaking, narrative ellipses are also examples of productive montage.

going beyond the experience of tempo and dynamism and into the realm of disruption.<sup>60</sup> For Balázs the experience of disruption, however, still hovers awkwardly between the Kuleshov-like notion that there is something wrong with such montage (Balázs 1984: 91) and the Eisenstein-like understanding of disruption as a productive quality of montage (Ibid. 90).

Like the later Balázs, Arnheim (1932) uses “montage” to denote editing practices in general. The most striking aspect of Arnheim’s book is the level of systematization, unparalleled by any of the theorists discussed up until now. More important for this thesis than Arnheim’s four-part framework for the taxonomy of montage, however, is his conclusion that editing ought to be defined in phenomenological rather than technological terms:

Editing [“Montage”], in the real sense of the word, requires that the spectator should observe the discrepancy among the shots that are joined together (Arnheim 1957: 101).<sup>61</sup>

For Arnheim the function of editing is either the decomposition of the spatio-temporal continuum or the joining of spatio-temporally disparate shots into spatio-temporally coherent wholes. Otherwise, we are forced to include devices with very different effects such as Méliès’ disappearance tricks as instances of editing. Arnheim realizes that if the phenomenological discrepancy were not the criterion of editing we would also need to say that the whole film is edited together out of single static frames, what Arnheim refers to as “imperceptible montage” (“unmerkbar Montage”).

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<sup>60</sup> “It is interesting that it was possible to increase the tempo of the rapid cut to the turmoil montage of the Russian film.” “Interessant aber ist, daß es möglich war, das Tempo des Kurzschnittes bis zu der Wirbelmontage der russischen Filme zu steigern” (Balázs 1984: 90).

<sup>61</sup> “Zur Montage in eigentlichen Sinne gehört, daß der Zuschauer die Unzusammengehörigkeit der aneinandergeklebten Bilder bemerke” (Arnheim 1932: 122-123).

It is important to recognize that for Arnheim the discrepancy referred to in the preceding paragraph does not amount to the experience of disruption I have been talking about. That discrepancy between shots and the experience of continuity go hand-in-hand is clear, for otherwise no discussion of editing would be possible without recourse to the filmstrip. This affinity is also evinced by Arnheim's claim that the greatest peril of editing lies precisely in the possibility that the aforementioned decompositions or attempts at joining spatio-temporally disparate shots may go amiss and result in disintegration, i.e. in the experience of disruption. In other words, although classical Hollywood relied on various editing practices of disparate shots, among which discrepancies were regularly spotted, the overall impression elicited was still one of continuity and as such did not produce the experience of disruption present in the work of Soviet filmmakers.

It is telling that Arnheim singles out Soviet-style montage, which for him rests primarily on the joining of spatio-temporally disparate shots, as having the greatest danger of producing this disruption, with *Mat' / Mother* (Pudovkin, 1926, USSR) as his main example. And it is also striking that Arnheim adopts a position similar to Balázs regarding the experience of disruption. Both critique the joining of spatio-temporally disparate shots as ultimately unsuccessful, even if they recognize the intention behind such devices. For Arnheim, what is quite simple in poetry, because of the abstract nature of mental images being joined, is far more difficult in film because of the actual images which need to produce a symbolic connection.

Although the Russian language does not contain exact equivalents to "editing" and "montage" but uses "montazh" to denote both, and although both Balázs and Arnheim rely on "Montage" for the same, the writings of the Soviet and Weimar theorists clearly show there is a fine distinction between the concepts. This remains

the case in spite of the fact that Eisenstein applied montage to the whole history of art. It is well known that for the Soviets the experiential effect on the audience was at the core of montage theory. As we have seen, this is also the case for Weimar theorists. I have tried to articulate this concern with regard to the experience of disruption. I now wish to go further, and propose that there are tensions in the works of Kuleshev, Pudovkin, Balázs and Arnheim which only get resolved in Eisenstein's work.

The tension for Kuleshev and Pudovkin, lies in their need to resort to writing in order to make the practice of montage be seen and recognized as such. For when everything goes right in practice, and when montage is used to alter the essence of the material, the representational device itself remains unperceived. It is a powerful device, the essence of cinema in fact, yet Kuleshov himself concedes that it took him years to see it for what it was. Eisenstein corrects this "wrong". He identifies an aspect beyond those of salience, intensity and dynamism of montage taking place on the level of the represented by describing attraction in terms of shock. But he also makes it clear that the specific disruptive quality in his montage practices (as opposed to American ones) operates not only on the level of the represented, but also on the level of the representational. In other words, Eisenstein emphasizes that proper montage should make us continuously aware of it through the experience of disruption. At the same time, he also resolves the tension in Balázs and Arnheim. Admittedly, the two of them do not have as much invested in montage as Soviet montage theorists do, for they were neither full-fledged filmmakers nor supporters of the thesis that montage was the principal device of cinema. The tension in their writing is somewhat different. They oscillate between seeing the experience of disruption in particular editing practices as hindering, on the one hand, and productive, on the other. In other words, they equivocate as to whether disruptions



detract from our viewing experience or enhance it. Eisenstein cuts the Gordian knot of indecision and insists that the experience is productive. Disruption, he insists, is a necessary prerequisite of montage executed successfully.

Based on this discussion I propose a definition of film montage with a single experiential condition in mind: montage is a type of editing characterized by the experience of disruption. This means that different historical audiences may have different understanding of montage.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the *evaluation* of disruption, whether positive or negative, does not play a role in *identifying* montage as such.

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<sup>62</sup> At the same time, however, we should be careful not to speak of film montage before approximately 1917, i.e. before the norms of classical continuity were established. It is true that a number of devices, including close-up were, at the time of their introduction, regularly perceived as disruptive. There is, however, little point in referring to these occasions as instances of montage for to speak of montage only makes sense within the context of conventionalized editing practices.

## PHOTOMONTAGE

1920s and 1930s commentators of photomontage in Germany (Raoul Hausmann 1972b, Ernő Kallai 1989a, Alfred Kemény<sup>63</sup> 1989, László Moholy-Nagy 1928, 1967, and Jan Tschichold 1928,), France (Louis Aragon 1989), Italy (Vinicio Paladini 1989), the Netherlands (Cesar Domela Nieuwenhuis 1931, 1989), the USA (Harry Allan Potamkin 1931) and to an extent the USSR (Gustav Klucis 1931, 1989, Varvara Stepanova 1989) all saw the practice as the invention of German artists.<sup>64</sup> Thus, unlike film montage, photomontage was perceived as a domestic creation, not an import from the USSR. Although some retrospective testimonies suggest that the term “die Fotomontage” was in circulation as early as 1918 (Hausmann 1972b: 45), it is doubtful the term was coined in German before the mid-1920s.<sup>65</sup> According to Richard Hiepe (1969: 7), it is most likely Moholy-Nagy who devised the term in his 1925 book *Malerei, Fotografie, Film/Painting, Photography, Film*.<sup>66</sup> Its Russian cognate – “foto-montazh” – appears in the USSR at least as early as 1924 in an unsigned *Lef* article usually attributed to Gustav Klucis. It is unlikely, however, that

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<sup>63</sup> Kemény published under the pseudonym Alfred Durus.

<sup>64</sup> Later on, this would become a contested issue (Dawn Ades 1976, Nieuwenhuis 1989, Jennifer Velcke 2009). As for these early writings they already differ significantly when it comes to identifying who the person who invented montage is. Max Ernst, John Heartfield, Georg Grosz, Moholy-Nagy and Hannah Höch all appear as the inventors depending on the source.

<sup>65</sup> The fact that the catalogue for *Erste internationale Dada-Messe/The First International Dada Fair* organized by Grosz, Hausmann, and Heartfield and held in Berlin between June 30 and August 25, 1920 does not name any of the works as photomontages despite the fact they fit the 1920s definitions of photomontage suggests Hausmann is misremembering.

<sup>66</sup> At least as early as 1920 Heartfield calls himself “Monteur dada”, and in the catalogue for *The First International Dada Fair* of the same year an abbreviation “mont.” appears next to a number of works which we nowadays call collages (e.g. *Korrigiertes Masterbild* and *Korrigiertes Picasso*) and assemblages (e.g. *Preussischer Erzengel*). Although it probably stands for the verb “montieren” (to mount) no end product of such a process is described as (photo)montage in the catalogue. Moreover, the works of the Dadaists which are nowadays called collages – e.g. Heartfield’s *Leben und Treiben in Universal City 12 Uhr mittags* – are simply described as “Bilder”, i.e. paintings. As such “mont.” describes the mechanic’s more general practice, not a particular one like making “Klebebilder”, which was the contemporary term for collage. Another telling fact is that in the discussion of photomontage in his well-known survey of art after Expressionism, Franz Roh (1925) still uses “das Klebebild” and not “die Fotomontage”. Jennifer Valcke (2009: 17) obfuscates this fact by implying that Roh (1925) is already talking of “montage”.

the term was picked up from the USSR in the same sense that the semantics of “montage” in Weimar film theory and criticism were construed under the influence of film practice and theory from the USSR.

In both ordinary and more specialized language the term “photomontage” currently denotes both the process and the end product of composite photography. Two considerably different processes are both recognized as photomontage. The first takes place in the dark room and entails the printing of two or more negatives onto a single print. The second entails cutting and pasting of the photographic and other material onto a single surface potentially accompanied by drawings, paintings or typography. Although some contemporary definitions do explicitly eliminate “other materials”, the second use of “photomontage” is, in this sense, practically interchangeable with that of “collage”. The advent of digital photography has also led to digital manipulation processes falling under the label of “photomontage”.

If digital manipulation is taken out of the equation, the ordinary use of “photomontage” in the period under scrutiny – the mid-1920s to the early 1930s – is, in essence, no different from today’s.<sup>67</sup> The more specialized use of the term in German, as far as its technical aspect is concerned, however, places greater emphasis on the process of cutting and pasting. In short, it denotes the manipulation of photographic positives and not negatives. This constrained usage can be found in a number of definitions circulating at the time.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Nieuwenhuis (1931).

<sup>68</sup> See Moholy-Nagy (1928, 1967), Kallai (1989a, 1989b), Tschichold (1928), Franz Höllering (1989), Curt Glaser (1931), Nieuwenhuis (1931), Klucis (1931) and implied in Hausmann (1972b) and Kemény (1989a, 1989b). That these writers were well aware of the technological processes used in photography is further corroborated by the fact that they regularly distinguish photomontage from photogram – cameraless photography involving the direct placing of objects onto a light-sensitive surface.

As with the Soviet montage school, many of those writing about photomontage in Germany (Klucis, Hausmann, Moholy-Nagy, Nieuwenhuis) were themselves practitioners of the art. Yet their combined writings do not amount to a theory in the sense that those of the Soviet montage school do. They are more like the writings of Balázs and Arnheim, who see montage as an important aspect of the film medium but never its essential trait. In this respect, the German writings on photomontage are often just a part of broader discourse on photography. These writings regularly offer definitions of photomontage as a technological process and many discuss the effect photomontage had on the viewer.

By the end of the 1920s photomontage in Germany enjoyed enormous circulation in the public sphere, at least on a par with that of film. Photomontages regularly appeared on book covers (most notably Malik Verlag), in illustrated magazines (*Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* and *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*), in advertising, and on film posters, and readers could even submit their own photomontages for publication.<sup>69</sup> As such, photomontage played a considerable role in debates about revolutionary art (Höllering 1989, Kemény 1989a, 1989b). Commentators interested more in the aesthetic and experimental aspect of photography were the ones who produced the accounts of reception that are of most interest for my thesis.

Two main conceptions of photomontage emerged at the time. The first, exemplified by Moholy-Nagy (1928) and Hausmann (1989), emphasizes the experience of disruption and, in the case of Hausmann, even confusion:

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<sup>69</sup> John Heartfield's book covers and political contributions to the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* were probably the most widely distributed photomontages in Weimar Republic. Curt Glaser (1931) implicitly acknowledged this.

[dadaist photomontages] brutally showed the process of production, the dismantling of particular photos, the raw cut of scissors. these “photomontages” were the true sisters of the futuristic, brutalist music that – out of shreds of noise – out of an agglomeration of single elements, wanted to convey, for instance, the shocking experience of a city awakening or something similar.<sup>70</sup>

If photomontage in its primitive form was an explosion of viewpoints and a whirling confusion of picture planes more radical in its complexity than futuristic painting, it has since undergone an evolution one could call constructive (Hausmann 1989: 179).<sup>71</sup>

Both of these comments focus on early Dadaist work up to the mid-1920s. In fact, Moholy-Nagy (1928, 1967) is explicit that, unlike early photomontage, his special brand of photo-plastic (“die Fotoplastik”) has a clear meaning and organization. Similarly, as can already be inferred from the above quote, Hausmann talks of a later far more structured photomontage. In this sense both can be connected to the second conception of photomontage exemplified by Tschichold (1928), Nieuwenhuis (1931) and Klucis (1931).<sup>72</sup> This later interpretation of photomontage is far more dialectical than the earlier one, and stresses that the harmonic unity of the resulting work derives from strongly contrasting forms:

the essence of photomontage is the organization of a number of elements – a slogan or a label, photo, colour – into a unified complex [...] the photomontage organizes the material on the principle of maximum contrast,

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<sup>70</sup> “sie zeigten brutal den entstehungsprozeß, die zerlegung von einzelfotos, den rohen schnitt der schere. diese ‘fotomontagen’ waren die wahren schwestern der futuristischen, brutistischen musik, die – aus geräuschfetzen zusammengesetzt – aus vielen einzelementen zusammengeballtes, wie z.B. das aufregende erlebnis eines stadtwachens und ähnliches vermitteln wollen” (Moholy-Nagy 1928, no capitalization in the original).

<sup>71</sup> “*War die Fotomontage in ihrer früheren Form eine Explosion von Blickpunkten und durcheinandergewirbelten Bildebenen, in ihrer Kompliziertheit weitergehender als die futuristische Malerei, so hat sie inzwischen eine Entwicklung durchgemacht, die man konstruktiv nennen könnte*” (Hausmann 1972b: 52, italics in the original).

<sup>72</sup> Nieuwenhuis and Klucis contributed to the catalogue of the first retrospective of photomontage, which was held in Berlin between April 25 and May 31, 1931 under the name *Fotomontage Ausstellung/The Photomontage Exhibition*. Nieuwenhuis was its organizer. Hausmann accompanied the opening of the exhibition with a speech reprinted in Hausmann (1972b) and translated in Hausmann (1989).

unexpected arrangements, greatest disparity, whereby it yields the maximum of creative energy.<sup>73</sup>

These contrasting forms include “rough versus smooth, aerial view versus close-up, perspective versus flat plane”<sup>74</sup> as well as “[t]he possibilities of strongly contrasting sizes and shapes, of contrasts between near and distant objects, of planar or more nearly three-dimensional forms, etc.”<sup>75</sup>

From this discussion it becomes clear that we cannot apply a definition similar to that of montage to the whole of photomontage practices of the late 1910s, 1920s and early 1930s. We can, however, apply it to a subset which roughly corresponds to Dadaist work up to around the mid-1920s. Here, the requirement spelled out above applies, namely the experience of disruption. We need to keep in mind, however, that in film montage the disruption appears between spatio-temporally organized representations whereas in photomontage it does so between spatially organized ones. We can also see how the disruptive aspect of early photomontages was downplayed and subsumed under the strong experience of contrast, as articulated by the definitions accompanying the 1931 *Fotomontage Ausstellung/The Photomontage Exhibition*. In this sense photomontage in the 1920s had a theoretical development precisely the opposite of that of film montage. Whereas Eisenstein elevated the disruptive aspect into a productive principle in order to distinguish montage from general editing practices, the commentators of photomontage downplayed the experience of

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<sup>73</sup> “das wesen der fotomontage ist, eine anzahl von elementen – eine lösung oder aufschrift, foto, farbe – als einheitlichen komplex zu gestalten [...] die fotomontage organisiert das material nach dem prinzip des maximalen kontrastes, der unerwarteten anordnung, der größenverschiedenheit, wobei sie ein maximum an schöpferischer energie hergibt” (Klucis 1931: 6-7, no capitalization in the original).

<sup>74</sup> “rauch gegen glatt, luftbild gegen nahaufnahme, perspektive gegen fläche” (Hausmann 1972b: 52, no capitalization in the original).

<sup>75</sup> “Die Möglichkeiten stark kontrastierender Größen und Formen, des Kontrastes von Objekten von großer Nähe und weiter Ferne, flächigerer und plastischerer Form usw.” (Tschichold 1928: 93).

disruption that early photomontages exhibited in order to arrive at a definition which could embrace later practices as well.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF MODERNITY OR “HYPER-STIMULATION”

In his 1929 review of Döblin’s novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* literary, theatre and film critic Herbert Ihering writes the following:

Pimps and newsagents, burglars and the Salvation Army, small gentlemen and big crooks, pubs and joints, underground construction and signboards, hit songs and biblical passages, everything forms into a sparkling, convulsive filmstrip, into a word-film “*Berlin Alexanderplatz*”. [...] Into the story of Franz Biberkopf, Döblin cuts dates and scraps of newspapers, news and rumours, realities and premonitions, spiritual leitmotifs and furtive anxieties.<sup>76</sup>

This brief excerpt encapsulates the set of traits that, in part or in full, appear among many contemporary reviews of the novel: the appreciation of the novel’s engagement with the urban; the explicit likening of the novel to film; the rhetorical simulation of tempo and dynamism through a laconic listing of diverse motifs; the reference to montage and photomontage practices in the description of the novel’s key stylistic device here expressed by the term “cut into” (“schneiden”); the nod to what I refer to as the experience of disruption present in the use of the term “zuckend”, which can be translated as “convulsive”, “twitching” or “jerking”; and, finally, the identification of ready-made texts (signboards, hit songs, biblical passages, newspapers, etc.) as the elements used in the process of “cutting into”.

*Berlin Alexanderplatz* was certainly not Döblin’s first literary work to elicit comparison with film. As early as 1913 Joseph Adler likened Döblin’s collection of short stories published the same year – *Die Ermordung einer Butterblume/The Assassination of a Buttercup* – to film, using the same term as Ihering – “word-film”

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<sup>76</sup> “Zuhälter und Zeitungshändler, Einbrecher und Heilsarmee, kleine Ehrenmänner und große Gauner, Kneipen und Kaschemme, Untergrundbau und Reklameschilder, Schlager und Bibelstellen, alles ordnet sich zu einem funkelnden, zuckenden Bildstreifen, zu dem Wortfilm ‘*Berlin Alexanderplatz*’. [...] In die Geschichte von Franz Biberkopf schneidet Döblin Daten und Zeitungsfetzen, Nachrichten und Gerüchte, Wirklichkeiten und Warnungen, geistige Leitmotive und heimliche Ängste” (Ihering 1975: 73, italics in the original).



(“der Wortfilm”). Adler (1973: 14) based the comparison on the similarities in tempo, dynamism and the dissolution of the authorial narrator in the narrative. Nor were the comparisons between literature and film reserved exclusively for Döblin’s work. Indeed, a whole, albeit short-lived genre of so-called “cinema poetry” existed which openly endeavoured to simulate filmic experience through literary means.<sup>77</sup> That being said, the contemporary reception of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* did provide one important first. It consistently used montage (and photomontage to a minor degree) to describe one of the novel’s key stylistic devices and did so with reference to ready-mades and the experience of disruption. As I said earlier, it is not that *Berlin Alexanderplatz* introduced literary montage as such, but that the concept was articulated for the first time in the process of the novel’s contemporary reception.

Leaving aside the ready-made aspect of montage to Chapter Two, I would like to elaborate on the experience of disruption here. The previous section of this chapter examined classical writings of film theory in order to provide a definition of montage. There I reached the conclusion that montage is first and foremost an issue of reception, i.e. that it is far better defined in terms of its experiential effects, than its technical and production aspects. I proposed that the crucial experiential effect of montage lay in the disruptive quality of shot relations, in opposition to the unnoticeable transitions characteristic of standard editing practices (whose principal function is narrative immersion). Here, I would like to elaborate on the experience of disruption from a different angle, that of the experience of modernity. There are several reasons for this. Most importantly for my thesis, this discussion allows me to isolate the experience of disruption as a particular aspect of the experience of modernity and, in doing so, identify disruption as *the* experience that was perceived to

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<sup>77</sup> An anthology of the genre can be found in Hans Stempel and Martin Ripkens (1984).

conjoin *some* films – viz. Soviet montage films – with Döblin’s novel, and which allowed for the transfer of the term “montage” from film to literary discourse.

First, montage has been theorized as a key aspect of the experience of modernity at least since the writings of Ernst Bloch. One typical expression of the “modernity thesis” may be found in Annegret Jürgens-Kirchhoff:

With montage the artists certainly react not only to the new technical and aesthetic possibilities of photography and to the general technical novelties photography mediates; they also attempt to match the perception and the experience of a substantially altered reality faced with which conventional artistic means appear to break down.<sup>78</sup>

Second, as I already mentioned in the Literature Review, the experience of modernity is perhaps the key framework for the post-war academic discussion of Döblin’s novel, as inaugurated by Fritz Martini (1954). According to one standard expression:

*Berlin Alexanderplatz* abandons the project of narration for the simulation of urban experience through visual and aural perception [...] Thus, the simulation of the urban takes place through the protagonist’s paranoid consciousness and turns his body into a battle-ground of modernity (Hake 1994a: 347).

The third reason to elaborate on the experience of disruption is that cinema is repeatedly connected with the experience of modernity. Importantly, it is not only the Soviet montage school that is discussed in these terms but cinema overall. Benjamin’s stance in his “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit” (“The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility”) presents a classic articulation of this view:

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<sup>78</sup> “Mit der Montage reagieren die Künstler allerdings nicht allein auf die neuen technischen und ästhetischen Möglichkeiten der Fotografie und, über diese vermittelt, auf allgemeine technische Neuerungen; sie versuchen auch, ihrer Wahrnehmung und Erfahrung einer gründlich veränderten Realität zu entsprechen, vor der die herkömmlichen Mittel der Kunst zu versagen scheinen” (Jürgens-Kirchhoff 1978: 7).

*Film is the art form corresponding to the pronounced threat to life in which people live today.* It corresponds to profound changes in the apparatus of apperception – changes that are experienced on the scale of private existence by each passerby in big-city traffic, and on the scale of world history by each fighter against the present social order (Benjamin 2008: f32, italics in the original).<sup>79</sup>

Claims of this type are often grounded in what is still perceived as cinema's device par excellence – editing. Sabine Becker, for instance, states that, montage across arts “based its fascination on the ‘shock-effect’ which was in film induced by the jerkiness and disparity of moving images.”<sup>80</sup> This jerkiness and disparity in film is, of course, the result of editing.<sup>81</sup>

Revisionist film historians have recognized that narrativity and editing as its main form of expression, were not inherent to the cinematic medium but were developed only through a painstaking method of trial and error during the period between approximately 1907 and 1913, often referred to as the cinema of narrative integration (Eileen Bowser 1990, Tom Gunning 1991, Charlie Keil 2001). The precondition for this innovation was the discovery of a period of early cinema lasting to about 1907 and characterized by its own aesthetics – the cinema of attractions

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<sup>79</sup> “*Der Film ist die der betonten Lebensgefahr, in der die Heutigen leben, entsprechende Kunstform.* Er entspricht tiefgreifenden Veränderungen des Apperzeptionsapparats – Veränderungen wie sie im Maßstab der Privatexistenz jeder Passant im Großstadtverkehr, wie sie im weltgeschichtlichen Maßstab jeder Kämpfer gegen die heutige Gesellschaftsordnung erlebt” (Benjamin 1989: f16, italics in the original).

<sup>80</sup> “Auch sie [Montage] gründete ihre Faszination auf jene ‘Chock’-wirkung, die im Film durch die Sprunghaftigkeit und Disparatheit der bewegten Bilder ausgelöst wurde” (Becker 1993: 341).

<sup>81</sup> It should be noted that Becker bases her generalization about editing on Benjamin's generalization of the same sort to be found in the second version of the essay: “From an alluring visual composition or an enchanting fabric of sound, the Dadaists turned the artwork into a missile. It jolted the viewer, taking on a tactile quality. It thereby fostered the demand for film, since the distracting element in film is also primarily tactile, being based on successive changes of scene and focus which have a percussive effect on the spectator. *Film has freed the physical shock effect – which Dadaism had kept wrapped, as it were, inside the moral shock effect – from this wrapping*” (Benjamin 2008: 39, italics in the original). It is crucial to note, however, that prior to 1935, and especially at the time of writing the *Berlin Alexanderplatz* review in 1930 and the account of “Russian films” in 1927, Benjamin produces more nuanced discussions of editing. For more details about Benjamin's understanding of montage at the time see Chapter Two.

(André Gaudreault and Gunning 2006, Gunning 1986, 1989, 1993, and 1994). Yet even in the discussion of cinema of attractions, which was largely editing-free, the experience of modernity continues to play a key role in accounting for the spectator's experience:

Investigating the cinema of attractions illuminates the changes in environment brought about by the growth of capitalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century and its consequent technological transformation of daily life. It seems to me that attractions provide a key concept for exploring what a primarily German tradition describes as "modernity" (Gunning 1994: 192).

The experience of modernity is one of six facets of modernity sketched out by Ben Singer (2001: 1-2) in his defence of the "modernity thesis". These facets include: 1) rapid urbanization, industrialization and technological development accompanied by socio-economic change (modernization); 2) the hegemony of instrumental rationality; 3) the destabilisation of the greatest varieties of norms and values; 4) the increased circulation of all "social things"; and 5) social atomization and the rise of individualism.<sup>82</sup> Drawing upon an abundance of contemporary sources compiled from material as diverse as academic journals, commentaries on neurasthenia, sensationalist press, artistic practices and art reviews, Stephen Kern (1983) and Singer (1995, 2001) have demonstrated that a rich discourse on experiential overload ushered in by modernization was well in place by the start of the twentieth century. Most scholars, however, turn to classic articulations by Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin, with Charles Baudelaire as their precursor, to describe the experience modernity. Avant-garde manifestos present another source:

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<sup>82</sup> For a comprehensive and recent reference to issues pertaining to modernity and Modernism see Peter Brooker et al. (2010). For an introduction to modernity in a more specific German context see David Frisby (1985).

Life appears as a simultaneous jumble of noises, colours and mental rhythms. It was transferred undeterred into Dadaism with all of the sensational cries and craze of its reckless everyday psyche and in its entire brutal reality.<sup>83</sup>

We can use “hyper-stimulation” as an umbrella term for this experience of modern life.<sup>84</sup> I wish to focus only on the immediate aspects of this experience and discount those arising later such as the formation of attitudes, emotional states, habits and behaviours. Within this framework I propose to articulate “hyper-stimulation” along three axes: 1) the quantifiable properties of modern stimuli, 2) their immediate emotional evaluation, and 3) their experiential effects articulated along two additional sub-axes. Thus, although behaviour such as thrill-seeking or stimuli avoidance, reflection on or exploitation of these stimuli, development of blasé attitudes or neurasthenia, addiction and its attendant fears and anxieties are all part of the discourse on “hyper-stimulation”, I am bracketing them off in order to arrive at the vocabulary used to describe the immediate experience of modern phenomena.<sup>85</sup>

The variable properties of quantifiable stimuli include an increase in type, number, frequency, intensity, concentration, brevity, partiality, rate of alteration, spatial directionality, as well as rapid oscillation along these axes. Immediate emotional evaluations of these stimuli may be both positive and negative; for some these stimuli may be a source of pleasure, for others one of discomfort, and for others still a mix of both. Of crucial importance for the experiential aspect is the degree of strain the stimulus exerts. This duress ranges along a continuum from merely

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<sup>83</sup> “Das Leben erscheint als ein simultanes Gewirr von Geräuschen, Farben und geistigen Rhythmen, das in die dadaistischen Kunst unbeirrt mit allen sensationellen Schreien und Fiebern seiner verwegenen Alltagspsyche und in seiner gesamten brutalen Realität übernommen wird” (Hausmann 1972a: 24).

<sup>84</sup> In 1910 Michael Davis, a New York social reformer, coined the term “hyperstimulus” as the defining trait of modernity (Singer 1995: 65).

<sup>85</sup> For the wider understanding of experience of modernity in the writings on early German and Weimar cinema see Hake (1993).

attention-grabbing to psychological, epistemological and even bodily failure. Moving along what might be dubbed the impact continuum, from low to high, these stimuli may produce wonder, fascination, surprise, amazement, astonishment, shock, awe and, finally, overwhelming confusion and even dizziness. At the same time, on a different sub-axis, these stimuli may be perceived either as a flux of fused impressions or as an array of discrete and discontinuous sensations. It is important to note that impressions experienced as fused may produce just as much wonder, dizziness or anything in between as those experienced as separate.

#### “HYPER-STIMULATION”, ATTRACTION AND FRAGMENTATION

I wish to make the case that for reasons of conceptual clarity and historical precision we need to recognize various subsets in the “hyper-stimulation” set if we wish to apply the latter to the study of cinema and literature. Failure to discriminate among the “hyper-stimulation” subsets leads to a number of theoretical problems. First, on the basis of experiential effects alone, the lack of discrimination makes it impossible to distinguish clearly between Soviet montage and classical Hollywood editing patterns. Second, in the case of cinema of attractions it conceals the inconsistencies in Gunning’s understanding of attractions. Finally, in the cases of descriptions of overall editing practices as “fragmentary” made by the proponents of the “modernity thesis”, it deprives the historical spectator of the opportunity to distinguish between diverse editing practices. And the goal of articulating these “hyper-stimulation” subsets – three altogether – is precisely to correlate them with three broadly conceived editing practices – classical Hollywood editing, Soviet montage and city symphony montage. This, in turn, will allow me to identify, somewhat counter-intuitively, Soviet montage

films, rather than city symphonies, as those which were perceived to be experientially closest to *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and which facilitated the transfer of “montage” from film to literary discourse.

This is not to deny that more detailed analyses of various types of editing practices cannot be made. Such work clearly exists as evinced in various typologies I have already sketched out. These typologies, however, are not based on distinctions within “hyper-stimulation” but on types of dynamization (Eisenstein 1998b, 1998c), collisions (Eisenstein 1998b, 1998c), correlations (Vertov 1984a), or rhythm (Eisenstein 1998d) that (audio)visuals afford. There are certainly even more detailed historical analyses such as Gunning’s monograph on D. W. Griffith and his use of editing techniques in 1908-1909. Such work meticulously analyses the intended narrative effects of these practices and provides detailed formal descriptions. Yet Gunning’s work neither cites contemporary reception in detail nor provides a fine-grained analysis of the “hyper-stimulation” set. In other words, when focus is turned from *narrative* to *experiential* effects (in the narrow sense I speak of) and the experience of modernity is invoked to account for them, the result is the disappearance of previously carefully demarcated narrative types of parallel editing practices. All of Griffith’s parallel editing is now simply *like* the experience of modernity:

The syncopated rhythm of ragtime and the mechanically produced sensations of speed and force in amusement park rides reproduced the new and often repressive experiences urban workers encountered [...] Likewise, Griffith’s parallel editing invokes the split-second timing of industrial production and worker’s enslavement to an oppressive temporality (Gunning 1991: 105).

The above quote also demonstrates that applying only one subset from the set covered by “hyper-stimulation” to a cultural phenomenon, in this case speed and dynamism to

Griffith's parallel editing, is often sufficient to liken the experience of that particular phenomenon to the experience of modernity in general. Moreover, as I shall demonstrate through the example of the cinema of attractions, such correlation need not even be based on attributing the same "hyper-stimulation" subset to all of the phenomenon's instances.

The first conceptual reason to introduce coherent "hyper-stimulation" subsets is indebted to classical accounts of the experiential aspects of continuity editing (Kuleshov 1974, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson 1985) and Soviet montage (Eisenstein 1949, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d), as well as to the more recent descriptions of implied or historical spectatorial experiences of city symphonies. The distinguishing factor between montage and editing is exactly the perceivable disruptive quality produced by juxtaposing particular shots beyond that of tempo and dynamism. In the case of city symphonies (Michael Minden 1985, Anton Kaes 1998) a further distinction may be found – namely, the emphasis on the stimuli register on the far end of the impact continuum, i.e. on the epistemological and/or bodily grievances. Kaes articulates it best:

Ruttman's editing of the train ride from the outskirts to the city of Berlin is dizzying in its rapidity... The frenzied juxtaposition of shots with shifting perspectives and odd angles results in a disorienting series of images... The very form of this assaultive montage is intended to produce in the viewer a shock-like reaction that confounds perception and destabilizes identity (1998: 181).

Further grounds to introduce "hyper-stimulation" subsets are provided by the conceptual commitments of the cinema of attractions. The cinema of attractions is a highly successful revisionist film theory introduced by Gaudreault and Gunning in order to disrupt teleological narratives in film history and to describe a mode of



production, formal traits and reception alternative to narrative cinema. It describes an exhibitionist cinema (as opposed to the voyeuristic classical cinema) which solicits the attention of the spectator either by its own status as a technical novelty, or by aligning itself with the modes of representation of the performing arts rather than those of dramatic illusion. If we focus on modes of representation and consider Gunning's description of their historical reception along the three axes articulated above, the standard "hyper-stimulation" subset includes a predominantly pleasurable variety of intensive and brief, discretely perceived stimuli, accompanied by an experience of shock and astonishment. On the impact continuum sub-axis, therefore, the experience hovers around the middle of the spectrum.

On the theoretical level, Gunning insists on the discrete, "now you see it, now you don't", absent/present and shock-like aspect of attractions – "rather than a development which links the past and the present [...] the attraction seems limited to a sudden burst of presence" (Gunning 1993: 7). In other words, he accounts for attractions in terms of the experience of disruption. It quickly becomes apparent, however, that predominantly positive emotional evaluations need not be of discrete and disruptive stimuli exclusively, but may be of continuous ones as well. Such is the case when colour (Gunning 1993: 5) or movement itself are described as attractions (Gunning 1989:40, 1993: 5). Additionally, in these accounts less intensive and psychologically forceful experiences of fascination and wonder replace that of shock.

I believe Gunning (1994: 193) also misinterprets Baudelaire's account of modernity – "the ephemeral, the contingent, the fugitive" – mistaking it for a marker of disruption or, in his own words, punctuality.<sup>86</sup> It would be better understood as a

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<sup>86</sup> See Baudelaire (1995: 12-15).

description of the transience and elusiveness of stimuli whose boundaries are difficult to separate, one stimulus merging with another, one inconspicuously overtaking the other only to drown again in an ever-changing sea of sensations. Evidence for my account lies in another quote of Baudelaire's, cited by Gunning on the very page he introduces Baudelaire's epithets of modernity. This quote relates the fugitive to a kaleidoscope – a device whose effects are better described in terms of flux rather than discontinuity.<sup>87</sup> In short, then, whereas the theoretical account of attractions uses a fixed “hyper-stimulation” subset, once different types of attractions are examined, Gunning's descriptions slide toward continuity rather than disruption, undermining the conceptual coherence of attractions.<sup>88</sup>

The rationale for distinguishing between “hyper-stimulation” subsets may be articulated from at least one more perspective. Significant problems arise once the proponents of the “modernity thesis” use a word from the subset interchangeably both as a subset and as an umbrella term. A case in point is the use of the term “fragment” and its derivatives “fragmentary” and “fragmentation”. What may start out merely as a reference to the partial and separate nature of stimuli often slides in reference to denote a more complex experience of disruption and discontinuity and on occasions even the whole of the experience of modernity.<sup>89</sup> For instance, when Singer (2001: 102) lists formal and spectatorial similarities between the cinema and metropolitan

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<sup>87</sup> In another paper, Gunning (1997: 32-36) himself describes the kaleidoscope precisely in terms of flux.

<sup>88</sup> In a footnote Gunning (1993: f15) makes a cursory nod to this problem but does not offer a satisfactory solution.

<sup>89</sup> A good way to think about the difference between two types of fragments in relation to their disruptiveness and partiality is to think about the difference between pieces of broken glass and pieces of a stone mosaic. Both can be called fragments because both are partial in respect to the whole but only the former are partial in their own right. The pieces of a mosaic are partial only in relation to the mosaic. In themselves they are full-fledged stones and their edges are not characterized by jaggedness and brokenness of a shard. In other words, a stone mosaic usually does not convey the experience of disruption whereas glass shards put together do. I explain the experience of disruption in more detail below.

experience, spatio-temporal fragmentation is only one element in the list, distinct from disruption, intensity and mobility. It is used to potentially denote very different types of editing and their partial nature, ranging from the most rudimentary techniques through classical Hollywood style editing to Soviet and avant-garde montage. Quickly thereafter, however, Singer uses “fragmentation” as a shorthand for the whole experience of modernity, pushing fragmentation ever closer to the status of an umbrella term: “The city’s bombardment of heterogeneous and ephemeral stimuli fostered an edgy, hyperactive, fragmented perceptual encounter with the world” (Ibid. 104). Finally, Singer explicitly links fragmentation to the abruptness of editing, implying that all editing practices may be thought of as fitting the experience of disruption (Ibid. 127). Leo Charney arrives at the same conclusion:

Editing thus creates a collage of fragments that cannot help render the viewer’s experience discontinuous. Editing’s discontinuity opens up gaps and spaces throughout the action, nagging echoes of discontinuity which haunt the film’s premise of continuity (1995: 291).

Although neither Charney nor Singer equate fragmentation with the experience of modernity fully, this move can be spotted in the writings of other proponents of the “modernity thesis”, especially those writing about city symphonies. A shift of meaning in term “fragmentation”, from the partial to the universal, can, for instance, be tracked in Alexander Graf:

It is [... the] fragmentation and inflation of the visual aspect of urban experience that the montage aesthetic both used and addressed. [...] As historically specific expressions of urban experience, then, city symphonies expose the fragmentary nature of urban experience through the application of montage aesthetic (2007: 86, 87).

The plain employment of fragmentation as an umbrella term may be found in Carsten Strathausen (2003: 18, 26) and Becker (1993: 338-343). Further proof of the

concept's vagueness is its use as an umbrella term even in the writings of a vocal opponent of the "modernity thesis" – Charlie Keil: "A fragmentary mode of existence requires films exhibiting an aesthetic of fragmentation" (2004: 55). Finally, while criticizing Keil, Gunning nonetheless retains his generic use of the term to defend the view that parallel editing in the narrative integration period, much like attractions in the preceding period, conformed to the experience of modernity:

Whereas attractions are typified primarily by a lack of editing [...] parallel editing [...] hardly undermines a sense of fragmentation. Parallel editing, by interrupting action and switching among various strands of the narrative, renders the fragmentary extremely visible – if not visceral (2006b: 311).

I believe the above discussion demonstrates why "fragmentation" is such an attractive term for the advocates of the "modernity thesis". Through its denotative fuzziness it establishes a direct and almost intuitive link between what is often thought of as the cinema's device *par excellence* – editing – and the experience of modernity. However, the term's appeal is also precisely its greatest peril, because such a loose application may easily obfuscate distinctions between various editing practices and their accompanying experiential effects. In other words, because the "modernity thesis" applied to cinema is not only a thesis about filmmaking and film's formal and stylistic properties, but also a thesis about historical reception, then its proponents open themselves to criticism for their claims concerning the latter.<sup>90</sup> Put another way, there is an internal tension in the "modernity thesis" proponents' stance. On the one hand, they claim that the contemporary audiences had a specifically different experience when watching cinema of attractions – a period that had to be rediscovered

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<sup>90</sup> The shift in focus from filmmaking and film's formal features to spectatorship takes place in Gunning's 1989, 1993 and 1994 papers, with a definitive statement about it made in retrospect: "Its [cinema of attractions'] value lies ultimately in how it opens up films and generates discussion, in a historically specific and analytically detailed manner, of the nature of film spectatorship" (Gunning 2006a: 38).

– as opposed to when viewing narrative cinema. This experience was characterized by perceptual shock as opposed to that of narrative immersion. At the same time, however, by connecting editing to the overall experience of modernity described as fragmentary and without specifying further subsets of hyper-stimulation, they imply that those very audiences failed to *experience* the differences in editing patterns as diverse as classical editing or Soviet and avant-garde montage which, unlike the cinema of attractions, never had to be rediscovered. From this perspective it appears that all of these editing techniques are simply fragmentary, i.e. evocative of the whole of the experience of modernity.

I, on the other hand, aim to demonstrate that contemporary sources (audiences, reviewers, practitioners, theorists) employed different “hyper-stimulation” subsets to describe different editing practices, at least relatively consistently, and, as such, exhibited discrimination capabilities of formal properties similar to the ones we purport to enjoy today. This, then, is the second reason – both conceptual and historical – for introducing “hyper-stimulation” subsets.

With the above conceptual distinctions in mind I propose three subsets from the “hyper-stimulation” set. These three subsets track three types of experiential reactions – namely, experiences of continuity, disruption, and confusion – which, in turn, are related to three types of editing practices – classical Hollywood editing, Soviet montage, and city symphony montage. I will verify whether this relation holds through a detailed analysis of contemporary film reviews – an exercise curiously absent in almost all of the work done by the proponents of the “modernity thesis”. To repeat, the final goal is to identify one of these subsets – the experience of disruption – as key to the contemporary association of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* with films of a particular type, and therefore to appropriation of “montage” by literary discourse

more generally. It is important to keep in mind here that the domain of reference of descriptors of these subsets shifts subtly between the represented and representation where it is not exclusive to editing, but may include other representational strategies.

#### THE “HYPER-STIMULATION” SUBSETS: CONTINUITY, DISRUPTION AND CONFUSION

I wish to relate the experience of continuity to the classical Hollywood style in its various guises and to parallel editing in particular. Drawing on Charlie Keil (2006) and Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson (1985), I propose that this experience constitutes the default in the cinema of the late 1910s and 1920s and that if no description of experience is made in the contemporary reviews then it is safe to assume that the experience of continuity was afforded to the spectator. References to tempo and dynamism, I submit, should also be understood to fit the experience of continuity if no invocation of disruption or confusion is made. I wish to demonstrate, for example that the joining of spatio-temporally dislocated “fragments” through the representational technique of parallel editing in the last-minute rescue sequence of *Orphans of the Storm* (Griffith, USA, 1921) is experientially different from the joining of spatio-temporally dislocated “fragments” through the representational technique of montage in the Odessa steps massacre sequence in Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin*. Although both may be described in terms of rapidity, intensity, fascination and thrill, the latter has an additional trait of disruption as theorized by Eisenstein.

In this sense, neither references to the partial nature of the represented content and their rapid alternations, nor fascination with this content, as described in Singer’s

account of Griffith's race-to-the-rescue melodramas (2001: 129), amount to invocations of either disruption or confusion. A description of confusion obviously requires a vocabulary much further along the impact continuum, such as the one used by Kaes. For something to count as an account of disruption there needs to be a vocabulary far more similar to the one "officially" used by Gunning to emphasize the sudden and unexpected nature of some content appearance. Singer remains at the low-end of the impact spectrum with terms such as "arousal" and "excitation". That Singer does not invoke disruption is not surprising for he is effectively speaking of the fascination with movement. In order to apply "attraction" to continuous phenomena such as movement, Gunning himself had to quietly sacrifice the disruptive nature of attractions. And even if Singer did shift further along the impact continuum, closer to the vocabulary of Gunning's "now you see it, now you don't" account of attraction, this would still not amount to a description of the experience of disruption in the sense I wish to articulate. Even in this counterfactual case, Singer would still only be talking of the content – an unexpected obstacle on the road, a hypothetical last-minute glitch in the rescue, etc. – and not about the representational strategy of parallel editing. I, on the other hand, am interested in the potentially disruptive nature of editing techniques themselves.

Turning to the "disruption" subset, modelled on the experiential distinction between editing and montage, an instructive relationship emerges between attraction and montage which forces us, in turn, to articulate the domain of disruption more precisely. Keeping in mind that Gunning appropriates the term "attraction" from Eisenstein's 1923 essay "Montage of Attractions", it is no wonder that Gunning's "now you see it, now you don't" understanding of attraction ends up having significant overlap with the experiential aspect of Eisenstein's account of montage. In

other words, Gunning's account of attraction shares the "disruption" subset with Eisenstein's understanding of montage. For Gunning, the experience of disruption lies in the attraction's temporal punctuality, i.e. the disruptive nature of the represented content due to its sudden (dis)appearance. In Eisenstein, it hinges on the visual conflict present in the represented content.

If we do not maintain the distinction between representation and the represented here, it becomes very difficult, with recourse only to the experiential aspect of the disruption subset, to distinguish between scenes as diverse as the montage of the close-up of a lady with Pince-nez in *Battleship Potemkin* and – one of Gunning's favourite attraction examples – the putting in motion of the static image in *L'arrivée d'un train à la Ciotat/Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (Auguste and Louis Lumière, France, 1896). On the level of the represented, both scenes may be described in terms of disruption: shock-like, unexpected, discrete and invasive. In order to claim that contemporary audiences distinguished between the scenes it is the reference to the manner of representations that needs to be established. Because I am focusing on the reception in Weimar Germany, we cannot rely on the distinction between "editing" and "montage" to denote distinct representational practices as we oftentimes can in specialized English. The reason is that "Montage" and "Schnitt" were used interchangeably once "Montage" was introduced into German film vocabulary with the translation of Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Film Technique* in 1928.

I propose that the experience of disruption ought to be understood in its simplest form, so that it may be applied to all art-forms that lay claim to montage and collage practices. This minimum is the attention-grabbing aspect where the attractional pull is exerted either by an eruption of discontinuity in the representational continuity or by the perceptual salience of borders between discrete



representations. Compare this to Gunning's "now you see it, now you don't" discussion of attractions, where the disruption appears as the brief culmination of temporal development on the plane of the represented. Moreover, even if temporal punctuality were to take place on the representational level it cannot cover the whole range of representational disruptions, for the representational continuum in the arts does not have to be temporal at all. It may also be just spatial or spatio-temporal and, to introduce other senses, it may be stylistic (representational devices) or material (medium properties themselves).

Furthermore, whereas for attractions it is important to articulate their emotional evaluation and the accompanying value on the impact spectrum, in the discussion of the experience of disruption this is generally unimportant because the emotional evaluation is neutral and the shock-effect might be completely absent. Put differently, the attention-grabbing aspect is not so much affective as it is meta-poetic. It points in the direction of "making strange", a concept independently introduced under different names by Viktor Shklovsky's ("ostranenie") and Bertolt Brecht ("der Verfremdungseffekt"). In this sense the difference from Gunning's more specialized account of disruption can be articulated more clearly, for what captures attention is not something represented that suddenly appears and disappears, but the jarring nature of the gap between contiguous representations. More abstractly, Gunning's disruption of attractions on the level of the represented is based on a surplus of presence, whereas in the bare account of disruption it is based on a brief hint of absence. In Gunning, however briefly, something suddenly appears.<sup>91</sup> In the case of disruption there seems to be something missing between what is consecutively represented. On

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<sup>91</sup> Admittedly, in the case of disappearance tricks something suddenly disappears. But the representational, on these occasions, still does not come to the perceptual fore.

the representational level, it is the moment in which a sequence from one represented to another has been exposed as a sequence of representations, the moment in which representation draws attention to itself, when it might be said that the representation and the represented do not fit each other completely, that there is a surplus of representation. In other words, the representational comes to the perceptual fore precisely when there is something missing on the level of the represented. It is also important to note that the experience of tempo and dynamism, and the experience of disruption are independent of each other – they may appear separately, together or not at all.<sup>92</sup>

One last way I shall try to articulate the experience of disruption will be by comparing it to the notion of distraction (“die Zerstreuung”), as construed by Malcolm Turvey (2011) in his recent critique of the idea that cinema is experientially *like* modernity. Turvey meticulously analyses the conceptual problems that proponents of “modernity thesis” ignore when using the notion of distraction (and shock) as vaguely as they do. He argues that distraction proper, the one that characterizes modern urban environments, occurs only when our attention is drawn from one thing to another in a sufficiently abrupt manner. Disruption, therefore, can also be understood as a local perceptual shock – a subset of distraction – characterized by the attention being drawn to the manner of representation.<sup>93</sup> The only problem is that Turvey would probably not be satisfied with my account, for I allow for sequential disruptions among others. He, on the other hand, insists that distraction can only be a consequence of *simultaneous* stimuli, and not of *sequential* ones: “Distraction by

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<sup>92</sup> The experiences of tempo and dynamism can, of course, appear both on the level of the represented and representation.

<sup>93</sup> The perceptual shock is local in the sense that, much like Turvey argues, this does not preclude us from following the film overall.

definition consists of having one's attention drawn away from one thing by another, and in order for this to happen the two things must be copresent" (2011: 170). This, however, strikes me as an unnecessarily narrow definition of distraction.

There is no reason to think that what we attend to when distracted need be exclusively visual. Turvey's definition which speaks of "things" certainly allows for more than visual phenomena. He himself talks of sounds as potentially disruptive and cites Benjamin in speaking of spectators' associations being disrupted. We may, then, be distracted *from* a thought, a sound, and smell as much as from a sight and be so distracted *by* all sorts of things including other thoughts, sounds, smells, sights and so forth. Therefore, if the essential condition for a distraction to take place is only that one thing draws attention from another, then there is no reason why a sufficiently abrupt change in one and the same thing could not count as a distraction. Consider an aeroplane which suddenly explodes as you are watching it take off. Has your attention not switched from whatever you were thinking about to the shock and terror of the lives lost? In other words, is the sequential objective change (from a cruising plane to a fiery ball of debris) not sufficient to produce a disruption in the subjective experience?<sup>94</sup> The experience of disruption I talk of is certainly far less dramatic but it also makes us abruptly shift our attention from one thing to another – from the level of represented to the level of representation. And it can do so both spatially and temporally (sequentially). The disagreement between Turvey and me on this minor point, however, does not impinge on the essence of Turvey's broader argument, i.e. the claim that for the most part film in general and editing in particular are *not* characterised by distraction. On this we are in agreement.

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<sup>94</sup> I am even inclined to think that here we can legitimately say that the explosion has effected a visual distraction as well – from a plane to the ball of fire.

The experience of confusion is the last subset I wish to propose. As Kaes aptly articulates, this is the subset in which quantifiable values of stimuli reach new heights, producing experiences at the high-end of the impact continuum (including both epistemological and bodily misgivings) that result in negative emotional evaluations. Kaes' account is also informative of the continuous/discrete sub-axis of experiential effects, for it suggests that confusion takes place exactly when the discrete nature of stimuli can no longer be distinguished, at which point stimuli morph into an inchoate flux. Returning to the representation/represented distinction again, the confusion is not so much with the representational strategies but with the represented as a result of representational strategies. Here, of course, it will be important to distinguish between other representational strategies the effects of which may potentially be described as confusing, such as the spinning of the camera to evoke the experience of intoxication in *Der Letzte Mann/The Last Laugh* (F. W. Murnau, Germany, 1924). Finally, it is often the case that the experience of confusion includes both the experience of tempo and dynamism and the experience of disruption.

Although these subsets are for the most part modelled on the accounts of the experience of film, they can be applied to the analysis of the reception of various cultural artefacts including literature and pictorial art, discussed here. That we are free to do so is because we have already ascertained that identifying montage and photomontage is essentially an experiential matter. Moreover, the subsets I am proposing are inherent to "hyper-stimulation" which characterizes general modernity. The aforementioned reviews of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* by Adler and Ihering immediately present themselves for such an application.

With its references to the speed of trains and the assaultive quality of Döblin's short sentences, Adler's account – "Döblin's work possesses the tempo of our life"<sup>95</sup> fits well with the experience of tempo and dynamism, but stops short of both disruption and confusion. Ihering's account fits better with both the experience of tempo and dynamism *and* that of disruption, as evinced by his reference to the representational technique of "cutting into", by his simulation of discontinuous effects and rapid alterations of represented motifs, and by his employment of a term suggesting the disruptive quality in the representational continuum ("convulsive filmstrip"). These examples suggest that there is not only a conceptual but also a historical reality to these subsets. Additionally, the fact that the terms "montage" and "photomontage" (accompanied by their conceptual articulation via film and pictorial arts) are introduced into the German critical vocabulary precisely in the period between the publication of Adler's and Ihering's reviews, also presents us with a historical reason for the articulation of these subsets.

#### HISTORICAL RECEPTION STUDIES AND THEIR CURIOUS LACUNAE

What follows is an analysis of the reception of montage practices in film.<sup>96</sup> One impetus for this work is certainly my personal experience of seeing the films and art works in question. For instance, I disagree with Graf's blanket application of the term "fragmentation" as an umbrella term to describe all city symphonies, Strathausen's use of it to describe *Chelovek s kino-apparatom/Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, USSR, 1929), and Hake's (1994b) claim that John Heartfield's work shares substantial formal properties with Eisenstein's montage. The other, more important

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<sup>95</sup> "Das Döblinsche Werk hat das Tempo unseres Lebens" (Adler 1973: 14).

<sup>96</sup> For want of space I shall not reproduce a similar analysis for "photomontage" practices.

reason is the fact that such work is a precondition for any comparative analysis of the contemporary reception of visual arts, on the one hand, and the novel, on the other. Curiously enough, for all the talk about the implied and historical spectatorship I am not aware of a single systematic study of contemporary experiential effects of either the Soviet montage school or city symphonies. In the case of the history of various editing practices, Yuri Tsivian (1994) stands as a lone exception.<sup>97</sup> Interestingly, even Gunning's account of the cinema of attractions only tangentially engages with contemporary sources.<sup>98</sup>

It should be noted that during the cinema of attractions period (up to c.1907) editing was relatively uncommon; editing practices increased in frequency and diversity only with the transition to narrative cinema through the period of narrative integration between around 1907 and 1913. In his account of spectatorship, for instance, Tsivian found that ellipses elicited narrative confusion and an experience of disruption similar to those of jump-cuts as late as the 1910s (Tsivian 1994: 141-42). He also found evidence of a similar disruptive experience accompanying close-ups in the same period (1994: 155-56). In this sense, the introduction of parallel editing, the

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<sup>97</sup> Whereas the original Russian version of Tsivian's book analysed reception until 1930, the English version stops at 1920. For all their valuable information on changes in production, distribution, exhibition, representational strategies, reception and audiences of early cinema, books by Charles Musser (1990, 1991), Bowser (1990), Gunning (1991), Janet Staiger (1992), Keil (2001), Gaudreault (2009), and Barry Salt (2009) fail to tackle the reported experiential effect accompanying the introduction of new editing practices on such a fine grained level as Tsivian. A great source of American production and distribution catalogues for the period corresponding to the cinema of attractions, invaluable for the understanding of intended spectatorship, is compiled by Musser (1986).

<sup>98</sup> When Gunning's (and Gaudreault's) key five papers (1985, 1986, 1989, 1991, and 1993) are placed under closer scrutiny, the number of spectatorial accounts preceding c.1907 cited amounts to three. Even when non-spectatorial sources from that period which may tell us about the intended spectatorship effects are included, the number rises only to six; one exhibitor enjoys regular citation and so do two catalogue entries. In fact, most of the spectatorial citations that Gunning uses to prove the thesis about the period preceding 1907 are taken from the period after: those by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Fernand Léger, Kracauer and Benjamin. That most of the reports from cinema drawing attention to attractions date from after the transition period is explicitly admitted by Singer (2001: 129). With this in mind I would even be inclined to say that the effects of disruption ought to be attributed to the introduction of particular representational devices (editing practices, camera movement) rather than the represented in the sense of the cinema of attractions. This would deserve a separate study, one outside of the scope of this thesis.

discussion of which is unfortunately missing in the English translation, might indeed have been perceived in terms of disruption as well as confusion. Given my focus on the period around the time of the writing of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* – 1926-1930 – it may be safely assumed that the classical Hollywood editing practices were well in place by that time. Thus, the identification of the experience of disruption over and beyond that of speed and dynamism in contemporary accounts of that period should not be construed as early spectators' sensitivity to the medium but as a genuine call for distinguishing between different "hyper-stimulation" subsets.

Turning to Soviet montage, it is true that recourse to the Kuleshov experiment is regularly made in film scholarship. However, the discussion of the reception of montage therein is conceptual, not experiential. That a different emotion is attributed to the expressionless face depending on the representation succeeding it (a plate of soup, a girl, and a little girl's coffin) is a cognitive performance, not a sign of the spectator's experience in the narrow sense of the word I have been using. In fact, both Kuleshov's and Pudovkin's writing make the case that this sequence of images was perceived as a smooth transition between the actor Ivan Mosjoukine's expressionless face and other represented figures and objects. As such, this work can be understood as an attempt to confirm the theoretical distinction between editing and montage spelled out in the first section on the level of historical spectatorship.

Finally, in the case of city symphonies, the authors referred to above (Graf, Kaes, Minden, Strathausen) cite no contemporary reception with the exception of Kracauer in the case of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*. And even when they cite Kracauer's review (2004b: 411-413), it is not to tackle experiential effects, but to engage with his (primarily Marxist) dismissal of the film.

Only on the basis of an analysis of contemporary film reviews can we investigate whether what contemporary reviewers of Döblin's novel referred to as "photomontage" and "montage" was perceived as similar to editing and collage practices, and if so, whether it was more like classical editing, Soviet montage, city symphony montage, or simply photomontage. The next section demonstrates that it was mostly like Soviet montage.



## CONTEMPORARY WEIMAR FILM RECEPTION

If cinema is considered as the source of montage technique for *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, two films present themselves as the most obvious possible influences, not only formally but also thematically and iconographically. The first is *Strike* with its famous montage sequence in which the strikers' execution is juxtaposed with shots of a bull being slaughtered. This sequence immediately brings to mind passages from Döblin's novel describing the city abattoir as well as those connecting Mieke's murder and the slaughter of livestock. The second is *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* for its host of images of Berlin surfaces reminiscent of Döblin's descriptions of Rosenthalerplatz and Alexanderplatz. I do not wish to argue in this direction, however, for, as I have shown in the Literature Review, there were many possible influences on Döblin outside cinema. My intention is, rather, to analyse reviews of a number of films available to Weimar audiences in the period between 1926 and 1930 in order to single out the experience of disruption as the defining experiential trait of montage. Paired with an analysis of the introduction of the terms "der Schnitt" and "die Montage" into Weimar film discourse, this will allow me to explain the use of the same terms in the reviews of Döblin's novel on the basis of a shared experience of disruption. In conclusion, I shall demonstrate that Soviet cinema was perceived to be more similar to the novel than city symphonies.

I opt for 1926 as the starting point of my analysis because it is the year in which the first German screening of a film now listed among the greats of the Soviet montage school took place – *Battleship Potemkin*. This film not only stirred up great passions in the cultural sphere because of its initial censorship on political grounds, but also proved to be a great success with Berlin audiences. Most importantly for this thesis, it was perceived as ushering in a stylistically new type of "Russian film"

(Oksana Bulgakowa 1995). I end my analysis in 1929/30 because these are the years in which most of the contemporary reviews of the novel appeared.

I shall discuss the reception of *Strike* (1925), *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), *Mother* (Pudovkin, USSR, 1926), *Konets Sankt-Peterburga/The End of St. Petersburg* (Pudovkin, USSR, 1927), *October* (1928), *Potomok Chingis-Khana/Storm over Asia* (Pudovkin, USSR, 1928), and *Staroye i novoye/Old and New* (Aleksandrov and Eisenstein, USSR, 1929). I shall also discuss Soviet films which nowadays are no longer considered to employ montage techniques but which might have been discussed in terms of Soviet montage in Weimar-era Berlin simply because they came from the USSR.<sup>99</sup> *Tretya meshchanskaya/Bed and Sofa* (Abram M. Room, USSR, 1927) and *Devushka s Korobkoy/When Moscow Laughs* (Boris V. Barnet, USSR, 1927) immediately come to mind.<sup>100</sup>

In order to examine the distinction between editing and montage I turn to popular German and American films which jointly dominated the German market in the period (Thomas J. Saunders 1994). I focus on adventure films, i.e. on films that abound with what would have been perceived as fast cutting and parallel editing (e.g. the “American detective films” in Kuleshov’s vocabulary). What is important in this analysis is whether or not the editing in these films was perceived as disruptive. In other words, whereas *Bed and Sofa* and *When Moscow Laughs* demonstrate that not all “Russian films” were perceived as disruptive, the reviews of adventure films show

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<sup>99</sup> Bulgakowa (1995) and Rainer Rother (2012) argue that the Berlin reception of Soviet films was homogenous and often laden with stereotypical notions of Russia. In fact, regardless of their exact origin inside the USSR they were regularly referred to as “Russian”. It is worth analysing whether representational categories were perceived as homogeneously as political and cultural ones.

<sup>100</sup> Bulgakowa (1995), among other things, is a precious source of reviews of Soviet films available to Berlin audiences.

that films modelled on fast cutting and parallel editing were also perceived as stopping short of producing the experience of disruption.

In the case of city symphonies, I shall discuss the reception of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1926) and *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). I shall also turn to films which have been left out of recent discussions of city symphonies but still share some common properties, in order to see whether contemporary audiences distinguished between them on the basis of editing. These include street films (“der Strassenfilm”) and cross-section films (“der Querschnittfilm”). I turn to street films both because of their iconographic focus on the urban landscape and because contemporary discussions explicitly placed them in relation to city symphonies (Balázs 1984).

I investigate cross-section films because at the time city symphonies were not perceived as a separate genre but as instances of cross-section films. It was in fact Balázs (1926) who applied the term “der Querschnitt” in his account of *Die Abenteuer eines Zehnmarkscheins/Adventures of a Ten Mark Note* (Berthold Viertel, Germany, 1926). Like all genres, “Querschnitt” was a fuzzy category which included films made from amalgams of documentary material, found footage, as well as fiction films which posed as documentary ones. In his discussion of “absolute film”, the key properties of which he identified as framing and editing, Balázs (1984b: 124-30) briefly analysed a number of cross-section films. He even directly compared *Die Strasse/The Street* (Karl Grune, Germany, 1923) – the first film of the “Strassenfilm” genre – to *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*. The term “Querschnitt” still appears to be in use in descriptions of city symphonies like *Rien que les heures/Nothing but Time* (Alberto Cavalcanti, France, 1926), *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* and *Man with a Movie Camera*. However, the formation of a separate category of the city symphonies

or lyrical documentaries (Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell 2003, Bill Nichols 2010) can be attributed at least to Kracauer (1947).<sup>101</sup> Because the cross-section films listed above are regularly excluded from the category of city symphonies, one reason for which is the perceived absence of montage techniques, it is well advised to see whether this distinction was perceived by contemporary audiences as well.

The great majority of the reviews I discuss in the following section could be read in popular dailies (*Das Berliner Tageblatt*, *Der Berliner Börsen-Courier* and *Die Frankfurter Zeitung*), books on film (Alfred Kerr 1927, Balázs 1982, 1984, Arnheim 1932), specialized press (*Film-Kurier*, *Die Lichtbild-Bühne*, *Die literarische Welt* and *Die Weltbühne*) and in the workers' press (*Die Rote Fahne*). Among the most notable critics of the time were Kracauer who wrote for *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Ihering who contributed to *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, Balázs, Hans Feld and Willy Haas known for their reviews in *Film-Kurier*, Rudolf Kurtz and Hans Wollenberg for their work in *Die Lichtbild-Bühne*, Benjamin for his contributions to *Die literarische Welt*, Arnheim, Axel Eggebrecht and Hans Siemsen for their criticism in *Die Weltbühne*, and Kemény and Otto Steinecke for their writings in *Die Rote Fahne*. Although the discussion of these critics' reviews comprises a good part of what follows, I have also tried to give voice to other less prominent figures.

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<sup>101</sup> Nowadays city symphonies, together with *Nothing but Time*, *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* and *Man With A Movie Camera*, usually include *Manhatta* (Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler, USA, 1921), *De brug/Bridge* (Joris Ivens, Netherlands, 1928), *Sao Paolo, Sinfonia de Metr pole/Sao Paolo, a Metropolitan Symphony* (Adalberto Kemeny and Rudolf Rex Lustig, Brazil, 1929), *Regen/Rain* (Ivens, Netherlands, 1929), *Skyscraper Symphony* (Robert Flaherty, USA, 1929), *À propos de Nice* (Jean Vigo, France, 1930) and *Bronx Morning* (Jay Leyda, USA, 1931).

## THE “RUSSIAN FILM” AND THE EXPERIENCE OF DISRUPTION

At the time of its release *Battleship Potemkin* was unanimously acclaimed as an aesthetically ingenious and emotionally engaging work.<sup>102</sup> However, once we move away from general remarks about the film’s impressiveness and try to unpack where precisely the film’s aesthetic ingenuity was thought to lie, curiously little is articulated. None of the reviewers, for instance, recognize editing as the film’s key organizing principle. Nevertheless, a more nuanced reading of the reviews does enable us to tease out some of the experiences accompanying particular editing practices. Haas’ and Ihering’s reviews permit the best access to this issue.

In the paragraph in which he points out some of the film’s failings, such as occasionally superfluous or excessively long intertitles, Haas (1991: 173) notes that close-ups and details which in other films might appear interesting here appear disruptive (“es stört”) merely as attempts at “making [things] interesting [Interessantmacherei]”. His discussion of the intertitle editing practices gives us good reason to think that not only the represented but also the representational appeared as disruptive. This is further supported by the preceding paragraph where Haas, employing a metaphor of sunrays, describes the dialectics of randomly changing jumbles of (“wahllos durcheinandergeschaltet”) details. These, according to him, manage to produce a majestic whole despite their separate character.

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<sup>102</sup> Initially premiering for a closed audience on January 21, 1926 in Berlin, *Battleship Potemkin* was banned on March 26, only for the ban to be revoked on April 29. It was again banned on July 12 with the ban being lifted once again and another re-edited version coming out on October 2. For the controversy surrounding the censorship from the perspective of the working press see Gertraude Kühn (1975a: 323-369). Interestingly, Piel Jutzi, the director of the first film adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, edited the German version. The reviews consulted include Haas (1991: 171-173), Ihering (2011: 206-207), Kracauer (2004a: 234-237), Steinecke (1975c), Oscar A. Schmitz (1927), and Benjamin (1977b).

Ihering's review demands an even more nuanced reading. In order to narratively and experientially describe the first act of the film – the beginning of the mutiny – Ihering (2011: 208) employs a number of short sentences separated either by commas or full stops.

The guard aims. Interposed hands which twitch, fingers which grope for daggers. Then the sailor Vakulinchuk breaks loose. The rifles are lowered. The frozen mass breaks loose. The canvas flutters empty in the wind. The riot wins out. Only Vakulinchuk falls.<sup>103</sup>

If we follow Hake's (1993: 199) lead, such writing is intended to simulate not only the experience of tempo and dynamism, but also that of disruption.<sup>104</sup> Generally speaking, there are better reasons to think this writing style goes no further than the simulation of tempo and dynamism, for the same style can be found in Kuleshov's (1974: 48-49) and Pudovkin's (1928: 82-83) descriptions of American editing practices which they find to be experientially continuous. There needs to be some further markers, therefore, that would allow us to take Ihering's style to be simulating the experience of disruption.

We may indeed find such markers in Ihering. The first appears at the beginning of the paragraph following the one just cited. There Ihering establishes the second act – Vakulinchuk's burial – in direct opposition to the first – the mutiny. He describes the shots in the second act as "consistent", "peaceful" and "gliding" implying that the ones in the previous act were disjointed, violent and disruptive:

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<sup>103</sup> "Die Wache zielt. Dazwischengeschaltet Hände, die zucken, Finger, die nach Dolchen tasten. Da bricht der Matrose Wakulintschuk los. Die Gewehre sinken. Die starre Masse löst sich. Die Segeltuch flattert leer im Wind. Die Revolte siegt. Nur Wakulintschuk fällt" (Ihering 2011: 208).

<sup>104</sup> Interestingly, Hake singles out Steinecke's reviews in *Die Rote Fahne* as those simulating the experience of film montage. His writing style, however, is far more traditional than Ihering's. It is true that Steinecke's writing is agitational for he has a certain fondness for exclamation marks. However, his emphasis is always on narrative developments and the emotional effects of the narrative, not those of editing devices.

Now with the highest objective consistency and with the highest artistic wisdom peaceful, gliding shots.<sup>105</sup>

The second marker is the insertion of the term “single frames” (“die Einzelbilder”) in the description of the Odessa steps. In his description, Ihering separates short sentences denoting particular shot contents by semicolons and proceeds to insert the term “single frames” here and there.

Single frames in-between. Types. [...] A new twist. With rifles raised Cossacks are marching down the giant stairs towards the harbour without delay; people fall; single frames; but it goes on and on.<sup>106</sup>

By deliberately not describing any particular shot content, rather by simply referring to shots as “single frames”, Ihering draws attention to the representational level. I take it, therefore, that Ihering perceived these frames as disruptive in nature.

It would appear then that the commentators recognized the “attractions” of *Battleship Potemkin* under the broader discussion of the film’s emotional engagement, but that only a few writers articulated the experiential nature of editing. In these latter cases, tempo, dynamism *and* disruption were regularly mentioned. This trend would, for the most part, recur in the reviews of other “revolutionary Russian films”.

The premiere of *Mother* prompted some reviewers to recognize editing as one of the most important aspects of style and discuss its experiential effects in more detail.<sup>107</sup> In his review of the film, Arnheim (1977: 188-189) singles out two sequences – the introduction of the court building and the preparations for the prison break-out –

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<sup>105</sup> “Jetzt mit höchster sachlicher Folgerichtigkeit und höchster künstlerischer Weisheit ruhige, gleitende Bilder” (Ibid.).

<sup>106</sup> “Dazwischen Einzelbilder. Type. [...] Neue Wendung. Die Kosaken marschieren mit vorgelegtem Gewehr die riesige Steintreppe zum Hafen hinunter, ohne Aufenthalt; Menschen fallen; Einzelbilder; aber immer geht es weiter” (Ibid. 209).

<sup>107</sup> *Mother* premiered on February 24, 1927 in Berlin.

for their “surprisingly new and unusual character”. However, it is only in his later monograph that he makes a clearer distinction between the content and representational techniques. Interestingly, the very same intercutting of countryside shots that signal disruption for Arnheim (1932), are also tackled by Kracauer (2004a: 334-336). For Kracauer they represent a failed example of aesthetic practice. Kracauer, unlike Arnheim, however, identifies the problem as lying not so much in their disruptive character as in the fact that the device had already been exhausted by the time it was used in *Mother*.

For the fullest and most articulate analysis of editing in *Mother* we can turn to Haas (1991: 199-200). Contrary to Steinecke (1975b), who as usual recounts the film by merely inserting a short sentence here and there, Haas barely mentions the content and, almost exclusively, tackles style. Haas’ words present us with a strikingly vivid description of the experience of disruption. Although he speaks of irrational, expressionist and brutal film-cutting (“der Filmschnitt”) without recourse to “montage”, he describes the film’s “true vitriolic style” (“ein wahrer Vitriolstil”) as “fully rugged, chopped-up, [and] caustic” (“der ganze schroff-zerhackte, ätzende Stil”) (Haas 1991: 199). He continues:

Each particular shot is extra-cranked as a hundred horsepower motor, chopped-up, highly original, divine landscapes are cut-in, everything is vivaciously mixed throughout [...].<sup>108</sup>

In what is generally a very positive review, he concludes that the sense of true expressionist film-cutting would be the “restitution of the naturally gliding form of

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<sup>108</sup> “Jedes einzelne Bild extra gekurbelt als 100-H.P.-Motor, abgehackt, hochoriginell, himmlische Landschaften dazwischengeschnitten, alles temperamentvoll durcheinandergemixt [...]” (Ibid. 200).



film and not the underlining of a mechanical imperfection”.<sup>109</sup> Unfortunately for Haas, *Mother* fails on this account for it, unlike Carl Mayer’s films, does not allow him to “hear” the rhythm.<sup>110</sup> Again, we see the tensions that arise once an attempt is made to integrate the experience of disruption into the understanding of editing as its productive aspect.

German audiences were only able to see Eisenstein’s first film, *Strike*, after *Battleship Potemkin* and for the most part they judged it to be inferior.<sup>111</sup> Both Eggebrecht (1995) and Ihering (2011: 207) find the shots, the direction, and the photography to be less well formed than those in *Battleship Potemkin*. Crucial for my thesis, both invoke the experience of tempo and dynamism as well as that of disruption throughout. Eggebrecht faults Eisenstein for not being able to omit various details. For Eggebrecht, these details, including the shots of streams of water from water cannons and those of steel frameworks “often disrupt the process of the whole”.<sup>112</sup> Ihering, similarly, talks of the “wild disorder of improvisations” (“[e]in wirres Durcheinander von Improvisationen”), of the visual tyranny over the world and of the sequence of images being “shredded” (“hingefetzt”) (Ihering 2011: 207).<sup>113</sup> The term “montage”, however, still does not make an appearance.

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<sup>109</sup> “[D]ie Restituierung der natürlichen gleitenden Bandform des Filmes, nicht die Unterstreichung einer mechanischen Unvollkommenheit” (Ibid.).

<sup>110</sup> Most probably Haas is referring to films Carl Meyer wrote scenarios for: *The Last Laugh* and *The Street*. It is certainly not a reference to *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* for it would come out only in September 1927.

<sup>111</sup> *Strike* premiered on February 27, 1927 in Berlin.

<sup>112</sup> “[D]er Wasserstrahl einer Feuerwehrspritze, die dämmrige Silhouette zerreißen ihm [Eisenstein] oft den Gang des Ganzen” (Eggebrecht 1995: 104).

<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, none of the reviewers, including the ones in *Die Rote Fahne* and *Die Lichtbild-Bühne* mentioned the slaughter sequence.

*The End of St. Petersburg* was, like *Battleship Potemkin*, unanimously acclaimed for both its aesthetics and its effect.<sup>114</sup> All of the reviewers highlight the experience of tempo and dynamism. Kracauer and Steinecke even move beyond the standard articulation of dynamism to discuss impact continuum values bordering on disruption but, nevertheless, remain on the level of the content. It is only Ihering and Kracauer who turn to editing techniques in their attempts to tackle the disruptive. For Ihering (2011: 218) the disruptions hinted at in the “rhythmical caesuras” (“die rhythmischen Zäsuren”) and “exceptionally forceful and piercing” (“[u]ngewöhnlich eindringlich und scharf”) sequences are resolved in a rhythmical flow of shots. Kracauer (2004b: 59) is far less dialectical in his analysis, and finds that the famous intercutting of the stock exchange and the front disrupts (“durchschlagen”) the viewing because of its surface tendentiousness.

The first use of “montage” among the reviews consulted hitherto appears with *October*, a film regularly compared to *The End of St. Petersburg* but, with the exception of Frida Rubiner (1975), most often found to be its inferior.<sup>115</sup> The term is used by a certain A. K. and presents a clear expression of a novel type of editing which, next to tempo and dynamism, elicits an almost over-powering experience of disruption: “the montage cutting turns into a hacking of impressions painful for the eyes.”<sup>116</sup> Though he does not speak directly of “montage”, Ihering tackles issues of editing in *October*. Like A. K., he finds that the film is “stylistically brought out of

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<sup>114</sup> *The End of St. Petersburg* premiered on February 21, 1928 in Berlin. Reviews consulted include Arnheim (1977: 197-202), Ihering (2011: 217-219), Kracauer (2004b: 57-59), and Steinecke (1975a).

<sup>115</sup> *October* premiered in Berlin on April 3, 1928. Other reviewers consulted include Ihering (2011: 219-221), Kracauer (2004b: 85-88), and A. K. (1928). A somewhat similar term – “die Montierung” – is used to denote “the composing of film parts and intertitles” (“Zusammensetzung der Filmteile und Zwischentitel”) as early as 1925 by Viktor Ardow (1995: 168). I have not seen this term used in any of the reviews consulted in this chapter. Though “montage” clearly appears in German film discourse before the translation of Pudovkin’s monograph it is safe to assume that *Filmregie und Filmmanuskript* popularized it.

<sup>116</sup> “[D]ie Montageverkürzung wird zum augenschmerzenden Zerhacken der Eindrücke” (A.K. 1928).

balance” and that it “shatters into restless details”. Most specifically, he argues, “the switching between various relations of Napoleon is disruptive”.<sup>117</sup>

With *Storm over Asia*, the term “montage” starts to appear more regularly.<sup>118</sup> This is in line with the thesis that the August/September 1928 translation of Pudovkin’s book into German popularized the term. Kracauer reviews the publication on September 30 and proceeds to use “montage” in his review of *Storm over Asia* early next year (2004b: 191-195). Again, it is only he (Kracauer) and Ihering (2011: 221-223) who move beyond the generic evocations of the experience of tempo in dynamism explicit in other reviews.<sup>119</sup>

Both critics tackle the intercutting of the religious ceremony with the preparations of the Russian general and his wife. Although the discussion of disruption is, with the exception of *Battleship Potemkin*, not as explicit as in the previous films, both reviewers give good reasons to think that disruption was registered. For Ihering (2011: 222), the contrast between the facial expressions of the anonymous Mongolian and their intellect-ridden European counterparts is so striking that the additional representation of their different forms of behaviour is described as borderline disruptive. For Kracauer, the same shot sequence is “interrupted” (“unterbrochen”) by a brutal crime against the population, i.e. the pillaging of Mongolian cattle by the White Russian battalion. In Kracauer’s view, moreover, Pudovkin “handles the mores and customs in such detail that they, admittedly, do

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<sup>117</sup> “[D]as Zwischenschalten von Napoleonbeziehungen [ist] störend. [...] Eisensteins film [...] zersplittert sich in unruhigen Details. [...] [Er wird] stilistisch aus dem Gleichgewicht gebracht” (Ihering 2011: 220).

<sup>118</sup> *Storm over Asia* premiered on January 12, 1929 in Berlin.

<sup>119</sup> These include Arnheim (1977: 211-214), Heinz Einsgruber (1975), Edgar von Schmidt-Pauli (1995), W. H. (1975) and another anonymous reviewer Kühn (1975a 392-394).

damage to the consistency of the film.”<sup>120</sup> Together with the reference to the experience of tempo and dynamism, always somewhat further along the impact continuum than usual accounts, it is reasonable to conclude that disruption comes into play in these two reviews.

Like the rest of Eisenstein’s films distributed after *Battleship Potemkin*, *Old and New* received mixed reviews.<sup>121</sup> Whereas Arnheim (1977: 226-227) thinks the film boring, an anonymous reviewer for *Die Lichtbild-Bühne* finds it “stunning, ravishing and overpowering” (“[e]in wuchtiger, hinreißender, bezwungener Film”) (Bulgakowa 1995: 112). Kemény (1975a: 413), also of the latter opinion, describes the film by referring to a “hammering power of montage” (“[e]ine hämmernde Kraft der Bildmontage”). This description succinctly incorporates the overtones of disruption present in Eisenstein’s own accounts of the shock-like aspect of montage. The hindering aspect of disruption also appears in Arnheim (1977: 227) when he speaks of the shot sequence representing the renewal of the peasant enterprise as one performed in an “optically confusing and crooked manner” (“auf eine optisch unübersichtliche und ungradlinige Weise”).

Generally speaking, the “attraction” aspect of these “revolutionary Russian films” is consistently recognized on the narrative level and on the level of visual content. When editing is tackled in more detail as is the case in the writings of Arnheim (1932), Eggebrecht (1995), Haas (1991: 171-173, 199-200), Ihering (2011: 206-207, 207-208, 219-221, 221-223), Kemény (1975a) and Kracauer (2004b: 57-59, 191-195), editing practices are regularly found to be not only fast and dynamic but

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<sup>120</sup> “Er [Pudowkin] behandelt die Sitten und Gebräuche mit einer Ausführlichkeit, die zwar der Konsistenz des Films Abbruch tut” (Kracauer 2004b: 194).

<sup>121</sup> *Old and New* premiered on February 10, 1930 in Berlin. Balázs edited the German version.

also disruptive. While the experience of confusion also comes into play, it does so on two occasions only: in the reviews of *Battleship Potemkin* and *Old and New* (both of which demanded nuanced readings). In all other cases, the experience of disruption was articulated explicitly, with Haas' (1991: 199-200) account of *Mother* presenting probably its clearest description. Haas' review is also the best proof for the claim that, contrary to Frank Kessler (2002), the notion of montage existed in Weimar film criticism even before the introduction of the term.

#### THE DISTINCTION FROM OTHER NON-DISRUPTIVE EDITING PRACTICES

Writings on the genre of "Russian film" appeared as early as 1927 (Benjamin 1977f, Haas 1991: 158-163, Kerr 1927). These texts present a relatively homogenous view of Russian cinema so, as I mentioned earlier, we cannot discount a priori that descriptions of experiences I am looking for appeared in reviews of films that no longer make the list of the Soviet montage greats. It must also not be forgotten that the first Soviet film to be screened in Germany after the World War I – *Polikushka* (Aleksander Sanin, USSR, 1919) – enjoyed great success and was described variously as a work of poetry (Balázs 1995) and even as a proletarian film (Max Barthel 1995).<sup>122</sup> By our standards, however, the film is mediocre at best; lacking revolutionary spirit, it coincides aesthetically with Kuleshov's dismissive account of slow-paced Russian cinema of the 1910s (Bulgakowa 1995, Rainer Rother 2012).

A look at the reviews of *When Moscow Laughs* and *Bed and Sofa* dispels any potential worries that contemporary audiences did not distinguish among "Russian films" on the basis of their experiential effects of editing for the experience of

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<sup>122</sup> *Polikushka* premiered in March 1923 in Berlin.

disruption is noted on one occasion only.<sup>123</sup> Disruption is a theme in Feld's (1995) review of *When Moscow Laughs* where it is explicitly attributed to the German re-editing, strongly suggesting that the original was not regarded in similar terms. This hypothesis is further supported by Emil Rabold in *Welt am Abend* and Erich Burger in the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Whereas Rabold (1995) talks of a good tempo of direction, Burger (1995: 105) is even more explicit when he talks of Barnet's direction as working "without any violent aberrations" ("ohne gewaltsame Abirrungen").

This result can be thought of as supplementing Haas' (1991: 158-163) and Balázs' (1984: 198-200) discussion of the development of "Russian films". Whereas Haas and Balázs categorized the films in terms of thematic and narrative criteria, this categorization chimes perfectly with the experiential effects these films were seen to produce. Taken together, Balázs' first two categories – films in which agents of revolution are individuals and those in which they are the collective – coincide with Haas' category of revolutionary films (these include *Battleship Potemkin*, *Strike*, *Mother*, *The End of St. Petersburg*, *October*, and *Storm over Asia*). The analysis above shows that Weimar critics consistently perceived these "revolutionary films" – nowadays the core of the Soviet montage canon – in terms of disruption. Balázs' third category includes chamber plays, which concern the "transformation of private life in the collective society" (1984: 199), and fits Haas' second type of Russian films dealing with the construction of a new Soviet morality. This category includes films

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<sup>123</sup> These films were repeatedly recognized as the first Russian comedies ("das Lustspiel"), thematically and in their tone quite different from the preceding Russian production, not losing but reframing their revolutionary aspect. For *When Moscow Laughs*, premiering on September 6, 1927 in Berlin, see Boromäus (1975), Erich Burger (1995), Feld (1995), Emil Rabold (1995), and Wollenberg (1995). For *Bed and Sofa*, premiering on May 11, 1928 in Berlin, see H. Gr. (1995), Haas (1995), and Kühn (1975a: 380-381).

similar to *Bed and Sofa* and *When Moscow Laughs*, precisely those which are not perceived as employing any disruptive editing strategies.<sup>124</sup>

The reviews of *The General* (Buster Keaton, USA, 1926), *Ben-Hur: A Tale of Christ* (Fred Niblo, USA, 1927), *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1927), and *Spione/Spies* (Lang, Germany, 1928) show that even the most fast-paced German and American films were also not perceived as disruptive.<sup>125</sup> In other words, the distinction between even the fastest classical Hollywood editing and Soviet montage was experientially clear. In his discussion of *Ben Hur: A Tale of Christ*, for example, Kracauer (2004a: 264-267) singles out two grandiose action sequences: the naval battle and the chariot race.<sup>126</sup> For Kracauer the movement in these mass scenes develops rhythmically: “the chariot race intensifies from the beginning until the end [...]. Its encompassing artistic mastery can be attributed to the technique in which the total views are always alternated with flashing details – the heads of the racing horses.”<sup>127</sup> Kracauer, that is, only speaks of the partial (“details”) and fast and dynamic (“flashing”) nature of the scene, and does not mention disruption at all.

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<sup>124</sup> *Po zakonu/By Law* (Kuleshov, USSR, 1926) seems to present us with the only exception. Although Balázs and Haas do not mention it in their categorization, it is reasonable to think that it fits the category of films concerned with the construction of new morality. In line with this categorization, none of the reviewers I consult (Bernard von Brentano 1995, Leo Hirsch 1995, Walter Kaul 1995, Kurt Kersten 1995) speak of disruption. From our perspective, however, the film does take part in the Soviet montage canon. It would have also have been interesting to analyse where *House on Trubnaya/Dom na Trubnoy* (Barnet, USSR, 1928), given its occasionally striking use of editing, would fit. This film, however, was not shown in Germany in the period under scrutiny.

<sup>125</sup> In Germany *The General* premiered on April 4, 1927; *Metropolis* premiered on January 10, 1927 in Berlin; and *Spies* premiered on March 22, 1928 in Berlin. For *Ben Hur: A Tale of Christ*, see Kracauer (2004a: 264-267); for *The General* Arnheim (1977: 190-191), Haas (1991: 202-203), Ihering (2011: 210-211), and Kracauer (2004a: 338-340); for *Metropolis*, anonymous in *Lichtbild-Bühne* (1927b), Arnheim (1977: 184-186), Hans-Walther Betz (1927), Max Feige (1927), Haas (1991: 195-198), Ihering (1927), and Hans Siemsen (1975); and, finally, for *Spies*, anonymous in *Film-Kurier* (1928), Arnheim (1977: 202-204), Kracauer (2004b: 62-63), and Wollenberg (1928).

<sup>126</sup> The chariot race in Niblo’s *Ben Hur* was the blueprint for the now more famous shot sequence in William Wyler’s 1959 version.

<sup>127</sup> “Das Wagenrennen steigert sich von Anfang bis zu Ende [...]. Seine umfassende künstlerische Bewältigung esist der Art zu danken, in der die Gesamtübersichten mit aufblitzenden Einzelheiten – so den Köpfen der jagenden Schimmel – jeweils wechseln” (2004a: 265).

This emphasis on the rhythmical tempo is common to other reviews as well. An anonymous reviewer in *Film-Kurier* introduces *Spies* as a film that “mirrors the tempo of the times” (precisely how Adler described Döblin’s early prose). Wollenburg, similarly, speaks of how “the whirling bombastic effects are rhythmically well balanced with the more peaceful parts of the film.”<sup>128</sup> A remark on *The General* by Arnheim, typical for these reviews, essentially puts to rest the possibility of disruption in classical fast-paced editing: “the heart-stopping chase with vehicles gone wild is certainly nothing new.”<sup>129</sup>

#### THE CROSS-SECTION FILM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF CONFUSION

In the case of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* contemporary reviewers do, for the most part, articulate the experience of confusion in line with Kaes’ reading of the film.<sup>130</sup> For Kracauer (2004a: 411-413), the fast-paced contrasting images in the film “run in a jumbled fashion” (“durcheinander Rasen”), causing confusion and intoxication among Berliners. The experience for Kracauer is accompanied by the sensation of tempo and dynamism, but it is unlikely that it is accompanied with one of disruption as well. In the opening paragraph Kracauer stresses the *continuous* aspect of filmmaking by referring to successful dissolves and occasional bridges between strongly defined points of view. No invocation of the experience of disruption may be found in Ihering either. He does present a list of motifs similar to that in his review of *Battleship Potemkin* but given that there are no additional markers (e.g. content-less

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<sup>128</sup> “Ruhigere Stellen [...] und die wirbelnden knallenden Effekte sind rhythmisch gut zueinander abgewogen” (Wollenberg 1928).

<sup>129</sup> “[E]ine atembeklemmende Jagd mit wildgewordenen Verkehrsmitteln [ist] gewiß nichts Neues” (Arnheim 1977: 190).

<sup>130</sup> The film premiered on September 23, 1927 in Berlin.



descriptions of single shots as single frames) there is no reason to think that Ihering's account goes beyond that of tempo and dynamism.

Haas' (1991: 210-11) take on the film is similar to the one outlined by Kracauer. He invokes the experience of dynamism and the perils of an unstructured and chaotic artistic work, which allude to the possibility of even greater degrees of psychological and epistemological duress. He speaks more clearly of the experience of confusion once he likens *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* to a "blurred total artwork" ("verschwommen Gesamtkunstwerk"). Haas identifies shot-antitheses, a likely nod to Soviet montage, as one of the possibilities of the film medium employed in *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*. However, Haas' aforementioned description of continuity, his references to the filmic principle of "gliding past" ("das Vorübergleiten"), as well as his use of metaphors about swimming suggests that, much like for Kracauer and Ihering, the experience of disruption does not play an important role in this description.

In his review of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* Balázs also invokes the high end of the impact continuum: "[a] wonderful Dionysian frenzy haunts us, a masochistic rush of self-abnegation" (Balázs 1984: 221). Similarly, Paul Friedländer (1975) writes of the chaotic effect that thousands of intoxicating images produce. Kurtz (1927) does much the same by using terms such as intoxicating and overwhelming to describe the effects of the film. In a dialectical move, however, Kurtz insists that although the film does engender excessive psychological strain, it conceptually represents the whole of the city through thousands of partial rather than disruptive images.

It seems that it is only Feld (1927) who in his discussion of Edmund Meisel's musical accompaniment perceives film to be disruptive. He uses terms such as "to jerk" ("zucken") and "fragmentation" ("Zertrümmerung") to describe the score, which he subsequently links to editing techniques: "[t]he acoustic experience synchronizes with the optical".<sup>131</sup> Ihering, by contrast, is of exactly the opposite opinion. For him, although the editing of the film is characterised by elegant and curved transitions, this smooth experience is destroyed by Meisel's disruptive score (Ihering 2011: 129).

Whereas the reviews of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* provide ample evidence of the experience of confusion, those of another famous city symphony – *Man with a Movie Camera*, – paint a considerably different picture.<sup>132</sup> Kracauer articulates this contrast best in his direct comparison of *Man with a Movie Camera* with *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*: "Vertov gets coherence through montage of splinters of reality. Ruttmann provides juxtaposition without elucidating it."<sup>133</sup> Further proof that tempo and dynamism play a role in Kracauer's experience, but without any confusion, is provided by the following statement:

It [the day] is movement, a unique powerful movement, which seizes the hitherto fragmented so that all of the elements [...] flow together and fuse so completely that they enter into the rhythm of the whole.<sup>134</sup>

Kracauer's (2004b: 247-251) review indicates not only the absence of confusion but also a dialectical stance towards the experience of disruption. For Kracauer, the partial nature of fragments permits for localized disruption, but this disunity is immediately

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<sup>131</sup> "Akustisches Erleben synchronisiert dem Optischen" (Feld 1927).

<sup>132</sup> The film premiered in Berlin on July 2, 1929.

<sup>133</sup> "Wertow [gewinnt] durch die Montage dem Zusammenhang der Wirklichkeitssplitter einen Sinn ab. Ruttmann gibt ein Nebeneinander, ohne es aufzuklären" (Kracauer 2004b: 248).

<sup>134</sup> "Er [der Tag] ist Bewegung, eine einzige mächtige Bewegung, die das bisher Zerstückelte ergreift und alle Elemente [...] so zusammenführt und ineinanderschmilzt, daß sie in der Rhythmik der Ganzen eingetan sind" (Ibid.).

sublimated into the rhythmical experience of the whole. Other reviewers would shift, non-dialectically, between these two poles. Whereas Balázs emphasizes disruption: “[t]he smallest scenes are made important in such a manner that when they are isolated and emphasized from the continuity they attract the whole of our attention”,<sup>135</sup> Lotz (1995) does not mention disruption at all. Similarly, whereas Kemény finds that Vertov’s film is “overrun with details, without a continuous rhythm”,<sup>136</sup> Kurtz emphasizes the partial nature of fragments rather than their potentially disruptive aspect: “[t]he single moments are chosen exclusively with regard to the rhythmical coherence of the whole, and not their characteristic particular meaning.”<sup>137</sup>

To sum up, the experience of confusion was only perceived as a characteristic of Ruttmann’s symphony.<sup>138</sup> This surely invalidates claims that all city symphonies were perceived in the same manner.<sup>139</sup> My analysis also raises doubts that editing in city symphonies was regularly perceived as disruptive. I have found only one reviewer who saw *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* as disruptive and in the case of *Man with a Movie Camera* the attitude was far more ambiguous. Most importantly, and somewhat counter-intuitively, we shall see that the experience of disruption evoked by *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is closer to that engendered by *Man with a Movie Camera* and Soviet montage films than by *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*. In other words, the use of “montage” in the reviews of Döblin’s novel derives less from the

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<sup>135</sup> “Kleinste Szenen werden bedeutsam dadurch, daß sie, herausgehoben aus der Kontinuität und isoliert, unsere ganze Aufmerksamkeit anziehen” (Balázs 1984: 117).

<sup>136</sup> “[Ein Werk], überwuchert mit Details, ohne einen durchgehenden Rhythmus” (Kemény 1995: 155).

<sup>137</sup> “Die einzelnen Momente sind ausschließlich gewählt mit dem Rücksicht auf den Rhythmischen Zusammenhang des Ganzen, nicht auf ihre charakteristische Einzelbedeutung” (Kurtz 1995: 155).

<sup>138</sup> In the case of *Man with the Moving Camera* this also holds for the domestic reception, a compilation of which may be found in Tsivian (2004).

<sup>139</sup> Balázs’ comments on *Rain* and *Bridge* are also far from both the experience of disruption and confusion (1984: 125-6).

similarities with editing in Ruttmann's city symphony than with those in Soviet montage films.

When disruption was not perceived, as in the case of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, no recourse to "Montage" was made. Balázs and Ihering only used "Schnitt" in their reviews and Kemény, Kracauer, Kurtz and Haas did not use any "cutting" terms at all.<sup>140</sup> Interestingly, the reviewers of *Man with a Movie Camera* who spoke of disruption (Balázs, Kemény and Kracauer) used "Montage" rather than "Schnitt", and Lotz, who did not speak of disruption at all, used none of the terms. Kurtz was the only critic to speak of "Montage" in connection to non-disruptive editing, but he interchangeably used it with "cutting into" ("Einschneiden"). On first inspection, this might suggest a preference on the part of Weimar critics to connect "Montage" rather than "Schnitt" with the experience of disruption. A historically more informed conclusion, however, would be to say that the use of "montage" in the reviews of *Man with a Movie Camera* was indebted to the popularization of the term through the translation of Pudovkin's book, published after the premiere of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*. It would also be more accurate to say that "Montage" and "Schnitt" were used interchangeably to cover editing practices as a whole.

The reviews of other cross-section films further complicate the standard attribution of the experience of confusion to city symphonies. Whereas the reviewers of *Rund um die Liebe/About Love* (Oskar Kalbus, Germany, 1929) and *Menschen am Sonntag/People on Sunday* (Kurt and Robert Siodmak, Germany, 1930) make no reference to the experience of confusion, those of *Adventures of a Ten Mark Note* and

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<sup>140</sup> When in later work Balázs did begin to describe *Berlin* in disruptive terms he used "Montage" (1984: 90-91).

*Melodie der Welt/Melody of the World* (Ruttman, Germany, 1929) paint a more intricate picture.<sup>141</sup>

An anonymous review of *Adventures of a Ten Mark Note* appearing in *Film-Kurier* on October 29, 1926 gestures in the direction of the experience of confusion by referring to “a vortex of situations and snapshots” (“[e]in Wirbel von Situationen und Momentaufnahmen”). Mendel (1926) does the same when he speaks of “the confusion of events” (“die Wirrnis der Ereignisse”). Kracauer is even more explicit when he discusses the film’s specific editing and “the spasmodic associations, which bind the incoherency together, and in doing so give a picture of our disintegrated being.”<sup>142</sup> The reviewers of *Melody of the World* provide a more ambiguous account. On the one hand, Steinthal (1993: 439) talks of an “overwhelming expression of human feeling” (“ein überwältigende[r] Ausdruck eines Menschengefühls”) and Burger of a “mixed-up cutting of shots” (“Durcheinanderschnitt der Bilder”) and of “confusion and unrecognizability emerging out of rapid editing.”<sup>143</sup> On the other, Kurtz is explicit that “no wild confusion emerges, but [that] the edited shots are somehow perceived as coherent.”<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> *Adventures of a Ten Mark Note* premiered on October 28, 1926 in Berlin. For reviews see anonymous (1926), Mendel (1926), Kracauer (2004a: 275-276), and Rudolf Schwarzkopf (1975). *About Love* premiered on April 26, 1929 in Dresden. For reviews see Georg Herzberg (1993), Hans Kafka (1993), and Hans Sahl (1993a). *Melodies of the World* premiered on December 16, 1929 in Berlin. For reviews see Burger (1993), Ihering (2011: 132-133), Michel Kurd (1993), Kurtz (1993), Hanns G. Lustig (1993), Heinz Pol (1993), Sahl (1993b), and Walter Steinthal (1993). *People on Sunday* premiered on February 4, 1930. For reviews see anonymous in *Lichtbild-Bühne* (1930b) and Kemény (1975b).

<sup>142</sup> “Die sprunghaften Assoziationen, die das Unzusammenhängende miteinander verbinden und so ein Bild unseres aufgelösten Daseins geben” (Kracauer 2004a: 275).

<sup>143</sup> “[I]m raschem Bildschnitt entsteh[t] Unübersichtlichkeit und Unkenntlichkeit” (Burger 1993: 441).

<sup>144</sup> “Es entsteht kein wildes Durcheinander, sondern man empfindet die Schnittbilder irgendwie zusammengehörig” (Kurtz 1993: 439). Interestingly, Kurtz went on to compare Ruttman’s editing practices to “Russian montage” and gave a succinct description of the term almost identical to Eisenstein’s writing on the subject in the same year: “this juxtaposition of shots which bear some resemblance to one another or which find themselves in stark contrast, produces a feeling of a flow of action, which grabs the viewer’s attention and interest.” “[D]ieses Nebeneinander von Bildausschnitten,

This analysis demonstrates that the ubiquitous attribution of the experience of confusion to historical spectators of city symphonies (Graf 2007, Strathausen 2003) is problematic for two reasons. First, the contemporary reviews – namely those of *Man with a Movie Camera* – do not support any such claims. Second, this attribution neglects the contemporary categorization which identifies the cross-section film and not the city symphony film as the focus of interest.<sup>145</sup> In other words, even if the first problem were to be resolved, the experience of confusion cannot be the defining experiential trait of the city symphony because, according to the reviewers, some cross-section films shared it.

Finally, the use of the terms “spasmodic” and “disjointed” in Kracauer’s review of the *Adventures of the Ten Mark Note* strongly indicates the experience of disruption. This is further supported by Mendel, who finds that “[i]n editing, particularly with close-ups, their brief lengths and repetitions rob us of tempo.”<sup>146</sup> That the experience of disruption plays a role in the reception of one or more cross-section films does not pose a problem for my discussion of Soviet montage films. This is so because these films are either also described in terms of the experience of confusion (*Adventures of a Ten Mark Note*) or are in fact Soviet montage films (*Man with a Movie Camera*). And even if the experience of confusion did not accompany the experience of disruption this would still not be a problem: for there is no reason why *Adventures of a Ten Mark Note* would not make use of Soviet montage once it was in

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die irgendeine Ähnlichkeit haben, oder die sich in starkem Gegensatz befinden, erzeugt das Gefühl eines Flusses der Handlung, der den Zuschauer festhält und ihn interessiert” (Ibid.). The fact that the experience of disruption did not come into play may be explained by Kurtz’s belief that Ruttmann was far more reserved in the application of montage than his Russian counterparts.

<sup>145</sup> The robustness of the application of the term “Querschnitt” may be tracked in many of these reviews. A clear distinction between cross-section film and “travel film” (“der Reisefilm”) were also made in Pol (1993) and Steinthal (1993). Pol claims that, from a representational point of view, editing underpinned this distinction.

<sup>146</sup> “Im Schnitt sind, besonders bei den Großaufnahmen, winzige Längen und Wiederholungen, die das Tempo rauben” (Mendel 1926).

circulation. In other words, there is no reason to think that, in the period in question, only Soviet films used montage proper. Contemporary reviews, however, clearly demonstrate that adventure films did not use montage, i.e. that they were not perceived as doing so. As far as the city symphonies are concerned, moreover, contemporary reviews also demonstrate that the experience of confusion is *not* a good way to describe their experiential effect in general.

### THE STREET FILM AND POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

The reviewers of street films generally corroborate the view that the experience of confusion did not play a role in their reception. Certainly no discussion of it can be found in the reviews of *The Street* (1923), *Dirnentragödie/Tragedy of the Street* (Bruno Rahn, Germany, 1927), *Asphalt* (Joe May, Germany, 1929) and *Der blaue Engel/Blue Angel* (Josef von Sternberg, Germany, 1930).<sup>147</sup> In fact when representational devices of interest are tackled, very different experiences are identified. In his review of *Asphalt* Wollenberg notes that “the rhythm of the night street [is] arranged through exquisitely successful editing.”<sup>148</sup> Similarly, Walter praises May’s directorial virtuosity “[i]n the rhythm of shot sequences, contrasting, transitions and the correspondence of shots.”<sup>149</sup> Blaß speaks of “a thrilling vision of the

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<sup>147</sup> *Tragedy of the Street* premiered on April 14, 1927 in Berlin. For reviews see anonymous in *Lichtbild-Bühne* (1927a), Kracauer (2004a: 337-338), and Haas (1991: 203-205). *Asphalt* premiered on March 11, 1929 in Berlin. Some of the reviews include Roll Nürnberg (1993), Kersten (1993), Ernst Blaß (1993), Kracauer (2004b: 235-236), Paul E. Marcus (1993), Max Pfeiffer (1993), Fritz Walter (1993), and Wollenberg (1929). *The Blue Angel* premiered on April 1, 1930 in Berlin. For reviews see Celsus (1930), Ihering (2011: 147-149), Kracauer (2004b: 375-378), and Wollenberg (1930).

<sup>148</sup> “Der Rhythmus der abendlichen Straße [ist] vorbereitet durch eine vorzüglich gelungene Montage” (Wollenberg 1929).

<sup>149</sup> “In der Rhythmik der Bildablaufs, in den Kontrastierungen, Übergängen und Entsprechungen der Bilder” (Walter 1993: 28). Walter also mentions *Manhattan Transfer* as the model for the representation of the city and laments how the script of *Asphalt* employs none of the possibilities the

metropolis” (“einer packenden Vision Berlins”) and Kracauer of May’s “excellent technical performance” (“eine technisch vorzügliche Leistung”). In the discussion of *The Blue Angel* Kracauer mentions in passing that the film was edited with “undeniable skill” (“mit unleugbarer Fertigkeit [...] geschnitten”).

The exception to this trend is Haas’ (1991: 203-205) review of *Tragedy of the Street* which, on first inspection, poses a twofold problem. First, Haas appears to invoke the experience of confusion hitherto restricted to some of the city symphonies. Perhaps even more surprisingly, he also attributes the experience of disruption to a film which is nowadays almost forgotten. Haas identifies “the dead, mechanical, calculated editing [Schnitt]” as the director’s crucial weakness and claims that:

[w]hen one of the narrative threads appears flat to him [the director], he quickly cuts another one in, which is also flat, believing that, if disorderly and confusingly cut, they are already progressing. [...] [However] they lie pale and heavy and only interfere with the digestion. Ten times he cuts in a pointless erotic cluster into Asta Nielsen’s monologue scene and does not allow it to play out flowingly. [...] If I had the chance [...] I would re-edit this film into long, uninterrupted, continuous acting scenes.<sup>150</sup>

The experience of confusion here described is not an experiential form of confusion in the strict sense, but a narrative one. In other words, the intended confusion here is not perceptual in that it simulates the overwhelming nature of urban stimuli (as with *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*), but one which, according to Haas, attempts to make the film more interesting simply by hindering the comprehension of narrative

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novel provides for parallel descriptions of the multitude of concurrent and juxtaposed processes. For Walter, May’s direction saves the film.

<sup>150</sup> “Wenn ihm [dem Regisseur] eine Handlungslinie leer scheint, so schneidet er schnell eine zweite hinein, die auch leer ist und glaubt: durcheinandergeschnitten werden sie schon marschieren. [...] Sie liegen bleischwer da und stören nur die Verdauung. Eine pointenlose erotische Gruppe schneidet er zehnmals in eine volle schwarze Monologszene der Asta Nielsen ein und läßt diese nicht in einem Fluß ausspielen. [...] Hätte ich die Möglichkeiten [...] schnitte [ich] diesen Film um, ganz auf lange, ungebrochene, kontinuiernde Spielszenen” (Haas 1991: 203).



development. That is to say, this confusion is not experiential in the narrow sense I am interested in.

The editing of *Tragedy of the Street* clearly comes across as disruptive, and it elicited harsh criticism from the reviewers. Yet we should not dismiss the film as an instance of montage simply because it is perceived as failure, for montage in a number of “Russian films” was also deemed to be lacking. We need only recall that Kracauer (2004a: 57-59) and Ihering (2011: 219-221) identify tendentiousness as the reason for disruption in *The End of St. Petersburg* and in *October*, respectively. Indeed, there is no reason why montage could not have been employed in Weimar film production. As I already noted, it could be found in cross-section films (*Adventures of a Ten Mark Note*) so there is no reason why, under the influence of Soviet cinema, it could not have been picked up on occasions in other genres as well. The point of my analysis is not to deny the possibility of montage outside Soviet films; rather, it is to demonstrate that the cinema modelled on American adventure films deployed editing techniques which fell short of both disruption and confusion, their emphasis on the experience of tempo and dynamism notwithstanding. In other words, it is to show that, in general, different “hyper-stimulation” subsets were correlated with different types of editing. The “modernity thesis” framework must provide more fine-grained analysis of how exactly editing patterns evoked one experience as opposed to another. Moreover, my analysis, unlike the one based on the notion of filmic writing (Ekkehart Kaemmerling 1975, Paech 1988), has the advantage of being able to precisely correlate Döblin’s literary technique to a special

brand of editing – viz. Soviet montage. It also helps explain why “montage” came to be appropriated by the literary discourse.<sup>151</sup>

In order to explain the use of the terms “montage” and “photomontage” in contemporary reviews of Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, I have tackled the reception of Soviet montage theory and the writings on photomontage in Weimar Germany. I have provided phenomenological definitions of both stylistic devices and identified the experience of disruption as their essential trait. In order to articulate this experience more precisely I have related it to the experience of modernity, i.e. “hyper-stimulation”. In doing so, I have identified some conceptual inconsistencies in the “modernity thesis”. For instance, I have argued that the proponents of this thesis fall short of producing a coherent theory of historical reception. By generalizing about the phenomenological nature of editing and its connection to the experience of modernity, they overlook the fact that different types of editing practices were consistently described by both contemporary audiences and theorists in terms of different experiences. Whereas the distinction between parallel editing in adventure films and montage in Soviet montage films was clearly articulated in terms of the distinction

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<sup>151</sup> The only other exception as far as the experience of confusion is concerned seems to arise in Kracauer’s (2004a: 54-56, 138-140) discussion of *The Street*. Although the film is outside the period under scrutiny, it is nevertheless useful to expand the scope momentarily in order to see how the experience of confusion is attributed to a representational device which, strictly speaking, does not fall under editing. Kracauer described the vision of the film’s protagonist thus: “the senseless, seductive confusion of the swaggering life is unveiled to him.” “[D]as sinnlose verlockende Durcheinander des taumelnden Lebens [entschleiert sich ihm]” (Ibid. 54). On the representational plane, however, this is not an effect of editing, but of shots produced through multiple exposures: “It [the film] pieces shots which swirl one behind another into shots and mechanically produces a world out of them.” “Aufnahme stückt er an Aufnahme und setzt aus ihnen, die hintereinander abwirbeln, mechanisch die Welt zusammen” (Ibid. 56). These shots are further described as consequences of “futuristic painting”. The film “expresses what besets the yearning one, and it can express it only because the fragmented images together with dreams satisfy the pining of the already-lost interiority” “Der Film wird hier zur Folge futuristischer Gemälde, er drückt aus, was den Sehensüchtigen bedrängt, und er darf es ausdrücken, weil nur zerstückelte Bilder noch wie Träume das sich verzehrende schon verlorene Innere erfüllen” (Ibid. 54-55). Here fragmentation ought not to be understood as implying disruption but merely denoting that these images have clearly discernible parts.

between the experience of tempo and dynamism in the former case, and that of disruption in the latter, editing in city symphonies could only on occasions be related to the experience of confusion. Moreover, cross-section film was sometimes identified as eliciting the same experience of confusion. As far as Döblin's novel is concerned, these findings suggest that, experientially speaking, the novel's key device was perceived as more similar to montage of "Russian films" than to atypical editing in cross-section films. In other words, the experience of literary montage was far more one of disruption than that of confusion. With that in mind, it is finally time to tackle *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in more detail.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Literary Montage in Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*: Stylistic, Phenomenological and Narratological Properties**

#### **THE READY-MADE AND THE STYLISTIC DISTINCTIVENESS**

In the previous chapter I set the discussion of the ready-made aspect of literary montage aside in order to focus on the experiential dimension of film editing and photomontage understood in the narrow sense. By tracking the historical application of the term “montage” in Weimar film and literary criticism in the second half of 1920s, I teased out a specific type of experiential common ground on which literary montage, photomontage, and a particular type of editing – “Russian montage” – were brought together: the experience of disruption. Although spectator/reader-dependent, the experience of disruption saves the concept of montage from becoming over-inflated. More specifically, the articulation of this common ground serves as a condition for retaining the “modernity thesis” claim to an account of historical reception by allowing the thesis to distinguish between different subsets of “hyper-stimulation”, i.e. the experience of modernity. From the perspectives of literary criticism and theory, the experience of disruption provides one of the two necessary conditions for the identification of literary montage. Unlike in film and photomontage, where recourse to the technological aspect of the representational plane (e.g. the fact of cutting) is sufficient to attribute the experience of disruption to a particular montage device, in the case of literary montage it is necessary to engage with the material used.

The reason for this shift in focus is perhaps best articulated by Walter Benjamin in his famous review of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* from 1930:

The stylistic principle of this book is montage. Petit bourgeois forms, scandalous stories, unfortunate incidents, sensations from 1928, folk songs, advertisements are peppered throughout this text. Montage blows the “novel” apart, blows it apart in construction as well as style and opens up new, very epic possibilities. First and foremost formally. The material of montage is by no means anything arbitrary. Genuine montage rests on the document. In its fanatical fight against the artwork, Dadaism, with the help of montage, made everyday life into its ally. Primarily, even if uncertainly, Dadaism proclaimed the supremacy of the authentic. In its best moments, film made an effort to accustom us to it [montage]. Here for the first time it became of use for epic poetry. By means of biblical verses, statistics, pop song lyrics, Döblin affords authority to the epic event. They correspond to the formulaic verses of the old epic poetry.<sup>152</sup>

Benjamin’s account of the effect of montage – “to blow apart” (“sprengen”) – is completely in line with the experience of disruption as I defined it in the previous chapter. Its working is so violent that it tears holes in the construction and the style of the novel. But, according to Benjamin, the experience of disruption itself cannot fully account for the device of montage; only in connection with the material of montage – the document – is montage accounted for.

In his account of the document Benjamin invokes a variety of Dadaist objects employing ready-mades.<sup>153</sup> Interestingly, he does not appeal to film to emphasize

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<sup>152</sup> “Stilprinzip dieses Buches ist die Montage. Kleinbürgerliche Drucksachen, Skandalgeschichten, Unglücksfälle, Sensationen von 28, Volkslieder, Inserate schneien in diesen Text. Die Montage sprengt den ‘Roman’, sprengt ihn im Aufbau wie auch stilistisch, und eröffnet neue, sehr epische Möglichkeiten. Im Formalen vor allem. Das Material der Montage ist ja durchaus kein beliebiges. Echte Montage beruht auf dem Dokument. Der Dadaismus hat sich in seinem fanatischen Kampf gegen das Kunstwerk durch sie das tägliche Leben zum Bundesgenossen gemacht. Er hat zuerst, wenn auch unsicher, die Alleinherrschaft des Authentischen proklamiert. Der Film in seinen besten Augenblicken machte Miene, uns an sie zu gewöhnen. Hier ist sie zum ersten Male für die Epik nutzbar geworden. Die Bibelverse, Statistiken, Schlagertexte sind es, kraft deren Döblin dem epischen Vorgang Autorität verleiht. Sie entsprechen den formelhaften Versen der alten Epik” (Benjamin 1972b: 232-233).

<sup>153</sup> A more detailed elaboration of the document can be found in Benjamin’s review of an exhibition on public health – “Bekränzter Eingang” (“Garlanded Entrance”) (1972a) – published the same year.

what has often been referred to as the “indexical nature” of photography, in order to relate indexicality to the document. Instead, he argues that the most striking films are precisely those which endeavour to habituate viewers to montage. It is not unreasonable to assume that Benjamin is speaking of “Russian films” for, at the very least, he is claiming that the most accomplished films were those which engaged with the dialectics of the hindering and the productive aspects of montage. And from his (1977b) reply to Oscar Schmidt regarding *Battleship Potemkin* it is clear that Benjamin held “Russian films” in very high regard.<sup>154</sup>

I have already mentioned in the Literature Review that Benjamin does not give a definition of what a document is. He does, however, produce a list of instances of a document: forms, scandalous stories, unfortunate incidents, sensations, folk songs, advertisements, biblical verses, statistics and pop song lyrics. Although scandalous stories and unfortunate incidents may refer to real-life diary entries, and news reports to the stories of Zannowich and Bonemann, the bulk of the examples on Benjamin’s

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Some of the documents Benjamin lists as making up montage include bills, bits of fabric, tram tickets, shards of glass, buttons, and matches.

<sup>154</sup> By 1935/1936 and his oft quoted “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” particularly the essay’s second version which has come to be regarded as the authoritative one, Benjamin will identify the experience of disruption embedded in the notion of the shock-effect (“Chockwirkung”) as the principle of *all* film editing (Benjamin 2008: 39). This is the standard view of Benjamin’s engagement with film, exemplified by Joachim Paech (1988: 125-126), Sabine Becker (1993: 340-341), Ben Singer (2001: 101-130), and even by one of his most astute commentators on matters of film – Miriam Hansen (1987: 184-185). (On a later occasion, however, Hansen (2004: 10) does suggest that the second version of the “Artwork” essay applies to only non-Hollywood and early cinema but does not elaborate on the reasons for this claim). Most importantly for my thesis, the less generalizing view of editing that Benjamin lays out in his 1927 essay on Russian film is regularly ignored. There, for instance, he describes the fragments that open *Shestaya chast mira/One Sixth of the World* (Dziga Vertov, 1926, USSR) merely in terms of speed as “following each other in fractions of a second” (“In Bruchteilen von Sekunden folgen einander Bilder”) (Benjamin 1977f: 749). The same types of fragments in German films are similarly described as uninterrupted (“ununterbrochen”). Moreover, the shock Benjamin refers to in his “Artwork” essay appears to be a more disruptive and visceral experience than that of interruption (“Unterbrechung”), which he identifies as the principle of montage common to Epic theatre, radio, and film in his 1932 “Theater und Rundfunk” (“Theatre and Radio”) and 1934 “Der Autor als Produzent” (“The Author as Producer”) (Benjamin 1977a, 1977c). Shock also forms the basis of comparison between these media in the second version of the “What is Epic Theatre?” written in 1939 but not in its original version from 1932 (Benjamin 1977d, 1977e). Finally, Benjamin will, in the second half of the 1930s, expand the meaning of montage and apply it to, among other things, the understanding of history and the principle of construction behind his own *Arcades Project*, i.e. *Passagenwerk*.

list present stylistically distinguishable and recognizable instances of specific linguistic cultural forms. As such, all of Benjamin's instances are ready-mades in Viktor Žmegač's (1987) sense, though, admittedly, two of them may at the same time appear as a story within a story which are stylistically not so different from the story they are embedded in (that of Franz Biberkopf).

Style is, of course, a notoriously fuzzy term so it is worth teasing out what the stylistic distinctiveness I speak of means in order to avoid problems similar to those plaguing the term "fragmentation" I highlighted in the previous chapter. First of all, in discussing the stylistic distinctiveness of ready-mades I am not speaking of distinctiveness based on a particular type of language (e.g. Yiddish), dialect (e.g. "berlinisch"), idiomatic expressions or idiosyncratic use of language depending on character's educational, social background, etc. In other words, I am not speaking of what might be referred to as speech registers. Thus, the story of Zannowich cannot be an instance of a ready-made simply because Yiddish is used for its narration. The same holds for the way Franz or any other characters generally talk. If the opposite were the case, then any shifts in speech registers, present in literature long before the twentieth century would a-historically be transformed into ready-mades. This would, for instance, force us to count a plethora of interjections of French in nineteenth century Russian novels as instances of montage.

What is necessary for something to count as a ready-made is the employment of more formulaic material. I propose to refer to such formulaic material as a specific "genre" of language and outline two of its types most pertinent to the analysis of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. On the one hand, we may speak of non-literary language "genres" such as scientific papers, newspaper reports, statistics, etc. Such "genres" have relatively clear rules of construction and these rules can generally be found in an

explicit form in various guides. On the other hand, there are well-known cultural texts such as the bible, *Schnitterlied/The Reaper Song* or popular songs. Crucially, both of these types of formulaic materials are easily recognizable when embedded in other texts. In *Berlin Alexanderplatz* this is true regardless of whether they are uttered by various characters or not. Nevertheless, as I emphasized in the Literature Review, the question of intradiegetic motivation is crucial for distinguishing between Žmegač's open montage and montage proper.

Two things need to be emphasized here. First, the ready-made does not necessarily amount to a quotation. In the novel, for instance, most of the biblical sections are not verbatim quotes of Luther's translation of the bible but paraphrases retaining its style. Second, the key to understanding the document is *not* its alleged non-fictional status as, for instance, Todd Heidt (2009) holds. As noted in the previous paragraphs, both *The Reaper Song* and the bible are used as ready-mades in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* but both depict fictional worlds. Moreover, there is no reason why accurate descriptions of actual places abounding in realist novels would be any more fictional than transcripts of, say, real-life newspapers. Yet we would be hard pressed to call, say, accurate descriptions of Berlin instances of montage. Alternatively, the fact that something is an actual object does not preclude it as being treated as a fictional one, as the example of Troy before its unexpected discovery demonstrates. Furthermore, if it turned out that some of the statistics or advertisements were made up by Döblin and not transcribed from authentic originals it would not discount them from being instances of montage. Finally, even Benjamin's remarks about authenticity do not entail that whatever is authentic is necessarily non-fictional (or vice-versa). For instance, behaviour regardless of whether it is fictional or non-fictional is regularly described as both authentic and inauthentic.



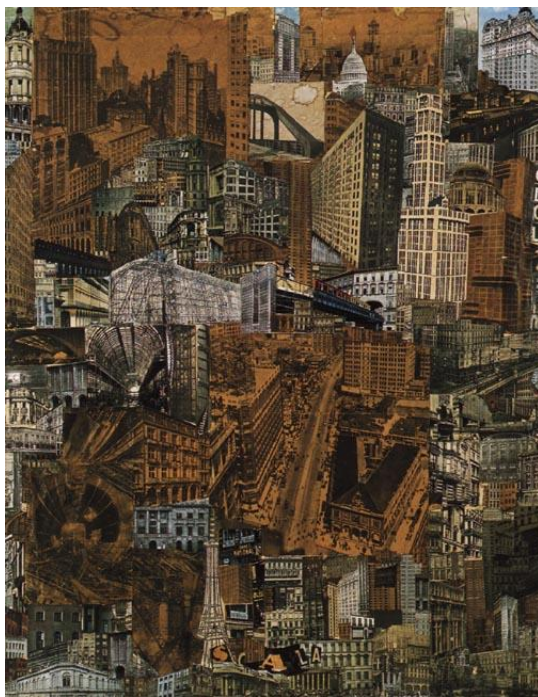
We can start to give a better explanation of the ready-made and its stylistic distinctiveness if we take a look at how the term operates in film and pictorial art. In the latter case, the purely phenomenological definition of photomontage is not sufficient to distinguish between say Cubist, Futurist or Expressionist painting, on the one hand, and photomontage, on the other. For who is to say that collages and paintings such as George Braque's *Fruit Dish and Glass* (1912), Umberto Boccioni's *The Street Enters House* (1912), Gino Severini's *Pan Pan Dance* (1912) or Georg Grosz's *Explosion* (1916) did not invoke the experience of disruption on the level of the representational? We can nevertheless distinguish between these forms of visual art based on one or more of the following: the technological process, the material used and their stylistic distinctiveness.

It is the disruption as an outcome of a technological process – cutting up and pasting – that allows us to distinguish the disruption in collage and photomontage from that in Severini's, Boccioni's and Grosz's paintings. Unlike collages and photomontages Severini's, Boccioni's and Grosz's paintings are uniform insofar as their material and style are concerned. The only material used is paint and the stylistic strategy deployed does not change from one part of the painting to the other (figure 0.3 and 0.4). In the case of Cubist and Dadaist pictorial works the stylistic distinctiveness usually emanates from material distinctiveness, i.e. from the fact that these works are agglomerates of photographs and/or other materials such as paper, glass, clippings, etc.<sup>155</sup> The above cited *Fruit Dish and Glass* uses wallpapers next to traditional materials (charcoal and ink) and in so doing juxtaposes a drawing style with a ready-made object (figure 0.2). Finally, the general rule of thumb in distinguishing between collage and photomontage seems to be that the more

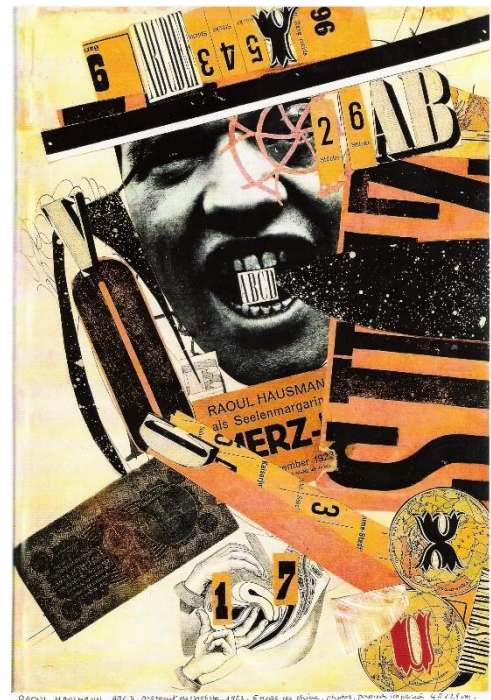
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<sup>155</sup> This is not to say that stylistic distinctiveness cannot be secured by using the same material.

photographic material (as opposed to non-photographic material) the pictorial work contains, the likelier we are to speak of photomontage than collage. This would make *Fruit Dish and Glass* a collage, Paul Citroën's *Metropolis* (1923) a photomontage, and Raoul Hausmann's *ABCD* (1923/24) something in between (figure 2.1 and 2.2).



**Figure 2.1** *Metropolis* (1923), Paul Citroën



**Figure 2.2** *ABCD* (1923/24), Raoul Hausmann

From the examples given above it appears that there is something substantially different in the way the ready-made is present in the pictorial arts as opposed to literature. The crucial difference seems to be that in pictorial arts the ready-made is physically tangible whereas in literature it is not. However, the idea that physical tangibility is either a necessary or sufficient condition for something to be called a ready-made should be discarded. For instance, the colour pigment in a painting is no

less tangible than either a photograph in a photomontage or a piece of paper in a collage. The pigment is not immaterial so if physical tangibility was a sufficient condition for a ready-made we would have to say that colour pigment is also a ready-made. And we could apply the same reasoning to other types of pictorial art objects including oil on canvas and drawings. But this would transform most of the pictorial art throughout history into closed montages – hardly a desirable outcome.

We might want to go beyond simple physical tangibility and say that something more is needed to count an object among ready-mades. We might invoke Braque and Picasso, who were among the first to use materials such as paper, rope or glass in their works and in doing so made the surface of the painting rough and protruding.<sup>156</sup> But this would not work either. Photomontages are characterized neither by tangible roughness nor protrusion yet we would be hard pressed to deny that they consist of ready-mades, i.e. pre-existing photographs.

The physical tangibility of the material, therefore, cannot be the defining trait of the ready-made; this instead must reside in its functional position in relation to the aesthetic practice. The only reason why ready-mades in pictorial arts are physically tangible is because the material of these arts *is* physically tangible.<sup>157</sup> What is more important is that glass, paper and rope are not generally produced with pictorial art in mind. Nor are photographs generally produced with photomontage in mind.<sup>158</sup> In the same sense, all of the documents listed by Benjamin in his review are not produced with the idea of being incorporated into other literary art works. The same holds for

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<sup>156</sup> Hanno Möbius (2000: 123-124) points out these practices may be found as early as 1880s in the work of a group called Incoherents.

<sup>157</sup> There are, of course, digital pictorial arts whose material does not appear to be tangible. This, however, does not impinge on my overall argument.

<sup>158</sup> John Heartfield's work is an exception to an extent.

the language “genres” I proposed above. Thus, ready-mades are forms prefabricated according to some structural principle, taken out of their primary context and reapplied in a different one. In this sense the material aspect of the ready-made plays as much of a role in defining photomontage and collage as it does in defining literary montage.

In the case of film this definition has often led to confusion. We must avoid the temptation that a number of commentators, most notably, Volker Klotz (1976), have fallen prey to, of saying that standard film editing employs ready-mades. Pieces of filmstrip in standard film production are made with a particular film in mind so they cannot be construed as ready-mades under the above definition. We should speak of the employment of ready-mades in film only in “found footage” practices. This argument is also very convenient for historical reasons. It was in great part due to the lack of film stock that Lev V. Kuleshev began his montage experiments (Vsevolod I. Pudovkin 1928). However, on these particular occasions the goal was exactly the opposite of the experience of disruption – namely, the production of a coherent and continuous whole.

## LITERARY MONTAGE AS A DISRUPTIVE USE OF READY-MADES

### CONTEMPORARY RECEPTION OF *BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ*

It might be objected that Benjamin does not exclusively attribute the experience of disruption to the ready-made, for his scandalous stories and unfortunate events are not unequivocally identified as ready-mades and also allow for more traditional embedding of stories, as exemplified by the story of Zannowich. In other words, the objection would go, even the earliest accounts of literary montage include narrative inserts other than ready-mades. The first retort to this objection would be to invoke Occam's razor and suggest that if the notion of a language "genre" is sufficient to fit all of Benjamin's instances of the document, then this description should be preferred to the one that complicates matters. An even better reply would be to turn to other reviewers who explicitly and exclusively relate the experience of disruption to the ready-made class of texts.<sup>159</sup>

Hans Sochaczewer (1973) talks of "the fanaticism of disruption" ("Unterbrechnung-Fanatismus") in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*:

in a novel of more than five hundred pages the development of the story line is continuously interrupted during which Döblin reveals what the weather was like in Berlin on this or that day; or from which departments the AEG is composed of (and so on).<sup>160</sup>

According to Sochaczewer, although these inserts together with all other news reports are initially more than simply experiments in form, they ultimately distract from the

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<sup>159</sup> Emanuel Bin Gorion (1973), Franz Herwig (1973), Hans Sochaczewer (1973), and Fritz Schulte ten Hoewel (1973).

<sup>160</sup> "[I]n einem Roman von über fünfhundert Seiten [wird] immer wieder der Verlauf der Handlung unterbrochen, indem Döblin bekanntgibt, wie die Wetterlage in Berlin an diesem oder jenem Tag war; oder aus welchen Abteilungen die A.E.G besteht (und so weiter)" (Sochaczewer 1973: 233).

reading process. Sochaczewer thus identifies ready-mades exclusively as examples of disruptive practices.

Franz Herwig (1973) is even more interesting in his explicit separation of the sections of the novel that express Franz's impressions and emotions, on the one hand, and those in which the baffled author suddenly starts babbling, in an infantile manner, of race, weather and market reports or biblical psalms, on the other. This practically mirrors the distinction Benjamin makes between interior monologue as employed by James Joyce in *Ulysses* and literary montage as employed by Döblin: "It would not be necessary [in the discussion of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*], however, to use art terms, to speak of 'dialogue intérieur' or to refer to Joyce. In fact, it is a case of something completely different [i.e. montage]."<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, whereas Herwig describes the representation of Franz's experiences in terms of "hyper-stimulation" including all of the experiences of tempo, dynamism, disruption and confusion, he reserves the experience of disruption as the only subset of "hyper-stimulation" characteristic of ready-made inserts: "The so to say pure line of this unusual style [i.e. the use of ready-mades] is broken from the get go."<sup>162</sup>

Fritz Schulte ten Hoevel (1973) and Emanuel Bin Gorion (1973) reiterate Sochaczewer's points but do so in a more negative tone. Schulte ten Hoevel finds that the materials such as scientific asides, economic, statistical, medical and physical explanations, advertisement posters and newspaper clippings are all inserted without any connection. Bin Gorion criticizes the novel for its "stringed together shreds of

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<sup>161</sup> "[E]s wäre nicht nötig gewesen, darum mit Kunstausdrücken zu operieren, vom 'dialogue intérieur' zu reden oder auf Joyce zu verweisen. In Wirklichkeit handelt es sich um etwas ganz anderes" (Benjamin 1972b: 232).

<sup>162</sup> "Die sozusagen reine Linie dieses ungewöhnlichen Stils ist mit dieser Art von vorneherein durchbrochen" (Herwig 1973: 246).

weather reports” (“aneinandergereihte Fetzen von Schauerberichten”) and describes the construction of the novel as a case of montage (“Schnitt”):<sup>163</sup>

A chanson stanza, tabloid headlines, statistical surveys, chemical formulas, emblems, advertisements, medical prescriptions, weather reports, travel schedules, radio announcer phrases, documents of the Institute for Sexual Research, film strips of the abattoir and again and again reminiscences of Aeschylus, Gilgamesh, Iliad and the bible follow a part of the story or find themselves directly in the story’s centre.<sup>164</sup>

Of course, all of the reviewers do not paint the exact same picture. Wilhelm Michel (1973) claims that Döblin’s technique derives from film and that it produces “epileptic convulsions” (“die epileptischen Zuckungen”). He, however, never explicitly connects the technique to the ready-made and seems to be more interested in drawing parallels between shot scales and the varying levels of detail in the descriptions of Franz. Similarly, in a nod to the experience of disruption and in his explicit recourse to the technological process of cutting into, Herbert Ihering (1975) appears to place simple motifs alongside ready-mades proper.<sup>165</sup> Finally, although E. Kurt Fischer (1975) lists various ready-mades and identifies them as key elements of “Bildmontage”, he never attributes to them anything more than the experience of tempo and dynamism.

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<sup>163</sup> Here, we should remind ourselves that “Schnitt” and “Montage” are used interchangeably in this period to denote montage.

<sup>164</sup> “Auf ein Stück der Geschichte folgt oder mitten drin steht die Strophe eines Chansons, die Schlagzeile eines Boulevardblattes, statistische Erhebungen, chemische Formeln, Wappen, Inserate, Rezepte, Wetterberichte, Fahrpläne, Tagesphrasen des Rundfunkansagers, Akten des Instituts für Sexuallforschung, Bildstreifen vom Schlachtviehhof und wiederum Reminiszenzen an Aeschylus, an die Ilias, an Gilgamesch, an die Bibel” (Bin Gorion 1973: 263).

<sup>165</sup> It is open to interpretation, however, whether Ihering’s list of what is cut into Franz Biberkopf’s story (“dates and scraps of newspapers, news and rumours, realities and premonitions, spiritual leitmotifs and furtive anxieties”) includes items which cannot be explained as ready-mades. By resorting again to Occam’s razor, premonitions may be thought of as citations from *Ecclesiastes*, spiritual leitmotifs as issuing from the bible more generally, and furtive anxieties may be explained away with reference to stories of Abraham and Job.

J – S (1975) and Wilhelm Westecker (1973) suggest that Döblin’s method is reminiscent of photomontage. J – S alludes to the surface lustre of photomontage in his discussion of the “glossy description” in the novel but without mentioning any of the experiences of interest to us.<sup>166</sup> Westecker, by contrast, moves further along the impact continuum to include the experience of confusion and claims that “Döblin [...] imitates the confusingly spasmodic way the people think.”<sup>167</sup> Döblin’s method, according to Westecker, is intimately bound up with his use of psychological, statistical and technological facts. It remains unclear whether these facts amount to ready-mades exclusively, for the psychological ones would allow for more standard representations of impressions and emotions. Recourse to the simplest possible hypothesis, however, allows us to construe them all as ready-mades.

As far as the experience of disruption is concerned, Westecker is not the only one to find it accompanied by the experience of confusion. Julius Bab (1973), for instance, attributes the whole set of “hyper-stimulation” to the insertion of ready-mades:

[H]ere the street cries at us with street barkers, sounds of the street car, shreds of speech, fragments of advertisement columns and light advertisements. Here the popular melodies and the last newspaper reports or billpostings, which fill the inner life of the city today, swirl in our head. Here is the wild, relentless, abruptly hacking tempo of northeast Berlin.<sup>168</sup>

On the other hand, reviews such as Efraim Frisch (1973), R. Rang (1973), and S. Stang (1973) connect “hyper-stimulation” not only to the ready-mades but also to

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<sup>166</sup> “Das alles wird glänzend geschildert, [...] mit einer Art Photomontage” (J – S 1975: 71).

<sup>167</sup> “Döblin imitiert auch die verworrene, sprunghafte Denkweise der Menschen” (Westecker 1973: 238).

<sup>168</sup> “[D]a schreit die Straße mit Ausrufem, Straßenbahnklingeln, Gesprächsfetzen, mit Bruchstücken der Litfaßsäule und mit Lichtreklamen auf uns ein. Da wirbeln um unseren Kopf die Gassenhauer des Tages und die letzten Zeitungsnotizen und Plakatanschläge, die heute das innere Leben der Stadt ausfüllen. Da ist das wilde, schonungslose, steil hackende Tempo des nordöstlichen Berlin” (Bab 1973: 210).



thought processes. Willy Haas (1973) goes even further and connects “hyper-stimulation” to more standard narrative inserts.

There are a number of reasons why these examples do not pose significant problems for my attempts to connect the experience of disruption to literary montage via photomontage and film montage. First, that Michel (1973) and Westecker (1973) in talking of montage and photomontage, respectively, do not make an explicit connection to ready-made material is no more a problem than that references to montage or photomontage do not always explicitly invoke the experience of disruption (Fischer 1975, J – S 1975). This only demonstrates that these reviews were not as in-depth in their analyses as Benjamin. Yet contemporary reviews should generally not be held to the same standards as the analyses produced for and by academics. Second, that the experience of confusion often accompanies that of disruption does not change the fact that the experience of disruption still takes place; it merely pushes the experience of the novel closer to the confusing aspect of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (which should come as no surprise given the reception of the film analysed in Chapter One).<sup>169</sup> Finally, that the whole of “hyper-stimulation” is on occasions attributed not only to ready-mades but also to thought processes (Frisch 1973, Stang 1973) or even narrative inserts (Haas 1973) does not pose a problem so long as the procedure in question is not identified as “montage” or “photomontage”.

This real problem arises only with H. A. Wyß (1973):

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<sup>169</sup> Axel Eggebrecht (1973) is the only reviewer to explicitly connect Ruttman’s film to the novel. He suggests that the technique of montage Ruttmann employed in the film could serve as a great pre-study if it were ever decided, as Eggebrecht believes it should be, to adapt the novel to screen. In his other review of the novel, Eggebrecht (1975) explicitly dismisses the idea that various digressions break the novel. All of this is completely in line with most of the reviews of Ruttmann’s city symphony, which found the film to produce the experience of confusion but not that of disruption.

The thought montage [“Gedankenmontage”], this significant process that takes place in everyone in every minute, and which Joyce had established, has been executed compellingly for the first time. But whereas in Joyce it was the shredded, deserted field of the inner [...], in Döblin the field finds itself left in undistorted coherences.<sup>170</sup>

The problem here is not that Joyce’s technique is described as disruptive but that it is referred to as montage (“Gedankenmontage”). Wyß is clearly speaking of what even then was regularly identified as interior monologue. I am not disputing that interior monologue may have been experienced as disruptive any more than I am disputing that the Expressionist or Futurist painting could have been experienced in the same manner. Otto Biha (1975) and Walter Muschg (1973) (along with other reviewers of *Ulysses*) also found the representation of thought processes in Joyce to be disruptive. What is special about Wyß is that he explicitly invokes montage as the device in question. How are we to resolve this? One way would be to show that Wyß was prone to contradicting himself and, in doing so, demonstrate that this is a conceptually far weaker and less coherent text than those which distinguish between interior monologue and the montage of ready-mades explicitly (Benjamin 1972b, Bin Gorion 1973, Herwig 1973) or implicitly (Schulte ten Hoevel 1973, Sochaczewer 1973). Indeed, this can be done if we take a look at the following quote from Wyß in the same review:

He [Döblin] sees a variety of wretches, jezebels, bourgeois types, small multiplication tables of the outer form and the greatness of the inner, he describes, comments, rips hodgepodge conversations of yearning and desire, throws images in between, runs after associations, calculates what happens in chemical and mathematical formulae; [he sees] conversations with oneself in cross-sections and intersections of all possible stimuli, advertisement texts,

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<sup>170</sup> “Zum ersten Mal ist die Gedankenmontage, dieser merkwürdige Prozeß, der in jedem zu jener Minute geschieht, und den Joyce begründet hat, zwingend durchgeführt. Aber bei Joyce ein zerrissenes, wüstes Feld des Innern [...], bei Döblin aber Feld und Befund in seinen natürlichen, unverzerrten Zusammenhängen gelassen” (Wyß 1973: 241).

latest news reports, the whole of 1928 seemingly incoherent, often like the stutter of a schizophrenic thrown between particular destinies.<sup>171</sup>

Here Döblin's novel is described in terms of "hyper-stimulation" in direct contrast to the "undistorted coherences" attributed to the text in the previous quote. Although the description casts serious doubt on the way Wyß attributes the experience of disruption to either Joyce or Döblin it is still difficult to dismiss the review completely. With this in mind it would be wise to analyse German reviews of *Ulysses* and look for the use of terms "photomontage" or "montage". This analysis, together with the one of the reception of John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* should be undertaken anyway for it should be thought of as fulfilling function similar to function the analyses of cross-section, street, adventure, and other non-disruptive Russian films undertaken in the previous chapter had – distinguishing montage from other stylistic devices. The question here is not so much whether these novels are discussed in terms of the experience of disruption (although if this is the case, it should be assessed whether this was done in relation to the ready-mades); the more important question is whether there is any recourse to "photomontage" or "montage" in the descriptions of these novel's techniques. Their first translations into German in 1927 should certainly allow for the application of at least some of the terminology.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> "Er sieht die Mannigfaltigkeit seiner Kerle, Nutten, Spießer, das kleine Einmaleins äußerer Gestalt und das Große des Innern, schildert, kommentiert, reißt in Gesprächen das Kuddelmuddel von Gier und Wunsch auf, wirft Bilder dazwischen, rennt Assoziationen nach, rechnet das Geschehen um in chemische und mathematische Formeln; Selbstgespräche mit den Kreuz- und Querverbindungen aller möglichen Reize, Reklametexte, Meldungen neuster Zeitungsnachrichten, das ganze Jahr 1928 scheinbar zusammenhangslos, oft wie die Gestammel eines Schizophrenen zwischen das Einzelschicksal geworfen" (Ibid. 239-240).

<sup>172</sup> *Ulysses* was translated by Georg Goyert for Rhein-Verlag and *Manhattan Transfer* by Paul Baudisch for Fischer-Verlag.

## CONTEMPORARY RECEPTION OF *ULYSSES* AND *MANHATTAN TRANSFER*

As an introduction to this analysis we can note that, with the exception of Wyß, none of the other *Berlin Alexanderplatz* reviewers who connected the text to either *Ulysses* or *Manhattan Transfer* used the “photomontage” or “montage” terms to describe Joyce’s and Dos Passos’ novels.<sup>173</sup> Of those Benjamin, Eggebrecht, and Muschg were the most explicit in dismissing montage as a device used by Joyce (Benjamin 1972b, Muschg 1973) or by both Joyce and Dos Passos (Eggebrecht 1973). In fact, Muschg’s comment made during the public reading of Döblin’s novel at the Berlin Society of the Friends of Literature on March 19, 1929 also appears to be the first description of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* to employ the terms “montage” or “photomontage”:

For the mastery of these synchronous impulses [of the world] Döblin uses a completely new technique. It is vaguely similar to Joyce’s extraordinary technique in *Ulysses*. It [Döblin’s technique] translates what in film and photography is called *photomontage* – the simultaneity of heterogeneous shots, a clash of different images.<sup>174</sup>

Other commentators explicitly identify the connection between these novels in things quite different from ready-mades. Armin Kesser (1975), for instance, argues that *Berlin Alexanderplatz* does for German literature what Joyce did for literature in English – the elimination of the conventional uniform narration. For Frisch (1973) the connections between the novels are to be found in the thickness of thought and the employment of associations. Weiskopf (1975) makes the connection between *Ulysses* and *Berlin Alexanderplatz* on the basis of three levels on which characters are

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<sup>173</sup> These include anonymous (1930a) in *Menorah*, Bab (1973), Biha (1975), Eggebrecht (1973, 1975), Frisch (1973), Ihering (1975), Hans Henny Jahnn (1973), Armin Kesser (1975), Muschg (1973), Sochaczewer (1973), Benjamin (1972b), and Weiskopf (1975).

<sup>174</sup> “Döblin verwendet zur stilistischen Bewältigung dieser synchronen Eindrücke eine ganz neuartige Technik. Sie gleicht entfernt der merkwürdigen Art des Joyce in *Ulysses*. Sie setzt das in die Sprache um, was Film und Photographie *Photomontage* nennen, also Gleichzeitigkeit heterogener Aufnahmen, ein Überschneiden verschiedener Bilder” (quoted in Becker 1993: 291).

represented: reality, thought and unconscious. Ihering (1975) and Hans Henny Jahnn (1973) are less convinced of Joyce's possible influence, claiming that although there certainly are some similarities between the two novels, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* produces a new style of its own. The same holds for Bab (1973) who includes the American "seconds style" ("Sekundenstil") in the list of influences. An anonymous reviewer in *Menorah* (1930) lists *Ulysses*, whose author uses "the psychological technique" ("die psychologische Technik"), next to *Manhattan Transfer*, whose author "captures the terrific speed of New York in short prose by shifting people and places in a film fashion" as influences on Döblin, but also argues for Döblin's originality.<sup>175</sup> Finally, Sochaczewer (1973) draws a connection between American literature and *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, noting that readers not introduced to American literature could find Döblin's novel astounding.

Only a handful of reviewers speak of disruption in Joyce (Biha 1975, Muschg 1973, Wyß 1973) and when they do, they never connect it to the ready-made. It is only Wyß who connects disruption to the terminology of montage. For Biha the form of both books corresponds to the disjointedness of the petit-bourgeois soul. Others who find connections between Joyce and Döblin never do so on the basis of the ready-made. In talking of either *Manhattan Transfer* or American literature more generally, nobody mentions disruption or montage terminology at all – the connection here is mostly expressed in terms of the experience of tempo and dynamism. All of this, despite Wyß' explicit invocation of montage, speaks overwhelmingly in favour of the claim that the ready-made together with the experience of disruption are coherently identified as specific novelties of Döblin's novel, novelties that were

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<sup>175</sup> "John Dos Passos [...], der in kurzen, Personen und Ort filmartig wechselnden Prosastücken die Rasanz New Yorks einfängt" (Anonymous 1930a).

subsequently dubbed montage in the contemporary reviews due to their phenomenological similarities with photomontage and “Russian montage”. Let us, therefore, turn to the contemporary reception of Joyce and Dos Passos.

In his monograph on Joyce’s influence on the German novel, Breon Mitchell (1976: 100) claims that montage had been one of the key aspects of the Weimar *Ulysses* reception since 1925. In truth, however, this claim obtains only if montage is understood very broadly along the lines of Theodor Adorno and Peter Bürger, or if it is conflated with film editing in general.<sup>176</sup> An analysis of 146 German language reviews of *Ulysses* between 1922 and 1940 compiled by Wilhelm Füger (2000) shows that “montage” or any of its derivative forms is used only once to denote the technique used in the novel.<sup>177</sup> The reviewer in question is Ernst Bloch (2000) and his understanding of montage is already so broad as to include the interior monologue and the parody style of the *Nausikaa* chapter among its instances. Clearly then we have very strong evidence that *Ulysses*, unlike *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, was not described in terms of montage by contemporary audiences. Rather, the key device identified was the use of different writing styles – above all, interior monologue.

We can make a few more generalizations, all of which fit my thesis that it is the ready-mades *together* with the experience of disruption that prompted the reviewers of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* to speak of montage. The category of ready-mades is implicitly identified on several occasions in reviews of *Ulysses* (Walter Schmits 2000), and even connected to the experience of “hyper-stimulation” (Walter Enkenbach 2000, Klaus Mann 2000). The exact experience of disruption is, however,

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<sup>176</sup> These approaches are criticized in the Literature Review and Chapter One, respectively.

<sup>177</sup> This also includes variations of “Schnitt”. Manfred George (2000) does use “schneiden” but to denote characters’ vision of the city rather than the author’s technique.

either reserved for the descriptions of sentence breaks (Iwan Goll 2000) and word constructions (Carola Giedion-Welcker 2000) or for the accounts of the representation of thoughts and particularly interior monologue. Manfred George gives a representative account of how Molly's monologue comes across as disruptive:

My first attempt to work out this incessantly deflective, spasmodic train of thought which clutches abruptly at a lightning-fast association for pages on end, and then flies off in its opposite, failed. The peculiar thought was not accommodating; it rebounded from bifurcations over the strange bends of thought into the void.<sup>178</sup>

In fact, contemporary reviews typically described the representation of thoughts, not the experience of the modern city, in terms of confusion (Ernst Robert Curtius 2000, Karl Arns 2000, Bernard Fehr 2000, Ellen Russe 2000, Schmits 2000, and Eduard Korrodi 2000).<sup>179</sup> The latter idea appears to be characteristic of the post-World War Two scholarship.

*Ulysses* is often compared to film, but the reasons for these comparisons vary widely and sometimes contradict each other.<sup>180</sup> On some occasions, the confusion engendered by stream of consciousness writing is compared with film's structureless continuity (Curtius 2000); on others, with the experience of speed (Anonymous 2000a, Giedion-Welcker 2000, Döblin 2000); and on others still, with its obverse, i.e. slow motion (Erich Gottgetreu 2000, Goll 2000). Further reasons for the comparison include the "rewinding" quality of Molly's interior monologue (Goll 2000), the

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<sup>178</sup> "Mein erster Versuch, diese immer abbiegende, sprunghafte, sich an einer blitzartigen Assoziation plötzlich seitenlang festklammernde, dann unkontrollierbar ins Gegensätzliche absausende Gedankenbahn lesend entlang zu laufen, mißlang. Der eigene Gedanke war nicht schmiegsam genug prallte an den Verzweigungen oft über die fremde Gedankenkurve hinaus, ins Leere" (George 2000: 169).

<sup>179</sup> A lone exception is John Alexander West (2000).

<sup>180</sup> X-ray is another technology from the end of the nineteenth century that is often compared to Joyce's technique (West 2000, Felix Langer 2000, Giedion-Welcker 2000, and Bruno E. Werner 2000). According to these critics, what x-rays do for the physical interior Joyce does for the psychological interior.

accomplishment of Aristotelian unity of space and time, i.e. simultaneity in the *Wandering Rocks* chapter (Albert Ehrenstein 2000, L. F. 2000), the optics of the characters (George 2000), and the use of “Kino-englisch”, i.e. the movie-script-like nature of the *Circe* chapter (Goll 2000, Korrodi 2000, Bruno E. Werner 2000). There are occasions when the experience of disruption provides the basis for phenomenological comparison (Anonymous 2000b, L. Th. 2000) but even on these rare occasions no connection is drawn to the ready-mades. The findings of this analysis (i.e. the negative evidence supplied by the *Ulysses* reception), make my case for the uniquely perceived disruptive use of ready-mades in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* even stronger.

The contemporary reception of *Manhattan Transfer* gives further credence to this claim. In the reviews consulted I found only one use of “montage” to describe Dos Passos’ work.<sup>181</sup> The critic in question, Werner Türk (1933), however, reserves the application of the technique exclusively to *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel* (1930) and *Nineteen Nineteen* (1932), even though he also discusses *Manhattan Transfer* at length.<sup>182</sup> Crucially, he identifies ready-mades – newspaper articles, daily news headlines, popular songs, segments from official speeches, and Marxist theses – as elements of montage. The presence of ready-mades in *Manhattan Transfer* suggests that the manner in which they are used in *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel* and *Nineteen Nineteen* differs from their deployment in *Manhattan Transfer*. This appears to corroborate Jürgen Stenzel’s view that montage proper is more specific than Viktor Žmegač’s open

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<sup>181</sup> The contemporary German material consulted includes R. K. (1927), Sinclair Lewis (1927), Gustav Meyer (1927), Paul Wiegler (1927), Peter Panter (1928), Friedrich Schönemann (1928), Franz Hessel (1928), Walther Fischer (1929), Lutz Weltmann (1930), Hans A. Joachim (1930), Werner Neuse (1931), and Werner Türk (1933). Admittedly, Hessel uses “Schnitt” – a derivative of “schneiden” – on one occasion as well. For details see footnote 183.

<sup>182</sup> The first German translations are *Der 42. Breitengrad* from 1930 and *Auf den Trümmern* from 1932, respectively.



montage, i.e. that it is characterized by a particular form of independence from the narrator.<sup>183</sup>

Türk, moreover, cites the standard comparison of *Manhattan Transfer* with film techniques beginning with at least Sinclair Lewis' review.<sup>184</sup> Like other critics, both Türk and Lewis base this comparison on the novel's tempo, i.e. "the lightning-fast change of scenes, the jumping from one group of characters to the others" (Türk 1933: 378) rather than on any experience of disruption, for "Dos Passos does not use this technique to achieve a frantic Jazz tempo."<sup>185</sup> The point is further substantiated by another commonly identified connection between novels and films among the reviewers – the elimination of transitions.<sup>186</sup> This "transitionless" ("übergangslos") character of the novel is perhaps best understood along the lines of Werner Neuse's dissertation on Dos Passos:

When one of the characters penetrates to the fore again, the outward or inner circumstances have also altered in response to time, which always remains on the move. We have to construct the changes ourselves. [...] Like in Dos Passos' previous works all closer dates are evaded, so as not to disrupt the consciousness of the flow of time.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> This does not mean that no instances of montage proper can be found in *Manhattan Transfer*, rather that the dominant use of ready-mades therein is intradiegetically motivated in the narrow sense. I shall speak of this in more detail below. In fact, Hessel finds that "in flashing advertisements the world of business cuts into ["einschneiden"] the most tender and wildest experiences." "[I]n aufleuchtenden Reklamen [schneidet] die Welt der Büzineß in zarteste und wildeste Einzelerlebnisse ein" (1928: 241). Although it is unclear to what Hessel's statement exactly refers to, it is nonetheless important to note that his example involves ready-mades, a key aspect of montage in my definition.

<sup>184</sup> Originally published in *Saturday Review* it served as a foreword to the first German translation of the novel.

<sup>185</sup> "[D]as blitzhaft-rasche Szenenwechsel, das Springen von einer Gestaltungsgruppe zur andern" (Türk 1933: 378). "Dos Passos benützt diese Technik nicht dazu, um ein fieberhaftes Jazztempo zu erreichen" (Lewis 1927: 12).

<sup>186</sup> Lewis (1927), Wiegler (1927), Hessel (1928), and Fischer (1929).

<sup>187</sup> "Stösst eine der Personen bei Dos Passos wieder zum Vordergrunde durch, so haben sich inzwischen, entsprechend der Zeit, die immer in Bewegung bleibt, die äusseren oder inneren Umstände gleichfalls gewandelt. [...] Wie in den vorhergehenden Werken von Dos Passos werden alle näheren Zeitangaben vermieden, um das Bewusstsein der fließenden Zeit nicht zu stören" (Neuse 1931: 64-65).

As the quote above suggests, what is gained in effecting unobtrusive passage of time appears to be lost in terms of narrative comprehensibility:

Whereas in film the audience can effortlessly follow a kaleidoscopic vortex of changing scenes without transitions, for the new image can be immediately grasped with a single look, in the novel this is not possible. The new image here emerges only in the course of a process, therefore it takes time before the reader has an overview of the situation or before she has renewed the acquaintance with the earlier group of characters.<sup>188</sup>

The fact that *Manhattan Transfer* is predominantly characterized in terms of speed and confusion, rather than disruption, also chimes well with the comparisons Gustav Meyer (1927) and Hans A. Joachim (1930) make to one film in particular – *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*.<sup>189</sup> As I demonstrated in the first chapter, Walter Ruttmann’s symphony was received along the very same lines.<sup>190</sup>

In conclusion we can say that *Manhattan Transfer* rather than *Ulysses* was perceived as ushering in a new form of novel in which the city was the true object of representation. Moreover, the comparison with film was primarily grounded in the impression of speed (oftentimes accompanied by confusion) that the transitionless changes between the scenes elicited. These literary spatio-temporal dislocations were never described as montage, however. Instead the term was reserved for disruptive uses of ready-mades which were to be found in Dos Passos’ later work rather than in

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<sup>188</sup> “Kann beim Film das Publikum einem kaleidoskopischen Wirbel übergangslos wechselnder Szenen mühelos folgen, weil es das neuerscheinende Bild mit einem Blid [*sic*] sofort zu fassen vermag, so ist ihm das im Roman nicht möglich. Hier entsteht das neue Bild erst im Verlauf eines Prozesses, es dauert daher einige Zeit, bis er der Leser übersieht, oder bis er die Bekanntschaft mit einer früheren Gestaltungsgruppe des Romans erneuert hat” (Türk 1933: 378).

<sup>189</sup> Only Schönemann (1928) and Hessel (1928) speak of disruption in *Manhattan Transfer*. Whereas for Schönemann the repetition of motifs appears disruptive, for Hessel it is the shifting between episodes that is “spasmodic” (“sprunghaft”). Most importantly, when Hessel does speak of disruption he reserves the montage vocabulary (“einschneiden”) for ready-mades.

<sup>190</sup> Türk’s generalization about film, I assume, applies only to classical and non-avant-garde cinema.

*Manhattan Transfer*, giving further credence to the thesis that literary montage hinges on intradiegetically unmotivated use of ready-mades.

## A NARRATOLOGICAL DEFINITION OF MONTAGE

### THE TROUBLES WITH THE EXTRADIEGETIC NARRATOR

In the previous section I supplemented the experiential account of montage discussed in the first chapter with a description of the stylistic shift that takes place in the moment of disruption. Here, I will address the last key aspect of montage – the narratological. I have already suggested in the Literature Review that the deployment of montage signals a shift between narrative voices and, in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* specifically, between the voice of something like Gérard Genette’s extradiegetic narrator and the voice(s) whose source has usually been identified as the city of Berlin. I wish to be even more precise than this, however, for I will argue that once montage is understood in narratological terms another historical peculiarity of the novel may be identified. Moreover, some of the key narratological aspects of Fassbinder’s adaptation may be articulated in opposition to this peculiarity. The irregularity in question involves the status of the narrator’s existence. To fully understand what is at stake, a digression regarding the concept of the narrator is necessary. In what follows I shall argue that the notion introduced by Gregory Currie – the controlling fictional narrator – is a more felicitous concept than Genette’s widely used concept of the extradiegetic narrator, since the former introduces no ontological confusion of the type the latter does. With recourse to methods borrowed from analytic philosophy I shall proceed to demonstrate that the controlling fictional narrator is a property of the vast majority of literary fiction. This will allow me to contextualize montage as a narratologically innovative phenomenon which eliminates the figure of the controlling fictional narrator but in a radically different way than multi-narrator epistolary novels had done before *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

First, following Genette's distinction between narration and focalization, I understand the narrator as the agent who speaks and the focalizer as an entity, not necessarily an agent, who sees. Narration here should be understood as the act of narrating, whilst "narrative" should be reserved for the text, having a beginning and an end, and out of which a chronological sequence may be inferred. Following Seymour Chatman, I understand the text to be "any communication that *temporally* controls its reception by the audience" (1990: 7). Thus, most paintings are not strictly speaking texts for although it takes time to look at them, unlike film and literature they do not unfold in time.

The second point to stress is that my work builds on the now commonly accepted premise expressed by Genette in his seminal *Narrative Discourse*:

It is not Abbé Prévost who tells of the love of Manon and Des Grieux, it is not even the Marquis de Renoncourt, supposed author of the *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*; it is Des Grieux himself, in an oral narrative where "I" can designate only him, and where "here" and "now" refer to the spatio-temporal circumstances of that narrating and in no way to the circumstances of the writing of *Manon Lescaut* by its real author. [...] the narrative situation is never *reduced* to its situation of writing (Genette 1980: 214, italics in the original).

In literary narratives, therefore, deictic terms – "I", "here", "now" – used fictionally refer to the agent of fictional narration (fictional narrator) and not to the agent of actual narration (actual author).<sup>191</sup>

An ontological gap exists between the fictional narrator and the actual author. Without going into too much detail, the ontology of fiction as opposed to that of actuality could briefly be accounted for in terms of truth functions. Simply put,

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<sup>191</sup> Although counter intuitive, this also holds for instances of oral narration because of the properties of deixis discussed below.

assertions such as “Franz Biberkopf spent 4 years in Tegel jail” when understood literally (and as long as there is no actual person of the same name) have no actual truth value, only a fictional one. However, when they are understood as shorthand for “in the story of Alfred Döblin’s novel Franz Biberkopf spent 4 years in jail” they are actually true. Another way to sketch out this difference in ontologies is to say that fiction is the domain which prescribes particular imaginative engagement, to which we have an epistemic access, which may cause emotional engagement, over which we may have performative influence but towards which we enjoy no spatio-temporal relations. In other words, when reading we are invited to imagine that Franz Biberkopf spent four years in jail, we gather knowledge that it is a part of the fictional story of Franz Biberkopf that he spent four years in jail, we may sympathize with the character because of it, and in engaging Alfred Döblin’s writing as fictional it is made fictionally true that he spent four years in jail, but neither we nor Döblin could have ever taken the 41 tram to pay him a visit in Tegel prison. This is not to say we cannot engage fiction in ways such as playing certain fictional characters, as actors regularly do, but it is to understand that such engagements do not produce actual spatio-temporal relations to the fictional world, but only fictional ones.<sup>192</sup>

Third, the typology of narrators as described by Genette (1980), one based on the distinction between narrative levels (“extra-” or “intradiegetic”) and their relationship to the story (“hetero-” or “homodiegetic”), introduces some confusion as to what the term “diegesis” stands for. This in turn allows for other ontological issues to creep in. Originally, the extradiegetic narrator, as opposed to the intradiegetic one, stands for the narrator on the zero narrative level from whence all the events are

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<sup>192</sup> For the most comprehensive discussions of ontology of fiction, fictional truth and the modes of engaging fiction see Currie (1990) and Walton Kendall (1990). For a good brief introduction see Donald Davies (2001: 263-274).

narrated. In that sense, any fictional narrative has at least the extradiegetic narrator occupying level zero with the story itself – the diegesis – consisting of characters, events, etc. occupying level one. Further embedded narration by the characters produces metadiegetic levels two, three, etc. Attributes “homodiegetic” and “heterodiegetic”, on the other hand, are used to denote that the narrator is or is not a character in the story narrated by the narrator. Yet problems begin to arise once examples of such narrators are presented in a two by two matrix, for the implication here is that extra/intra and hetero/homo axes are mutually independent. A look at the “intradiegetic” column, however, reveals noteworthy discrepancies.

	<b>Extradiegetic</b>	<b>Intradiegetic</b>
<b>Heterodiegetic</b>	“Homer”	Scheherazade
<b>Homodiegetic</b>	“Marcel”	Ulysses

**Table 2.1** A typology of narrators based on their narrative levels (“extra-” or “intradiegetic”) and relation to the story (“hetero-” or “homodiegetic”). Adapted from Genette (1980: 248)

Scheherazade is the key problem here, for when she is described as both intradiegetic and heterodiegetic what “diegetic” stands for is not the same in both cases. Insofar she is heterodiegetic, “diegetic” refers to the stories she tells, those on level two (for she plays no role in them). Insofar she is intradiegetic “diegetic” stands for the story she is a part of – the story on level one told by an unnamed extradiegetic narrator in which she postpones her execution for 1001 nights by means of story-telling. The same relations hold for Ulysses when he is described as both intradiegetic and homodiegetic narrator. He is intradiegetic for he is a part of the level one story

“Homer”, i.e. the extradiegetic narrator of *The Odyssey* tells.<sup>193</sup> But Ulysses is homodiegetic from the viewpoint of the level two story he tells in chapters ix-xii. Genette (1988) implicitly admits of this problem when he says that the narrative level is a property of the narrators and not that of characters. This is why he later does away with the misleading tabular representation and replaces it with a comic-strip that embeds stick-figures within balloons denoting narrating acts (Genette 1988: 85-86). This, however, does not resolve all of the issues. Further problems pertain to what type of story Scheherazade is telling and to an asymmetry within the extra/intra distinction.

Although Genette is explicit that the narrative level is not an ontological dimension, i.e. that the stories within stories may (but need not) be fictional in relation to the story they are embedded in, the confusion stems from how exactly is the extradiegetic narrator “outside” of the story it recounts. In fact, insofar as the prefix “extra” merely denotes the presence on the zero narrative level of a given fictional narrative, “intra” simply refers to whatever “extra” is not. By contrast, “homo” and “hetero” are the *opposite* of each other. In other words, Genette does not allow for the existence of any other extradiegetic narrators in the chain of embedded narratives, they are all intradiegetic. Yet narrators may be either homo- or heterodiegetic regardless of the plane, including the zero one.

The problems emanating from this asymmetry between “extra” and “intra” are twofold. First, it destabilizes Genette’s claim that narrative levels have nothing to do with ontological barriers, for the position of the extradiegetic narrator is reserved exclusively for the border between the author and his or her fictional narrative.

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<sup>193</sup> Originally there is a slip here: Genette talks of Homer, rather than “Homer” as he should.



Second, if every narrating act produces a meta-narrative level should not Ulysses, although intradiegetic with reference to what “Homer” recounts, be extradiegetic in reference to what he (Ulysses) recounts? And given that no such thing is permitted in Genette’s outline, does that not imply that “Homer”, the extradiegetic narrator of the whole of *Iliad*, is somehow differently “outside” the story than Ulysses, the extradiegetic narrator of chapters ix-xii? And does that not suggest that “Homer” might not only not be a part of the story (for he is heterodiegetic unlike Ulysses) but also not even of the story-world? But again there is a paradox here, for although extra-heterodiegetic narrators are not strictly speaking part of the story they are a part of the story-world. This is no different than the fact that I am a part of the story-world (i.e. the world) of an actual story I recount about my friend, even though I took no part in the story myself. It seems then that there is a tension in how “diegetic” is read when prefixed by the pair “extra” and “intra”. It shifts between denoting the story and denoting the story-world and as such ushers in more ontological confusion.

Another ontological confusion can be illustrated more clearly with the example of Scheherazade. Given that Genette’s balloon representations do not distinguish between fictional and non-fictional metadiegetic stories relative to the diegetic level, Scheherazade is represented as though she has an ontological relation to her stories no different than “Homer” does to *The Odyssey*. However, Scheherazade produces a fictional story within a fictional story which further complicates the picture. From the perspective of the story on the level one, Scheherazade is undoubtedly intradiegetic but that is not the problem. The problem is the attribute “heterodiegetic” which, playing on the similarity with the special type of “outside” that “extradiegetic” implies, masks the fact that Scheherazade is no more heterodiegetic (or homodiegetic for that matter) to the story she tells than Döblin is

heterodiegetic (or homodiegetic) to the story of Franz Biberkopf. Moreover, unlike Ulysses, Scheherazade cannot even be extradiegetic from this perspective for the same reason Döblin is not the extradiegetic narrator of the story of Franz Biberkopf.

Simply put, the deictics in these particular narratives do not refer to Scheherazade's time-space (with the Maharaja during a given night) but to the extradiegetic narrator ontologically distinct from Scheherazade. Scheherazade is not a fictional extradiegetic narrator in the sense she is a fictional intradiegetic one, she is the fictional author.<sup>194</sup> To put it more precisely, although it is fictionally true that she recounts 1001 different stories it is not fictionally true that she recounts them fictionally. Thus, the fictional extradiegetic narrator can only be "Scheherazade". Narrative levels, as long as they are presented with balloons, still fail to account for this.

There are further concerns with Genette's account. It seems to be implied that Ulysses is given his own voice in chapters ix-xii somewhat differently than in his more mimetic dialogue lines. It is also unclear in Genette's account whether epistolary and dialogue-only novels have extradiegetic narrators or not. Because of these concerns and the ones articulated in more detail above, I prefer to talk of the controlling narrator rather than the extra-diegetic one. Currie defines the controlling narrator as that whose fictional utterances "coincide with the text we are reading when we read the work" (1995: 265).<sup>195</sup> In the above scheme "Homer" is the controlling narrator, as is the extradiegetic narrator fictionally recounting the story of Scheherazade. It is important to note that although Ulysses and Scheherazade perform

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<sup>194</sup> That she is the author does not necessarily mean she is the one who invented the stories she tells – she might have heard them from somebody else. In Walton's terminology Scheherazade would be a storytelling narrator (1990: 368).

<sup>195</sup> Admittedly, an exception should be made for paratexts.

further intradiegetic story-telling, on this view they are embedded narrators to whom the controlling narrator lends voice only temporarily in a fashion no different than how voice is borrowed in the instances of dialogue.

#### THE NEAR-UBIQUITY OF THE CONTROLLING FICTIONAL NARRATORS

At stake in this chapter is the demonstration of the thesis that montage breaks with the figure of the controlling narrator. In pursuit of this, we have to determine that the controlling fictional narrators are indeed a property of, if not all, then at least the great bulk of literary narrative production. Call this the “near-ubiquity thesis for literary fiction” (in the discussion of Fassbinder’s adaptation I shall produce the obverse for fiction film – a “near-absence thesis”). Therefore, I will briefly sketch out the problems with previous claims to ubiquity or near-ubiquity and, with some modifications, reiterate my own version of the argument produced elsewhere.<sup>196</sup>

For a period of time, a key narratological assumption was that there could not be a narrative without a narrator. Since Genette’s description of the extradiegetic narrator in *Narrative Discourse* this has been implicitly transformed into the assumption that there cannot be a fictional narrative without a fictional narrator. Accomplished narratologists such as Chatman (1990), Mieke Bal (1999: 22) and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2003: 92) have explicitly supported this thesis.<sup>197</sup> It took analytic philosophers rather than scholars from literary departments to point out the problems with these assumptions. It is easy to demonstrate that “there cannot be a

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<sup>196</sup> Mario Sluga (2010).

<sup>197</sup> Although the dissent usually came from linguists in arguing for speakerless sentences (Ann Banfield 1982), it can be also found in early Chatman (1978), and even earlier in Käthe Hamburger (1957) *Die Logik der Dichtung/The Logic of Literature*.

fictional narrative without a fictional narrator” does not follow from “there cannot be a narrative without a narrator”. The implication between the two statements is formally invalid. There is no more reason to agree with this implication than to agree with the implication that if every narrative has a narrator, then every short narrative has a short narrator. But it can also be shown that not even the antecedent of the implication holds, i.e. that every narrative has a narrator.

Consider a real-life event which meets all of the requirements of Chatman’s narrative text. Imagine you are attending a sports event of your choosing. It has a clearly defined beginning and an end, it temporally controls its reception, and a story can be reconstructed out of it. However, can we say that somebody is recounting this story? Of course, there might be a commentator but she cannot be the narrator in the regular meaning of the word for she rather reports what she sees and is in principle in no more privileged position to do so than we are. And even if the commentator were the narrator we can certainly imagine a sports event without one. Sports events played out in such a manner certainly fit the bill of narrator-less narratives.

Turning to the question of whether fictional narratives have fictional narrators, analytic philosophers such as Noël Carroll (2006), Currie (2010), Berys Gaut (2004, 2010) and Andrew Kania (2005) have garnered much attention recently by claiming that no fictional narrators but only explicit ones such as Ishmael from Hermann Melville’s *Moby Dick* or “Marcel” from Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* exist. George Wilson (2007, 2011) responded. Elsewhere (Mario Sluga 2010), I have argued in more detail against Carroll (2006), Currie (2010) and Kania (2005) but for reasons other than Wilson (2007). Here, I would like to briefly run through this territory again, tackle some of the points Gaut (2004, 2010) raises and rearticulate my

own argument for the near-ubiquity of fictional narrators in fictional literary narratives.

Wilson (2007) has replied to both Carroll (2006) and Kania (2005) concerning their proposal that we need not imagine fictional declarative sentences as assertions, and that in turn we need not imagine any narrative agency making those assertions, rather that they may be understood as containers for propositional content. Thus sentences like “Katie loves Hubble” need merely express the proposition “that Katie loves Hubble”. Even if assertions were nothing but containers for propositional content, Wilson continues, there are sentences in literature such as conditionals and questions which often employ illocutionary force over and beyond pure declaratives. Wilson asks us to consider the following statement: “Katie loves Hubble. Many people thought so. But was it true?” He concludes that the additional illocutionary force found in the question is a sufficient marker of some internal minimal narrating agency. Currie (2010) and Gaut (2010) reply that both utterances following the initial declarative “Katie loves Hubble” can be thought of as issuing from the author and not the fictional narrator. Finding no definite answer to these objections, Wilson (2011: 121) concludes that “these considerations rest finally on claims about the phenomenology of our imaginative engagement with novels and kindred works of literary fiction.”

I have proposed that Wilson’s inability to resolve this issue hinges on his failure to see that he, unlike Kania (and others it would seem), models this imaginative engagement on oral narration similar to fictional monodrama and not on the *transcribed* version of this oral narration.<sup>198</sup> Although both accounts of narration

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<sup>198</sup> For details see Slugan (2010: 27-28).

fit Chatman's definition of the text, the proper way to engage a novel would be to focus on the published text, i.e. the "transcribed" form and not on the author-text complex. Once such an understanding of the text is secured we can directly attack the view that declaratives may be understood merely as propositional content and then proceed to produce an argument even stronger than Wilson's.

As noted earlier, Carroll et al. have claimed that sentences such as "Katie loves Hubble" are not fictional assertions but merely containers of propositional content. Yet, propositional content in analytic philosophy is usually discussed in the form "X does Y" or "X is Y". The present simple in these sentences is not used for an action occurring at the moment of speaking but for expressing a fact, a state of affairs or a generalization. These sentences are easily understood without any recourse to temporality. Literary narratives by contrast, regularly employ verb tenses to express time, however imprecisely, of a particular event or state of affairs. In the case of "Katie loves Hubble" the simple present tense verb does not merely express a state of affairs or generalization as it does in statements like "a mother loves her child". It says more. It says that respective to the "*present*" Katie was in love with Hubble and still is. To make the point clearer, consider the same sentence in the past simple tense: "Katie loved Hubble". This statement reveals that, again, respective to the "present" Katie was in love with Hubble, but it does not specify whether she still is. Thus, and this is the crucial moment in my argument, we cannot simply translate sentences which use verbs narratively into propositional content of the form "at one point in time X does/is Y" without losing relevant information. The propositional content must keep the reference to the "present" alive. But then how can we imaginatively engage fictional propositional content P such as "X was Y" in full without recourse to a "present" temporal position at which X might no longer be Y? This "present"

temporal position, moreover, as Émile Benveniste (1971) elaborates, can be understood only as the moment of speaking about the event contained in P. Thus, to imagine literary narrative sentences to merely contain propositional content, if the chain of reasoning is followed through, establishes a controlling fictional narrator no different than the one established by imagining sentences as fictional assertions.

The argument – the “linguistic version of the ontological gap argument” – may be formalized as follows:<sup>199</sup>

- (1) “Present” can only be understood by positing a speaker/writer contemporaneous with it (Benveniste 1971: 227);
- (2) The temporal dimension of tensed verbs can only be understood with reference to the present tense, i.e. the “present” (Benveniste 1971: 226-227);
- (3) (1) and (2) entail that the temporal dimension of tensed verbs can only be understood by positing a speaker/writer contemporaneous with the “present” which they refer to;
- (4) Temporal deictic terms such as “now”, “yesterday”, “tomorrow” can only be understood by positing a speaker contemporaneous with the “present” which they refer to;
- (5) (3) and (4) entail that tensed verbs behave like temporal deictic terms as far as the understanding of their temporal dimension is concerned;
- (6) In literary narratives deictic terms used fictionally refer to the agent of fictional narration (fictional speaker) (Genette 1980: 214);
- (7) (5) and (6) entail that any text of literary fiction in which: a) there is no explicit controlling fictional narrator, b) there is at least a single narrative usage of a tensed verb, and c) this use cannot be ascribed to any particular character (meaning it is on level zero), has an implicit controlling narrator, i.e. the agent contemporaneous with the “present” referred to in the tensed verb.

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<sup>199</sup> Levinson (1996) has produced an (epistemological version of the) “ontological gap argument” criticized successfully by Kania (2005) and Wilson (2007).

Returning to Wilson (2007) it is important to note that, contrary to Genette's claims, actual entities may act as fictional narrators. In Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*, to give just one example, the actual Nixon fictionally narrates the story. In other words, Wilson is saying something like the following: it is fictionally true that the actual Nixon narrates the events of June 1953 recounted on the pages of Coover's book. Genette claims something different: it is fictionally true that a fictional entity bearing the name "Nixon" (which is supposed to invoke the actual Nixon) narrates the story. Translated to Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Wilson and Genette disagree on whether the novel's extradiegetic narrator should be referred to as Döblin or "Döblin". According to the "linguistic version of the ontological gap argument", the deixis present in the text refers to an entity with fictional spatio-temporal coordinates. By itself, my argument cannot decide who is fictionally narrating the story: the actual Döblin or a fictional entity by the name of "Döblin". The matter does seem to come down to the question of the preferred phenomenological engagement with fiction.<sup>200</sup> Yet however we call him, it still remains the case that there is a fictional zero level narrator.

If this argument is sound then we can assign controlling narrators to a huge subclass of literary fiction. Subclasses which need to be left out include pieces written exclusively in the form of direct speech and epistolary novels without an explicit "editor".<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> This is not the same as whether declarative sentences are fictional assertions or containers for propositional content. My argument demonstrates that the former is the case. (7b), in particular, deals with this question.

<sup>201</sup> Rimmon-Kenan (2003) seems to believe that even epistolary novels have a fictional "editor". However this is susceptible to the same arguments Kania (2005) makes against Levinson (1996). We might call Rimmon-Kenan's proposal the "material version of the ontological gap argument", for somebody fictionally needed to compile all of the letters.



## MONTAGE AND THE CONTROLLING FICTIONAL NARRATOR

By way of lengthy but necessary digression I believe I have demonstrated that the near-ubiquity thesis holds, i.e. that controlling fictional narrators are a property of the vast majority of literary fiction. It remains to be seen how literary montage fits with this thesis. Simply put, the employment of montage problematizes proposition (7) for the shift in style as described in the previous section suggests another narrative voice takes over the narration but does so on the same zero level the former voice inhabits. Thus, instead of a single controlling narrator which lends voice to embedded narrators, the voice is simply taken away and a multiplication of narrators ensues. The difference between *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and preceding epistolary novels in which multiplication of narrators took place is that all of the narrators in the epistolary works are explicit, i.e. that they are for the most part named and at least homodiegetic. Historically speaking, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* seems to be the first novel to introduce implicit narrators next to the explicit heterodiegetic one – “Döblin” – on the same zero level and by doing so eliminates the hegemony of a single controlling narrator in narratives which do have the zero level.<sup>202</sup>

With all of the pieces of the puzzle in place – stylistic, phenomenological and narratological – we can finally propose a more detailed procedure for identifying literary montage with three necessary and sufficient conditions: 1) the insert is an instance of Žmegač’s open montage (i.e. the stylistic or the ready-made condition); 2) the insert is not intradiegetically motivated in the narrow sense (i.e. the phenomenological or the disruption condition); and 3) the insert cannot be subsumed

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<sup>202</sup> Novels consisting exclusively of dialogue lines have no zero level. As such they are no different from drama (both written and performed) insofar as they have no implicit narrators.

under voice-modulation (i.e. the narrative or the absence of narratorial control condition).

The first step, therefore, is to identify whether a given piece of text is some specific “genre” of language (e.g. fairy tale, newspaper report, advertisement, etc.) or a (variant of a) well-known text (e.g. the bible, *The Reaper Song*, popular songs, etc.). This will of course depend on the skills of the reader considerably more than the following two steps.

The second is to determine that a given insert has no diegetic motivation, i.e. that no character utters, reads, writes, thinks or looks at the given text. Taking a cue from Stenzel, I believe it is reasonable to assume that any such diegetic mediation attenuates the potential disruption for it invokes no shift in the narrative voice in command at the moment.<sup>203</sup> This assumption is further supported by Türk who identifies montage in Dos Passos’ *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel* and *Nineteen Nineteen* only, in spite of the fact that *Manhattan Transfer* abounds with ready-mades. In other words, diegetically motivated texts, unlike montage inserts, cannot be on the level zero but are necessarily on the level one or higher. Judicial correspondence which can be found in Chapter IV.1 of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (E127-128; G107-108) serves as an example of what is, in my account, regularly incorrectly listed among instances of montage.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Stenzel (1966) makes a somewhat different point than mine, although for him the narratological function of montage remains the same – the independence from the controlling narrator. He finds that this independence is secured only when instances of Žmegač’s open montage are *not* typographically marked, i.e. italicized, put into square quotes or introduced by colons and the like. I fully agree that punctuation marks such as colons and square quotes are signs of control from the higher narrative level but I remain undecided on italicization. Moreover, there are occasions when instances of Žmegač’s open montage are not marked but are still not instances of montage proper. Judicial correspondence by Herr Löwenhund, Attorney at Law is a case in point (E127-128; G107-108). Volker Hage dismisses the importance of Stenzel’s remarks failing to see that there is a narratological function to montage in addition to the phenomenological one.

<sup>204</sup> All of the translations, unless specified otherwise, are from the English translation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* by Eugene Jolas. The pagination format is (ENGLISH\_TRANSLATION\_PAGE\_NUMBERS; ORIGINAL\_PAGE\_NUMBERS).

All of the legal documents to be found on these pages ought to be construed as written by a character (tangential to the story-line) Herr Löwenhund, Attorney at Law.

Lastly, we need to check that the stylistic shift is not due to potential attitudes the narrator may exhibit and that it cannot be attributed back to “Döblin”.<sup>205</sup> An example of where this requirement is not met is the section in which Franz is ironically compared to ancient heroes such as Orestes (E97; G84). With the above-described procedure in mind let us analyse the novel and dispel several wrong notions about what counts as an instance of montage.

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<sup>205</sup> I shall be using “Döblin” here instead of Döblin to distinguish between the fictional narrator and the real-life agent, rather than to imply that Genette’s phenomenological engagement is to be preferred over Wilson’s.

## **AN ANALYSIS OF ALFRED DÖBLIN'S *BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ***

It is ironic that the best narratological analysis of montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* – Fortis Jannidis' "Wer sagt das?" ("Who says that?") – is not to be found in Gabriele Sander's (2014) bibliography. Jannidis (2006: 152) clearly separates montage from four other devices pertaining to narrative voice: 1) direct speech, 2) stream of consciousness, 3) free indirect speech, and 4) imitated speech (a variation of free indirect speech). Although precise, Jannidis' analysis is rather brief, and only serves as part of a broader argument about the need to retain the anthropomorphic aspects of the narrator figure in narrative theory. Also, as it does not take issue with the figure of the controlling narrator, it does not single out montage as the device which disrupts the controlling narrator's voice in the sense I suggest. On the one hand, direct speech and stream of consciousness are to be attributed to characters and as such cannot disrupt the voice of "Döblin" – the narrator on the narrative level zero. On the other, unlike what Ann Banfield (1982) thinks, both free indirect and imitated speech belong to the controlling narrator proper, despite the fact that they entail certain modulations in the voice owing to the character the proximity to whom they simulate. Finally, Jannidis does not refer to Döblin scholarship at all (which could account for his absence in Sander) and only gives a couple of examples of montage from the novel. Thus, the space for the project outlined at the end of the last section – a comparison with standard textual segments discussed in terms of montage in Döblin scholarship – remains wide open.

To understand what montage is let us inspect its first appearance in the novel:

He wandered down Rosenthaler Strasse past Wertheim's department store, at the right he turned into the narrow Sophienstrasse. He thought, this street is darker, it's probably better where it's darker. The prisoners are put in isolation cells, solitary confinement and general confinement. In isolation cells the

prisoner is kept apart from the others night and day. In solitary confinement the prisoner is placed in a cell, but during his walks in the open air, during instruction or religious service, he is put in company with the others. The cars roared and jangled on, house-fronts were rolling along one after the other without stopping (E13).<sup>206</sup>

The first and the last sentence of the quote clearly stem from a zero level narrator insofar as they present obvious instances of an, up until now, unnamed agency, later identified as “Döblin”, speaking about Franz. The opening of the second sentence (“He thought ...”) is also uttered from the zero narrative level but the indexical quality of the ensuing “this” suggests that we have moved onto the first narrative level as Franz’s interior monologue, i.e. stream of consciousness progresses. We need not decide between the two for it changes nothing as far as our investigation of montage is concerned. The following three sentences do matter.

In her indispensable work in which she identifies the various sources Döblin cites from, Sander (1998) has shown that the fourth, fifth and sixth sentences may be found in an actual Prussian prisoners’ regulations text. But, as Jannidis and Stenzel before him shrewdly observe, montage does not depend on our knowledge of whether something is a citation or not, but on our ability to identify textual segments in which the change of the narratorial voice takes place. This shift is certainly indicated by the change in tenses (from past simple to present simple in English and from preterit to present in German) and by the change from active to passive voice. There are other stylistic cues for the shift such as the impersonal and official tone embedded in these prescriptions. Taken together, these markers suggest that these three sentences may

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<sup>206</sup> “Er wanderte die Rosenthaler Straße am Warenhaus Tietz vorbei, nach, rechts bog er ein in die schmale Sophienstraße. Er dachte, diese Straße ist dunkler, wo es dunkel ist, wird es besser sein. Die Gefangenen werden in Einzelhaft, Zellenhaft und Gemeinschaftshaft untergebracht. Bei Einzelhaft wird der Gefangene bei Tag und Nacht unausgesetzt von andern Gefangenen gesondert gehalten. Bei Zellenhaft wird der Gefangene in einer Zelle untergebracht, jedoch bei Bewegung im Freien, beim Unterricht, Gottesdienst mit andern zusammengebracht. Die Wagen tobten und klingelten weiter, es rann Häuserfront neben Häuserfront ohne Aufhören hin” (G9-10).

belong to what we dubbed language “genre” in the first part of this chapter. We might call this genre “regulations genre”. At this point I part ways with Jannidis, who claims that although a good marker, style alone cannot account for the recognition of the shift in voice. For him it is the contrast to the preceding established voice that is crucial. Although I concede that this contrast is crucial (the disruption condition in my vocabulary), I cannot see how it is to be understood if not as a *stylistic* contrast.<sup>207</sup> Intradiegetic motivation and questions of voice modulation come to the fore only *after* we have identified a stylistic shift and then wish to check if the segment in question really is montage or not.

#### INTRADIEGETIC MOTIVATION AND VOICE MODULATION

My understanding of intradiegetic motivation is narrower than the common use of the term. I am not denying that there is a connection between the above cited montage inserts and the overall story-line (of course there is, for Franz has just been released from prison). My claim is that there is no obvious immediate diegetic way in which we can attribute these three sentences to something Franz sees, hears, reads, says, or thinks. Here one might be tempted to follow Fritz Martini (1954) and Weiskopf (1975) who seek to give an account of various inserts in terms of psychological associations, or even Helmut Schwimmer (1973) who explicitly states that Franz remembers the regulations. Then we would be dealing with interior monologue on level one and not with utterances on level zero that I claim we *cannot* attribute to “Döblin”. Although this is not an implausible account, my basic assumption is that as

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<sup>207</sup> There are other markers which might help in making the change in voice more salient. These devices include the use of punctuation marks or other graphic cues (brackets, italics or insertion of empty lines), but even they function primarily with reference to stylistic contrast. There is more to say about this for some of these devices may also lessen the contrast.

long as there are no clear markers that a given language “genre” is motivated intradiegetically in the narrow sense, no invocation of memory or mental states should be made.<sup>208</sup>

There are additional reasons which support this approach. The first one is extra-textual or authorial. As I have elaborated in the Literature Review, one of the main tenets of Döblin’s project of epic writing was anti-psychologism. This suggests that an account which explains montage without recourse to psychological states of characters is more in line with authorial intentions than an account which invokes these states. The other three reasons carry far more weight as they are primarily textual. First, there are numerous instances throughout the novel in which intradiegetic motivation is clearly spelled out. For instance, Franz reads the notification prohibiting his stay in Berlin and is plagued by verses he cannot get out of his head.<sup>209</sup> Second, there are occasions on which Franz remembers his prison time, but these are clearly marked as such.<sup>210</sup> Taken together, the two reasons serve as positive evidence that intradiegetic motivation was a device readily employed by Döblin. Therefore those who side with Schwimmer et al. claiming that the sentences

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<sup>208</sup> From now on whenever I refer to intradiegetic motivation I will be doing so in the narrow sense.

<sup>209</sup> An example of the former: “One morning, which otherwise wasn’t so bad, he found on his table an official yellow paper with printing and typewriting on it. Police commissioner, division 5, reference number so-and-so, you are requested in case of possible claims to quote the above reference number [...]” “Lag da eines sonst gar nicht üblen Morgens ein gelbes Papier auf seinem Tisch, amtlich, gedruckt und Schreibmaschine: Der Polizeipräsident, Abteilung 5, Geschäftszeichen, es wird er sucht, bei etwaigen Eingaben in vorliegender Angelegenheit das obige Geschäftszeichen anzugeben” (E40; G34-35). An example of the latter: “Incomprehensible verses keep running through his head in a circle. When you make soup, Fräulein Stein, I’ll get a spoon, Fräulein Stein. If you make noodles, Fräulein Stein, give me some noodles, Fräulein Stein. Tumbling down, tumbling up.” “Durch seinen Kopf rollten Verse, im Kreis, nicht zu verstehen: Kochste Suppe, Fräulein Stein, krieg ich n Löffel, Fräulein Stein. Kochste Nudeln, Fräulein Stein, gib mir Nudeln, Fräulein Stein. Fall ich runter, fall ich rauf.” (E31; G26).

<sup>210</sup> “Sweat on his brow. Again that fear. And suddenly his head slithers off. Boom, the bell rings, get up; five-thirty, six o’clock, cells opened; boom, boom, brush your coat quickly, suppose the old man makes inspection, no, not today. I’ll get discharged soon.” “Der Schweiß auf seiner Stirn! Die Angst, wieder! Und plötzlich rutscht ihm der Kopf weg. Bumm, Glockenzeichen, Aufstehn, 5 Uhr 30, 6 Uhr Aufschluß, bumm bumm, rasch noch die Jacke bursten, wenn der Alte revidiert, heute kommt er nicht. Ich wer bald entlassen” (E33; G28).

in question are intradiegetically motivated need to explain why there is no positive evidence for such claims. The burden of proof, in other words, lies with them. Finally, there are numerous occasions where there is just no way to attribute the various textual segments to Franz without recourse to interpretive acrobatics.<sup>211</sup> I turn to these now for they deserve a more detailed analysis than it has been afforded hitherto.

The opening of Book II has been regularly cited as an example of montage and some, most notably Klotz (1969), Harald Jähner (1984), and David Dollenmayer (1988), have produced lengthier treatments of this segment. Although different perspectives and interests guided their analyses, with Dollenmayer's being the most valuable for us because of its narratological slant, all agree that the whole of the first chapter of Book II – “Franz Biberkopf betritt Berlin” (“Franz Biberkopf enters Berlin”) amounts to montage. My view differs substantially.

I shall not begin the analysis with Chapter II.1 but with Book II proper, for there are a couple of paragraphs in Book II before Chapter II.1 starts. This will be illuminating for I shall demonstrate that there are a variety of styles “Döblin” can use without relinquishing control over the text. In other words, I shall demonstrate how not all deployments of language “genres” amount to instances of literary montage. The reason will be somewhat similar to intradiegetic motivation explained above. However, because the relation that concerns us is that between the ready-made and the narrator, and not between the ready-made and a character, it is best to drop the attribute “intradiegetic” altogether and talk about mechanisms of voice modulation instead.

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<sup>211</sup> There are also accounts which explicitly deny that the sentences are intradiegetically motivated: Jannidis (2006), Michael Jennings (1998) and Dominique Pleimling (2010).



Like every other book in the novel, Book II starts off with “Döblin” flaunting his knowledge of Franz’s story while at the same time only hinting at what exactly happens next. The tone is serious and compassionate yet not completely free of moralizing. What follows is a paragraph-long paraphrase of the beginning of the biblical myth of the Garden of Eden but told in the style of a fairy-tale. The reason why this is not a montage insert, despite the obvious stylistic shift, is that the paragraph following the paraphrase of the bible in a fairy-tale fashion explicitly refers to the mood set up in the paraphrase:

Once upon a time there lived in Paradise two human beings Adam and Eve. They had been put there by the Lord, who had also created the beasts and plants and heaven and earth. And Paradise was the wonderful garden of Eden. Flowers and trees were growing there, animals were playing about, and none oppressed the other. The sun rose and set, the moon did the same, there was abiding joy the whole day long in Paradise.

Thus let us start off merrily. We want to sing and move about: with our little hands going clap, clap, clap, our little feet going tap, tap, tap, moving to, moving fro, roundabout, and away we go (E45).<sup>212</sup>

“Merrily” in the first sentence of the second paragraph bears directly on the joy described in the previous paraphrase. The cheerful voice in command now appears to slide even further towards infantilism as it borrows from nursery rhymes introduced by a colon. The connection between the cheerful voice and the serious one just two paragraphs before (not quoted here) is strengthened by the common desire to know what happens next to Franz (“let us start off merrily”). Thus the most reasonable way to construe the opening of Book II is to posit a single narratorial agency whose voice

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<sup>212</sup> “Es lebten einmal im Paradies zwei Menschen, Adam und Eva. Sie waren vom Herrn hergesetzt, der auch Tiere und Pflanzen und Himmel und Erde gemacht hatte. Und das Paradies war der herrliche Garten Eden. Blumen und Bäume wuchsen hier, Tiere spielten rum, keiner quälte den andern. Die Sonne ging auf und unter, der Mond tat dasselbe, das war eine einzige Freude den ganzen Tag im Paradies. So wollen wir fröhlich beginnen. Wir wollen singen und uns bewegen: Mit den Händchen klapp, klapp, klapp, mit den Füßchen trapp, trapp, trapp, einmal hin, einmal her, ringsherum, es ist nicht schwer” (G37).

modulates four times: 1) flaunting and serious (not quoted here), 2) fairy-tale paraphrase of bible, 3) cheerful, and 4) nursery rhyme. There are at least two language “genres” we can identify here (e.g. fairy-tale and nursery rhyme) and what is known as “Moritat” in German is also on occasions suggested in the literature (Dietrich Scheunemann 1996) to describe the style of narratorial agency exercised in the book openings.<sup>213</sup>

Voice modulation should be understood as a device through which potentially separate voices are brought together and revealed to be under the control of a single narratorial agency. The procedure bears resemblance to intradiegetic motivation discussed above insofar as it rests on positive textual evidence. In both cases – the relationship between the characters and the ready-mades, and the relationship between the zero level narrator and the ready-mades – the textual clues in question provide good reasons for thinking that either the characters or the narrator directly engage with the ready-mades. Whereas the characters do so by reading, listening or thinking about them, the narrator does so by uttering them.<sup>214</sup> In both cases, however, the effect of these cues is the integration of language “genres”, the smoothing out of their introduction or, put simply, the elimination of the experience of disruption. The difference is that in the case of the characters, the clues for these effects are to be

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<sup>213</sup> The story, according to Scheunemann, is presented in a manner of an oral storytelling genre – street ballads – which was regularly accompanied by pictures. However, he seems to take liberties with the text when he describes oral formulas as follows: “To look at these pictures...” or “Here in the beginning we see...” (Scheunemann 1996: 86). In fact, in the introduction to the novel and the Book I, where these formulas derive from, respectively, no visual props or *literal* verbs of vision are invoked. The exact quotes are “to contemplate/look and to hear this” (“[d]ies zu betrachten und zu hören”) and “Here in the beginning, Franz Biberkopf leaves Tegel prison” (“Hier im Beginn verläßt Franz Biberkopf das Gefängnis Tegel”) (E8, 9; G7, 8). Thus it appears to be a bit of a stretch to call this style Moritat, although references to the style appear as early as with Benjamin’s review (1930). Whether we do or not, however, has little impact, for it is not necessary that voice modulation incorporates a language “genre” at all. As modulation 3 shows, the overall tone will suffice. Irony and parody fall into this category as well.

<sup>214</sup> It is fictionally indeterminate whether the language that makes up a good part of the text of the novel is written, spoken or thought by “Döblin”. To signify this indeterminacy I will use the verb “to utter” when talking about the activity he engages in.

found on level one or higher, i.e. on the diegetic plane. In the case of “Döblin” they are to be found on level zero.

Although it is doubtful that we can formulate a simple rule for what would count as evidence of voice modulation, some general conclusions from the above examples may be drawn and put to heuristic use. It appears that direct reference to the act of storytelling as a type of narratorial commentary, coincidence of tone across adjacent language “genres” and signalling the use of another language “genre” by means of punctuation marks would form the core of this heuristic. All of these properties pertain to level zero.

## MONTAGE AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CITY

Chapter II.1 proper (E45-55; G38-47) is introduced with a series of visual symbols denoting various types of services available in Berlin and composed of the following textual segments: 1) building lot scheme, 2) hunting lessee, 3) notice of resignation, 4) weather report, 5) tram 68 notice, 6) man with two yellow packages, 7) various goods, 8) A.E.G. information, 9) parts of various conversations, 10) more various goods, 11) construction work, 12) Max Rüst, 13) two people in a cafe, and 14) a young girl and an elderly gentleman. In my scheme segments 1 to 5 are instances of montage for they meet all three criteria I have proposed (e.g. the stylistic condition, the phenomenological condition, and the absence of control condition).<sup>215</sup> All of the

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<sup>215</sup> Segments 2 and 3 are introduced by an en dash. An en dash, however, is not informative of the narrator in the sense that a colon is. A colon signals that what follows is an enumeration or a specification of the subject introduced in the space preceding the colon and strongly suggests that the enumeration or specification is done by whoever introduced the colon. An en dash merely marks that the following part is to be read “separately” from the previous. In this sense an en dash is not much different than the paragraph break, colon or semi-colon. Therefore, this is not an instance in which punctuations act as a marker of voice modulation.

others meet the phenomenological criterion, i.e. they are introduced abruptly without causal connections and with only the fact of physical proximity to Rosenthaler Platz in common. For the most part, however, they fall short of satisfying the stylistic criterion. Segments 7, 8, 10 and 11 might appear to meet this criterion on first inspection but in fact they do so only partially and within what I have called voice modulation. The A.E.G. information is introduced with a colon (like the nursery rhyme discussed above) and presents a quotation from the telephone directory.<sup>216</sup> Segments 7 and 10 present another type of modulation, the identification of which hinges on the presence of narratorial commentary. Consider segment 7:

Various fruit brandies at wholesale prices, Dr. Bergell, notary and attorney-at-law, Lukutate, the Indian rejuvenation treatment for elephants, Fromms Akt, the best rubber sponge, what's the use of so many rubber sponges anyway? (E48)<sup>217</sup>

The question put forward at the end of the segment reveals a narratorial attitude towards one particular item on the list and gives good reason to claim that the whole list of goods and services issues from a single agency. It is also reasonable to assume that the voice belongs to the same agency which has just recounted a brief sighting of a man with two yellow packages (6): first, because the manner in which both segments are conveyed suggests the narrator's physical proximity to Rosenthaler Platz; second, because segment 6 also ends with an expression of an attitude: "damned lucky, that fellow with his packages" (Ibid.).<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> "The A. E. G. is an immense enterprise, which embraces, according to the 1928 telephone directory: [...]" "Die AEG. ist ein ungeheures Unternehmen, welches nach Telefonbuch von 1928 umfaßt: [...]" (E48; G41).

<sup>217</sup> "Diverse Fruchtbranntweine zu Engrospreisen, Dr. Bergell, Rechtsanwalt und Notar, Lukutate, das indische Verjüngungsmittel der Elefanten, Fromms Akt, der beste Gummischwamm, wozu braucht man die vielen Gummischwämme" (G41).

<sup>218</sup> "Der hat aber mal Schwein gehabt mit seine Pakete" (Ibid.).

Segment 11 seems to be the most problematic, for there are no narratorial comments and the potential ready-mades are so short that it is difficult to decide whether or not montage takes place within the segment:

On the Elsasser Strasse they have fenced in the whole street leaving only a narrow gangway. A power engine puffs behind the billboards. Becker-Fiebig, Building Contractor, Berlin W 38. There is a constant din, tip-carts are lined up as far as the corner, on which stands the Commercial and Savings Bank, Deposit Branch L, Custody of Securities, Payment of Savings Bank Deposits. Five men, workmen, kneel in front of the bank driving small stones into the ground (E49).<sup>219</sup>

There are two potential ready-mades here. The first, sentence-long, starts with “Becker-Fiebig”; the second, which comprises only a part of a sentence, starts with “Commercial and Savings Bank” and runs until the end of that sentence. These inserts may easily be read as embedded within the diegesis and as narrated by the same voice from previous segments (if for no other reason than the impression of his proximity to Rosenthaler Platz). “Becker-Fiebig” would then be construed as the content of one of the billboards and the prolonged identification of the bank’s name and address as a whim or indulgence of the narrator. These are certainly plausible options and we can think of them as diegetically motivated types of language “genres” which relate not to the characters but to the narrator. In contrast with the heuristic outlined above which deals with level zero, here we have an issue which straddles level zero and level one. In other words, this is an example of voice modulation which cannot be accounted for with recourse to level zero alone.

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<sup>219</sup> “In der Elsasser Straße haben sie den ganzen Fahrweg eingezäunt bis auf eine kleine Rinne. Hinter dem Bauzaun pufft eine Lokomotive. Becker-Fiebig, Bauunternehmer A. G. Berlin W 35. Es rumort, Kippwagen liegen bis zur Ecke, wo die Commerz- und Privatbank ist, Depositenkasse L. Aufbewahrung von Wertpapieren, Einzahlung von Banksparkonten. Fünf Männer knien vor der Bank, Arbeiter, schlagen kleine Steine in die Erde” (G42).

We might call this instance of voice modulation the strong coincidence of the subject matter narrated. I would advise, however, that the heuristic used in identifying this type of modulation be applied only sparingly, and then only when the potential ready-mades are very short in length. Therefore, I would certainly count lengthier inserts such as the scientific report on sexual potency in Book I (E32, 34; G27, 29) as a case of montage, despite the fact that it is directly preceded by Franz's failure to perform (implying a coincidence with the subject matter narrated). I would also classify the insert of information about Tram 99 at the beginning of segment 14 as montage.<sup>220</sup> Of course, it would be futile to define what "short in length" stands for. Decisions regarding that should be made on a case-to-case basis. The rule of thumb should be that as long as the ready-made is perceived as long enough to produce a disruption it should be counted as montage.

Though decreasing the number of montage inserts in my analysis of Chapter II.1 in comparison with other commentators, I am not suggesting that the chapter becomes any less effective in simulating the whole of the experience of "hyperstimulation". I am merely saying that montage does not do the job alone. It does so together with other devices such as insertion of graphic material (Berlin services), organization of textual material based on spatial adjacency rather than causal connection (1-14), shifts in subject matter across (1-14) and within segments (6-11), brevity of textual segments (1-12), incompleteness of narrative segments (6, 9, 14),

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<sup>220</sup> "A young girl gets out of the 99, Mariendorf, Lichtenrader Chaussee, Tempelhof, Hallesches Tor, Hedwigskirche, Rosenthaler Platz, Badstrasse, Seestrasse, at the corner of Togostrasse, during the night of Saturday to Sunday continuous service between the Uferstrasse and Tempelhof, Friedrich-Karl Strasse, at intervals of 15 minutes. It is 8 p.m., she has a music-case under her arm [...]" "Ein junges Mädchen steigt aus der 99, Mariendorf, Lichtenrader Chaussee, Tempelhof, Hallesches Tor, Hedwigskirche, Rosenthaler Platz, Badstraße, Seestraße Ecke Togostraße, in den Nächten von Sonnabend zu Sonntag ununterbrochener Betrieb zwischen Uferstraße und Tempelhof, Friedrich-Karl-Straße, in Abständen von 15 Minuten. Es ist 8 Uhr abends, sie hat eine Notenmappe unter dem Arm [...]" (E54; G46).

voice modulation (7-8, 10-11), partial, rapid and disruptive presentation of causally disjoint dialogue lines (9), flaunting of narratorial prescience (11), emphasis on dramatic dialogue (13) and montage within segments (14), to name just a few. To repeat a key point from the Literature Review, given that most of these devices can be found in literary works from before the twentieth century it is anachronistic to describe them as montage.

The analysis of the opening of Book II can serve as a model for the understanding of the relationship between montage and the experience of the city. It can also serve as a model for the analysis of Chapter IV.1 which has been regularly and mistakenly invoked as an example of a chapter constructed fully through montage.<sup>221</sup>

There are, moreover, other aspects of montage inserts which come to the fore once narratological concerns are prioritized over phenomenological ones. On the one hand, montage inserts may be analysed in terms of their relation to the “linguistic version of the ontological gap argument”. It will be shown that there are some inserts for which it can neither be said that they issue from “Döblin”, nor that anybody fictionally utters them. In other words, not only is there a multiplication of implicit narrators on level zero which dismantles the presence of a controlling fictional narrator, but there are even textual segments for which literally *no* fictional source can be identified. On the other hand, different categories may be constructed depending on the relationship montage inserts have toward diegesis. I have already identified one type – montage inserts which strongly coincide with the subject matter narrated. A complementary category will be independent montage. Thus, I shall not be concerned

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<sup>221</sup> Klotz (1969), Dollenmayer (1988), and Pleimling (2010) present the most notable cases.

with the overall typology of language “genres”. As long as we exclude literary allusions, real and fictive persons, and intradiegetically motivated narratives from Schwimmer’s (1973) proposal, we may consider that that work has been done satisfactorily.<sup>222</sup>

## DIEGESIS AND MONTAGE

The first aspect of montage I wish to address pertains to the relation between montage inserts and diegesis. We can distinguish between montage inserts which relate to the diegesis strongly and those for which no immediate connection obtains. The segments 1 to 5 from Chapter II.1 are of the latter type. The overall connection to diegesis remains vague and the only clear relation appears to be spatial – inserts belong to various instances of “urban” discourse available around Rosenthaler Platz. I propose to call these examples instances of “independent montage”.

The scientific report on sexual potency introduced after Franz fails to perform and the aforementioned prisoners’ regulation montage fit the other type of montage well – the coincidence of the subject matter narrated. We could also apply this category to the appearances of *The Reaper Song*. The song is introduced immediately after the description of Franz’s stare at Reinhold, which warrants the reader to associate the song with Reinhold. The procedure is repeated twice on the same page in order to secure the connection between the two:

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<sup>222</sup> Language “genres” would then include: fragments of the city (graphic symbols, official announcements and statistics), the press (political, non-political, advertisements), economics (posters, stock-market reports), scientific texts, classic literary texts, poems (*The Reaper Song*) and popular songs and religious texts (Abraham and Isaac, The Garden of Eden, The Whore of Babylon, *Jeremiah* and *Ecclesiastes*).



Franz is still watching Reinhold.

There is a mower, Death, abhorred. Has power given him by the Lord. When he begins his scythe to whet, keener it grows and keener yet, soon will his blade begin to sweep, man must endure, though it cut deep.

A funny chap. Franz smiles. Reinhold doesn't smile at all.

There is a mower, Death, abhorred. Has power given him by the Lord. Soon will his blade begin to sweep (E192).<sup>223</sup>

We may call both of these subtypes instances of “associative montage” and think of them in terms of coincidence with the subject matter narrated.<sup>224</sup> This may include responses to present narrative concerns (Franz’s release from jail or his sexual impotency) or the establishment of character leitmotifs (*The Reaper Song* in connection with Reinhold). Of course, combinations between the two subtypes are possible, as in the case when *The Reaper Song* is related to Reinhold’s murder of Mieze (E370; G317) or when the serpent motif is introduced into the paraphrased version of the Garden of Eden story, immediately after Franz has been betrayed by Lüders (E112; G95). Two occurrences of the *Revelation 17* paraphrase also follow a pattern similar to *The Reaper Song*: first as another Reinhold leitmotif (E206-207; G177) and then as directly connected to Reinhold throwing Franz out of the moving car (E222; G189).

As particular instances of associative montage are deployed on later occasions, the exact nature of the relation towards diegesis may change. The point here is not to

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<sup>223</sup> “Franz beobachtet immer den Reinhold. Es ist ein Schnitter, der heißt Tod, hat Gewalt vom großen Gott. Heut wetzt er das Messer, es schneidet schon viel besser, bald wird er drein schneiden, wir müßens erliden. Ein merkwürdiger Junge. Franz lächelt. Reinhold lächelt gar nicht. Es ist ein Schnitter, der heißt Tod, hat Gewalt vom großen Gott. Bald wird er drein schneiden” (G163).

<sup>224</sup> The psychological overtones of “associative” should be understood as pertaining to the reader, and not the characters or the narrator. The allusion to Sergei M. Eisenstein’s terminology is deliberate.

enumerate every instance of a particular montage but only to highlight these possible transformations. Thus the first paraphrase of the biblical passage *Ecclesiastes 3* is introduced through a comparison of Mieke's and Reinhold's walk in Freienwalde with a sermon (E363; G311). The paraphrase is lengthy and rich in motifs, so any precise connection between it and the walk remains vague.<sup>225</sup> The second appearance of the paraphrase is much shorter and comes after Reinhold has exhibited the first clear signs of aggressive behaviour towards Mieke (E364; G312). At this point we may recollect the montage of *The Reaper Song* appearing only two pages earlier (E362; G310) as well as "Döblin's" warning in the introduction to the Book VII – "Now the hammer crashes down, crashes down against Franz Biberkopf" (E317).<sup>226</sup> This, together with the prophetic and ominous tone of the *Ecclesiastes* paraphrase – "To everything there is a season, to everything" ("ein jegliches, ein jegliches hat seine Zeit") – might prompt the reader to think that the montage could be referring to Franz's or Mieke's fate in some sense. Indeed, as Reinhold gets more aggressive the paraphrase continues to appear (on one occasion it is impossible to decide whether it is an instance of Mieke's free indirect speech or montage proper) until finally the connection is spelled out for us:

Its season, its season, to everything its season! A time to strangle, a time to heal; to break down and to build up, to rend, and to sew, to everything its

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<sup>225</sup> It might be claimed that the first *Ecclesiastes* paraphrase is in fact better construed as voice modulation rather than montage proper, for in the same paragraph it is followed by these sentences: "Therefore I say there is nothing better than to laugh and be merry. Better than to be merry. Merry, let us be merry. There is nothing better beneath the sun than to laugh and be merry." "Darum merkt ich, daß nichts Besseres ist, als fröhlich sein. Besseres als fröhlich sein. Fröhlich sein, laßt uns fröhlich sein. Es ist nichts Besseres unter der Sonne als lachen und fröhlich sein" (E363; G311). On this account the opening "therefore" refers to the paraphrase. Given that I have argued that Book II is a case of voice modulation with which these sentences clearly resonate in tone, style and content, I should say the same for this textual segment. To this I respond that resonance with a part of the text is far from sufficient to count the segment in question an instance of voice modulation, for then there would be no such thing as montage involving coincidence with the subject matter narrated. More importantly, "therefore" may just as well refer to the passage preceding the *Ecclesiastes* paraphrase, characterized by the very cheerful tone.

<sup>226</sup> "Hier saust der Hammer, der Hammer gegen Franz Biberkopf" (G271).

season. She throws herself down, trying to escape. They wrestle in the hollow. Help, Franz! (E370)<sup>227</sup>

There are also montage inserts which straddle the divide between independent and associative usage. Initially they might appear as independent but as the narrative progresses they become integrated into the associative complex. The slaughterhouse montage fits the bill well. Appearing initially in Chapter IV.4 the only connection that slaughterhouse montage has to Franz's story is that the slaughterhouse in question finds itself in Berlin. The chapter itself is quite complex, for the slaughterhouse montage is both flanked and interrupted by further montage inserts of various related data: the area the slaughterhouse covers, its administrative organization, cattle-market supply, butcher shop information, and preparation of stuffed pig's feet. In fact, with the exception of the last paragraph of Chapter IV.4, which deals with Franz, the whole chapter might be called the slaughterhouse sequence, consisting of narrative and non-narrative (data) montage inserts that *internally* relate to narrative inserts on the basis of their coincidence with the subject matter narrated there. The numerous "you-addresses" directed at the animals being slaughtered, the fixation on gruesome details and the serious tone employed are some of the key traits which set this voice apart from "Döblin's". The slaughterhouse montage transforms from independent to associative montage once two shorter parts from the original narrative montage appear just prior and just after Mieke's murder (E369, 370; G316, 317). We see then how the scene of Mieke's murder plays a pivotal role in the understanding of various relations montage inserts can take towards diegesis.

Two other important paraphrases of biblical books – *Job* and *Revelation 17* (The Whore of Babylon) – also begin as independent instances of montage but take a

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<sup>227</sup> "Seine Zeit! Seine Zeit! Jegliches seine Zeit. Würgen und heilen, brechen und bauen, zerreißen und zunähen, seine Zeit. Sie wirft sich hin, um zu entweichen. Sie ringen in der Kute. Hilfe Franz" (G316).

somewhat different path over the course of the novel – they become integrated into the narrative itself. For instance, the moral depravity personified as The Whore of Babylon in *Revelation 17* makes its second appearance as soon as Franz goes back to his old smuggling ways: his new clothes are flaunted adjacent to a description of The Whore’s rich attire (E266; G226). Thus, the *Revelation 17* paraphrase, unlike the *Job* paraphrase, first gets transformed into the associative montage. They both, however, get integrated into Franz’s storyline proper in Chapter VIII.5 (E398-400; G341-342). As such these language “genres” exhibit a pattern inverse to the one in the *Garden of Eden* paraphrase. Whereas the *Garden of Eden* paraphrase first appears as a part of voice modulation and is only later transformed into an instance of (associative) montage, the *Job* and *Revelation 17* paraphrases start off as (independent) montage and then become integrated into the story told by the narrative voice.

Some commentators have suggested that the text of Chapter VIII.5 fictionally issues from Death and not “Döblin”. I am inclined to accept this account. But then we need to understand that Death is a character on a diegetic plane and not a narrator on level zero rivalling “Döblin” directly. We also have to keep in mind that if it is Death whose voice presides over this chapter, then this voice is also in charge of many a disruptive instances of “you-addresses” directed at Franz, starting as early as in Chapter I.1 and often signalled by brackets – “(terrible, Franze, why terrible?)” (E11).<sup>228</sup> Thus, although Death’s utterances are stylistically different from “Döblin’s” and although they may be introduced in a disruptive fashion, they may not be considered montage for in the last book Death is explicitly identified as a character. The fact that Franz’s conversation with Death might only be a delusion does not change anything as far as montage is concerned.

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<sup>228</sup> “[schrecklich, Franze, warum schrecklich?]” (G8).

It might be objected that this is a too neat a picture, providing clear-cut examples of montage and equally unproblematic examples of voice modulation or intradiegetic motivation. Admittedly, there are instances in which segments do not fit the models I have outlined as nicely as one would like. Perhaps the best example of this is the paraphrase of the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. On level one, its introduction raises the question whether it is intradiegetically motivated, i.e. whether it should count as montage at all:

And a violent sleep seizes him again, unsealing his eyes. Franz knows everything.

And there is a mountain and the old man arises and says to his son: Come with me.<sup>229</sup>

On the one hand, there are reasons to believe that what follows is a dream. The phrase “violent sleep” may be related to the story of sacrifice that follows, and “unsealing his eyes” together with “Franz knows everything” may serve as further markers that the biblical paraphrase is intradiegetically motivated. Moreover, the repetition of “and” at the beginning of the two paragraphs adds to their resonance. Finally, if the deixis of “there” were to be understood metaphorically as referring to the “dream world” we would have an even better reason to read the second paragraph as a description of Franz’s dream. On the other hand, “seizes him again” clearly indicates that if the Abraham paraphrase were a dream, it would not be the first time Franz had dreamt it. However, this is the first time that the paraphrase appears in the book in any form whatsoever. Moreover, “violent” is not really a good description of the following paraphrase, for although it is clearly about the possibility of human sacrifice an

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<sup>229</sup> “Und der gewaltsame Schlaf kommt wieder und reißt ihm die Augen auf und Franz weiß alles. Und da ist ein Gebirge und der alte Mann steht auf und sagt zu seinem Sohn: Komm mit” (G255). The translation is mine for I think the English one establishes far too many connections between the segments. Jolas translates “gewaltsam” as “profound” whereas I opt for “violent”. He also chooses a far lengthier translation of “Und da” opting for, “Now in that place there”, whereas I use “And there”.

atmosphere of aggression is never conveyed; the mood is rather one of acceptance and peace. Finally, “there” can also be stripped of its metaphorical reference and understood in the literal sense of referring to the place where the story of Abraham and Isaac takes place.

If we accept that this textual segment is an instance of montage, as I am inclined to do, further questions arise on level zero: is the montage associative or independent? The same line of reasoning we developed concerning the relation between the character and the language “genre” should discount any claim that the montage is associative in the sense of being Franz’s dream. It does not, however, discount the option that the story is *like* a dream – but even then the connection would be too vague to count the montage as associative. Nonetheless, it is still difficult to say that the montage is independent in the same sense that the spatially adjacent “urban” discourse of Rosenthaler Platz was, for there are symbolic coincidences with other montage material that has already turned up (primarily the slaughterhouse montage). Moreover, it appears that at least on one occasion, brief references to the Abraham paraphrase are later integrated into the narrative (E328; G280).

As I stated in the introduction, I am not interested in providing an interpretation of the book but in outlining a phenomenological and narratological model with which to analyse instances of montage in it. What I can say is that there is a difference between the Abraham paraphrase and the other two stories which are often invoked as parables for Franz’s story and as such often described as montage segments: the story of Zannowich and that of Finke-Bornemann. In my account neither of them is a montage because the Zannowich story is told by a Jewish character (E19-23; G15-19) and the Finke-Bornemann story by “Döblin” (E340-341, 347, 347-348, 349, 350, 354; G290-291, 296, 297, 298, 299, 302). Looking at the

conditions for montage in more detail, whereas Zannowich's story produces no phenomenological disruption, Finke-Bornemann's does as it abruptly interrupts the main story-line.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, neither of them is an instance of a language "genre" for we have noted in the case of Zannowich that the use of Yiddish does not count as a "style" in this typology. Although both stories can be afforded the status of the parable in the novel, neither should be thought to do so by virtue of satisfying the criteria needed for them to count as montage.

### VOICELESS MONTAGE

In conclusion, let us consider montage inserts 1 to 5 from Chapter II.1 again, but do so in the light of the "linguistic version of the ontological gap argument" and the identification of the voice in command. Segment 2 clearly identifies the voice on level zero in command of reporting the content of the hunting lessee. However, it is not "Döblin's": "I have granted to Herr Bottich, hunting lessee [...] The Chief Burgomaster, Controller of Hunting Licenses" (E47).<sup>231</sup> A somewhat different example of montage may be found in segment 3. A typical sentence reads as follows: "The district office has expressed recognition of his merits in a note of thanks to Mr. Pangel" (Ibid.). A verb in the past tense is used narratively here which clearly establishes the existence of a narrator. This narrator, although anonymous, cannot be identified with "Döblin" for there is no sign of voice modulation. We are dealing with

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<sup>230</sup> There is, admittedly, one occurrence of the Finke-Bornemann story which is executed as a rhyme, i.e. a particular language "genre" (E347; G296). A sentence from the occurrence: "When Bornemann to the water hied, a fresh corpse floating he espied, a bright idea he descried." "Wie der Bornemann also ans Wasser kam, im Wasser eine frische Leiche schwamm. In Bornemanns Haupt da ein Lichtlein glomm." Whether this is an instance of voice modulation or montage proper is open for discussion.

<sup>231</sup> "Ich habe dem Jagdpächter, Herrn Bottich [...] die [...] Genehmigung [...] erteilt [...] Der Oberbürgermeister als Jagdvorsteher" (G40).

a shift in voice proper and the introduction of an implicit narrator which brings down “Döblin’s” ambitions towards the status of the controlling narrator once and for all.

But there is more. Consider the previously discussed instances of prisoners’ regulation and data inserts in the slaughterhouse sequence, or segment 5 in Chapter II.1. A typical sentence in segment 5 reads: “Car No. 68 runs across Rosenthaler Platz, Wittenau, Nordbahnhof, Heilanstalt, Weddingplatz, Stettiner Station, Rosenthaler Platz, Alexanderplatz, Straussberger Platz, Frankfurter Allee Station, Lichtenberg, Herzberge Insane Asylum” (Ibid.).<sup>232</sup> The present tense of “runs” (“fährt”) is not used narratively but to express a state of affairs. The same non-narrative use of verbs takes place in the regulations “genre” as well as in the statistical information and technical instruction “genres” found among the slaughterhouse inserts. As such, these segments may be construed along exactly the same lines as Carroll’s (2006) and Kania’s (2005) proposal, i.e. as containers for propositional content of the type “X is/does Y”. This in turn means that it is fictionally indeterminate (and most likely false) that anybody or anything utters the segments in question.<sup>233</sup> Thus, there are examples of montage for which the fictionally responsible party cannot simply be named, but for which there is no-one to name to begin with.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> “Die Elektrische Nr. 68 fährt über den Rosenthaler Platz, Wittenau, Nordbahnhof, Heilanstalt, Weddingplatz, Stettiner Bahnhof, Rosenthaler Platz, Alexanderplatz, Strausberger Platz, Bahnhof Frankfurter Allee, Lichtenberg, Irrenanstalt Herzberge” (G40).

<sup>233</sup> There is one sentence in segment 5 which causes problems: “Get to know about the lines.” Whereas the English translation merely implies a “you-address” the German original produces it explicitly: “Unterrichte dich über das Liniennetz.” The problem is that if we follow Benveniste (1971: 224) we are obliged to say that every instance of “you-address” implies an “I”. This means there is an “I” fictionally responsible for the sentence and a fortiori the segment in question. However, no such problems plague the prisoners’ regulations example.

<sup>234</sup> It is possible to say that these particular voiceless montage inserts should be understood as actual, in the sense that the first sentence in Anna Karenina can be understood as making a statement about the actual state of affairs concerning families: “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” However, that the sentence might indeed have a direct claim to actuality does not mean it should not at the same time be understood fictionally as well. For although we can think of this sentence as expressing Tolstoy’s opinion, it is also reasonable to assume it expresses “Tolstoy’s”



This is also the place to discourage any appeal to what might be called the “material version of the ontological gap argument”. It might be objected that although we cannot identify any of the voices as “Döblin’s” we could still save his status as the controlling narrator if we say that “Döblin” is responsible for fictionally compiling all of the various inserts which make up the novel. This is an idea similar to Rimmon-Kennan’s (2003) when she says that even epistolary novels have a controlling narrator – the one who has fictionally edited the letters together. However, although there are epistolary novels which do explain how it is fictionally the case that the material is available (as is the case in Choderlos de Laclos’ *Dangerous Liaisons*), there are others in which this is left fictionally indeterminate. Similarly, it is fictionally indeterminate (and likely false) that “Döblin” compiled all of the various inserts into a fictional written piece which coincides with the actual text of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. There are no positive clues that any such action on “Döblin’s” part takes place. It is only actually true that Alfred Döblin compiled all of the segments in question into the actual text of the novel. Thus, appeals to fictional editors or compilers who fictionally make it the case that all of the textual segments are fictionally in one place are unwarranted.<sup>235</sup>

With all this in mind we can now see how montage is used not only to efface the potential controlling narrator or, on occasions, to wrest control over the text away from it, but also to literally mute and destroy the figure of the narrator. At these moments Döblin does not merely simulate the narrator-less presentation of images in moving pictures as he does when he robs “Döblin” of control of a particular segment,

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opinion at the same time. Similarly, although there is no fictional narrator in the case of voiceless montage inserts, there is still nothing to stop us from engaging with them as fictional even if they also contain information which obtain actually. Whether we are authorized to do so in Walton’s sense, however, remains the question.

<sup>235</sup> In the chapter on Fassbinder’s adaptation we shall see that a similar logic applies to film.

but actually manages to accomplish narrator-less presentation of text. Thus, it is not only phenomenologically that “Döblin” achieves effects similar to those achieved by some films, but also on the level of narrative voice. With these two aspects of literary montage in mind let us proceed to film adaptations of the novel.

## CHAPTER 3

### A Formalist Adaptation Study:

#### Visual and Sound Montage in Piel Jutzi's *Berlin-Alexanderplatz*

##### INTRODUCTION TO AN ADAPTATION STUDY

##### INTERPRETATION AS ADAPTATION

In this chapter I shall provide a formal analysis of the two key montage sequences in the first film adaptation of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. I shall argue that the articulation of spatial relations is crucial for construing both visual and sound montage. Moreover, I shall claim that formal analysis, unlike interpretation, is not blighted by the problems of the originality requirement touched upon in the introduction. I shall begin by outlining the formalist adaptation study I am undertaking in this chapter. From the introductory remarks concerning the distinction between interpretation and formal analysis, the historical study in Chapter One and the narratological discussion in Chapter Two, a picture of what I find to be of interest in the study of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as an adaptation has started to emerge. In the first place, it concerns the identification of a device – montage – which exhibits similar phenomenological effects across media and the analysis of its narratological consequences. Therefore, it would be wrong to think of the thesis as a conservative adaptation study, which starts off with the source text – the novel – and proceeds to discuss its derivative texts in sequence.<sup>236</sup> Even by itself, Chapter One should have dispelled such considerations, for it demonstrated that the focal point for the

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<sup>236</sup> Whoever feels that source/derivative text harbours an evaluative binary opposition is welcome to exchange the pair for hypo/hyper-text in Gérard Genette's (1997) sense.

recognition of montage it is not even the novel but its *reception*. In Chapter Two I devoted considerable attention to the discussion of the linguistic medium in order to demonstrate the specific effects that the deployment of montage inserts has on a commonplace term of narratological analysis – viz. the narrator. Taken together, the two preceding chapters thus spell out the properties montage exhibits depending on the medium in which it is deployed. This form of analysis continues in the following two chapters of the dissertation.

It is undeniable that analysis of this sort bears certain similarities with the “medium specificity” approach discussed in the Literature Review. Certainly, the “linguistic version of the ontological gap” argument in Chapter Two hinges on the phenomenon of deixis. The argument makes claims about some key narratological properties of literary fiction and does so on the basis of traits specific to the medium. At the same time, however, my analysis never takes the form of, say, Seymour Chatman’s “What Novels Can Do That Films Can’t (and Vice Versa)” in the sense that it never suggests that there are certain inherently (un)cinematic or (un)literary devices, nor does it make any evaluative claims on the basis of such supposedly (un)cinematic or (un)literary devices. None of the fallacies pertaining to “medium specificity” in the adaptation studies listed by Thomas Leitch (2003) may be found here either. In other words, I do not subscribe to the assumption popularized by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in *Laocoön* that the success of a given work depends on the maximal deployment of devices specific to a particular medium. As far as film is concerned, V. F. Perkins (1972) has demonstrated the essentially hybrid nature of cinema and criticized both Soviet montage and realist demands for purity. Noël Carroll (1988b, 2008b) has produced an even more general critique of the usefulness of medium specificity in art criticism. There is no need, therefore, to rehearse the arguments made against the

fallacies that pertain to medium specificity. Nevertheless, this is not to say that no (almost-)ubiquitous claims about the medium can be made. The “linguistic version of the ontological gap argument”, for instance, makes a claim for the near-ubiquity of controlling fictional narrators in literary fiction, and in the next chapter I shall produce an argument for their near-absence in fiction film. It should be said, however, that many of the film’s supposed affinities – as for instance its affinity with the present, as professed by Béla Balázs (2010: 21), Jean Epstein (1988: 413) and Jean Mitry (2000: 53) among others – are by no means necessary consequences of the medium. The same can also be said of Wolfgang Iser’s idea (1978: 138-139) that novels allow for greater imaginative engagement with their characters because of their lack of visuals.

Having elaborated on the type of adaptation study I seek to undertake, I will now clarify two more points raised in the thesis’ introduction. The first pertains to potential qualms regarding the expansion of the term “adaptation” to include interpretation. The second deals with concerns regarding interpretation as an “original” contribution to scholarly endeavour. Focusing on the first for the time being: am I not doing something similar to what I chastised the commentators of the novel for? Am I not inflating the concept of “adaptation” to a point of uselessness in much the same way as I argued happened to the term “montage” in Döblin scholarship? Or, seen from the other end of the spectrum, if I am willing to seriously entertain interpretation as adaptation, why not draw attention to the ready-made aspect of literary montage and call the ready-made an adaptation as well?

In order to tackle the first objection, a definition of adaptation is required. As Leitch (2012) points out, this is more difficult than would appear at first glance. Adaptation theorists often avoid providing one, Robert Stam (2005) and Julie Sanders (2006) being two recent notable examples. Attempts have been made to hazard a

definition of adaptation however. Paisley Livingston, for examples, suggests that “adaptation [...] is a work that has been intentionally based on source work and that faithfully and overtly imitates many of this source’s characteristic features, while diverging from it in other respects” (2010: 104). Another definition is given by James Griffiths: “[an adaptation is] an imitation [that] tries to capture some qualities of the object without perversely trying to capture them all” (1997: 41). Linda Hutcheon, finally, defines adaptation as “repetition without replication” and “an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art” (2006: 7, 170). From all of this it is clear that we are dealing with a fuzzy concept – the most pressing issue being where to draw the line between adaptation and more general forms of intertextuality, including ready-mades.

Both Hutcheon (2006: 169-171) and Leitch (2012) engage with this problem head on, and although both list a number of classes of texts that fall outside the domain of adaptation, they provide no precisely articulated criteria for establishing borders. Although the borders I shall propose are not as strong as those that I have identified for literary montage, they do advance a step beyond those presently available in the above discussions. Moreover, because of the scope of my study, I shall only focus on narrative texts as source ones.

One quick way to distinguish intertextuality from adaptation is to say that adaptations are necessarily intentional artefacts. I can make a reference to *The Odyssey* without being aware I am making one (I can do so simply by comparing the attraction of something to a siren’s call) and thus bring about an intertextual phenomenon. However, I have not produced an adaptation of *Hamlet* even if I stage a play about a Danish prince who finds his father murdered and his uncle on the throne, but have no idea of the existence of Shakespeare’s original play.

Another characteristic of the above definitions is that there has to be a certain level of divergence from the source text. Therefore, even if it is not perfect (a scene or a page may be missing), a copy of a text does not count as an adaptation as long as the intention was to make a perfect copy. As we shall see in a moment, this border is no less fuzzy than the one between adaptation and other related phenomena.

Is the performance of a written text an adaptation? Though it is clearly modelled on a script, a libretto, or a dramatic text, and though it endeavours to instantiate all of the character, narrative, thematic, stylistic, chronotopic, socio-ideological, and other relevant features present in both the main text and the stage directions, a performance does so in a different medium. Does the transposition of the medium necessarily transform an execution into an adaptation? An even fuzzier case is that of translation. In the case of standard translations we might easily brush aside potential indecision by saying that there is simply too much repetition going on – translations are regularly characterized by fidelity not only to the storyline but also to lexical and sentence meaning. But what do we say about translations of epic poems which need to make compromises between verse properties (prosody, rhyme, etc.) and semantics? Or what about translations which switch from one literary genre to another, most often from poetry to prose eliminating verse properties altogether? I propose the following criterion for distinguishing between adaptations and objects too similar to the source text: as long as a one-to-one correspondence for all of the *relevant* features between the source and the derivative text can be made, the latter is *not* an adaptation of the former because the two are identical for critical purposes. This results in the exclusion of standard translations, whereas those which navigate between faithfulness to semantics and to verse features as well as those which switch

between literary prose and poetry are retained.<sup>237</sup> What the relevant features are, again, depends on the text in question.<sup>238</sup>

Take the example of whether performances are adaptations. The answer hinges on the question of whether the additions to and subtractions from the text that each medium-change instantiates necessarily add to or detract from what is seen as the *relevant* feature of the text in question, where *relevant* is understood as something engendering critical discussion. For instance, it is undeniable that an actor playing Hamlet brings a particular tone of voice to the role, one which was never determined in the stage directions for *Hamlet*. The question is whether this is *necessarily* a *relevant* feature of the performance text? I would argue that the correct answer is no, for it is easy to imagine a delivery in a tone of voice which is sufficiently neutral that the performance text neither gains nor loses anything by it. Moreover, it is possible that all of the aspects which distinguish a particular performance from the source text are so neutral that they fail to be relevant for any critical discussion. In other words, although performances may be adaptations, there does not appear to be an a priori argument according to which performances are necessarily adaptations.

In order to articulate the border between adaptation and other forms of intertextuality further, we need to return to the discussion of montage inserts in terms of ready-mades. It is crucial to remember that in Chapter Two I defined ready-mades

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<sup>237</sup> In the introduction to a new edition of *After Babel*, a book that has exerted great influence on translation studies, George Steiner makes a claim about what has been “widely accepted” since the book’s initial publication in 1975: “[T]ranslation is formally and pragmatically implicit in *every* act of communication” (1992: xii, italics in the original). The implication, echoing Susan Sontag (1966), is that adaptations are a subset of translations. I believe, however, that we are dealing with another inflation of terms – it would be more felicitous to speak of “de/coding” instead of translation. This would make both adaptation and translation subclasses of “de/coding” rather than translation. For a book-length treatment of adaptation and translation theories side by side, see Lawrence Raw (2012).

<sup>238</sup> In epic poems, as we have seen, the relevant properties include (at least) both verse properties and semantics. In novels, on most occasions, semantics together with speech registers account for all of the relevant features. The same appears to obtain in most dramas as well.



stylistically. From this perspective, the recognition of montage inserts depends on being able to identify a text as belonging to a particular linguistic “genre”. Identification of adaptation requires something different. In the case of narrative texts, the imitation of stylistic traits is irrelevant for determining whether something is an adaptation or not. Of course adaptations can (and often do) follow the style set by the source text. Just to give one example, many hard-boiled novels such as Vera Caspary’s *Laura* or Dorothy B. Hughes’ *In a Lonely Place* found their equivalents in the Hollywood *film noir* style of the 1940s and 1950s. But take the lyric and nostalgic tone and sensibility of Terrence Malick’s *The Thin Red Line* (USA, 1998) which differs significantly from the matter-of-fact style of James Jones’ novel of the same name. It cannot be denied, however, that Malick’s film is an adaptation of Jones’ novel. Adaptation, therefore, need not preserve the same style, tone, genre, or sensibility as the source text. As we shall see, a number of contemporary commentators complained that the style of Piel Jutzi’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as well as its generic allegiances to crime films did not do justice to Döblin’s stylistic and generic decisions. Similar complaints are levelled at the melodramatic tone of Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. But none of these commentators give even a hint that the changes in style and genre exclude the derivative texts from being considered adaptations. On a more general level, parodies present a whole class of adaptations whose structure hinges on humoristic subversions of the source text. Therefore, the “stylistic independence”, together with intentionality, presents at least two ways of distinguishing adaptation from intertextuality (at least for narrative works).

Determining the status of sequels, prequels, and other texts which expand the story-world such as spin-offs or intertexts of the *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are*

*Dead* variety will allow us to flesh out the problem of delimitation relative to other intertexts. I propose that we are not dealing with adaptations as long as these texts bring no information necessary for the comprehension of characters and events as they unfold in the source text. This would, for the most part, put sequels, prequels, and spin-offs outside the domain of adaptations. Simply put and contrary to Hutcheon (2006), they do not share a sufficient number of common traits with the source text. A more precise criterion of demarcation would state that an expansion of the source text is not an adaptation if it merely assumes that the narrative events of the source text have taken place but does not enact them anew.<sup>239</sup>

We have determined two fuzzy, but nevertheless applicable boundaries that distinguish adaptations from various other intertextual forms on the one hand, and from “near-copies” for the text’s relevant purposes on the other. Articulating a positive criterion for adaptations is what remains. Crucially, we are speaking of adaptations of narrative texts. Let us consider a film or a play which professes to be an adaptation of *Hamlet* but in which no character akin to Hamlet may be found. There is no usurpation of the protagonist’s rightful place in the world, there is no murderous betrayal of somebody close to him by others as close, nor is there any revenge ploy. It is safe to say that such a text would not be an adaptation of *Hamlet* despite even the best intentions of the would-be adaptor. Similarly, Fassbinder’s *Faustrecht der Freiheit/Fox and His Friends* (Germany, 1975) is not an adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* just because the main character is called Franz Biberkopf. Returning to the previous play, we can say that it would be an adaptation of *Hamlet* even if Hamlet married Ophelia and rode off into to sunset having decided against avenging

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<sup>239</sup> This makes Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* inhabit the space of the fuzzy boundary.

his father's murder. These examples point in the direction of a necessary (though not sufficient) criterion for recognizing a text as an adaptation: the protagonist(s) presented in both texts must be identifiable as one and the same, and there has to be an intention on the part of the adaptor to retain this identity.

The crux of the problem lies in fleshing out the conditions of identity, which in turn involves answering some difficult philosophical questions regarding the reference of fictional names and the ontological status of fictional characters.<sup>240</sup> Again, we are outside of the scope of this study so I can only propose a framework for the resolution of this vexing issue. It is certainly true that a number of Bertrand Russell's (1905) claims about denotation are legitimately invalidated by Saul Kripke's (1980) argument that proper names act as rigid designators. In other words, proper names pick out the same object in all possible worlds where they exist and do so by virtue of the appropriation of the name by different speakers in a great causal-historical chain, rather than by implicit invocation of definite descriptions in the actual world. "Alfred Döblin", therefore, refers to the son born to Max and Sophie Döblin, rather than to "the author of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*" for if it turned out that whoever is denoted by "Alfred Döblin" did not write *Berlin Alexanderplatz* "Alfred Döblin" would still be his proper name. However, it is difficult to see how a theory of rigid designation can work without an application of at least some version of names in terms of definite descriptions theory. The reason is that actual proper names are given by initial baptism of the sort "We shall name our first-born Adam" or "I shall call you Eve". Although I need not be aware of the circumstances of this baptism, according to the theory of causal-historical reference, I will be using "Adam" correctly as long as the Adam I believe I am referring to is the first-born of whoever "we" are. But in the final

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<sup>240</sup> For a good recent summary of the problems and possible solutions see Amie L. Thomasson (2009).

analysis this still means that the correct use of the name hinges on Adam exhibiting certain properties (being the firstborn of “we”), i.e. on him fitting certain definite descriptions. Speaking more generally, all initial baptisms can be articulated in terms of definite descriptions. This is the reason why Thomas G. Pavel’s claim (1986: 11-42) that fictional names are neither definite descriptions nor cluster sets of definite descriptions but rigid designators is difficult to defend.<sup>241</sup>

I therefore propose that some form of definite description theory serves to establish the criteria of identity for protagonists across texts. Of course, special attention will have to be paid to how exactly fictional characters may possess properties at all (for this produces further implications about their existence), but we can leave the details of this account to analytic philosophers and metaphysicians. For the purposes of this thesis it is sufficient to speak of characters as exhibiting traits in an ordinary language sense. Because there will always be some traits that identical protagonists do not share across the source and the adapted text (and because a later adaptation may reintroduce traits ignored in earlier adaptations but neglect others) a fuzzy cluster set theory rather than a simple definite description theory will have to suffice. At a certain point, impossible to define a priori, the alleged Hamlet will simply stop sharing enough properties with Shakespeare’s character to still think of him as Hamlet. Of course, there may also be many occasions when we shall not even be able to agree whether this line has been crossed or not. It is only on a case-by-case basis (and sometimes not even then) that we can decide whether the protagonists of a

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<sup>241</sup> Even Pavel inadvertently admits that rigid designation boils down to a form of definite description theory when he states the following: “[l]et us imagine a play in which there are many vague allusions to a character named Ugolo [such as] ‘Mary, think of Ugolo!’ or ‘John, don’t forget Ugolo’ [...] The descriptions related to this name are obscure and noncommittal. [...] Still, before long, the spectators know that there is some entity, called Ugolo, who (which?) has precisely the only property that nobody knows any of his (its?) properties” (1986: 37).

given text share a sufficient number of traits with the source text to identify the former as an adaptation of the latter.

What kind of texts can legitimately be called adaptations according to this proposal? Though the criterion for identifying adaptations invokes protagonist(s), this does not mean that the adaptation of a narrative text need be narrative as well. (I have tried to dispel this unwanted implication by using the syntagm “the protagonist(s) *presented*”.) For instance, summaries strip the source text to its narrative and character-relation bones, but they need not necessarily be narrative themselves. A TV Guide summary of the sort “George goes out of his way to seek an apology for an insult” can be easily understood to be of the non-narrative type “X is/does Y”, which asserts something about the protagonist. More detailed summaries and digests such as CliffsNotes may combine non-narrative and narrative forms. From there it is only a small step to including fully argumentational (in Chatman’s sense) academic criticism and interpretation. This is not to say that we cannot distinguish between summaries, digests, lecture notes, interpretations, critical evaluations, remakes, contemporary re-stagings and parodies, or between all of them and other types of adaptations, but it is to understand them as fitting the definitions of adaptation currently in circulation. In other words, “adaptation” does not suffer the type of over-inflation that “montage” does.

#### THE REQUIREMENT OF ORIGINALITY AND THE PERILS OF INTERPRETATION

Having demonstrated that interpretations (but not ready-mades) are adaptations as understood by contemporary adaptation theory, my proposal is as follows. The

academic community demands two things of its members in publishing – original and important contribution to existing knowledge. “We seek original and significant new research” is a standard articulation of this requirement.<sup>242</sup> These two requirements appear to be at least necessary (if not sufficient) conditions for an academic interpretation to be of value. However, once interpretation is thought of as adaptation, we may articulate the tensions that interpretations face more clearly. On the one hand, in an effort to produce an “original” reading the interpreter may end up over-interpreting the text. From the perspective of adaptation theory, such work only takes the source artwork as a creative starting point and is positively evaluated insofar as it subverts the premise that an adaptation is supposed to “faithfully” reproduce the source text.<sup>243</sup> Very rarely, however, does an over-interpretation present itself as an over-interpretation, for interpreters regularly claim (and, at the very least, imply) that they articulate the true meaning of the novel. In other words, whereas fidelity to the original has been dismissed as *the* criterion for evaluating adaptations in contemporary theory, it remains a key criterion for evaluating interpretations *as* interpretations of given texts.<sup>244</sup> More importantly, whereas an adaptation remains an adaptation of X regardless of fidelity to X, interpretation ceases to be an interpretation of X once it is no longer faithful to X. Under the current conditions of academic publishing, therefore, the interpreter is faced with a contradictory demand – to produce an original derivative text but one which, at the same time, cannot explicitly deny its authority over the source text’s meaning, that is over “what the source text really is about”. Formal analysis, by contrast, does not face the same problem, for it

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<sup>242</sup> The quote comes from *Slavic Review* website.

<sup>243</sup> George Bluestone (1957), Dudley Andrew (1984), Chatman (1990), Stam (2005), Hutcheon (2006), Leitch (2007) all subscribe to this view. A variant of it may be found at least as early as in Siegfried Kracauer (2005a).

<sup>244</sup> For other types of evaluation of interpretations and their criticism see Mario Sluga (2013).

does not articulate “what the source text really is about”. Rather it verbalizes stylistic devices which were never propositional to begin with.

For a number of reasons this appears to unfairly downplay predominant academic practices in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* scholarship. Firstly, one might object that I am clinging to an obsolete idea that texts have essences. Secondly, I could be accused of misconstruing what being “original” means. Finally, it could be objected that interpretations do not simply repeat what is said by a text but go beneath its surface. As such, they cannot be any less original than formal analyses for both interpretation and formal analyses deal with far more than explicit propositional content. I believe that all of three points are misplaced.

Starting with the first objection, pragmatists and anti-essentialists might invoke Richard Rorty (1992) or Jeffrey Stout (1982) to argue that texts have no essences, no internal coherence, i.e. that there is nothing that constitutes “what a text *really* is about”. Because no claims about originality can be made in the absence of such essences, they may point out, my critique is invalid. Put differently, one should understand “originality” to lie in the manner in which a given interpretation uses a text, and not in how it (re)articulates the text’s “essence” (for there is none). If, however, texts have no “internal coherence” as Rorty insists, then what is to stop us from using any text for any purpose? And if any text can be made to cohere with whatever purpose, then no application seems to be particularly original, for originality would appear to demand some constraint in the domain of possibilities. Therefore, I am willing to entertain this anti-essentialist claim, but only as long as pragmatists are willing to concede that there *are* a number of things a given text *really is* about: that is, as long as pragmatists admit that Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is *really*, though certainly not exclusively, about Franz Biberkopf, who, among other things loses his

arm and girlfriend. In other words, we can make sense of anti-essentialist claims only if they are taken to mean that even though the narrative aspect of the novel is undeniable, it is not the *essential* aspect (for, again, there is none). Then on an abstract level the objection would work and we could, in principle, allow for various original interpretations focusing on different aspects of the novel, none of them essential. One interpreter might use the text to point out how some ideological matrices might be subverted or propagated. Another might present a text as a commentary on aesthetic or other norms. A third may want to give us a lesson in how some phenomenon can be represented. In practice, however, all of the *Berlin Alexanderplatz* interpretations I have come across (regardless of whether they are of the novel or films) imply something more. They do not merely point out a neglected facet of a text, but also herald it as crucial for the text's construal. In doing so they part ways with pragmatism proper and attempt to apprehend "what a text really is about" beyond simply reconstructing the storyline.<sup>245</sup>

Other objections may be made from the diametrically opposed perspective. For essentialists, it is not the source text that should be thought of as the benchmark for "originality" but other interpretations. As long as a scholar produces a sufficiently novel interpretation (which fully or at least partially reveals "what a text really is about") the criterion is met. Another objection might run as follows: though an interpretation might not be "original" in the sense that it says something different than the source text, it can be said to meet academic criteria because "what the text really is about" was extremely difficult to reconstruct and effectively demanded the

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<sup>245</sup> Virtually all of the interpretative work on Alfred Döblin, Piel Jutzi and Rainer Werner Fassbinder fits this bill. Some of the most notable examples from the literature review include: Fritz Martini (1954), James H. Reid (1968/69), Volker Klotz (1969), Theodore Ziolkowski (1969), Klaus Müller-Salget (1972), Wolfram Schütte (1981), Günther Anders (1984), Eric Rentschler (1986), David Dollenmayer (1988), Achim Haag (1992), Sabine Hake (1994a), Thomas Elsaesser (1996), Andrew Webber (2008), Stephanie Bird (2009), Elena del Rio (2012), and Paul Coates (2012).



formation of a new interpretative framework or method. A final objection: just because “what a text really is about” is thought of as content and is shared by the content of the interpretation, this does not mean that what takes place in interpretation is a mere transfer from a narrative textual type to an argumentational one. Critics of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and its adaptations do not simply list narrative events, underlying themes, and character traits in bullet points. Rather, they articulate ideas nowhere present in an explicit verbal form. In this sense, the verbal articulation of formal properties demands as much skill in capturing non-verbal phenomena in words as the verbal articulation of implicit meanings (“what a text really is about”).

As for the first objection, originality regarding other interpretations only does not fully satisfy the initial requirement of originality, for such “interpretive” originality does not change the fact that the interpretation in question retains a relation to the source text. Put differently, interpretations regularly distinguish themselves not only by claiming that what they say is what no other interpreter has said, but also that what they say is what no other interpreter has said about the source text, i.e. Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. In other words still, there is a triadic relation between an interpretation, other interpretations, and the source text, and it would be ingenuous to use “the originality requirement” as a relevant property for only a part of that triadic relation.

The second objection effectively refines the first by saying that the requirement of originality may be applied not only to assertions made, but also to the procedures which enabled these assertions to be made. This is a good point in general. The Literature Review section on *Berlin Alexanderplatz* criticism demonstrates, however, that a genuinely new interpretative method seldom arises. (There are certainly far fewer methods than there are published “original articles”). And even

when a new method does arise, we may still draw attention to the fact that it admits it says nothing but what the source text has already said.

The final objection presents the greatest challenge. A part of it can be dismissed relatively easily if we examine an analogy George Wilson (2008) draws between interpretation of human actions and types of interpretation he calls narrative. As Wilson points out, narrative interpretations provide “an explicit elaboration of the details of the plot and the implied connections between them” (2008: 168), often focusing on single scenes for fine-grained analysis. I am not denying the meticulousness, precision and subtlety of this work, nor the fact that it often presents a far more methodological endeavour than other interpretative approaches. However, if the point of such efforts is precisely to reconstruct “the implicit fictional history presented” by the work, then it does not seem to be particularly original. In other words, such reconstruction would be as original as a detailed explanation of, say, a real-life crime. Informative and insightful, but hardly original. Or, to give a more positive analogy, we might think of such interpretations, exactly because of their attention to detail, as excellent transcriptions in a different medium. Calling them original in relation to the source text, however, remains infelicitous.

An even greater problem is presented by two other types of interpretation termed explicative and symptomatic in David Bordwell’s (1989) taxonomy. Whereas the former pertains to the extraction of symbolic meanings and/or implicit morals of the story much like the tradition of allegorical reading or certain brands of biblical exegesis, the latter seeks to uncover meanings which the text “represses”, usually modelled on Sigmund Freud’s ideas on “the unconscious”. It would certainly be futile to deny the originality of St. Augustine’s non-literal reading of the bible, or Freud’s take on *Oedipus Rex*. In principle, therefore, the objection stands. In practice,

however, by focusing on film criticism Bordwell has demonstrated that the results of interpretative work are rather poor in variety, for they focus on a very limited number of semantic fields, i.e. conceptual frameworks. Among others, these include binary oppositions (presence/absence, male/female, white/black, hetero/homosexual, etc.), propositions (Greimas' semantic quadrangle) and hierarchies (Symbolic/Imaginary/Real). In the hands of such interpreters, it is not that anything can mean anything else (as for the anti-essentialists), but that anything means only a very limited number of things. This much is corroborated by the review of literature on Fassbinder's adaptation. In fact, Thomas Elsaesser's (1996) reading could easily serve as a compendium for the most popular connections interpreters make. It is again the case that the potential for originality is severely hampered but now for a different reason – by the limited space of results and by relations to other interpretations.

The final objection still remains unanswered, however. Although I have shown that the most common types of interpretations in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* scholarship fail to meet the requirement of originality, the gist of the third and last objection to my preference of formal analysis over interpretation is to make a sufficiently strong analogy between interpretation and formal analysis, so that if one fails to meet the requirement of originality the other fails too. In fact, the comparison between narrative interpretation and transcription under this objection would be as easily applicable to the relation between formal devices and formal analysis, making formal analysis as unoriginal as narrative interpretation. I am not denying that both interpretation and formal analysis articulate something that was nowhere present in the source text in explicit verbal form. But this does not mean that there is no difference in what is present in the source text in an *implicit* verbal form. In other

words, the difference lies in the fact that interpretation *re-verbalizes* whereas formal analysis simply *verbalizes*, as I shall now explain.

Interpretations unearth something that was always already a form of thought/language – some conjunction of assertions. Interpreters might uncover a chronological list of propositions (fabula) and folk psychology assertions about motivation (character relations) in the case of narrative interpretations. They might dig out “true” claims about general and/or preferred states of affairs, or about their imperative forms (morals of the story) in the case of explicative interpretations. They might also excavate argumentational conjunctions of assertions (theories behind symptoms) in the case of symptomatic interpretations. On all occasions, however, the results of such interpretations are always verbal theoretical models to begin with. Novels and films can, at best, only *partially* be seen as verbal theoretical models. When a novel deploys a narrative ellipsis or a film enacts a particular event, a thought/language item in the chronological list may be inferred. However, it is not present in the sense it is when in the novel we read: “They had let him [Franz] out again” (E11).<sup>246</sup> In contrast, the formal devices I am interested in, although they may be linguistic (as literary montage clearly is) are never a form of thought/language;<sup>247</sup> they are simply specific uses of a medium (which then may be accounted for in verbal theoretical form). It is irrelevant whether they were prefigured theoretically in language before they were executed in practice in a given medium, for even if they were this does not make them theoretical models any more than the existence of a blueprint turns a building into that blueprint. Montage and most other formal devices are not theoretical models with which we make sense of the text, but wrinkles on the

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<sup>246</sup> “Man setzte ihn wieder aus” (G8).

<sup>247</sup> There are clearly stylistic devices which are forms of thought/language such as metaphor or simile. This, however, holds true only of their literary form.

body of the text which need their own theoretical models. In that sense, the text simply *is* a bundle of formal devices, whereas fabula, character relations, morals of the story, and theoretical sources of symptoms are, as we have been saying, “what a text is about”. Therefore, formal analysis presents a means of putting formal devices into thought/linguistic form for the first time. This is why formal analysis (at least of the type I propose) passes the requirement of originality, unlike much *Berlin Alexanderplatz* scholarship.

Of course, interpretation may employ formal analysis for its ends, just as formal analysis may focus on the meaning of the effects formal devices produce; most academic interpretations usually combine the two methods. The distinction between the two, as I said, lies primarily in whether the emphasis is given to the re-verbalization of “what the text is about” or to the verbalization of the effects that formal devices bring about. We may say that verbalization is a specific form of academic practice, original enough because it puts non-thought forms into words, while remaining as faithful to the appearance and the effects of the formal devices as possible. If successful, formal analysis is not an adaptation.

## PIEL JUTZI'S *BERLIN-ALEXANDERPLATZ*

As we have learned from the previous two chapters, contemporary comparisons of Döblin's work to film, especially of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, were numerous and recurrent. It was left to Axel Eggebrecht, however, in his review of the novel to state what must have already been obvious to contemporary readers:

If we had an adventurous film industry, it would have to snatch up this book right away. Ruttmann's bold Berlin film, in which the Berlin man has gone missing behind all of the montages of technology and traffic, could work as a small preliminary study.<sup>248</sup>

What must have appeared to Eggebrecht as wishful thinking (as it must have to many others, for the common thread that binds many of the reviews of Jutzi's film together is the praise for the courage film producers exhibited in deciding to adapt the novel),<sup>249</sup> was realized as early as May 1930 when *Film-Kurier* reported that the production of the manuscript for *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was underway.<sup>250</sup> According to Yvonne Rehhahn (1996), the producer Arnold Pressburger acquired the film rights for the Allianz-Tonfilm company by the end of 1930 and in the March of the following year Jutzi came on board as the director. The screenwriters reported to be working on the treatment included Carl Vollmoeller and Heinrich Oberländer, but the final version

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<sup>248</sup> "Hätten wir eine unternehmungslustige Filmindustrie, sie müßte sich um dies Buch reißen. Ruttmanns mutiger Berlinfilm, in dem der Mensch Berlins hinter lauter Montagen der Technik und des Verkehrs verloren ging, würde wie eine kleine Vorstudie dazu wirken" (Eggebrecht 1973: 244).

<sup>249</sup> For instance, in *8 Uhr-Abendblatt* Kurt Pinthus noted the following: "The Allianz-Film company and the director Phil Jutzi had courage as they went about the material, but they did not have enough of it." "Die Firma Allianz-Film und der Regisseur Phil Jutzi hatten Mut, als sie an diesen Stoff gingen, aber sie hatten nicht genug Mut" (1996: 224). The courage applauded by these reviewers (but also the criticism of failure to follow through on it) relates both to the film's engagement with socially divisive topics such as class struggle and to its unorthodox aesthetic. For an excellent contextualization of the film within the politics and the culture of the Weimar era, with special attention paid to censorship, see Peter Jelavich (2006).

<sup>250</sup> "Der nächste Jannings-Film" in *Film-Kurier*, May 17, 1930.

was written by Hans Wilhelm and Alfred Döblin.<sup>251</sup> The film premiered on October 8, 1931 at the Capitol in Berlin and was met with numerous reviews.<sup>252</sup>

Many of the film reviewers, including Herbert Ihering (1996), Ernst Jäger (1996), Alfred Kantorowicz (1975), Siegfried Kracauer (1996) and Georg F. Salmony (1931), complained that the filmic quality of the novel had generally been lost in Jutzi's adaptation. Jäger's remark that "this *literary* film remained a *copy* of literature, an extract of a novel for cinema" reflects the general dissatisfaction of these critics.<sup>253</sup> This is not to say, however, that no mention of certain aesthetically unorthodox montage procedures was made. In fact, the two sequences which exhibit these procedures – viz. the opening tram-ride sequence and the Alexanderplatz hawking sequence – were regularly commented upon. The most articulate reviewer (and the one with the least favourable evaluation) was Kracauer:

In order to satisfy the so-called higher claims, they [the filmmakers] belatedly attempted to include a part of the novel's epic associations which had been suppressed in the original conception of the film. I'm thinking of Biberkopf's endless tram-ride from jail to the city and above all of the incessant shots of Alexanderplatz. At each opportunity, from above and below, from left and right, Alexanderplatz appears with its reconstructions and bureau offices. An attempt at refinement ["Veredelungsarbeit"] which should obviously afford a sense of the local atmosphere to the events in the film [...] But it goes wrong on three counts. First, only in retrospect does it add to the film what should have been placed in it already from the outset; that is, it decorates the narrow play of the underworld with the elements of the novel instead of first developing a wide play out of these elements, one which naturally should not be confined to the underworld. [...] Furthermore, the interspersed city montages themselves are aimless. The director Phil Jutzi, whose great talent was shown by his silent film: MUTTER KRAUSE[N]S FAHRT INS GLÜCK,

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<sup>251</sup> "Der nächste Jannings-Film" reports the collaboration between Volmoeller and Döblin, whereas Herbert Ihering (1996) laments the replacement of young Oberländer with Wilhelm and Döblin.

<sup>252</sup> For a selection and a bibliography see Belach and Bock (1996). For another bibliography see Gabriele Sander (1998). For a detailed account of the history of production see Rehhahn (1996).

<sup>253</sup> "[D]ieser *literarische* Film blieb eine *Literatur-Kopie* eines Romans Extrakt fürs Kino" (Jäger 1996: 231, italics in the original).

mechanically drones out shot associations which line up together without any internal support. In Eisenstein's and Pudovkin's films the streets and the architecture declare something about themselves and even Ruttmann's rather weak *BERLIN-SYMPHONY* still intends a specific form, however questionable. [...] Finally, the pasted-in pictorial epic goes against film's intentions, for it [the epic] decreases the narrative suspense for the sake of which the film abandons the opportunities granted to it by the novel.<sup>254</sup>

Despite this negative evaluation it is clear that Kracauer refers to the sequences in question as instances of montage because of the disruptiveness precipitated by their lack of internal cohesion. Further support for this view may be found in the comparisons with Ruttmann's and acclaimed Russian directors' films. With regards to the latter, a reviewer under the pseudonym "Betz" concludes that Jutzi "has worked at 'Russian forcefulness', [...], has piled up a bunch of quasi 'original' shots, photographed top-down, bottom-up, without a purpose, simply out of a whim."<sup>255</sup> Kantorowicz (1975) is somewhat less negative, referring to "some uncharacteristic montages", while W. Fiedler acknowledges that "[t]he film makes a

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<sup>254</sup> "Um auch die sogenannten höheren Ansprüche zu befriedigen, suchen sie nachträglich einen Teil der epischen Assoziationen des Romans einzubeziehen, die in den ursprünglichen Konzeption des Films beflissen unterdrückt worden sind. Ich denke an die endlose Trambahnfahrt Biberkopfs aus dem Gefängnis in die Stadt und vor allem an die unaufhörlichen Aufnahmen des Alexanderplatzes. Mit seinem Umbauten und Bürohäusern erscheint er bei jeder Gelegenheit von oben und unten, von rechts und von links. Eine Veredelungsarbeit, die [...] dem Filmgeschehen offenbar zu einer Art von Lokalatmosphäre verhelfen soll. Aber es ist in dreifacher Hinsicht verkehrt. Denn einmal addiert sie nur hinterher zum Film hinzu, was schon an Anfang an in ihm hätte stecken müssen; das heißt, sie dekoriert das enge Unterweltsspiel mit Elementen des Romans, statt aus diesen erst ein breites Spiel zu entwickeln, das sich natürlich nicht auf die Unterwelt beschränken dürfte. [...] Ferner sind die eingestreuten Stadtmontagen selber richtungslos. Mechanisch leiert der Regisseur Phil Jutzi, dessen starke Begabung der stumme Film: *MUTTER KRAUSENS FAHRT INS GLÜCK* erwiesen hat, Bildassoziationen herunter, die sich ohne jeden inneren Halt aneinanderreihen. In den Filmen Eisensteins und Pudowkins sagen die Straßen und Architektur etwas über sich aus, und sogar die ziemlich schwache *BERLIN-SYMPHONIE* Ruttmanns meint doch noch einen bestimmten Gehalt, der allerdings fragwürdig ist. [...] Schließlich verfehlt sich die aufgeklebte Bildepik wider die Absichten des Films, da sie die Spannung verringert, um derentwillen dieser die ihm vom Roman eingeräumten Chancen preisgegeben hat" (Kracauer 1996: 233, block capitals in the original).

<sup>255</sup> "[E]r hat auf 'russische Eindringlichkeit' hin gearbeitet, [...], hat sozusagen 'originelle' Einstellungen in Haufen geschichtet, hat von oben nach unten, von unten nach oben photographieren lassen, ohne jeden Sinn, nur aus einer Marotte heraus" (quoted in Guntram Vogt 2001: 254).



couple of attempts which we experienced more forcefully in the *Symphony of the Big City*.”<sup>256</sup>

Others who refer to these sequences do not explicitly use the term “montage” to describe them. However, they often invoke particular phenomenological descriptions fitting our understanding of the device. More often than not they also evaluate the sequences positively. Thus, Kurt Pinthus talks of the “crass” manner in which the on-location shots “gape open” and singles out “the promising beginning” and “the jerking vision of feverish Biberkopf” as masterfully executed.<sup>257</sup> Ihering speaks of “very good, extremely variable” “detail shots” which unfortunately lack a “connection to a film form”.<sup>258</sup> Kurt London (1931) finds that the inserted atmospheric shots “do not fit into each other seamlessly” but that the idea to insert them is, in principle, correct.<sup>259</sup> Hermann Sinsheimer (1996) writes about the “tumult” of the traffic, which, all of its jumbling and mixing notwithstanding, still stops short of producing an experience of chaos. Hans Siemsen concludes that although Jutzi “did not succeed in making the whole film great he did manage to produce a couple of wonderful scenes.”<sup>260</sup> As we can see, both the experience of disruption and that of confusion play a role in these descriptions. Again, there is nothing controversial here for there is no reason why by 1931 montage should not be employed in pursuit of both these ends.

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<sup>256</sup> Quoted in Jelavich (2006: 228).

<sup>257</sup> “Kraß klaffen auseinander die Außenaufnahmen als Reportage von Straßen, Plätzen [...] Film hat noch genug Tüchtiges in sich: [...] die zuckenden Visionen des fiebernden Biberkopf, [...], hoffnungsvollen Beginn” (Pinthus 1996: 225).

<sup>258</sup> “Phil Jutzi kommt nur zu Detaileinstellungen, zu sehr guten, sehr abwechslungsreichen – aber es fehlt das Entscheidende: die Bindung zu einer filmischen Form” (Ibid. 228).

<sup>259</sup> “Die Idee ist richtig [aber] [l]eider fügt sich das Ablaufen der Bilder nicht nahtlos ineinander” (London 1931).

<sup>260</sup> “Dem Regisseur Phil Jutzi ist nicht der ganze Film, aber ein paar Szenenfolgen sind ihm wunderbar gelungen” (Siemsen 2012: 329).

Having isolated the few yet key instances of montage in the film, I wish to provide a shot by shot analysis of these two sequences in order to attempt a more precise account of why they were perceived as disruptive, and on occasions even confusing. Although a handful of scholars – including Hanno Möbius and Guntram Vogt (1990), Vogt (2001) and Peter Jelavich (2003, 2006) – have written about the disorienting quality of the opening tram sequence, no detailed analysis of it (or of the Alexanderplatz hawking sequence) exists. While disagreeing with his equating of detailed shot sequence descriptions with interpretations, I would like to follow in V. F. Perkins' (1990: 4) footsteps and try “to articulate in the medium of prose some aspects of what artists have made perfectly and precisely clear in the medium of film.”<sup>261</sup> It should also be noted that a comparison with the parts of the novel on which these sequences are based has also not been produced.<sup>262</sup> It will be shown, interestingly enough, that the film montage sequences were modelled on instances of literary montage, albeit in a very limited manner.

#### AN ANALYSIS OF THE TRAM-RIDE SEQUENCE

The tram-ride sequence opens with a close-up of the tram driver's hands as he puts the vehicle into gear and ends with Franz (Heinrich George), having jumped off the tram, barely managing to find a safe haven in one of Berlin's interiors. The sequence lasts for approximately 123 seconds and consists of between 32 and 34 shots – there are

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<sup>261</sup> Perkins is right when he says that to comprehend gestures we cannot merely give a moment-by-moment plot of them, rather we need to interpret them. Interpreting gestures, however, is not the same thing as interpreting films or other aesthetic artefacts. This much should be clear from the arguments I set out in the first section of the chapter.

<sup>262</sup> The only sustained comparison between a longer shot sequence and a part of the novel is to be found in Matthias Hurst (1996). It deals with Franz's exit from jail just preceding the tram-ride and is unfairly dismissive of the narratological potential of film as a medium.

difficulties with ascertaining whether or not a cut intervenes at a particular moment in a short segment lasting for no more than eight seconds near the end of the sequence.<sup>263</sup> What is more important here than the indeterminacy of the exact number of shots is what this is a sign of. In other words, the difficulties for detailed formal analysis are precisely the result of the intention to produce the experience of disruption and confusion. I shall argue that the best way to understand the production of these effects is to analyse the sequence in terms of spatial relations.

Shot 1 (figure 3.1.1): The driver, with his hands in a close-up, puts the tram in motion. The sound of a bell ringing signals the beginning of the ride, as does the music which mimics the sound of a steam engine picking up speed.

Shot 2 (figure 3.1.2): In a medium shot, in the front of the tram and leaning against a metal frame Franz looks wearily to the left and outside the tram. As he rubs his eyes hoping that this will help him endure the strain of the ride on his nerves, the bell rings two more times and a tune under the name of Berlin March picks up, again mimicking the increased tempo of the ride. The March will continue until the last shot of the sequence.



**Figure 3.1.1** A close-up of the driver's hands



**Figure 3.1.2** A medium shot of Franz looking weary

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<sup>263</sup> I was not able to access the film print and have therefore been forced to use the DVD version of the film.

Shot 3 (figure 3.1.3): A shot from the front of the tram in the direction of movement tilted horizontally towards the ground at first so only the cobblestones of the street, the rail track and the shadows of the tree branches can be seen as they rush by. Quickly the camera tilts up and swoons to the left revealing a wide street with tram-rail tracks running in parallel only to return to its central position moments later and nose-dive into the play of shadows, cobblestones and tracks again. Honking is heard as cars pass by and the shot closes with another bell ring. The inclination to attribute the vista to Franz is hindered by the fact that neither the driver (who is in front of him) nor anything of the tram is seen.

Shot 4 (figure 3.1.4): Franz in a medium shot again but now the tram driver can also be seen sitting in the foreground right. This set-up reveals that the driver's physical position provides a far better match for the vista of the previous shot than Franz's. At the same time, however, the nose-diving with which the previous shot concluded, the affected disorientation and the accompanying duress are far better attributed to Franz than the driver. At this moment we might say that the dissociation between the spatial and the psychological point of view prevents us from attributing the vista of shot 3 to a particular character, thereby enhancing the experience of confusion. Visibly agitated, Franz leans out of the tram slightly.



**Figure 3.1.3** A shot from the front of the tram



**Figure 3.1.4** A medium shot of Franz

Shot 5 (figure 3.1.5): Franz's point of view shot in the direction of tram movement and slightly to the right of mounted police officers and cyclists passing by. The camera pans slightly to the right. It is obvious that the tram has entered a bustling part of town.

Shot 6 (figure 3.1.6): Like shot 4 (though the driver is now only on the edge of the screen), Franz is looking increasingly agitated. He casts a brief look at the driver front right hoping for some acknowledgment or reassurance, or to at least to find some peace of mind in seeing somebody in control. It is to no avail, however, for the driver takes no notice of him. Franz proceeds to scan his surroundings left and right. The bell goes off two more times. The shot cuts as Franz directs his look frame left.



**Figure 3.1.5** Franz's point of view shot



**Figure 3.1.6** A medium shot of Franz

Shot 7 (figure 3.1.7): Another tilted-down shot in the direction of movement of the rail tracks and cobblestones like in the opening of shot 3. Franz's eye-line with which the previous shots ended makes it increasingly difficult to attribute the shot to Franz despite the effort to evoke psychological strain shot 7 is making. For the optical point of view match shot 5 set-up would be necessary. The visual quality of the cobblestones and the tracks push the image away from the figurative domain and into the abstract.

Shot 8 (figure 3.1.8): Most probably a shot from Franz's point of view (linked to his eye-line, with which shot 6 terminated) in the direction of a small square passing by right of the tram. The shot is further dynamized by the pedestrians in the foreground moving in the direction opposite of travel. The perceptual strain on Franz is increased by stimuli running in opposite directions and at different relative speeds thanks to the separation of planes. Interestingly, some of the figures in the street appear to be looking inquisitively at the camera (arguably because no attempt was made to conceal the camera).



**Figure 3.1.7** A shot from the front of the tram



**Figure 3.1.8** (Probably) Franz's point of view shot

Shot 9 (figure 3.1.9): A reaction shot of Franz in an “American shot” together with his absent look to the left gives further reason to construe the previous shot as his point of view. Increasingly distraught, Franz quickly refocuses and looks around for perceptual anchorage. For the first time the reaction shot of Franz is fully frontal (the reaction shots until now having been regularly taken from a slightly acute angle in the counter-clockwise direction). This, also for the first time, allows for the passing urban background to command just as much attention as Franz, and to count as more than a backdrop for the left side of the screen. The increasing number of possible points of interest (including the driver front right almost in perfect focus) thanks to the camera positioning and deep focus cinematography adds to the range of perceptual stimuli. We can easily discern local shop advertisements (one of them, for instance, says

“Cigarren”). More weight to the background and more focus in attention (which momentarily alleviates the proliferation of stimuli) are given when a shadow is cast on the right and the centre of the screen, practically erasing the image of the driver and enveloping Franz in darkness. With the end of the shot the bell rings again.



**Figure 3.1.9** A deep-focus “American shot” of Franz      **Figure 3.1.10** A shot of a tram passing by

Shot 10 (figure 3.1.10): A shot of a tram passing Franz’s ride in the opposite direction (presumably the object casting the shadow in the previous shot). The shot is taken from the front of Franz’s tram, but facing away from the direction of travel. The shot is novel for several reasons: it is the first to give us a view of what is going on screen right of the tram; the dominant movement in the shot is in the direction opposite of travel (unlike in shot 8 where there was movement in both directions); finally, the shot cannot be accounted for by a subjective position, nor can it be anchored by Franz. In the previous shot, and despite the proliferation of stimuli, Franz still inhabited the centre (both laterally and in depth, i.e. longitudinally). In this shot, only the driver’s left hand, visible in the right bottom corner of the screen, provides some human anchorage. There certainly are cues (the shadow), previous precedents (the movement in the direction opposite of travel) and anchoring devices (the driver’s hand) which can serve as a sort of stabilization mechanism for non-disruptive and non-confused processing of the shot. Simultaneously however, there is also considerable diminishing of this stable ground. This process of destabilisation is

perhaps best exemplified in the unexpected changes of angle and direction of movement represented, and in the rapid alternations of windows and window frames on the adjacent tram which cut up the space and provide brief glimpses of the street behind it. Moreover, the metaphorical attribution of this shot to Franz via his psychological state is subverted precisely by leaving the image of the driver's arm in frame. Such metaphorical attributions were easier when the driver was completely out of shot (shots 3 and 7).

Shot 11 (figure 3.1.11): Another counter-clockwise angled reaction shot of Franz in a medium shot, much like shot 6. Franz appears genuinely overwhelmed, his stare running wildly.

Shot 12 (figure 3.1.12): A shot from the front of the tram in the direction of travel (like shots 7 and 3 but horizontally centred). Numerous workers are replacing cobblestones between the tracks. Machinery on the right is spewing out smoke and the truck driving by is honking its horn.



**Figure 3.1.11** A medium shot of Franz



**Figure 3.1.12** A shot from the front of the tram

Shot 13 (figure 3.1.13): A shot from the front of the tram in the direction of travel tilted downwards left. A pile of cobblestones lies next to the tracks. Workers wait for the tram to pass but only their feet are seen and the shot cuts before their heads enter the frame.



Shot 14 (figure 3.1.14): A shot from the front of the tram in the direction opposite of travel with a clockwise angle of about 30 degrees, much like shot 10. This time, at first, there is no human anchorage at all; the only cues that the vista is taken from the front of the tram are the bell rope together with some interior metal framing. The camera eventually pans to the left to reveal the driver. This is the first time that there is more noticeable camera movement in the shots' set-up in the direction opposite to that of travel.



**Figure 3.1.13** A shot from the front of the tram



**Figure 3.1.14** A shot from the front of the tram (backwards)

Shot 15 (figure 3.1.15): A reaction shot of Franz with the shot 6 set-up. At this moment the Berlin March reaches a sort of local climax. Curiously, it appears that the camera movements ape the music (and not vice versa). There are four discreet bursts of music and the camera repositions laterally to the right and to the left just after the second. Then the camera seems to overtake the third burst, repositioning itself to the right just a moment before we hear it. The final burst is matched to a cut. Throughout the shot Franz is nervously scratching his scalp and rearranging the hat.

Shot 16 (figure 3.1.16): A shot from the front of the tram in the direction opposite to that of travel, angled counter-clockwise. Franz is almost completely engulfed in darkness in the right of the frame. The mounted police officers slowly lose ground behind the tram. One can even tell the time on a clock above a shop – 14:30.



**Figure 3.1.15** A medium shot of Franz



**Figure 3.1.16** A shot from the front of the tram (backwards)

Shot 17 (figure 3.1.17): A shot of a tram passing on the left of the screen and out of the frame. As the camera pans left the windows reflect the tram passing on the right and receding into the background. For numerous reasons, this is the most potentially disruptive and disorientating shot yet seen. First, the camera is tilted slightly to the right along the vertical axis. Second, as the camera pans to the left and the tram runs its course, it appears as though it is going to tip over and crush the camera in the process. Third, the multiplication of images through reflecting and refracting surfaces, as well as the glimpses of the background through the tram passing on the left, make this the most complex shot in the sequence to process visually. Finally, the shot has no perceptible connection with Franz's tram whatsoever. In fact, the camera position is not mounted on Franz's tram at all but for the first time appears to be stationary, inhabiting the narrow terrain between the two passing trams. If the tram on the right is Franz's, there is not the slightest hint of this. Such an unexpected spatial dislocation, paired with an abrupt stoppage of movement and the impending threat of an accident, is key for understanding the potential disruptiveness and confusion of the shot.

Shot 18 (figure 3.1.18): A variation of shot 9. An "American shot" of Franz angled counter-clockwise and tilted additionally to the left in relation to the vertical axis of the screen (in direct contrast with the previous shot which was tilted to the

right in relation to the vertical axis). The street in the background and to Franz’s left is clearly visible as the camera moves slightly to the left while panning out, revealing the driver and adding a few more degrees of sight in the counter-clockwise direction.



**Figure 3.1.17** A tilted shot of a tram passing by      **Figure 3.1.18** A tilted “American shot” of Franz

Shot 19 (figure 3.1.19): A moving shot of the traffic presumably to the left of the tram (right on screen) moving in the opposite direction for the most part. No subjective viewpoint can be attributed to this shot.

Shot 20 (figure 3.1.20): Like 18, a slight tilt to the left in reference to the vertical axis suggests Franz’s psychological imbalance. Franz, however, is strangely calm in this shot. His eyes do not dart around. He merely acknowledges with a glance a tram making a right turn (it moves frame left). As Franz tilts his head back the camera continues to pan left in the direction of the turning tram.



**Figure 3.1.19** A shot of traffic

**Figure 3.1.20** A tilted “American shot” of Franz

Shot 21 (figure 3.1.21): A moving shot of what at first appears to be a bundle of perpendicular lines receding diagonally into the background from left to right. As the shot continues the lines are revealed to be the wooden framing of a cart standing on the side of the road. Here, we see how a shot of a cart has been de-contextualized into an abstract pattern through camera movement and framing. It is not completely impossible that this is a subjective shot of Franz looking left and back. However, there are no explicit cues for this because the previous shot ended with Franz looking straight ahead. Moreover, the next shot is not a reaction one.

Shot 22 (figure 3.1.22): A moving shot of the traffic proceeding in the direction of travel, presumably to the left and back of the tram (frame right).



**Figure 3.1.21** A shot of a cart (abstract shapes)

**Figure 3.1.22** A shot of traffic

Shot 23 (figure 3.1.23): The same as shot 22. The introduction of the shot is a clear jump cut, for although the framing remains almost identical the cars making up the traffic are completely different. The disruptive effect is somewhat attenuated by the fact that the tree line in the backdrop remains the same.

Shot 24 (figure 3.1.24): Like 9 but this time Franz jumps out of the tram to escape the strenuous ride.



**Figure 3.1.23** A shot of traffic



**Figure 3.1.24** A shot of Franz jumping off the tram

Shot 25 (figure 3.1.25): The first in a sequence of what are very likely Franz's point of view shots, i.e. from the middle of the street he is trying to navigate. The traffic runs in the direction of the tram as did the traffic in shots 22 and 23. However, the screen directions are now inverted. Whereas in shots 22 and 23 the traffic advanced from background left into foreground right, in this shot it approaches from foreground right and recedes background left. Moreover, the cars are now much closer to the camera, presenting an immediate threat to Franz. This proximity also increases the speed at which the cars swirl by and emphasizes the partiality of the vehicles, making it increasingly difficult to get a full and commanding view of the traffic. The speed and the partial nature of stimuli increase as the camera jerks to the right, setting up a more horizontal plane against the incoming traffic. The speed and the partiality are radicalized in the subsequent shots by an even closer framing of the camera. Together they make it extremely difficult to tell a cut apart from merely another object entering the frame. The following six to eight shots are the best examples of the production of the experience of disruption and confusion in Jutzi's film. Together they last no more than eight seconds.

Shot 26 (figure 3.1.26): A closely framed static shot of motor traffic moving fast right to left. Identifiable motor traffic will continue in this direction for the

remainder of the sequence. Framing appears to be below the eye-line for it is mostly the tyres that can be made out.



**Figure 3.1.25** Overwhelming traffic



**Figure 3.1.26** Overwhelming traffic

Shot 27 (figure 3.1.27): The framing is now higher – approximately around eye-line for the top of a vehicle may be glimpsed. The presence of a cut is further supported by the brief appearance of a picket fence (in the previous shot it was outside the frame). A pedestrian carrying a load on the far side of the street and walking left to right can be spotted for a moment as the vehicles exit the frame.



**Figure 3.1.27** Overwhelming traffic



**Figure 3.1.28** Overwhelming traffic

Shot 28 (figure 3.1.28): Like 26. A heavier vehicle with a higher centre of mass passes by. A brief view of the cobblestones is afforded, as is a pair of pedestrian's legs making their way left.

Shot 29 (figure 3.1.29): Like 26. Only tyres and vehicle surfaces are discernible.

Shot 30 (?) (figure 3.1.30): An unidentifiable predominantly dark image with a play of grey specks. It appears that the changing grey spots move left to right. Perhaps a play of tree shadows on the street (which would imply that the shot is not static but moving in the direction of the traffic)?



**Figure 3.1.29** Overwhelming traffic



**Figure 3.1.30** Overwhelming traffic (abstract shapes)

Shot 31 (?) (figure 3.1.31): An unidentifiable predominantly bright image. A rectangular light-grey surface covers about a half of the screen. Whereas everything outside the light-grey rectangle is pitch black, the light is heterogeneously distributed along the surface with the strongest illumination in its lower left section. It appears that the movement from the previous shot has been retained, since the spot of illumination runs right.



**Figure 3.1.31** Overwhelming traffic (abstract shapes)



**Figure 3.1.32** Overwhelming traffic

Shot 32 (figure 3.1.32): Like 27. A bus passes by.

Shot 33 (figure 3.1.33): A closely framed shot of a bus approaching fast from the background. As it passes by, the camera pans left following its movement. These two movements produce an overbearing and threatening proximity to the vehicle similar to the one in shot 17.

Shot 34 (figure 3.1.34): With the March coming to a climactic end in an “American shot” Franz enters an unidentified interior, leaving the hustle and bustle behind him and closing the door in its face. Visibly shaken he wipes the sweat off his forehead, removes his hat and sits to the left of a homeless person.



**Figure 3.1.33** Overwhelming traffic



**Figure 3.1.34** Franz escapes the traffic

From the preceding discussion it becomes clear that analyses based primarily on the distinctions between authorial and personal narrative perspective (Möbius and Vogt 1990, Matthias Hurst 1996, Vogt 2001, and Harro Segeberg 2003b) cannot give us a full account of how the experience of disruption and confusion is effected. The narrative perspective as used in these analyses does not distinguish between point of view shots proper, eye-line matches, and subjective experiences. My analysis, by contrast, provides us with a more detailed list of elements of film form which play a role in the production of disruption and confusion. In the final shots of the sequence, very close framing, the speed of on-screen movement, the partiality of stimuli, the



speed of cutting, the lack of clear spatial motivation for cutting in any one place, the unmotivated cutting between slightly differing horizontal positions (between shots 26 and 27), and the alternating direction of on-screen movement (across shot 29 and 30 and across shot 31 and 32) all enhance the experience of disruption and confusion. Prior to this sub-sequence other aspects that helped produce these effects included: camera movement (nose-diving in shot 3), framing combined with the on-screen movement that allowed for the de-figuration of the image (shot 3, 7, 21, 30 and 31), the problematization of the subjective shot (3 and 7), the juxtaposition of movement within shots (8 and 17), the multiplication of centres of interest within the shot (9 and 18), the introduction of unexpected camera angles (shot 10), the elimination of human anchorage (shot 10 and 14), the use of reflective, refractive and transparent surfaces (shot 10 and 17), abrupt spatial dislocation (shot 17), jump-cutting (across shot 22 and 23), the combination of camera movement and in-shot movement to effect a threatening proximity (shot 17 and 33) and tilting of the camera relative to the vertical axis (shot 17, 18 and 20).

The analysis above should be understood in the first instance in terms of spatial relations. These spatial relations provide the ground for articulating epistemic relations, i.e. for answering the question “who is looking?” Even on their own they give a rich account of why the sequence was experienced in terms of disruption and confusion at the time of the film’s release, and why it potentially remains perceivable in those terms today. However, there is more to say if we expand the analysis to include temporal relations. We might ask ourselves: what are the temporal connections between the shots? More specifically, should we think that screen and diegetic time coincide in the sequence? At first sight this does not appear impossible. Certainly, at least the first 13 shots do not exhibit any clear signs that (noticeable)

temporal ellipses intervene between the shots. However, at least some parts of the sequence demonstrate that the full coincidence between screen time and diegetic time cannot be the case. The cut between shot 13 and 14 must have included some time passing between the two for the direction of the camera in shot 14 is the opposite of the one in shot 13 (relative to the direction of travel) and the work on the rail-tracks of the shot 13 should have been at least partially visible in shot 14. There also must be a temporal ellipsis intervening between shot 20 and 21 as the vista in shot 21 is revealed to occupy the same directionality as shot 20, however there are no matching objects in frame. A similar pattern can be observed in the jump-cut across shot 22 and 23.

Interestingly, there are some shots in which the temporal relation to the tram ride is largely obscure. Shot 17, for example, cannot be identified with certainty as either subjective or as issuing from somewhere around the tram (shot 19, 21, 22 and 23). Perhaps such shots are just illustrations of traffic in general. Alternatively, if they are somehow simultaneous with the tram-ride (regardless of whether they are spatially contiguous to it or not) then there are occasions when there must be ellipses between some of them. There should certainly be an ellipsis between shot 18 and 19 and between shot 19 and 20 (or both) because shot 19 is simply too short to account for the appearance of a tram to Franz's left in shot 20, given that no tram tracks are present in shot 18. Finally, if the shots after Franz has disembarked the tram are attributed to a subjective viewpoint then there are clear violations of temporal continuity starting with the cut between shot 24 and 25. Nothing in shot 24 prepares us for the amount of traffic Franz is assaulted by in shot 25. And even if this subsequence is merely a general illustration of the threat to pedestrians posed by modern traffic, it is still replete with jump cuts (in very similar framing the content of the traffic abruptly changes with each cut).

A few words need to be said about the sound. It should be noted that the traffic sounds in the sequence are used relatively sparsely. The only two non-musical accompaniments appear to be the sound of the tram bell ringing and the sounds of car horns. Though some have called this the noisification of music (Eggo Müller 1992, Möbius and Vogt 2000, and Andreas Fickers 2013), this is still a far cry from the use of non-music sounds for musical effects as, for instance, in the opening of Rouben Mamoulian's *Love Me Tonight* (USA, 1932). Moreover, the effect of "hyperstimulation" in Jutzi's adaptation is primarily due to the spatial and temporal relations established by the visual track. It is unlikely this was due to any limitations in sound technology for the Alexanderplatz and Franz's vision sequence are much richer in sounds and approach the level of what today might be called sound montage. The question of why more sound was not used in the tram sequence to produce an even stronger effect of disruption and confusion remains unanswered.

Before proceeding to the discussion of the Alexanderplatz sequence a brief comparison of the tram-ride sequence with the corresponding passage in the novel is in order. Because of its brevity, we can cite the passage in full:

He [Franz] shook himself and gulped. He trod on his own foot. Then, with a run, took a seat in the car. Right among the people. Off they went. At first it was like being at the dentist's, when he has grabbed a root with a pair of forceps, and pulls; the pain grows, your head threatens to burst. He turned his head back towards the red wall, but the tram went racing on, and only his head looking towards the prison. The tram took a bend; trees and houses intervened. Busy streets emerged, Seestrasse, people got on and off. Something inside him screamed in terror: Look out, look out, it's going to start now. The tip of his nose turned to ice; something was whirring over his cheek. "Zwölf Uhr Mittagszeitung", "B. Z.", "Berliner Illustrierte", "Die Funkstunde", "Any

more fares?” The coppers have blue uniforms now. He got off the tram, without being noticed, and was back among people again (E13-14).<sup>264</sup>

The passage contains no montage inserts at all. There are instances of disembodied voices, of street vendors selling various newspapers and, most probably, of the tram conductor inquiring whether anybody else boarded the vehicle, but their introduction is clearly marked by quote marks which locates them on the narrative level one. There are also sentences where it is not quite clear whether they should be attributed to the narrator or to Franz (“Off they went” and “The coppers have blue uniforms now”); whatever decision we make has no bearing on their status as montage inserts however. It could be said that the staccato style effected through short sentences, numerous commas, discrete chunks of information, disembodied voices and ambiguous utterances all contribute to an experience of tempo and dynamism on the one hand and bodily discomfort on the other. This, however, is still a far cry from the experience of disruption and confusion effected by the filmic version of the sequence. In fact, it appears that the key emotion being conveyed in this passage is fear and unease at being among the people after being let out of the prison. Only in the following passage, after Franz exits the tram on Rosenthaler Platz, does the “hustle and bustle” of city life emerge centre stage. Franz is “terror struck” (“Schreck fuhr in ihn”) by how grotesque the people appear to him when they eat and drink: “they had forks and stuck pieces of meat into their mouths, then they pulled the forks

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<sup>264</sup> Er schüttelte sich, schluckte. Er trat sich auf den Fuß. Dann nahm er einen Anlauf und saß in der Elektrischen. Mitten unter den Leuten. Los. Das war zuerst, als wenn man beim Zahnarzt sitzt, der eine Wurzel mit der Zange gepackt hat und zieht, der Schmerz wächst, der Kopf will platzen. Er drehte den Kopf zurück nach der roten Mauer, aber die Elektrische sauste mit ihm auf den Schienen weg, dann stand nur noch sein Kopf in der Richtung des Gefängnisses. Der Wagen machte eine Biegung, Bäume, Häuser traten dazwischen. Lebhaftige Straßen tauchten auf, die Seestraße, Leute stiegen ein und aus. In ihm schrie es entsetzt: Achtung, Achtung, es geht los. Seine Nasenspitze vereiste, über seine Backe schwirrte es. ‘Zwölf Uhr Mittagszeitung’, ‘B.Z.’, ‘Die neuste Illustrierte’, ‘Die Funkstunde neu’, ‘Noch jemand zugestiegen?’ Die Schupos haben jetzt blaue Uniformen. Er stieg unbeachtet wieder aus dem Wagen, war unter Menschen” (G8-9).

out again and were not bleeding” (E12).<sup>265</sup> However, even now, the terror elicited in him should not be confused with bodily failure due to perceptual overload. Concluding this brief comparison we can say that Jutzi’s adaptation transforms a minor segment of the text with no montage inserts at all and restrained effects within “hyper-stimulation” into a full-blown montage sequence that is successful in effecting disruption and confusion through a number of techniques depending primarily on varying spatial arrangements across shots.

#### AN ANALYSIS OF THE ALEXANDERPLATZ HAWKING SEQUENCE

Contrary to Segeberger’s (2003a, 2003b) claims that the contemporary reviewers were dismissive of the film because of their alleged subscription to silent cinema aesthetics, a number of reviewers including Ihering (1996), Sinsheimer (1996) and Siemsen (1996) found *Berlin Alexanderplatz* to be exemplary as far as the German sound film production was concerned. Even London’s (1931) negative remarks about the representation of the Berlin dialect demonstrate that sound-specific aesthetic criteria were adopted to evaluate the film.<sup>266</sup> It is true, however, that none of the critics discussed sound editing and/or montage in more detail. The only person who hints at an analysis in this direction is Ihering who, in the last passage of his review, makes a connection to Dziga Vertov’s *Entuziazm: Simfoniya Donbassa/Enthusiasm* (USSR, 1931). The first Soviet sound film is perhaps the best and most systematic implementation of what is now usually referred to as the “Statement on Sound,” co-authored by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Aleksandrov. The sound film manifesto by

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<sup>265</sup> “[S]ie hatten Gabeln und stachen sich damit Fleischstücke in den Mund, dann zogen sie die Gabeln wieder heraus und bluteten nicht” (G9).

<sup>266</sup> As can be gathered from the quotes above, the critics’ disappointment was primarily due to the film’s almost exclusive focus on Franz and what were perceived as unsuccessful attempts at montage.

Soviet filmmakers was originally published on July 28, 1928 in German in the journal *Die Lichtbild-Bühne* under the title “Achtung! Goldgrube! Gedanken über die Zukunft des Hörfilms” (“Attention! Bonanza! Thoughts on the Future of Sound Film”).<sup>267</sup> Given the status these directors enjoyed in Weimar cinema it is safe to assume that anybody working on early sound film projects was aware of the document.<sup>268</sup> In the manifesto, the trio describes the coincidence between sound and image as a danger to film because of its theatrical nature and call for the use of sound based on principles of montage and counterpoint:

*The first experiments in sound must aim at sharp discord with the visual images. Only such a “hammer and tongs” approach will produce the necessary sensation that will result consequently in the creation of new orchestral counterpoint of visual and sound images. [...] Sound, treated as a new element of montage [...], cannot fail to provide new and enormously powerful means of expressing and resolving the most complex problems [...] (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Aleksandrov 1988: 114, italics in the original).*<sup>269</sup>

In Ihering’s review, it remains unclear whether he posits a link between *Enthusiasm* and *Berlin Alexanderplatz* because of the censorship both films faced – a

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<sup>267</sup> The Russian version was published on August 5, 1928. The first English translation appeared in October of the same year in *Close Up* as “The Sound Film. A Statement from USSR”.

<sup>268</sup> Even more so in Jutzi’s case who, as I mentioned earlier, was responsible for editing the German version of *Battleship Potemkin*.

<sup>269</sup> “Die ersten Experimente mit dem Ton müssen in der Richtung seiner scharfen Abtrennung von den visuellen Formen gehen. Nur ein solcher Angriff wird die Einfühlung ergeben, welche notwendig ist, um in Zukunft den neuen, orchestralen Kontrapunkt der visuellen und akustischen Formen zu erschaffen. [...] Der Ton als neues Element der Montage [...] wird unbedingt neue Mittel von ungeheurer Kraft zur Lösung der verwickeltesten Aufgaben bringen” (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Aleksandrov 2004: 357-358). It is interesting to note that the English translation that appeared in October 1928 in *Close Up* and which can be found in James Donald, Anne Friedberg, and Laura Marcus (1998) uses language which is less aggressive, i.e. it is more restrained as far as the invocation of disruption. Instead of “sharp discord” (which is closer to German original), “pronounced non-coincidence” is used. (Admittedly, “attack” is a better translation of the original than “hammer and tongs” approach” Taylor opts for in his translation). Moreover, there is no use of the term “montage”, rather “mounting” and “cutting” are employed. As in German speaking countries, translations of Russian texts are responsible for “montage” entering English discourse on film sometime around 1929, a year before Ivor Montagu translated Pudovkin’s monograph into English (Bordwell 1986). It would be interesting to see when “montage” enters English discourse on literature and whether there is a correspondence in the contemporary reception between Russian films and *Berlin Alexanderplatz* from the perspective of the experience of disruption.

screening of *Enthusiasm* was banned in Hannover on the very day of the premiere of Jutzi's film – or because of a shared attempt at “experiment in form” (“Formexperiment”). In any case, the absence of detailed discussion of sound among contemporary reviewers should not deter us from investigating the sound editing in the Alexanderplatz sequence for although conclusions about its potentially disruptive nature for the contemporaries can only be speculative, there remain inter-subjective facts which will make the analysis richer and pave the way for the exploration of sound in Fassbinder's adaptation.

Already the transition to the hawking sequence prefigures importance of sound editing in what follows. In the shot preceding the sequence Franz rejects the advances of one of Reinhold's (Bernhard Minetti) accomplices to join the gang by saying: “I don't use muscle anymore. I use... my kisser!”<sup>270</sup> Framed in a medium close-up with Karl to his right (screen left), while uttering the words in question, Franz turns his face away from Karl towards the camera and proceeds to walk into a close-up. The movement is slightly diagonal in order for him to reach the centre of the shot (Karl even quickly moves off screen to accommodate this). The next shot cuts to another close-up of Franz but this time at another place and time, with Franz dressed differently (he even has a top hat) and hawking his tie holders. Although the matching of Franz's body position across shots is not visually perfect and even though the second close-up is closer than the first, the transition is smoothed out aurally for the cut intervenes exactly between the words “I use...” and “my kisser!” (figure 3.2.1 and 3.2.2) Strictly speaking, this is not exactly what the authors of the sound manifesto had in mind, for the effect is one of continuity rather than disruption. At the same time, however, it would hardly be probable for the Soviets to discount this procedure

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<sup>270</sup> “Ich mach's nicht mit der Muskeln. Ich mach's mit der... Schnauze!”

as theatrical. The same procedure is repeated at the end of the film with a small variation – this time it is Franz’s former girlfriend Cilly (Maria Bard) who introduces a sentence which Franz completes in the following shot (at the opening of another Alexanderplatz hawking sequence which also marks the closing sequence of the film).<sup>271</sup> Although the procedure was not common at the time, we should certainly not attribute the discovery of any new type of sound editing to the filmmakers for the same procedure – *viz.* one character finishing the words of another – may be found already in Fritz Lang’s *M* (Germany, 1931).<sup>272</sup> Still, neither should we discount the fact that in the first instance of this procedure in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* a further attempt at matching Franz’s body position across shots is made (to which an analogue in *M* is not to be found).<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Yet another hawking sequence takes place on the Alexanderplatz in the middle of the film, after Franz has ended up in the hospital having been run over. Here, however, it is an unidentified person who is hawking on Franz’s spot. Of the three sequences the first one is the most complex and thus the most deserving of a detailed analysis.

<sup>272</sup> Various types of additional continuity afforded by sound editing appear on three further occasions. Generally speaking they concern a continuous sound track running across a number of shots as the spatial relations of these shots to the diegetic sound source vary. On one occasion, the conversation between Franz and Cilly runs over the shots of Berlin, which move further away from the location of their conversation. On another, the reverse situation occurs: we first hear Franz and Mieke (Margarete Schlegel) having a conversation but it takes a couple of shots for the camera to find their exact location. This sequence is somewhat more complex for there is not only aural rhyming with the sequence preceding it but also a continuation of the song across the sequence cut. The song sung by Mieke in the former sequence (in which Franz and Mieke meet for the first time) spills over for a couple of moments into the following sequence, then her vocals are muted and die out with the music still lingering. Shortly thereafter the music dies out as well, only to be replaced by Franz (poorly) singing the same song before engaging Mieke in conversation. The final instance pertains to the shot in which Mieke’s murder takes place. As Mieke’s screams are silenced, the camera pans upwards and focuses on the branches of the trees. A surprisingly upbeat tune starts – the Soviets would have been pleased – and grows continuously louder as we cut to Karl (Gerhard Bienert) waiting for Reinhold on the forest path. Only when Karl focuses his look off-screen right do we realize that the music might in fact be diegetic. This suspicion is proven correct once a small band of six enters right and exits left past Karl.

<sup>273</sup> The visual rhyming of the meeting held by the police and the criminal world, evident especially in the hand gestures made by the presiding gentlemen, is, strictly speaking, not a case of matching body positions as I discuss them (34:40).





**Figure 3.2.1** “I use...”



**Figure 3.2.2** “my kisser!”

The sequence lasts for approximately 120 seconds and consists of 37 shots. Most of these shots adhere to the shot/counter-shot structure (in framing no smaller than medium), switching back and forth between Franz and the crowd gathered to listen to his sales pitch. As there is nothing particularly interesting in them as far as my thesis is concerned I shall turn my attention to shots where this structure is temporarily abandoned.<sup>274</sup> Generally speaking these shots are either very long and marked by interesting shifts in audio perspective, or they relate to the spatially contiguous space of Alexanderplatz and present equivalents to various montage types described in the previous chapter.<sup>275</sup> Articulating the spatial relations is once again crucial, therefore, for the analysis of this sequence.

Shot 3 (figure 3.2.3): A very long shot from a slightly high angle of Franz selling his wares with a crowd gathered around him. Franz’s voice is continuous across the shot transition; however, the volume is turned down during the duration of this shot (it returns to its previous level in the next shot). This would suggest that an attempt is being made to accompany the shift in visual perspective with a shift in

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<sup>274</sup> There are two long shots from the street level which do not fit this structure but which are not interesting from the perspective of montage. They allow for the traffic to pass between the camera and Franz and the crowd. Fassbinder will go further in his adaptation and mount the camera in one of the passing buses.

<sup>275</sup> The shot/counter-shot parts of the sequence, unlike the shots of most interest to us, were filmed on the set because of problems with the sound recording on location (Rehhahn 1996: 222). This, however, does not change any of the conclusions about the use of sound montage in the following analysis.

aural perspective. From our standpoint the procedure certainly looks awkward (and potentially disruptive) for something like this happens very rarely in contemporary films (and if it does it is usually in the service of producing epistemic discrepancies between the characters and/or the audience about what is heard). From a film historical perspective, on the other hand, it seems that it could be chalked up as an early attempt at producing sound effects, which would have been most natural to audiences. Among early sound engineers, it was not uncommon to think that visual distance ought to be accompanied by aural distance. Another sound variation accompanying the same camera set-up in shot 13, however, suggests that this procedure was a deliberate attempt at disruption. We should nonetheless keep in mind that the absence of comments by contemporary reviewers on this matter suggests that if it was an attempt at disruption, as it appears to me, then it went unnoticed.



**Figure 3.2.3** A very long shot of Franz hawking wares

**Figure 3.2.4** A “documentary” long shot of a church

Shot 10 (figure 3.2.4): A long shot of the silhouette of the church in the background, an upward pan explores its height and then a pan left makes it disappear off screen allowing a handful of people to enter on the left as they go about their business. They appear to move faster than 24 frames per second. Franz’s voice continues with no change in volume and so does the ambient noise including traffic and street-work. It is safe to assume that the shot is of Franz’s surroundings, i.e.

Alexanderplatz. On the basis of Kracauer's review it seems reasonable to see this shot as equivalent to the spatially contiguous type of independent montage I discussed in the analysis of the novel. We should bear in mind, however, that the continuous soundtrack does act as a factor in smoothing out the disruption. More importantly still, we should remember that the reason we are calling this a montage is not its relative independence through spatial contiguity (for then we would also call spatial dislocations in *Manhattan Transfer* montages or any parallel cutting for that matter) but the fact that contemporary reviewers described the shot transition as disruptive.

We could even go a step further and make an analogy with the stylistic shift that takes place in instances of literary montage. We could say that the spatially contiguous shot of the cathedral has a "documentary" feel to it unlike the previous shots in the sequence, i.e. that it is stylistically distinct from the preceding shots. In order to avoid the inherent vagueness of this attribute and its broad applicability I should specify what I mean by "documentary". Here the shots in question are not only shot on location (for the preceding shots were shot on location as well), they also exhibit a lack of control over the staging of human figures. An extreme case of this would be the inquisitive look at the camera we already noticed took place in shot 8 of the tram sequence. A further trait of "documentary" shots would be that they run faster than usual (i.e. that there is a lesser number of frames per second) and that the camera pans far more than usual, without drawing attention to anything in particular.<sup>276</sup> It must be emphasized that the analogy with the literary stylistic shift is not meant metaphorically: there *are* observable stylistic traits which change over shots. At the same time, however, the analogy does not apply to shifts in narrative

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<sup>276</sup> The distinction between narration and description provides another possible way to think about the stylistic difference across these shots. This is a particularly problematic distinction in film, however, and I believe it would introduce more problems than it would solve.

voice.<sup>277</sup> The full analogy fails because, as I shall argue in the following chapter, there is no equivalent to the narrator in fiction film.

Shot 13 (figure 3.2.5): A shot even longer than 3. The key difference is that shot 13, unlike 3, is completely mute. It would appear then that we are dealing with another attempt at aural disruption, i.e. sound montage.

Shot 15 (figure 3.2.6): A long shot of a busy street intersection filled with pedestrians and traffic moving faster than usual. The camera appears to sneak a peek behind some planks again in “documentary” fashion. The camera pans left and then up to reveal the street name: Dirckenstrasse (which passes directly through Alexanderplatz). Franz’s voice and accompanying noise continues throughout. This also obtains for all shots but 26 and 27.



**Figure 3.2.5** An extremely long shot of Franz selling wares



**Figure 3.2.6** A “documentary” shot of Dirckenstrasse

Shot 17 (figure 3.2.7): A brief long shot of the exit from/entry to the Alexanderplatz underground station.

Shot 18 (figure 3.2.8): A brief high angle shot revealing only the torsos and the legs of the people ascending and descending the stairs to the underground station, and

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<sup>277</sup> It could be said that Jutzi is in some sense paraphrasing Ruttmann’s documentary style, but such an explanation would be somewhat problematic for the distinctiveness of Ruttmann’s style is hardly as recognizable as, for instance, the excerpts from the bible in the novel.

doing so faster than normal (presumably from the same camera position as shot 17 but with a change in angle).



**Figure 3.2.7** A “documentary” shot of Alexanderplatz underground station



**Figure 3.2.8** A “documentary” shot of people entering and exiting Alexanderplatz underground station

Shot 20 (figure 3.2.9): A long shot of the workers shovelling beneath a railway track. The camera appears undecided whether to pan further right and up to reveal the passing train. It seems that the fluctuations are due to the decrease in the number of frames. Because the audio and visual tracks of the street work are poorly synchronized, it is safe to assume that this shot is another attempt at sound montage.



**Figure 3.2.9** A “documentary” shot of railroad work



**Figure 3.2.10** A “documentary” shot of a queue

Shot 21 (figure 3.2.10): A brief shot of a number of people in a queue running from the foreground left into the background right. Some people in the foreground

right are facing towards the camera but looking in different directions. Again it would appear that the number of frames is lower than standard.

Shot 23 (figure 3.2.11): A slightly high angle long shot of two children driving wooden buggies, entering screen right and quickly exiting screen left. The words uttered by Franz in the previous shot – “Come out of the street, young man”<sup>278</sup> – together with the high angle accompanying the reverse shots in Franz’s exchange with the crowd initially suggest that the children are not seen from Franz’s point of view, or that at least this is a reverse shot complementing shot 22. However, the eye-line match is off: Franz is looking to his left in shot 22, whereas the shot of children is seen from the perspective of someone looking to their right. We see once again how sound is used to smooth out the shot transitions only to be subverted again through eye-line mismatch.



**Figure 3.2.11** “Come out of the street, young man!”



**Figure 3.2.12** “If you get run over, who’ll clean up the mess?”

Shot 24 (figure 3.2.12): A brief high angle close-up shot of garbage being swept along the end of a road, followed by one of Franz proclaiming: “If you get run over, who’ll clean up the mess.”<sup>279</sup> These two shots, and especially the last one, thus represent an equivalent to the associative montage discussed in the previous chapter in

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<sup>278</sup> “Kommen Sie mal runter vom Damm, junger Mann.”

<sup>279</sup> “Sonst überfährt Sie ein Auto. Wer fegt nachher Ihren Müll zusammen?”

virtue of the coincidence with the subject matter narrated. Again it should be emphasized that the condition necessary for establishing any analogy between the two forms of montage is disruption rather than narrative control. Franz's voice secures the associative aspect but decreases the effect of disruption.

Shot 25 (figure 3.2.13): A brief long shot of people walking away from the camera with their backs turned. One man turns twice towards the camera, presumably to see what it is there for and to help us ascertain the "documentary" nature of the shot. It also appears that the shot runs faster than the ones revolving around the shot/counter-shot structure with Franz in the centre.



**Figure 3.2.13** A "documentary" shot of Alexanderplatz



**Figure 3.2.14** A very long shot of a train station

Shot 26 (figure 3.2.14): A high angle very long shot of the train station with the train moving right to left over an elevated track. There is no sound of Franz or the accompanying noise, only the muffled sounds of the train (which, admittedly, already begin at the end of shot 25).

Shot 27 (figure 3.2.15): A very long shot of the same train proceeding left to right with a glass lamp in the foreground almost at the centre of the shot. The optics of the glass distort the image of the train passing behind. The muffled sounds of the train continue.

Shot 28 (figure 3.2.16): A long shot of a shoe-cleaner at work. The camera again hesitates over what to focus on in the scene, a moment of indecision further exacerbated by the increased shot speed. Franz picks up exactly where he stopped in shot 25, suggesting that the previous two shots broke the previously steady coincidence between screen and diegetic time. This break appears to be a further intensification of the disruption at work in shots 3 and 13.



**Figure 3.2.15** A very long shot of a train



**Figure 3.2.16** A “documentary” shot of a shoe cleaner

Shot 30 (figure 3.2.17): A long shot of a man with a cane and a deformed right foot. The “documentary” characteristics of accelerated movement and the unfocused camera panning can be seen again. Most importantly, Franz broke his “unbreakable” tie holder in the previous shot evoking hearty laughter from his audience. The laughter spills over into this shot but now takes on grotesque overtones as it appears to be directed at the disabled man. A sort of associative montage we might say, but not exactly of the same sort as we have seen in shots 23 and 24 for the interplay between the sound and image is now reciprocal. The sound certainly modulates the image making us more attuned to the man’s disability, but the image in turns modulates the sound, undermining its innocence. In order to emphasize this reciprocal directionality we might call it bidirectional associative montage.<sup>280</sup>

<sup>280</sup> The shot of Mieke’s murder described in footnote 272 appears to fit this type of montage.



Shot 31 (3.2.18): A brief “documentary” shot of a child buying balloons.



**Figure 3.2.17** Laughter over a “documentary” shot of a disabled man

**Figure 3.2.18** A “documentary” shot of balloon purchase

The sequence continues for a further six shots and ends with the arrival of Cilly, at which point Franz giddily collects his wares and leaves with her. More shots of Alexanderplatz fill the transition between this sequence and the ensuing one in Franz’s apartment, but even if we were to count them under the hawking sequence they introduce nothing new as far as our analysis is concerned.

It remains to briefly summarize the results of the Alexanderplatz sequence. We have found that very long shots (contiguous or direct) have been paired with various types of volume modulation in order to affect the experience of aural disruption (shot 3, 13, 26 and 27). We have also found that the contiguous shots (all of the ones discussed above with the exception of 3 and 13) may be understood as equivalent to independent montage based on spatial proximity, so long as we only take their visual aspects into consideration. Additionally, the contiguous shots stylistically diverge from the rest of the shots, which is to say they elicit a “documentary” feel through non-staging, hesitant camera movement, haphazard screen composition and increased visual track speed. In the case of film, however, it is crucial to remember that we cannot talk of any shift in narrative voice when visual montage is discussed. Once the audio track is taken into consideration we can also identify aural disruptions (shot 20)

and equivalents to associative montage be they unidirectional (shot 23 and 24) or bidirectional (shot 30). In these cases of associative montage, the relation the audio track establishes towards the visual track diminishes the disruptiveness of the cuts in the latter. Finally, a sort of spatial dislocation may be identified as a necessary condition for all types of visual and sound montage discussed in this chapter. In the case of visual montage, spatial dislocation boils down to either breaking the rules of the Hollywood continuity system (eye-line matches, reaction shots, direction of movement, the 30-degree rule, etc.) or to cross-cutting to adjacent spaces. In the case of sound montage it amounts either to attempts at coincidence between the visual and aural perspectives or to the transfer of sound onto adjacent space.

Before proceeding to the comparison with the corresponding passages in the novel, a brief corrective to Kracauer's criticism is in order. I have noted that I do not regard my work as interpretative so it might appear strange for me to engage with Kracauer's dismissal of the film based on interpretation. My intention, however, is not to revise my views on interpretations but to elaborate on them. In other words, I simply wish to demonstrate that much interpretative and evaluative work hinges on inter-subjectively verifiable facts. If these facts are proven wrong, the conclusions critics draw should lose some of their persuasiveness. In the passage quoted in the previous section, Kracauer itemizes the film's three main faults as follows: the city montages are only added retrospectively, the montages themselves are not cohesive, and they decrease the film's primary goal – narrative suspense. The second critique is no more than a negative evaluation of the experience of disruption elicited. Since it is ultimately a matter of taste whether or not a particular inter-subjective phenomenon is preferred, this specific critique does not warrant discussion within my framework. My main interest in contemporary reception lies in the *identification* of the phenomenon

of disruption and not in the evaluation of that phenomenon. The first and the third objections do warrant discussion, however.

The two key sequences I described (and the ones Kracauer objected to most) take place in the first sixteen minutes of the film. Taken together, they constitute more than a quarter of screen time up till then. At this early stage of the film, relations between its protagonists and antagonists have only started to form. By the time of the Alexanderplatz hawking sequence, Franz has just started seeing Cilly and refused to join Reinhold's gang. In other words, Kracauer can hardly claim that these montage sequences are inserted retrospectively for contrary to what he may believe they are in fact introduced from the outset. Moreover, even if we were to agree with Kracauer that the film's primary goal is narrative suspense we would have to qualify this statement with the claim that this goal is only revealed later (i.e. only after the protagonist/antagonist relations have been formed), and certainly not before these two lengthy montage sequences have passed. This is not to say that ultimately montage is an exception rather than the rule in Jutzi's film (unlike in Döblin's novel). It is, however, to claim that Kracauer has dismissed the opening montages by retroactively applying a criterion of narrative development which properly takes place only after these sequences have passed. Ironically, he is guilty of retroactive decisions not unlike those for which he chastises the film-makers.

In a chapter on the novel that addresses the question "Who speaks?", Harald Jähner claims that the passages corresponding to the hawking sequence present "a powerful paradigm for Döblin's montage technique, indeed for the decisive characteristics of the modern epic overall. This applies to perpetual shifts in

perspective, simultaneity of ‘narrative planes’, spontaneity of associations, assimilation of different speech registers, gusto for citations.”<sup>281</sup>

Jähner develops the idea, already highlighted in the subtitle of his chapter – “Die herrenlose Sprache” (“Speech without an owner”) – that, although, strictly speaking, Franz utters the words of the sales pitch, he is by no means their productive agent; he merely cites and assembles bits and pieces of various surrounding discourses. Moreover, Jähner concludes, this material, because of its foreignness and anonymity, can neither be properly attributed to Franz nor to the author. In other words, he found that the question “Who speaks?” is unanswerable. Let us look at one of the representative passages he cites:

We’ve got to save time. Time is money. The romantic days are over and won’t come back again, we all have to take that into consideration nowadays. You can’t pull a long tube slowly round your neck every day, you need a ready and efficient article like this here. Just look, that’s your Christmas present, that suits your taste, ladies and gents, it’s for your own good. If the Dawes Plan has left you anything at all, it’s your head under your lid, and it ought to tell you that this is just what you want; buy it and take it home, it’ll be a consolation to you (E66).<sup>282</sup>

We must keep in mind that this is part of a larger speech which is clearly marked by quote marks (there are only occasional interjections from the narrator but these clearly takes place outside of quote marks). From our narratological perspective it is quite clear who is speaking: Franz on level one, whose words are cited by none

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<sup>281</sup> “[D]ieses unsägliche Marktgeschrei [ist] ein überzeugendes Paradigma für Döblins Montagetechnik, ja für entscheidende Eigenarten der modernen Epik überhaupt abgibt. Dies gilt für den beständigen Perspektivenwechsel, die Simultanität der ‘Erzählebenen’, die Unwillkürlichkeit der Assoziation, die Assimilierung verschiedener Sprachschichten, die Vorliebe für Zitate” (Jähner 1984: 126).

<sup>282</sup> “Man muß Zeit sparen. Zeit ist Geld. Die Romantik ist weg und kommt niemals wieder, damit müssen wir alle heutzutage rechnen. Sie können sich nicht jeden Tag erst langsam den Gasschlauch um den Hals ziehen, Sie brauchen diese fertige gediegene Sache. Sehen Sie her, das ist Ihr Geschenk zu Weihnachten, das ist nach Ihrem Geschmack, Herrschaften, das ist zu Ihrem Wohl. Wenn Ihnen der Dawesplan noch etwas gelassen hat, so ist es der Kopf unter dem Deckel, und der muß Ihnen sagen, das ist was für dich, das kaufst du und trägst es nach Hause, das wird dich trösten” (G57).

other than “Döblin” on level zero. Jähner would certainly not deny this, yet he nonetheless wants to say something different, something along the lines of Roland Barthes’ “Death of the Author” and Michel Foucault’s “What is an Author?” We can bracket any discussion of the author and focus exclusively on Franz’s speech. Put in terms developed in the second chapter, Jähner seems to be saying that Franz’s speech is, among other things, characterized by stylistic shifts. However, although the cited paragraph boasts a few commonplace phrases (“Time is money” or “it’s for your own good”), they are a far cry from anything we could describe as a linguistic “genre”. It is also unclear what exactly counts in this passage (and in the others which I have not cited here) as a shift in either perspective, spontaneity of associations or simultaneity of “narrative planes”. Even if Franz strings together various contemporary motifs in his speech (such as the reference to the Dawes Plan), the monologue is still clearly organized as a sales-pitch for tie holders. In other words, Jähner’s account of montage is problematic in both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, Jähner fails to include a discussion of the experience of disruption. Moreover, his understanding of montage along the lines of (post-)structuralist critiques of subjectivity makes it difficult to distinguish montage proper from other linguistic practices. Within this framework, all speech activity may be construed not as acts of speaking subjects but as cases of subjects being spoken, i.e. speech without an owner. From the practical perspective, Jähner’s example does not even fit well with the characteristics listed in his theoretical description.

To complete our comparative analysis, it only remains to be said that the film does not model its montage procedures on corresponding passages in the novel for there are no montages in the Alexanderplatz hawking segment in the novel to begin with. It would appear, then, that the filmmakers exhibited considerable ingenuity in

producing equivalents to various types of montage present in other parts of the novel by specifically filmic means, i.e. through the manipulation of space through image and sound. Although we can easily understand why contemporary reviewers felt the film fell short of capitalizing on the aesthetic possibilities afforded by the source, this should not anesthetize us to the complexity of the film's montage aesthetics. Crucially, whereas stylistic distinctiveness lay at the core of literary montage, the articulation of spatial relations proves to be the key for construing both visual and sound montage in film. In the last chapter it remains to see what Fassbinder's adaptation brings to the discussion.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Montage and the Controlling Fictional Narration in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz***

#### **THE NEAR-ABSENCE OF CONTROLLING NARRATORS IN FICTION FILM**

##### THE GREAT IMAGE MAKER

In Chapter Two I demonstrated at some length the near-ubiquity of controlling fictional narrators in literary fiction. This was necessary to explain the narratological innovation Döblin introduced in his use of literary montage – the multiplication of zero level heterodiegetic narrators as a novel way of eliminating the controlling narrator. I wish to open this chapter with a discussion of the status of the controlling narrator in fiction films. I will argue against the thesis generally accepted in non-analytic film narratology circles, popularized by Christian Metz and developed in most detail by George Wilson, which assigns the control over the whole of the audiovisual track to an entity dubbed “the great/grand image maker”.<sup>283</sup> I shall also criticize a version of this narrator going under the name of “the enunciator”. I shall argue for the near-absence thesis, i.e. that in most cases we cannot talk of a filmic narrator equivalent to the controlling narrator in literature. This will allow me to analyse Fassbinder’s use of montage and other devices as intentional attempts to simulate the existence of such a narrator.

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<sup>283</sup> Henceforth I shall use the term “the great image maker”.

There is, no doubt, significant uncertainty surrounding the exact role played by the great-image maker. Metz's initial formulation from the 1960s allows for three different readings of this role: as author, as implied author and as narrator. Only the latter two are interesting for narratological analysis proper, however.

Every narrative is [...] a discourse [...]. In Jakobsonian terms, one would say that a discourse, being a statement or sequence of statements, refers necessarily to a subject of the statement. [...] Albert Laffay [...] has shown this to be true of film narrative. The spectator perceives images which have obviously been selected (they could have been other images) and arranged (their order could have been different). In a sense, he is leafing through an album of predetermined pictures, and it is not he who is turning the pages but some "master of ceremonies," some "grand image-maker" (*grand imagier*) who (before being recognized as author, if it is an *auteur* film, or, if not, in the absence of an author) is first and foremost the film itself as a linguistic object (since the spectator always knows that what he is seeing is a film), or more precisely a sort of "potential linguistic focus" ("*foyer linguistique virtuel*") situated somewhere behind the film, and representing the basis that makes the film possible. That is the filmic form of the narrative instance, which is necessarily present, and is necessarily perceived, in any narrative (Metz 1974: 20-21, italics in the original).

Given the then current concerns of narrative theory and the restriction of Wayne C. Booth's (1961) concept of "the implied author" largely to American scholars, it is safe to assume that the great image-maker was initially thought of as a narrator figure, much like the Genettian extradiegetic narrator, in control of the entire text. This much is strongly implied in *The Imaginary Signifier*, where Metz compares films to dreams and lists the absence of the narrator in dreams as one of the main distinctions between the two (Metz 1982: 125). The identification of the great image-maker with the filmic narrator can be seen in a number of prominent scholars' work including Sarah Kozloff (1988: 44), André Gaudreault (2009: 89), and Gaudreault and François Jost (1999: 58).



Translation of Genette's work into English prompted a number of film scholars, starting with Brian Henderson's 1983 "Tense, Mood and Voice in Film (Notes after Genette)," to apply Genettian categories to film. Interestingly, although Henderson found the category of voice to be the most problematic for direct application to film (especially because he believed that the voice-over narrator was not equivalent to the extradiegetic narrator), later narratological studies would have far fewer reservations about applying the category. Kozloff (1988) identifies the great image-maker with the extradiegetic narrator. Tom Gunning (1991) understands the creation of narrative cinema in the work of D. W. Griffith as the birth of "the narrator system" construed along Genettian categories. Other prominent narratologists who have identified an equivalent filmic narrator in fiction film include David Alan Black (1986), Seymour Chatman (1990) and Peter Verstraten (2009). Either explicitly or implicitly much of this work hinges on the allegedly analytic premise that "if X is narrative then there is a narrator narrating X." In Chapter Two I have argued that this premise is invalid.

Kozloff's book is of particular interest for my thesis because it focuses on voice-over narration, a brand of which is present in Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. She concedes that most extra-homodiegetic voice-over narrators such as Walter Neff in *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, USA, 1944) and Joe Gillis in *Sunset Blvd.* (Wilder, USA, 1950) fail to exercise full control over the audiovisuals that make up the part of the story they are recounting verbally. She admits the same of most other extra-heterodiegetic narrators, such as the unidentified narrator (played/spoken by Orson Welles) in *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Welles, USA,

1942).<sup>284</sup> There are, however, at least local occasions where, according to her, a character voice-over narrator may take full control over the whole of the audiovisual track. In other words, for the duration of a *segment* of the film a character voice-over narrator controls all of the audiovisual information on screen. Kozloff argues that this is the case with Addison DeWitt in the opening sequence in *All About Eve* (Joseph Mankiewicz, USA, 1950). There, DeWitt not only freezes the image of Eve receiving the award in order to say a thing or two about her, but also turns off the volume during the award presenter's speech, which he deems uninteresting. Although Kozloff does not take into account the non-diegetic music accompanying the sequence, which cannot be attributed to DeWitt's control and thus disqualifies him as the local controlling fictional narrator proper, her analysis makes it clear how one could imagine occasions in which the voice-over narrator also assumes the controlling function. Later in the chapter I shall argue that, on at least one occasion in his adaptation, Fassbinder comes extremely close to embracing this type of narration.

## THE ENUNCIATOR

Metz's work has greatly influenced another account of narrators in film based on the analytic premise. Following in Metz's footsteps this approach attempts to apply Émile Benveniste's (1977) distinction between *histoire* and *discours* and his analysis of enunciation to film. Drawing on an analysis of spoken and written French, Benveniste concluded that there are two types of enunciation, i.e. linguistic acts: 1) those which mark the presence of the enunciator, i.e. the utterer – *discours* – and 2) those which lack clear markers of her presence – *histoire*. Put differently, *discours* can be

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<sup>284</sup> The reader might remember that I have expressed my reservations about the "extradiegetic" narrator in Chapter Two. I use the term here only because Kozloff applies Genette's terminology to her project.

identified by the presence of deixis, i.e. words such as “here”, “now”, “I”, all of which refer to the context of enunciation. The consequence is that without any knowledge relating to the context of enunciation we cannot fully comprehend *discours* sentences such as “I am standing here now”. In sentences like these, information about who is speaking, where, and when are all context dependent. *Histoire*, on the other hand, lacks deictics and thus secures complete understanding of the utterance without recourse to the context of its enunciation. No information about enunciation is necessary to fully understand utterances like “Romeo and Juliet are star-crossed lovers”. According to Benveniste, moreover, *histoire* appears to recount itself because in it no explicit deictics, i.e. no markers of the enunciator are present.<sup>285</sup> This analysis was particularly appealing to the enunciation theorists for they believed that by concealing itself as *histoire* whereas it was in fact *discours*, narrative cinema propagated ideological tasks.<sup>286</sup>

Before proceeding, it should be noted that Metz (1991: 768) would later explicitly deny that the great image-maker (or “the enunciator” as he now termed it) had any connection with the Genettian extradiegetic narrator. Indeed, Metz would align himself more closely with the idea that the great image-maker should be understood as the implied author. This is most probably due to Francesco Casetti’s (1997) work on filmic enunciation, in which Casetti defines the enunciator as a theoretical entity, extractable from the text and standing in opposition to the narrator figure. Moreover, although Gaudreault, who also discusses narration in terms of enunciation, uses the terms “the great image-maker” and “the mega-narrator”

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<sup>285</sup> The “linguistic version of the ontological gap argument” I developed in Chapter Two essentially follows this logic. The important difference, however, is that Benveniste never explicitly acknowledges that narrative tenses are also characterized by deixis.

<sup>286</sup> The most notable enunciation theorists include Francesco Casetti (1997), Daniel Dayan (1974), Gaudreault (2009), Gaudreault and Jost (1999), Mark Nash (1976), Kaja Silverman (1983), and Slavoj Žižek (2001).

interchangeably throughout *From Plato to Lumière*, in the book's first table he equates the great image-maker with the implied author (2009: 7). These examples point to a degree of uncertainty regarding the ontological status of the enunciator. In the works of these enunciation theorists, and particularly in Gaudreault, the enunciator's position regularly shifts ontologically between what is fictional in the story and what theoretical models we can supply to explain particular effects of the film. As I have already expounded a definition of montage in terms of fictional narrative voice, I shall concentrate here on the enunciator as an entity in cinema whose role mirrors that of the narrator in prose fiction.<sup>287</sup> Suffice to say, the detailed analysis of the concept of fiction that I undertake below will allow for a clearer separation of these roles.

Let us return to the argument that the enunciator should be equated with the filmic narrator. We could say that the articulation of this argument follows the same logic as my argument for the existence of controlling fictional narrators in literary fiction. According to enunciation theorists in narrative fiction film, it is possible to identify filmic analogues to linguistic deixis on the lowest diegetic plane. This entails the existence of a fictional agent responsible for all of the audiovisual information presented. Indeed, Gaudreault and Jost (1999: 47-48) give an extensive list of such markers: exaggerated foreground, low angle point of view shot, framing devices such as keyhole image, types of camera movement designed to make us aware of the camera's presence, artificial make up, jump cuts, punctuations such as superimpositions, and actors looking directly at the camera.

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<sup>287</sup> For a good historical overview of the use of the term "implied author" and its conceptual clarification see Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (2006: 42-121, 151-181).

Although the application of enunciation theories has been subjected to sustained criticism by David Bordwell (1985: 21-26) and Noël Carroll (1988a: 150-160), it mysteriously persists (usually by not engaging with this criticism at all). I will not re-rehearse the arguments of Bordwell and Carroll but merely point to another way of dismissing the enunciator theorists' claims regarding the filmic narrator.

Metz subsumes all of the devices listed above under a common denominator: "Enunciation is the semiological act by which some parts of a text talk to us about this text as an act [...] All figures of enunciation consist in metadiscursive folds of cinematic instances piled on top of each other" (Metz, 1991: 758-759). The use of the term "metadiscursive" should not fool us, for Metz assumes filmic narrative is already discursive. This much is clear from his famous statement that the filmic shot resembles enunciation more than it does a word. That is to say, Metz claims that a picture of X ought to be understood as saying "Here is X" rather than "X". Moreover, insofar as all film shots regularly employ filmic versions of linguistic deixis, they are instances of *discours*. Even in his last work Metz notes that "film does not contain any deictic equivalents, with the exception, [...] of one sort of global permanent deictic—a very atypical one, [...] '*There is*' [Voici], which is always tacit and always present" (Ibid. 755-756, italics in the original). Following this logic, because the figures Gaudreault and Jost refer to are both discursive and reflexive, they must be metadiscursive.

Yet there is no reason to think of film as discourse to begin with. As Edward R. Branigan (1986) and Bordwell (1985) remind us, the only reason why Metz is comfortable with identifying narrative fiction film with *discours* is because he applies a linguistic model to film analysis. In other words, Metz believes that film, despite being comprised of various semiotic systems, is comprehended by the spectator in

linguistic terms. Thus an image of X comes across as “Here is X” for the spectator. Branigan and Bordwell list a number of experiments from cognitive psychology which suggest that this need not be the case and that in fact there is much evidence to believe that we do *not* analyze images linguistically. I might add that even if the spectator did process the image in linguistic terms, and did so in the terms Metz proposes, this would still not warrant an inference about the existence of a fictional narrator. The reason for this can be understood with recourse to the ontological fallacy. Arguably, linguistic processing deals with what the images stand for in the real world and not with what these images might fictionally stand for. In other words, the image of Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1942) is processed as “Here is Humphrey Bogart” and not as “Here is Rick”. Therefore, the deixis in “Here is X” refers to the spectator-Bogart relation and not to either the fictional world the filmic text conveys or to the alleged narrator. Strictly speaking, there is no deictic or tense in the world of fictional film: there is just an image of X, and this image gets cognitively translated into a linguistic statement which is thought exclusively by the spectator.

On its own, this still does not mean that other types of inferences about the existence of a narrator cannot be made on the basis of the devices listed by Gaudreault and Jost. If we unpack Metz’s statement, however, we shall see that enunciation so conceived dovetails perfectly with Linda Hutcheon’s understanding of “metanarrative” as a text which “provides, within itself, a commentary on its own status as fiction and as language, and also on its own processes of production and reception” (1980: xii). Hutcheon’s exposition of metanarrative is, in turn, a subclass of Viktor Shklovsky’s notion of defamiliarization or, later, Bertolt Brecht’s well-known concept of estrangement. The crucial point to note here is that metanarrative

moments are often metadiscursive *only* in oral and especially in written narratives, because they relate to the narrator's subjectivity in one way or another. The most famous example is, of course, the controlling fictional narrator in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, who regularly addresses the audience and comments on the process of writing.

Metanarrative moments, however, need not produce fictional truths about the existence of a narrator. If a character who is not a narrator addresses an actual reader by saying: "Dear sir, you should not think of me as a mere character" – arguably an analogue to a character's direct address to the camera – this statement generates no fictional truths about the narrator. The only "I" entailed by the "you-address" is the character addressing the reader; and this can be indicative of the controlling fictional narrator only if the character *is* the controlling fictional narrator. By way of analogy, the only "I" that a knowing look to the camera entails is the character doing the looking. A similar argument applies to all the devices listed above. Consider the use of hand-held camera and jump cuts in the work of Lars von Trier. There is no more reason to assume that these devices generate fictional truths about the existence of a fictional narrator than there is to think that two different copies of *Gulliver's Travels* printed using two different fonts generate two distinct fictional truths about the font of Gulliver's entries into ship's log. It is true that von Trier's use of these devices produces various effects important for the appreciation of his films (including drawing attention to the fact that we are not watching a classical Hollywood film). But although this could be understood as the "text talk[ing] to us about this text as an act", the act referred to is not an act of a fictional narrator but an act of a real-life agent (be it the author, the cameraman, the editor or whoever) or a hypothetical (implied) author.

Perhaps an even better way to demonstrate why none of the above devices establish a case for the existence of the controlling fictional narrator is to consider how it would look if a fictional agency were in control of the audiovisuals presented. Good examples include mockumentaries such as *This Is Spinal Tap* (Rob Reiner, USA, 1984) and a number of sitcoms including *The Office* (UK, 2001-2003). In the former, it is fictional that all of the shots in the film are taken by a documentary film crew. In the latter, it is fictional that somebody is conducting interviews with the characters and filming them as they go about their daily business, though the context of these interviews is left indeterminate. In other words, these examples exhibit markers beyond those listed by Gaudreault and Jost which help us infer some subjectivity behind the camera – the documentary context in *This Is Spinal Tap* and the Q&A form in *The Office*. To conclude with the enunciation theorists then, there is no reason to think that metanarrative necessarily ushers a narrator into existence or that it is indicative of the narrator figure in any way.

#### THE ANALYTIC VERSION OF THE GREAT IMAGE MAKER

A notable exception among film theorists' appeal to narrators is Bordwell. In his *Narration in Fiction Film*, Bordwell explicitly denies the existence of controlling fictional narrators and instead advocates a model of impersonal narration. Bordwell's critics have rightly pointed out that his account is plagued with anthropomorphisms, particularly once he starts discussing narration's key attributes – knowledge, self-consciousness and communicativeness.<sup>288</sup> Bordwell discusses various situations in which it is clear that particular pieces of information are deliberately withheld from

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<sup>288</sup> For the critiques in question see Chatman (1990: 124-138), Gaudreault and Jost (1999: 61-62), and Gunning (1991: 22-23).



the viewer for, as he puts it, narration has to know them. Thus, supposedly non-anthropomorphic narration is endowed with attributes that only a narrating agent can have. Although this criticism is valid, it is far less effective as a demonstration of the existence of the narrator than as a demonstration of the difficulty of articulating the effect of the narratorless narrative without recourse to anthropomorphic metaphors.

There are authors whose arguments against the existence of controlling fictional narrators steer clear of anthropomorphisms, particularly those coming to the study of narrators from analytic philosophy (Carroll 2006, 2008, Berys Gaut 2004, 2010, Andrew Kania 2005). Wilson (1997, 2007, and 2011) is the most notable exception among analytic philosophers as far as his view on controlling fictional narrators is concerned. His indebtedness to the notion of the great image-maker is clear from the title of the first of his three pieces referenced: “*Le Grand Imagier Steps Out*”.

Wilson mounts his argument by criticizing what he refers to as the untenable “Face-to-Face version of the Fictional Showing Hypothesis”, advocated by Chatman (1990) and Jerrold Levinson (1996). According to this hypothesis, visual fiction presents the audiences with slices of the fictional world from a specific vista in that world. These slices, moreover, can only be presented by an agency from *within* the fictional world. Wilson criticizes the thesis for confusing what he terms “showing the fictional” with “fictional showing”. He invokes a shadow play as an example to demonstrate how a fictional story of a hawk attacking a mole can be told in shadows by an actual person using her hands without there being any fictional showing from within the fictional world by some fictional agent.<sup>289</sup> Indeed, it is sufficient to actually

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<sup>289</sup> Here, interestingly, Wilson chooses not to understand the whole performance as fictional as he does in the case of the oral narration that I mentioned in Chapter Two, and instead focuses only on the

present a series of images in which it is fictional that the envisaged events take place in order to show those events as fictional, i.e. “to show the fictional”. Wilson’s next step is to construct a more complex variant of the fictional showing hypothesis in order to establish a way in which a viewer could coherently imagine a fictional film as being fictionally narrated. The “Mediated Version of the Fictional Showing Hypothesis” states that fictional showing in filmic texts boils down to “the fictional exhibition and sequential arrangement, by means of editing, of *motion picture shots* of the occurrences that constitute the story” (Wilson 1997: 194, italics in the original). Here, motion picture shots should be understood as naturally iconic images, which, like photographs, exhibit natural counterfactual dependence on the array of elements and features present in the photographed situation. The crucial difference between motion picture shots and photographs is that, although the former are produced from within the fiction, the exact manner of their production is left indeterminate in our imaginative engagement with them (Wilson 2007).<sup>290</sup> In other words, Wilson holds that when watching a film we regularly imagine that we are fictionally shown fictionally edited fictional images of fictional events (produced in an indeterminate manner) by a controlling fictional narrator.

Note that there are two crucial steps in Wilson’s argument for the existence of the controlling fictional narrator: 1) the images constituting the filmic text are fictional, and 2) there is a fictional agent who arranges and shows them. It seems to me that step 2 can rest solely on what I term “the material version of the ontological-gap argument”. Naturally iconic images are fictionally material artefacts and these can

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shadow. One could legitimately argue that shadow play is a game of make-believe in which it is fictional that the person is fictionally showing the shadow events as actual.

<sup>290</sup> This characteristic is included in order to ward off numerous criticisms put forward by Carroll (2006).

indeed be handled exclusively by fictional entities. Thus, according to Wilson, it is safe to assume that a fictional agent is doing the handling. This, however, is problematic. If Wilson goes to such pains to construe the production of naturally iconic images as indeterminate, would it not also make sense to claim that their arrangement and exhibition are indeterminate as well? Why do we have to posit the existence of a great image-maker doing the editing if we do not have to imagine her producing the shots as well? Even if Wilson resolved this issue, the crucial problem of the argument is step 1. There is no reason to suppose that what we are shown in the filmic text are naturally iconic images to begin with. As Carroll (2006, 2008) argues, given the ontological and technological complexity of naturally iconic images, it is unlikely that regular audiences entertain such concepts at all. In addition, there are no textual clues to engender such concepts. There is nothing in the visuals of almost any fictional film that would suggest the postulation of naturally iconic images.

There are, however, films which achieve a not dissimilar effect to the one described by Wilson. What they imply, however, is not naturally iconic images but either motion picture shots produced by fictional cameras as in the aforementioned *This Is Spinal Tap*, or a vision of fictional characters through continuous insistence on point of view shots as in *Russkiy kovcheg/Russian Ark* (Alexander N. Sokurov, Russia, 2002). Moreover, I could imagine a film, say of a bank robbery, in which all of the shots are identified as belonging to one of the cameras of an intelligent surveillance system. But all of these controlling fictional narrators would be explicit. The more general problem then is not what could count as conclusive evidence for the claim that we imagine naturally iconic images when watching fictional films, but rather what could count as conclusive evidence for the existence of an *implicit* controlling narrator. Wilson (2007) admits that none is likely to be found. Remember

that – in literary fiction – the “linguistic version of the ontological gap” argument I propose allows for the reconstruction of an implicit controlling narrator thanks to deixis.

In his latest argument for the existence of controlling fictional narrators, Wilson (2011, 55) rests the “Fictional Showing Hypothesis” on the “Imagined Seeing Thesis”. According to this thesis, audiences watching visual fiction imagine that they see slices of the fictional world from a particular fictional vista. The structure of Wilson’s latest argument is as follows: the “Imagined Seeing Thesis” necessarily entails the “Fictional Showing Hypothesis” which necessarily entails the existence of a controlling fictional narrator. Above we have seen reasons not only why it is unlikely that the “Fictional Showing Hypothesis” entails the existence of controlling fictional narrators but also why the “Fictional Showing Hypothesis” itself is unlikely to hold. Here I aim to demonstrate that, although the “Imagined Seeing Thesis” is of relevance to the epistemology of film, it is inapplicable to the discussion of controlling fictional narrators.<sup>291</sup> The reason for this stems from Wilson’s confusion of game-worlds and work-worlds. Wilson claims that it is fictional in the work (or work-fictional) that spectators are seeing cinematic images and in turn being presented with them. He bases this claim on Kendall Walton’s (1990: 57-61) understanding of the work-world. For a given scenario to be work-fictional, the work’s standard function must be to prompt appreciators to make-believe a given scenario:

*[I]t is a standard function of a cinematic work of fiction to prompt viewers to imagine—to make believe—themselves being shown the narrative events and circumstances of successive shots. Moreover [...] it is fictional in the movie [...] Since “fictional showing” is putatively what the movie’s images are meant to achieve, and “imagined seeing” is putatively what movie viewers do*

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<sup>291</sup> I produce the argument for the “Mediated Version of Imagined Seeing Thesis” Wilson endorses, but it works for all of its versions.

in response to those images, it is often easier to formulate certain points in terms of one thesis rather than the other. But, to repeat, the two theses are utterly interdependent, although, of the two, the Imagined Seeing Thesis is probably the more fundamental (Wilson 2011, 55, italics in the original).

Walton has more to say about the work's standard function than Wilson lets on, however. Walton claims that something is work-fictional as long as it holds for *any* game of imagination the work prompts (1990: 60): otherwise it is game-fictional. (Game here is simply to be understood as unfettered imaginative engagement with an artwork.) To use his example, although it is both work- *and* game-fictional that there is a couple strolling in Georges Seurat's painting *La Grande Jatte*, it is only game-fictional that Richard, an observer at the Chicago Art Institute, is seeing the couple strolling. This depends on the fact that it is *Richard* who is appropriately playing an authorized game of make-believe with the painting as a prop. If Mary were to do the same, then it would be game-fictional that *she* is seeing the couple. Now, Wilson cannot exchange Richard and Mary for a variable X and say that it is work-fictional that X is seeing the couple. There is simply no X looking at the painting. An alternative might be to say something like: although there is no work-fictional character that sees, there is *subject-less* work-fictional "seeing". But this does not work either. For when we are seeing a couple strolling in *La Grande Jatte*, we are imagining that we see the couple but we are not imagining some subject-less "seeing" on top of this. Thus, the "Imagined Seeing Thesis" and, in turn the "Fictional Showing Hypothesis", are game- but not work-fictional.<sup>292</sup> As such they cannot tell us anything about controlling fictional narrators, whose (in)existence is necessarily work-

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<sup>292</sup> The following claim demonstrates at least a possible inadvertent admission of this by Wilson: "they [spectators] imagine, falsely but quite legitimately, *about the shots of the film*, that those have been transparently derived from certain visible constituents of the fictional world that the film creates" (Wilson 2011: 90, italics in the original). That there is confusion here is supported by direct contradiction with the in-text citation above.

fictional.<sup>293</sup> The (in)existence of controlling fictional narrators holds for *any* game the work prompts.

This, of course, does not mean that film as a medium necessarily precludes the existence of controlling fictional narrators. The aforementioned *Russian Ark* (consisting of a single point of view shot accompanied by intradiegetic sounds) provides an analogue to literary autodiegetic narrators recounting their stories in the present tense. And again, mockumentaries such as *This Is Spinal Tap*, sitcoms in the vein of *The Office* or recent horror films such as *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, USA, 2007) and *[Rec]* (Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza, Spain, 2007) make it work-fictional that there is a fictional recording of fictional events identical to the actual recording we see.

Human beings can imagine almost anything, i.e. they can play whatever games of make-believe they chose to. They can surely imagine that it is the actual author who is narrating fictional events or that a film is presented through naturally iconic images. But it is one thing to imagine something at will and another to imagine something according to parameters set by the text. Walton's distinction between game- and work-worlds neatly articulates the difference between the two. Wilson's "Mediated Fictional Showing Hypothesis" is devised to show that imaginings of naturally iconic images are at least minimally coherent. The problem is that he provides no textual grounding for such imaginings. If Wilson is ready to admit the absence of controlling fictional narrators in novels containing exclusively direct speech, I fail to see why he insists on the existence of narrators in fiction films. The suggestion of Carroll and Currie that instead of imagining seeing we simply see

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<sup>293</sup> Note that the "linguistic version of the ontological gap argument" does not depend on any abstract imagined reading or hearing.

images which we use to imagine what is fictionally the case seems to offer a more acceptable account of what we readily imagine in watching fiction films.<sup>294</sup> Paisley Livingston (2001) correctly points out that the burden of proof remains on the ubiquity theorist.

Based on these findings I shall argue that montage alone, as employed by Fassbinder, although certainly invoking attention to the film as a semiological act, does not suffice to generate any fictional truths about the controlling fictional narrator. However, once sound montage, voice-over narration of the text from the novel, the inserts of the novel's paragraphs in the form of intertitles, and paratextual information relating specifically to the Epilogue are taken into consideration, stronger arguments for the construction of such a figure become readily available. While Döblin attempts to convey the impression of the absence of a controlling voice at a number of places in his novel, Fassbinder simulates the impression of its presence in his film adaptation. It is important, however, to remember that Döblin moves beyond the simulation of this absence to absence proper precisely on those occasions in which he deploys montage without narrative tenses. Whether the converse is true in Fassbinder – whether, that is, he actually manages to bring the controlling narrator into being – will become clear through my analysis of various devices employed in the adaptation.

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<sup>294</sup> See Carroll (2006) and Currie (1995).

## “A FILM IN 13 PARTS AND AN EPILOGUE”

As early as the first episode of Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* we are introduced to almost all of the devices (both visual and sound) which will be used throughout the series and which are to be understood as instances of film montage. These include flashbacks, intertitles, and voice-over interjections that assume various positions in respect of both the image and the sound track. Moreover, there are a number of additional editing patterns which, though they might not be as disruptive in effect as the aforementioned ones, still fall outside the domain of the classical Hollywood style. In stark contrast to what Joachim Paech (1988), Achim Haag (1992, 1993), Andreas Rost (1993), Jane Shattuc (1995), Matthias Hurst (1996), Klaus Ulrich Militz (2006) and even Dominique Pleimling (2010) would have us believe, it is quite common that relationships between characters are *not* established through *standard* shot/counter-shot procedures. The first episode also presents many instances in which what counted as literary montage in the novel now appears intradiegetically integrated into characters' discourse; montage inserts from the novel are now simply spoken by the characters. For these reasons, analysis of the first episode largely suffices to give an account of the film's/series' devices of interest. Where necessary, I shall supplement this analysis with references to other episodes. I shall also discuss the specificities of the Epilogue's editing, and question the importance of Haag's (otherwise valuable) analysis of the music score for understanding sound montage. In addition, I shall offer some thoughts on the possibility of visual in-shot montage. I shall conclude by relating the use of sound montage and intertitles to the issue of the existence of the controlling fictional narrator. Before proceeding, however, it is worth stressing that the film's/series' hybrid nature as far as the distinction between television and cinema is concerned does not bear any relevance for the discussion of montage and narrative



voice within the framework of my thesis.<sup>295</sup> From the point of view of reception, the experiential engagement with editing patterns changes minutely, if at all, whether watching Fassbinder's adaptation on a television set or in the cinema. Equally, the shift between these two modes of exhibition has no bearing on what fictional truths are generated about the narrator. I shall, therefore, interchangeably refer to Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as both a film and a series.

## ATYPICAL EDITING PATTERNS

### *ASYMMETRIC SHOT/COUNTER-SHOT STRUCTURES*

In his discussion of editing patterns in Fassbinder's film, Hurst (1996: 269-273) has concluded that the principle behind the treatment of the characters is the "attached camera". However, this assertion is based on just one example. The example in question comes from the first episode's opening shot-sequence in which a standard over-the-shoulder shot/counter-shot exchange between Franz (Günter Lamprecht) and the prison guard takes place. To cite Haag (as Hurst himself does):

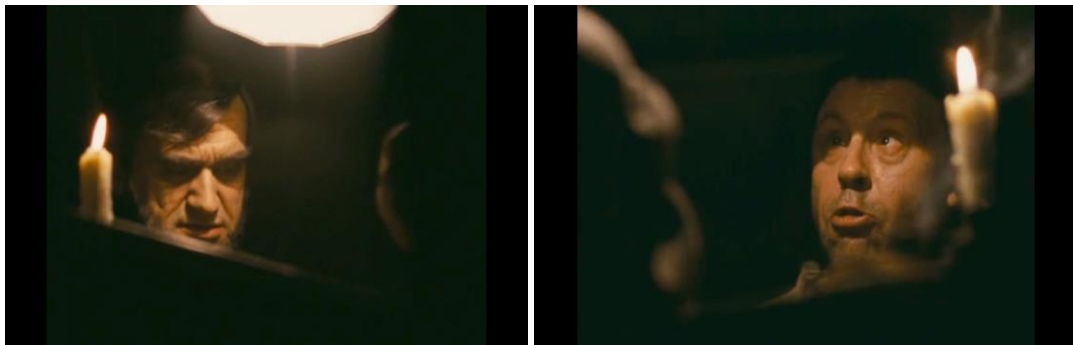
considering its primary function, the construction of events according to spatio-temporal logic, the editing in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is predominantly bound to the forms of film realism, the conventions of narrative cinema and its classical shot-sequences, respectively.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Militz (2006) is somewhat overconfident that Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* can be seen exclusively as a TV series. He forgets to mention that the premiere of the film at the Venice Film Festival on August 28, 1980 preceded the broadcast of the first episode in West Germany which took place on October 12. He also fails to mention that the subtitle of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is "A Film in 13 Parts and an Epilogue".

<sup>296</sup> "Die Montage in BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ bleibt angesichts ihrer primären Funktion, das Geschehen gemäß raumzeitlicher Logik zu gestalten, überwiegend den Montageformen des filmischen Realismus bzw. des konventionellen Erzählkinos und deren klassischer Einstellungsfolge verbunden" (Haag 1992: 191, block capitals in the original).

As I noted in the preceding section, practically all of the critics at least minimally interested in the film's formal properties share the opinion that – with the exception of clearly identifiable montage elements and sequences in the Epilogue – the editing conforms to the patterns of classical Hollywood style. Even Pleimling (2010), perhaps the film's most accomplished analyst in terms of form, believes that the curious editing pattern in the Baumann shot-sequence in Episode Four – an intradiegetically unmotivated low-angle shot/counter-shot exchange between Baumann (Gerhard Zwerenz) and Franz – can be explained by invoking its extratextual motivation with reference to a particularly important part of the novel, viz. the Job-paraphrase in this case (figures 4.1.1 and 4.1.2).<sup>297</sup> To single out two further examples, an unmotivated low-angle shot/counter-shot exchange also occurs when Franz and Mieke (Barbara Sukowa) take a lake-boat excursion in Episode Eight (figures 4.2.1-4.2.2), and again when they converse in a café in Freienwalde in Episode Eleven (figures 4.3.1-4.3.2). Neither of the two sequences refer to any particularly important parts of the novel.



**Figure 4.1.1** and **4.1.2** Unmotivated low-angle shot/counter-shot exchange between Baumann and Franz

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<sup>297</sup> For the analysis of this sequence and its relation to the novel, see Pleimling (2010: 32-35).



**Figure 4.2.1 and 4.2.2** Unmotivated low-angle shot/counter-shot exchanges between Mieze and Franz (boat ride)



**Figures 4.3.1 and 4.3.2** Unmotivated low-angle shot/counter-shot exchanges between Mieze and Franz (café)

Another form of atypical editing, the one I shall focus on here, occurs early in Episode One. It occurs with only the second person Franz speaks to – Nachum (Peter Kollek), who recounts the story of Zannowich in order to assuage Franz.

For reasons of space I shall focus primarily on the shot-sequence framed by two intertitles during which the tale of Zannowich is recounted (09:50 – 16:17). It should be noted, however, that the exchange with Nachum begins even earlier and that during this initial 140-second-long 11-shot sequence there is also not a single *symmetric* shot/counter-shot (although there are two eye-line matches). In other words, there is not a single shot/counter-shot equivalent to the one analysed by Hurst, i.e. one in which the shot size, the camera angle in relation to both the horizontal

plane and the imaginary line between the characters, and the character orientation are perceptually the same.<sup>298</sup>

There are altogether eighteen shots in this sequence (figures 4.4.1-4.4.18). In this section I will focus not on the sound track nor the intertitles but on the construction of space.<sup>299</sup> In the first instance, we should note that there is nothing unusual about the recurrent positioning of the camera near the ground, for Nachum is sitting on the floor and Franz, for the most part, is lying prone on it as Nachum tells his tale. There are, however, a number of very peculiar features in this exchange. Out of eighteen almost exclusively static shots only four camera set-ups are used more than once.<sup>300</sup> A high-angle over-the-shoulder close-up of Franz appears twice (figure 4.4.4 and 4.4.6), as do a close up of Nachum (figure 4.4.3 and 4.4.15) and a near-the-ground close-up of Franz (figure 4.4.9 and 4.4.13), and a long shot of both men framed by a wooden table leg on the left appears three times (figure 4.4.10, 4.4.14 and 4.4.16). This means that there are thirteen different camera set-ups within a sequence which takes place in a typical interior between two people who, for the most part, do not move – a very unusual approach by classical Hollywood style standards.

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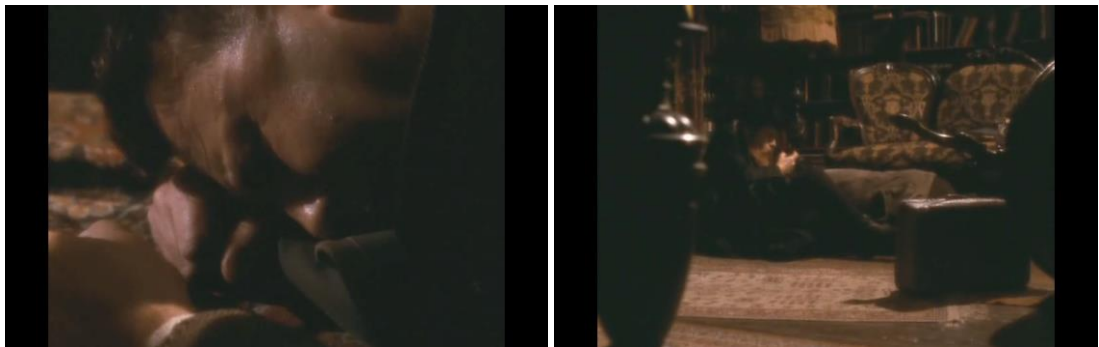
<sup>298</sup> There is a pair of shots in which Franz starts singing “The Watch on Rhine”. Whereas in the first shot Franz is in middle-close up and Nachum in the background, both facing the camera, in the second Nachum is in the foreground and Franz in the background, both looking away. Though, strictly speaking, the shots are symmetric (for both of the characters change orientations accordingly) the cut still appears unusual for it is commonplace that protagonists (even if talking to the mirror) face each other when speaking, as it is the case in the conversation between Franz and the prison guard.

<sup>299</sup> I discuss the soundtrack and intertitles in more detail below.

<sup>300</sup> The reframing, even when it occurs as is the case in shot 3, is barely noticeable.



Figures 4.4.1 – 4.4.8 The conversation between Franz and Nachum



Figures 4.4.9 – 4.4.16 The conversation between Franz and Nachum



**Figure 4.4.17 and 4.4.18** The conversation between Franz and Nachum

Another atypical stylistic choice is the evasion of symmetric shot/counter-shot structure; during these eighteen shots it occurs only once (figure 4.4.11 and 4.4.12), on the first occasion Franz gets up to sit. This structure is followed by a close-up of Franz lying on the floor again, barely one second-long. As the preceding shot was that of Nachum from Franz's over-the-shoulder there cannot have been sufficient time for Franz to have lain down. This is despite the fact that we can see him slowly returning to the floor over the shots 11 and 12 of the sequence. As a result the cut to shot 13 appears out of sync.

The final point to note is that while shot 1 one establishes a 180 degree line of action, all the ensuing shots in the sequence take place on the other side of that line. It is true that the switch is somewhat more difficult to spot than usual as one of the axes of the lengthy second shot is positioned precisely along this line. The problem for standard notions of continuity, however, is that this shot is in fact a bird's-eye long shot which has no intradiegetic motivation whatsoever. Bearing this in mind we would be hard pressed to claim that this shot-sequence follows standard conventions of space construction.

The bird's-eye is, admittedly, quite an uncommon device in the series but the proliferation of camera set-ups, and the use of atypical shot/counter-shot structures or

their overall evasion is not.<sup>301</sup> Already in the following shot-sequence, in which Nachum's brother-in-law Eliser (Hans Zander) enters the apartment, there is a persistent evasion of shot/counter-shot forms accomplished mostly through camera and character movements.<sup>302</sup> After two pairs of over-the-shoulder shot/counter-shots, there is a string of asymmetric ones in which Franz is seen in close-up, whereas Eliser and Nachum appear together in "American shots" (figure 4.5.1 and 4.5.2). Somewhat later, a symmetric close-up shot/counter-shot of Franz and the pair, respectively, is followed by a low-angle "American shot" of Franz. The next shot is set-up behind Franz with Eliser and Nachum approaching and appears to invite a counter-shot to follow. But yet again the classical expectation is thwarted: instead of a medium close-up or a close-up of Franz we see a blocked long shot of the three men (figure 4.6.1 and 4.6.2).



**Figure 4.5.1** and **4.5.2** An asymmetric shot/counter shot procedure (shot-size asymmetry)

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<sup>301</sup> In fact, whether due to frontal and theatrical organization of shots as in films such as *Katzelmacher* (Germany, 1969), camera movement as in the likes of *Warum läuft Herr R. amok?/Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?* (Germany, 1970), combinations thereof as in *Das Kaffeehaus/The Coffeehouse* (Germany, 1970), or the use of mirror surfaces as in *Der amerikansche Soldat/The American Soldier* (Germany, 1970), the avoidance of typical shot/counter-shot structures has been a mainstay of Fassbinder's film oeuvre since the beginning.

<sup>302</sup> In the final shot of the sequence, the avoidance of standard shot/counter-shot practice is secured through the use of two mirrors.





**Figure 4.6.1 and 4.6.2** Shot/counter-shot procedure thwarted

Atypical patterns may also be found in a number of other exchanges in Episode One, including Franz’s visit to Minna (Karin Baal) where a slightly low-angled sharply focused close-up of Franz is alternated twice with a horizontally placed soft-focus close-up of Minna (figure 4.7.1 and 4.7.2), Eva (Hanna Schygulla) and Herbert’s (Roger Fritz) visit to Franz where a close-up of Franz is followed by a blocked long shot of all three characters (figure 4.8.1 and 4.8.2), and Franz’s visit to Prisoner’s Aid where a close-up of Franz alternates with a low-positioned “American shot” of two female employees (figure 4.9.1 and 4.9.2). Similar unexpected and/or atypical patterns can be observed throughout the series as a whole. While these editing patterns are not sufficiently disruptive to be regarded as examples of montage it should nonetheless be clear that, in contrast to what other commentators claim, they differ substantially from classical Hollywood patterns.



**Figure 4.7.1 and 4.7.2** An asymmetric shot/counter-shot procedure (focus asymmetry)



**Figure 4.8.1 and 4.8.2** An asymmetric shot/counter-shot procedure (shot-size and character placement asymmetry)



**Figure 4.9.1 and 4.9.2** An asymmetric shot/counter-shot procedure (shot-size and camera placement asymmetry)

### *THE EPILOGUE'S "DREAM LOGIC"*

In contrast to the examples referred to above, the atypical editing patterns in the Epilogue have regularly been acknowledged – Both Haag (1992) and Pleimling (2010), for example, devote entire chapters to the series' final episode for this reason. Whereas Haag focuses mainly on the use of music, Pleimling (2010: 129) refers to the “extreme acceleration of rhythm”, “the brevity of individual shots and scenes”, “the dissolution of chronology”, the existence of “no clear causal connections”, “the style of ‘dream logic’”, and “chains of associations”. I shall discuss Haag’s notion of sound montage below, but here I would like to focus on Pleimling’s account of image track editing. More specifically, I want to address his conclusion that the Epilogue

confronts us with an example of “montage extreme” and that there “in the form of fast cutting Fassbinder comes closest to Döblin’s way of writing [...] [where] the montage character takes effect.”<sup>303</sup>

As I have already demonstrated in Chapter One, the speed of editing alone does not result in montage. Likewise, as I have shown in Chapter Two, the key to the link between literary and film montage is not the perceived speed but rather the experience of disruption. Whereas in literary montage this experience is bound up with the category of linguistic “genre” and non-motivated and non-modulated forms of its use, in film, as I highlighted in Chapter Three, this experience assumes the form of an unconventional spatio-temporal dislocation. Admittedly, “the style of ‘dream logic’” does go some way in this direction, but even if it were as disruptive as the types of editing I discuss later in this chapter, it would not be so by virtue of its cutting speed.

The most striking aspect of Pleimling’s appeal to the extremely fast cutting speed is that it is straightforwardly disproved by the data. In the 111-minute-long Epilogue there are altogether 441 shots with an average shot length of 15.1 seconds; in the 80-minute-long first episode there are 309 shots with an average shot length of 15.5 seconds.<sup>304</sup> The difference in average shot length of 0.4 seconds can hardly be said to amount to “extreme acceleration of rhythm”. Moreover, the sequences with the

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<sup>303</sup> “In Form des schnellen Schnitts nähert sich Fassbinder der Schreibweise Döblins [...] und der Montagecharakter kommt deutlich zum Tragen” (Pleimling 2010: 129).

<sup>304</sup> Haag (1991: 145) counts 305 shots in the first episode but from his breakdown according to shot size it seems that he does not count the four intertitles that appear during the episode. I include intertitles in both of my counts. I assume that Haag does not include the 87-second-long opening credits of the first episode for there are none in the Epilogue, so neither did I. It is generally unclear whether we should count the opening credit sequence as a single shot or as 29 stills over which the shot of the train wheels is superimposed. If we opt for the former, the average shot length is only slightly increased to 15.8 seconds. If we opt for the latter, however, the average shot length even falls below that of the Epilogue to 14.5 seconds.

fastest cutting speed in the Epilogue are not those characterized by “the style of ‘dream logic’” but rather by shot/counter-shot structures. These can be both symmetric and asymmetric and can depict Franz’s delusions and normal diegetic events alike. In the shot-sequence in which mice tunnel a way out for Franz, for example, there are 22 shots in 138 seconds, alternating between Franz looking at the mice and the mice tunnelling (in a slightly asymmetric eye-line exchange). Similarly, the boxing-ring sequence, all of which is composed from shot/counter-shot structures, eye-line matches and two long shots, lasts for 290 seconds and consists of 38 shots. The average shot lengths for these two sequences are 6.3 and 7.6 seconds, respectively. Both are well below the average shot length.

Given the data on average shot lengths can we still give a visual account of the “style of ‘dream logic’” that Pleimling (and many others) speak of? We need to say more than simply refer to surrealist *mise-en-scène*, as in the shot-sequence of Franz’s crucifixion or speak of the permutations of the sequence in which Franz loses his arm but with different characters playing different roles on each occasion. We need to explain this “dream logic” in terms of editing. However, explanations of this “dream logic” in terms of “chains of associations” and the existence of “no clear causal connections” are unsatisfactory, and, as we have seen, to refer to editing behind this logic simply as an “extreme acceleration of rhythm” is misleading.

The best way to visually explain the “style of ‘dream logic’” is by recourse to the manner in which space and time are constructed through editing. Two key devices are used in the Epilogue: 1) the continuity of local time and place with the discontinuity of character placement and 2) the discontinuity of place stitched together by either the continuity of character movement or by eye-line matches. The first device amounts to a subversion of the commonplace expectation that people will

not suddenly appear or disappear. The second establishes contact between disparate locations through an apparently “impossible” character interaction.<sup>305</sup>



**Figures 4.10.1 – 4.10.4** “Dream logic” and the discontinuity of character placement

The opening shot-sequence of the Epilogue offers a good example of the first device. As Franz is embracing Mieze, a choir begins to sing and draws their attention (figure 4.10.1). The matching eye-line shot situates the choir opposite the pair (figure 4.10.2). However, once we cut to the previous shot Franz is embracing nobody for Mieze has vanished into thin air (figure 4.10.3). Franz starts digging in the ground in search of Mieze, stops and – with an expression of disbelief – looks in the same direction where the choir stood (with the camera moving in on a close-up). We return to the same matching eye-line as before, but instead of a choir whose song still continues we now see Lüders (Hark Bohm) (figure 4.10.4). The expectation of

<sup>305</sup> Both of the devices may also be established through camera movement, but because this is technically more demanding the use of specific editing techniques remains important.

continuity is secured by the matching shot, only to be shattered by the surprise character displacement.

In terms of the discontinuity of place, character movement often forms a bridge between two places that are clearly not adjacent. Most of the places depicted in Franz's delusions are recognizable from the events of the normal diegesis in the preceding episodes. On one occasion, for instance, Franz tries to escape the Freienwalde forest and the figure there who continuously torments him by raving about the Whore of Babylon. Franz runs out of the frame and finds himself in the next shot in an underground station, but with the voice of the figure still audible in the background (figure 4.11.1 and 4.11.2). On another occasion, Franz enters the Salvation Army meeting hall he once frequented with Reinhold (Gottfried John) in Episode Five through a tunnel dug out for him by mice.



**Figure 4.11.1 and 4.11.2** “Dream logic” and the discontinuity of place accompanied by character movement

A subclass of the discontinuity-of-place device is implemented for the first time when Franz digs for Mieke again, but this time in the forest. He is shocked to find that below him, in a matching high-angle long shot, Cilly (Annemarie Düringer) is standing in an abattoir, drenched in blood and singing (figure 4.12.1 and 4.12.2). The same device is repeated in a later shot-sequence. Standing in the abattoir Maxie

takes a look through the gratings and sees, in another matching shot, with the iron bars out of focus in the foreground, Mieke being run over by Franz and Reinhold.



**Figure 4.12.1 and 4.12.2** “Dream logic” and the discontinuity of place accompanied by eye-line matches

It is true that some of these shot-sequences do not afford as strong a feeling of local narrative closure as we would like. This is certainly the case with the jump from the sequence in which Franz and Reinhold run over Mieke to that of Franz’s crucifixion. But we would still be hard pressed to equate this lack of local narrative closure with montage-like disruption and in so doing connect “dream logic” with montage more generally. Even on these few occasions where the absence of local narrative closure may be perceived, aural continuity remains. In the jump from the car crash to the crucifixion, for example, the “Radioactivity” song connects the shot-sequences. As such, the cuts in these sequences are hardly any more disruptive than standard jumps between shot-sequences in normal diegesis which usually take us to some other time, some other place, some other character, or a combination of all three. In fact, the most out-of-joint change between shot-sequences in the Epilogue takes place near its end and is not a part of “dream logic”. A cut to the courthouse for Reinhold’s sentencing immediately follows a shot in Maxie’s tavern where Eva tells Franz that she is no longer pregnant with his child. There is no sound continuity between the shots and it is not even fully clear if the courthouse-sequence

chronologically follows the one in Maxie's tavern. The exchange between Eva and Franz takes place after another courthouse-sequence in which Franz testifies in the trial against Reinhold; it is not impossible that Franz's sentencing immediately followed this testimony. Significantly, therefore, a sequence which cannot be construed as a part of Franz's delusions exhibits less local narrative closure than those which can.

Moreover, as opposed to what Pleimling claims about "the dissolution of chronology" I believe there is a very straightforward temporal continuity in the Epilogue up until this point. The order of all of the preceding sequences within the normal diegesis has clearly been linear, and there are good reasons to think that those sequences representing Franz's delusions progress in a linear fashion as well (moving from one delusion to the next and culminating in his crucifixion). First, the sequence of his delusions follows the fashion of a morality tale, in which Franz comes to terms with his sins as well as with his "hubris" to live a morally upright life. Second, while both of the "dream logic" devices play with spatial continuity they preserve the integrity of the temporal continuity.

In the case of asymmetric shot/counter-shots and the first "dream-logic" device, we have seen that editing patterns either preserve the local spatial continuity or, in the case of the second "dream-logic" device, use visual and spatial character relations to stitch non-adjacent spaces together. Together with the fact that they all preserve temporal continuity, this gives us good reason to refer to them as examples of atypical editing rather than montage proper. The editing I shall speak of later will go further as far as spatio-temporal dislocation is concerned. In the absence of any documented contemporary reception on this matter, however, I must admit that I



cannot insist that the phenomenological account I propose would hold as generally as those proposed in previous chapters.

## THE APPROPRIATION OF LITERARY MONTAGE

As I have already mentioned, a number of instances of literary montage are integrated verbatim into characters' discourse. The second montage insert of the novel – another ready-made of the prisoners' regulation “genre” – is uttered word for word by Franz in response to an overwhelming confrontation with the outside world upon his release from jail.<sup>306</sup> On another occasion in the same episode, a prostitute Franz picks up tauntingly reads an almost verbatim analysis of sexual potency (E32; G27) from the newspapers. Somewhat later, while spending time with Polish Lina (Elisabeth Trissenaar), Franz reads the label for a sexual impotency drug called Testifortan exactly as it is described in the novel (E34; G29). Given their somewhat artificial nature and their rather obscure connection with the novel's descriptions of urban life, a number of interpretative possibilities present themselves for the rendering of such citations. We might be tempted to say that, in these moments, the city speaks through the characters, emptying them of their subjectivity. Or we might claim the exact opposite – the characters are reaffirming their subjectivity by commanding the discourse the city produces. However, given that there is no way of adjudicating between these and many other readings I suggest we best stay clear of the whole project.

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<sup>306</sup> “When the given signal rings, work must be immediately. It can only be interrupted at the time set aside for eating, walking, and instruction. During the walk the prisoners must hold their arms stiff and swing them back and forth.” “Auf entsprechendes Glockenzeichen ist sofort mit der Arbeit zu beginnen. Sie darf nur unterbrochen werden in der zum Essen, Spaziergang, Unterricht bestimmten Zeit. Beim Spaziergang haben die Gefangenen die Arme ausgestreckt zu halten und sie vor- und rückwärts zu bewegen” (E13; G10).

After what may be termed “intradiegetic incorporation” the other most common method of treating the novel’s montage inserts is the voice-over interjection. “Interjection” is a far better word than “commentary” for, as we have seen in Chapter Two, montage inserts are not in fact comments on narrative developments (even though they may coincide with the subject matter narrated). They are, rather, textual segments which issue either from a different narrative voice or from none at all. “Interjection” also better captures the way in which the voice-overs are regularly introduced as unexpectedly as they are terminated. As we shall see voice-over interjections may also function as expressions of characters’ thoughts and as direct addresses to characters.

The first appearance of a voice-over interjection takes the form of another quotation of prisoners’ regulations – the novel’s first montage insert (E13; G9-10) – as Franz regains his composure in a building courtyard and follows Nachum into his apartment. Though most of the interjections in the series are uttered by Fassbinder, this first hurried interjection is made in Franz’s voice. Franz is trying to deliver the interjection as quickly as possible and the brevity of his speech leads him to sighs of exhaustion by its end. The mode of delivery seems curiously at odds with the calm and confident manner in which Franz takes Nachum up on his offer to follow him into his apartment after giving him what appears to be a smug look. Though pointing towards the essence of sound montage as described in “The Statement on Sound” (the intentional dissonance between the image and the sound track) I remain reluctant to classify this sequence as such. The voice is still attributable to Franz (most probably as a thought), and, as such, the dissonance does not appear to be sufficiently jarring. I would argue that having identified the voice as that of Franz, we are inclined to find an explanation for the dissonance which does not invoke distinct temporalities for the

image and the voice, and to smooth out its potentially disruptive nature in the process. It may be that Franz is just putting up a front for he does break down again immediately upon setting foot into Nachum's apartment. In other words, identifying the voice as Franz's leads us to postulate an intradiegetic motivation. This has the effect of pacifying the dissonance between the image and the sound, much like the way in which in the novel intradiegetic motivation stops Viktor Žmegač's open montage from becoming montage proper.

Even clearer examples of voice-over interjections that fall short of sound montage include those uttered by Minna and Franz in the shot-sequence in which Franz rapes her.<sup>307</sup> After Franz forces her to the ground, the second voice-over in the shot we hear is clearly Minna's and stands for her thoughts in the here and now, for what follows the interjection "I'll scream for help" is precisely the sound and the image of Minna screaming. Practically the same holds for Franz: the close-up of his face in an ecstatic spasm synchronizes perfectly with his voice-over about the "Garden of Eden with dazzling fireworks".

For similar reasons, the cacophony of the two streams of thoughts in voice-over form during Franz's attempt to have sex with a prostitute (while Franz ruminates about Mrs. Stein's soup, the prostitute thinks of mundane future choirs) would also not count as sound montage in relation to the image.<sup>308</sup> Simply put, despite the contrast between the representational content of the image and that of the sound track, it is clear who and where the sources of these sounds are: Franz and the prostitute, both of whom are in bed. Although it might be said that the sounds transform the meaning of the image in a manner similar to the deployment of associative sound

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<sup>307</sup> These examples, it should be noted, do not use the novel's montage inserts as their source.

<sup>308</sup> These are also streams of thought in the novel (E31; G26), though clearly separated from each other.

montage in Jutzi's adaptation, there the *displacement* of the sound onto the (presumably) adjacent space – the depiction of which was further characterized by “documentary” style – was the main reason for classifying it as montage. Nothing of this sort appears in Fassbinder's shot. I am also reluctant to classify this as sound montage as far as the sound track itself is concerned, for this would suggest that there is a sequential aural analogue to the disruptive cut in visual montage. The cacophony of these two streams of thoughts clearly suggests something very different. It is not that one sound is abruptly cut by another. Rather, it is simply difficult to tell the two streams apart and to catch the content of either in full. In this sense, they are very similar to the genre of simultaneous poem that I dismissed as an example of montage in the Literature Review. Cacophony does not hinge on sequential aural disruptions and is not, therefore, an example of montage.

Returning to the rape-sequence, it is Fassbinder who first interjects in a voice-over fashion. He quotes word for word an instance of literary montage from the novel concerning the damages a certain Captain Bacon received for his wife's adultery.<sup>309</sup> Although we might disagree on the details of this connection, in both film and the novel the text in question does bear on the subject matter narrated. At least in the novel, however, this connection by no means undermines the claim that it should be regarded as an example of montage: its status as such is guaranteed by the matter-of-fact style (seasoned with a touch of venom) which we might liken to a commentary-style news editorial. In the film, of course, the linguistic “genre” appropriated by a

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<sup>309</sup> “What is a woman worth among friends? The London divorce courts, in the suit of Captain Bacon, pronounced a dissolution of his marriage on the ground of his wife's adultery with Captain Furber, a fellow-officer, and granted him £750 damages. The captain does not seem to have put too high a value on his faithless wife, who is soon going to get married to her lover.” “Was ist eine Frau unter Freunden wert! Das Londoner Ehescheidungsgericht sprach auf Antrag des Kapitäns Bacon die Scheidung wegen Ehebruchs seiner Frau mit seinem Kameraden, dem Kapitän Furber, aus und billigte ihm eine Entschädigung von 750 Pfund zu. Der Kapitän scheint seine treulose Gattin, die demnächst ihren Liebhaber heiraten wird, nicht allzu hoch bewertet zu haben” (E36; G30).

voice-over cannot usher in montage in the sense a shift in style in literature can, for voice-over is only one of the semiotic systems employed. However, the clearly perceptible dissonance between the content of the image and the content and tone of the sound track may amount to montage.

Since Fassbinder's voice has no identifiable spatio-temporal location in relation to the image, its interjection may well appear disruptive. This is, admittedly, not very different from the position the extra-heterodiegetic narrator (in Kozloff's terminology) inhabits. The disruptive experience, however, may be further exacerbated by the fact that, although the content of interjection bears some relation to the represented violence, the exact nature of this relation is difficult to pin down. At the very least, the interjection is a far cry from standard voice-over practices which always have a far more direct relation with the subject matter narrated, whether in the form of description, narration or evaluation. Moreover, it is quite uncommon for a voice-over to begin mid-shot (let alone mid-sequence), as this is precisely what makes its introduction and termination appear disruptive. Generally in classical Hollywood style, voice-over is reserved for the opening and closing shots of a given sequence. Finally, the detached tone of delivery also contrasts with the violent nature of the act taking place. Out of all of the instances of voice-over interjection discussed thus far (including the interjection Fassbinder makes in the shot following Franz's invocation of the Garden of Eden, where the soothing image of fish swimming in the aquarium resonates with the calm discussion of zero gravity and dissolution of physical laws),<sup>310</sup> the report on Captain Bacon seems to be the most legitimate instance of sound montage in relation to the image.

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<sup>310</sup>“No house. No gravitation, no centrifugal force. It has disappeared, it has sunk away, extinguished is the red deflection of radiations in the sun's dynamic field, the kinetic theory of gases, transformation of

There are reasons, however, why we might not wish to concede even this. The aquarium referred to above already appears in the shot with the Captain Bacon-interjection. The shot is vertically divided according to the golden ratio: the upper shorter part filled with the aquarium standing on four legs, and the taller one below in which Minna and Franz are seen, at first only their legs, but then Franz lying on top of Minna having overpowered her. As such, the peacefulness of the aquarium already dispels some of the dissonance with the image track and, at the very least, works in tandem with the voice-over to produce a contrast with the lower part of the frame. Another reason to stop short of classifying this as an instance of sound montage is the continuation of the diegetic sounds of the struggle as the shot progresses. The elimination (or partial muting) of these sounds would act more disruptively. With all of this in mind, it should be acknowledged that to regard this sequence as a clear-cut instance of montage is problematic.

We can see then how the most common way of handling instances of literary montage in the novel is either to incorporate them through intradiegetic motivation (i.e. characters' discourse) or through voice-over interjection, be it a character's thoughts or a narrator's utterances.<sup>311</sup> Another method is to integrate the literary montage into the image track (the lengthy close-up of the newspapers the prostitute reads) or into the background soundtrack (Hübner's furnishing advert perceptible on

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heat into energy, electric vibrations, induction phenomena, the density of metals, of liquids, of non-metallic solids." "[K]ein Haus, keine Schwerkraft, Zentrifugalkraft. Es ist verschwunden, versunken, ausgelöscht die Rotablenkung der Strahlungen im Kraftfeld der Sonne, die kinetische Gastheorie, die Verwandlung von Wärme in Arbeit, die elektrischen Schwingungen, die Induktionserscheinungen, die Dichtigkeit der Metalle, Flüssigkeiten, der nichtmetallischen festen Körper" (E37; G31). This is not a montage insert in the novel.

<sup>311</sup> For an excellent analysis of other important appropriations of literary montage through voice-over – including *The Reaper Song* and biblical paraphrases – see Pleimling (2010: 82-91).

the radio during Eva's visit to Franz).<sup>312</sup> The final form of appropriation is to introduce literary montage as intertitles. In the process, most of these inserts lose their disruptive aspect, much like ready-mades in the novel did once they were motivated intradiegetically or introduced through the modulation of narrative voice. However, this is not to say that no instances of literary montage retain their disruptive aspects on screen or that there is no film montage in the series.

#### FILM ALTERNATIVES TO LITERARY MONTAGE

Although not as abundant as the atypical editing patterns discussed above, there are a number of instances of relatively straightforward visual montage segments in the series. For the most part, these consist of abrupt flashbacks; but there are also a small number of instantiations of Eisenstein's associative montage, as well as one case resembling intellectual montage (though, strictly speaking, it is also a flashback). In addition, there is the very unconventional use of intertitles throughout the series. Finally, instances of sound montage proper can also be identified. Although montage in the film, unlike in the novel, is not the dominant stylistic device, it still merits analysis. To date, there exists no detailed analysis of it in the literature, a lacuna made more surprising by the fact that some of the forms of montage are themselves extremely innovative.

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<sup>312</sup> Whereas it is fictionally indeterminate that the source of the sexual potency report is a newspaper, the radio advertisement in question does not appear in the novel at all. (According to Juliane Lorenz, the film's editor, most of these sound bites were made specifically for the series; personal communication.) More importantly, because of their very unobtrusive character such integrations warrant little attention under my framework. For more details on these examples and their unwarranted classification under the heading of montage see Militz (2006), Pleimling (2010), and Fickers (2013).

## *FLASHBACKS*

Most of the flashbacks center on Ida; four of them take place in Episode One. Two of these are extended shot-sequences of her murder, the longer of which will be repeated four more times during the series. In addition, there are flashbacks of the revolving rooftop in Episode Two where Franz confronts his communist ex-friends for the second time, of Franz's incarceration (twice in Episode Six), and of erotic fantasies about Mieze (Episode Nine). As Pleimling (2010: 38) rightly observes regarding the first extended flashback of Ida's murder, although diegetically motivated it nevertheless appears disruptive. It is introduced with a shot of Ida's photo portrait in her sister's apartment shortly after Franz rapes her. Its disruptive appearance is enhanced by the use of a sharp cut instead of a dissolve or a fade-out, a device which even in 1980 was still an unconventional means of representing the past. In contrast to the preceding shots, the Ida-flashbacks are always presented in soft focus. We might also add that the very first appearance of a flashback in the series – an abrupt cut-away to Franz kissing/biting Ida, motivated by Franz's arousal by the film poster for "Orphaned" – is particularly disruptive, for it ends as unexpectedly as it has begun.<sup>313</sup> In other words, unlike the extended shot-sequence of Ida's murder where the sequence terminates with Ida losing consciousness, thereby providing local closure to the sequence, the aforementioned flashback ends so abruptly that no such closure is obtained. The same holds for the remaining flashbacks in the series.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> In fact, both Pleimling (2010) and Elena del Rio (2013) fail to point out that a shot from the extended murder shot-sequence appears already a couple of shots after the film's first flashback.

<sup>314</sup> In Episode Two, during the confrontation with the communists in Maxie's tavern, there is a shot of Franz singing in the very courtyard from Episode One I mentioned when discussing the first appearance of voice-over. Curiously, what is represented is not consistent between the shots, for in Episode Two Franz is far more combative while singing than in Episode One. As such it could be problematic to call this a flashback proper.





**Figures 4.13.1 – 4.13.4** Reinhold throws Franz out of the car

Perhaps the most striking flashback in the whole series is the depiction of Franz's ejection from the car in Episode Six. Its first representation appears mid-episode, lasts for two or three seconds, and is shot from inside of the vehicle. Approximately ten minutes later into the episode, as Meck (Franz Buchrieser) listens to Reinhold and Cilly having sex in the bathroom an abrupt cut presents us with a fifteen second-long torrent of eighteen rapidly alternating shots (figures 4.13.1 – 4.13.18). The first shot is a close-up of a hand turning a door handle (figure 4.13.1). Because of the darkness of the flashback and the shot preceding it, the continuation of music score across the cut, as well as Meck's proximity to the bathroom door it is not unreasonable to think that it might also be him turning the handle (perhaps, to see the sexual act). Closer inspection, however, reveals that the hand opening the door is gloved, and thus belongs to Reinhold not Meck. Therefore, even if the first shot is not perceived as disruptive, the following one must be. It is a terse repeat of the first representation of Reinhold throwing Franz out of the car (figure 4.13.2). What follows

is an abrupt 180 degree cut to a long shot from the perspective of the car following the gang (figure 4.13.3). The next shot is also long but rotated 120 degrees clockwise in a circular direction (if we imagine the line between the cars to be the radius of that circle). Eight more shots repeat this alternating structure (figures 4.13.5 – 4.13.11).



Figures 4.13.5 – 4.13.11 Reinhold throws Franz out of the car (alternating structure)

There are several disruptive aspects to these alternations. The shots from the pursuing car are in slow motion, whereas those from 120 degrees angle are at normal speed. Moreover, the first shot in the pair repeats part of the content of the second. For instance, in shots 4 and 6 of the sequence (shot at the 120 degrees) Franz has already hit the ground, something which only occurs at the end of shot 7 from the slow-motion perspective of the car (figure 4.13.4, 4.13.6 and 4.13.7). Finally, all of the shots in this sequence have sounds, even if the music from the preceding sequence has been muffled. There are faint noises of the ejection and car motors running, but none of Franz hitting the ground.

The situation changes with shot 13, whereupon the noise of the car's motor picks up. The shot also breaks up the alternating structure through a long bird's-eye shot of Franz lying on the ground as the car approaches (figure 4.13.13). The alternating structure returns for one last time but now the first shot of the pair is no longer in slow motion and the camera is positioned further back, almost in the driver's seat, allowing for a more visceral experience of movement (figure 4.13.14 and 4.13.15). Shot 16 is a close-up of Franz's arm at the moment of contact with the tyre and repeats the contact made already in the previous 120 degrees long shot. A medium close-up of the driver and his date follows quickly thereafter. This part of the shot-sequence concludes with a longer medium close-up repeat of Franz's arm being run over followed by his excruciating scream. As a result of its duration, the scream also appears to re-establish the coincidence of diegetic and screen time.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> For such a complex montage sequence, it is curious that it has not engendered a single analysis in the existing literature, let alone a lengthy discussion. The shot-sequence continues (with the couple weighing their options of what to do with Franz) but there are no more editing patterns of interest for my thesis.



**Figures 4.13.13 – 4.13.18** Franz falls to the ground and his hand is run over

*ASSOCIATIVE MONTAGE*

The shots which might be thought of as associative montage are to be found in Episode Four and Ten and include two abattoir-sequences and an animation of a spider. The first abattoir-montage is a one minute-long sequence consisting of twenty-three stills of a historical slaughterhouse. The sequence is introduced by an intertitle citing one of the novel's chapter titles – “For it happens alike with Man and Beast; as

the Beast dies, so Man dies, too” (E138).<sup>316</sup> It begins with a still of a pig on a farm (figure 4.14.1) which rapidly dissolves into a representation of the meat-industry production process. This sequence of steady dissolves of one still into the next concludes with an image of a butcher’s shop (4.14.2). It is accompanied by Fassbinder’s voice-over reciting parts of the novel from the chapter in question (E144, 145; G122, 123). The nature of the cut itself precludes us from calling this sequence an instance of montage as we could in the case of flashbacks, where the stills were introduced by a dissolve and not a sharp cut. We can say, however, that the still nature of the images, together with their documentary and antiquarian feel (they are black and white and washed with sepia hues), constitutes a stylistic disruption within the film.<sup>317</sup> Moreover, the images clearly present an obtrusive spatio-temporal dislocation which is difficult to place within the physical coordinates of the story-world with any certainty. In that sense, they are reminiscent of the juxtaposition of war atrocities and the stock market in *The End of St. Petersburg* and the slaughter-sequence in *Strike*.<sup>318</sup> To take the example from *The End of St. Petersburg*, we cannot be sure that the shots of the stock market have an actual location within the story-world. Much like the meat-processing sequence, they seem to illustrate a generic type of practice without fixing it in any specific relation to the spatial coordinates of the story-world.

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<sup>316</sup> “Denn es geht dem Menschen wie dem Vieh; wie dies stirbt, so stirbt er auch” (G117).

<sup>317</sup> Stylistically, minus the brownish hues, they are quite similar to the stills used in the opening of every episode of the series (with the exception of the Epilogue). However, because they are a part of the opening credits they do not have the same relation to the story as the abattoir-sequence does and should not be understood as montage proper. For a more thorough analysis see Pleimling (2010: 42-44).

<sup>318</sup> In *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, on the other hand, it is clearly suggested that the shot-sequence which compares humans with animals locates both the daily work migration and the abattoir as Berlin.



**Figure 4.14.1** and **4.14.2** The first and the last shot of the meat industry production process sequence

The same type of spatio-temporal dislocation holds for the other two instances of visual montage I have identified. The first pertains to yet another shot of the abattoir. This shot, however, was clearly made in the studio. Therefore, there can be no talk of stylistic distinctiveness here. In the shot an unidentified nude man with long grey hair and a beard, and covered with fur in strategic places enters an abattoir, slaughters a sheep, and proceeds to a cathedra to, presumably, make note of the deed. The voice-over interjections include, respectively, Franz soothing the animal about to be slaughtered, Fassbinder supplying more information about the slaughterhouse from the novel as the animal flounders with its throat cut, and, finally, Franz lamenting the ever increasing expenses and market competition. All three interjections have enough in common with the image not to amount to sound montage in relation to the image track. Fassbinder’s interjection, though, may be called an instance of speech track montage due the unmotivated and relatively abrupt shift in both the origin of voice and the linguistic “genre” of what is spoken. The shot terminates with a dissolve to an intertitle citing one of the novel’s paraphrases of the biblical tale of Job – “That day his first sores began to heal” (E149).<sup>319</sup> On top of such unconventional spatio-

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<sup>319</sup> “An diesem Tag heilten seine ersten Geschwüre” (G127).

temporal dislocation, the introductory cut is sharp enough to make this shot appear disruptive.<sup>320</sup>



**Figure 4.15.1** and **4.15.2** The animated spider sequence

The other unconventionally spatio-temporally dislocated shot shares more similarities with the stills-sequence. It is introduced and terminated by a dissolve and is clearly stylistically distinct from the rest of the film (figure 4.15.1 and 4.15.2). The camera tracks over a still of a painting, following the movement of an animated spider across the bodies of two lovers with Fassbinder reciting yet another passage from the novel (E304-305; G260-261). The conclusion to be drawn here appears to be that a sharp cut in itself is not necessarily a prerequisite of visual film montage for the disruptive effect may be secured through a combination of a specific brand of spatio-temporal dislocation and stylistic difference. It might be objected that I am contradicting myself here, for much of the point of the first chapter was to demonstrate that the perception of a cut is a necessary though not sufficient precondition for visual montage. I am not backtracking on my claim that the perception of a cut is a necessary precondition. What I wish to emphasize, however, is that there is no such a thing as a cut in the literal sense as there is a fade or a dissolve. We do not literally *see* a cut when watching a film, there is no black frame in the

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<sup>320</sup> It has to be conceded, however, that Franz's intradiegetic scream from the previous shot spills over into this one.

sequence of images, no literal equivalent to the edges perceptible between two film strips joined together. There is, on the other hand, literally an overlap of images in the dissolve, a decrease or an increase of light in the fade. In other words, to talk of a cut in film at the level of perception is no more metaphorical than to talk of it in literature or on the sound track. In essence, therefore, a cut is nothing more than the relation between the style and the represented content of the adjacent images. And this means that its disruptive aspect, i.e. the surplus of representational form over content as I have referred to it in Chapter One, does not necessarily amount to an *instantaneous* change in the spatio-temporal coordinates of the represented, but may also be secured through the stylistic properties of this newly introduced space-time. Put differently, film montage can also be secured with a protracted change across two adjacent shots if the two are sufficiently stylistically distinct.

### *INTERTITLES*

This conclusion leaves us with the option of treating intertitles in Fassbinder as instances of montage. First and foremost, intertitles, criticized for their retardation of narrative by many including Béla Balázs as early as the silent era, are an extremely uncommon device in the sound period. The use of intertitles in the sound period, therefore, is not only disruptive narratively but visually as well. A white screen with black letters in gothic script in the middle of the film, even if it points to what happens next and even if it is not originally an instance of literary montage as is the case with most of the intertitles in the series, including the first one –“Instruction through the example of Zannowich” – is a far cry from established conventions of visual



continuity.<sup>321</sup> It should be remembered, however, that Fassbinder’s use of intertitles in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is by no means entirely indebted to Döblin’s literary techniques: intertitles also feature prominently in his earlier adaptation, *Fontane Effi Briest* (Germany, 1975).<sup>322</sup>

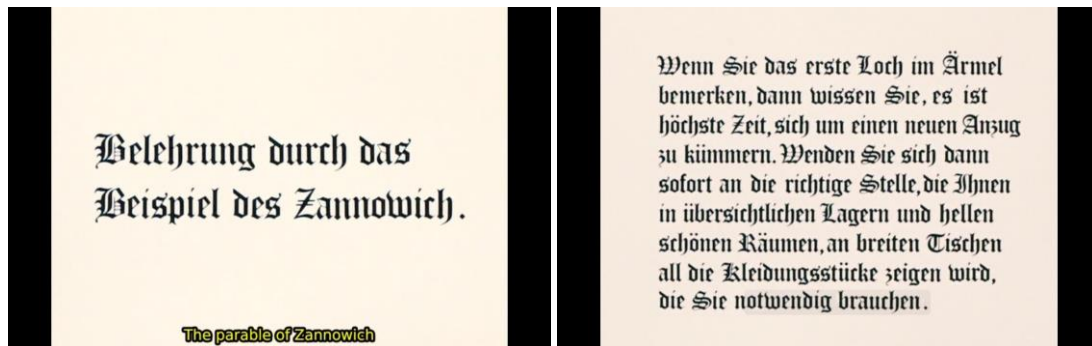


Figure 4.16.1 and 4.16.2 Intertitles

As I have mentioned earlier, a literary montage insert is appropriated with an intertitle on at least one occasion (and possibly two more).<sup>323</sup> The intertitle in question (figure 4.16.1 and 4.16.2) takes place at the beginning of Episode Eight and pertains to a suit advertisement (E264-265; G225). The shot is clearly an instance of film

<sup>321</sup> The same type of letters, though white in colour, is used for credits and episode titles. As there is nothing uncommon about overlapping a text directly onto the image track, I shall not dwell on the matter further.

<sup>322</sup> In fact, we should note that montage sequences in *Fontane Effi Briest* are more disruptive than in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, for in the former the intertitles are not introduced and terminated through dissolves, rather through what might be termed flash in and flash out. First, the image grows completely white and only then the writing appears. Before the next shot the image grows completely white again. Militz (2006: 239) quotes Fassbinder own commentary on these intertitles: “one is startled a bit, gets a small shock and remains awake.” I might add that the effect is further increased due to *Fontane Effi Briest*’s black and white cinematography and because flashes in and out are abundantly used as cuts between other types of shots as well.

<sup>323</sup> Pleimling (2010: 78) talks of four. One of these – formulas of Newton’s laws – is definitely not montage for in the novel they are introduced by colons. Another one of these is a montage – namely, the reference to *The Reaper Song* – but occurs in an episode title which Pleimling treats together with intertitles under the heading of “Schriftinsert”. The last one is too brief to claim with certainty whether it is a montage or not: “The German Reich is a Republic, and whoever doesn’t believe it gets one in the neck” “Das Deutsche Reich ist eine Republik, und wers nicht glaubt, kriegt eins ins Genick” (E278; G237). Finally, although the intertitle that introduces the abattoir montage-sequence is a quotation from *Ecclesiastes*, it is a heading of one of the chapters in the novel and, therefore, not necessarily an instance of literary montage. Given the stand-alone and distinct status of chapter headings as opposed to the rest of the text, it is difficult to use the disruption condition applicable to the rest of the novel for identifying montage.

montage: it is an intertitle and does not owe much, if anything, to the linguistic “genre” in which the intertitle is written.

### *VOICE-OVER MONTAGE*

In the previous section I discussed a case of possible sound montage in relation to the image track (the rape-sequence report on Captain Baker). I would like to conclude this section with a more definite example of voice-over montage, namely the Ida flashback in Episode Seven. I also wish to argue that all of the extended flashbacks to Ida’s murder except that in Episode One ought to be regarded as instances of sound montage. The flashback in Episode Seven abruptly cuts into a conversation between Meck and Franz. Fassbinder’s voice cuts in as abruptly on the sound track as the flashback does on the visual track. As the shot-sequence progresses and Franz beats Ida to death, in a very calm voice Fassbinder makes a reference to an unnamed girl and proceeds to read from her last diary entry. The same calm tone of voice is maintained as he reads about the girl’s desire to die, preferably from an incurable disease, for she does not want to hurt her loved ones by committing suicide.<sup>324</sup> Clearly, the content of the voice-over interjection is far from unrelated to the act of killing, and the same melancholic trumpet melody plays across the flashback and Meck and Franz’s conversation, partially smoothing out the abrupt visual transition. I would argue, however, that both the tone of the interjection and its content are sufficiently disparate to the images at hand to fit the principle of counterpoint advocated by Sergei M. Eisenstein, Vsevolod I. Pudovkin and Grigori V. Aleksandrov in their “Statement on Sound”. In short, insofar as the interjection, which has a direct

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<sup>324</sup> This is also a paraphrase from a passage in the novel (E324-325; G275-276).

relation to the events presented and muffles the sounds corresponding to the image, breaks with the conventions of voice-over commentary, and insofar as it does so in a disinterested manner, Fassbinder's voice-over is sufficiently out of joint with the image track to count as sound montage. In essence, the same relations obtain for all of the remaining Ida flashbacks in the series. In Episode Eight, Fassbinder relates the story of Franz saving a horse from a hole in the ground (E253; G215), the content of a postcard written by a certain disabled Johann Kirbach (E258; G219), and a discussion on prostitution (E260; G220-221) – all of which are taken almost verbatim from the novel. In Episode Nine Fassbinder reads word for word another two passages from the novel (E246-247, 247; G208-209, 209). During the second flashback of the same episode (E298-299; G255-256) he abridges, but in a far more engaged tone of voice, the Abraham and Job paraphrase. In the final flashback in Episode Thirteen Fassbinder repeats verbatim the reports on the Prague tragedy (E397; G339-340) and the zeppelin voyage (E411; G352).<sup>325</sup> In contrast to all of these, Fassbinder directly discusses Ida's murder in the first extended flashback of Episode One, despite doing so with unusual references to Newton's laws. For this reason the voice-over in Episode One fails to be sufficiently disruptive vis-à-vis the image to count as sound montage.

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<sup>325</sup> This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of voice-over montage occurrences. There are others as, for instance, Fassbinder's verbatim report on the Hahn department store (E173-174; G146) when Franz and Reinhold visit the Salvation Army meeting in Episode Five.

## FILM MONTAGE AS UNCONVENTIONAL SPATIO-TEMPORAL DISLOCATION

The consequence of identifying particular forms of voice-over as montage is the inclusion of simultaneous relations into the account of montage. In fact, I have already allowed for simultaneous relations in the previous chapter when I talked of associative montage based on the relation between image and sound in Jutzi's adaptation. This raises a number of questions about the possibility of *visual* in-shot montage along the lines of Eisenstein (1998b, 1998c) or later Jean Mitry (1997). For instance: is it legitimate to consider occurrences such as Franz's alternating disappearance into and re-emergence out of the dark (due to the pulsations of a neon light advertisement outside his room window) as instances of montage if this alternation is regarded as sufficiently visually disruptive? Can the same be said for the numerous occasions in Fassbinder's adaptation where the characters are blocked either fully or partially by objects in the foreground, as is the case with the fish tank in the shot in which Franz throws Minna to the ground? If so, why would we think any differently of those shots in which the use of mirrors allows for in-shot simulation of shot/counter-shot structures? In short, why would disjointed relations between the representational content of the image and that of the sound within a given shot be allowed to count as montage, but not disjointed relations between the represented of the image again within a single shot? Is there, following Mitry and Eisenstein, such a thing as visual in-shot montage?

Regarding Franz's disappearance and reappearance (and the types of in-shot relations it exemplifies) it should be noted that this sequence is qualitatively different to the cases of associative montage in Jutzi and to the use of voice-over in Fassbinder. In the examples of associative montage and voice-over I have referred to, the relations

between the image and the sound track are simultaneous, whereas alternations of light and darkness (although in-shot) remain sequential. Here it is important to remember one of the key lessons from the discussion of the experience of disruption in Chapter One. In the case of modes of representation which have an internal temporal dimension, for the disruption to count as montage, it needs to be identified on the level of the representational devices and not on that of represented content. In other words, in *literature* the necessary though not sufficient condition for montage is a perceptible stylistic shift between adjacent textual segments, whereas in *film* the necessary albeit also not sufficient condition for sequential montage is the perception of a *cut* between adjacent shots. Otherwise, we would be forced to call all abrupt changes in subject matter instances of montage. (Seen from this perspective, a sudden change in conversation in a novel would amount to montage. Likewise, in film, unexpected in-shot explosions or scares would also have to be counted as montage. Neither conclusion is, of course, felicitous.)

Can the second type of examples (character blocking, use of mirrors, various visual juxtapositions in Eisenstein, and deep-focus staging with two planes of interest in *Mitry*) be classified as montage? One way to argue against this assumption is to say that it simply inflates the notion of juxtaposition. It does so not only beyond the scope of the experience of disruption but to an extent where it simply becomes impossible to distinguish between what montage is and what it is not. A more acceptable solution (as it also anchors the experience of disruption in a more empirical and historical fashion), is to say that the notion of film montage in general, and that of sound montage in relation to the image in particular, hinges on certain types of spatio-temporal dislocation which are absent in these examples.

From the “Statement on Sound”, it is clear that Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Aleksandrov were deeply antagonistic towards the idea of synchronization between the image and the sound track. Clearly then, the program of deliberate negation of synchronization allows us to describe specific types of relations between the represented of the image and the represented of the sound as montage. To synchronize (as understood within the framework of Soviet montage), means to secure a temporal coincidence of the sound and the image tracks, to keep the spatial relations between the sound and its source clear, and/or to afford some sort of a valence to the image track (usually through non-diegetic music). To undermine synchronization is, therefore, either to insert a temporal gap between the image and its accompanying sound, to experiment with the spatial relations between the sound and its source, or to undermine the representational content of the image. All of these can be construed as forms of unconventional spatio-temporal dislocation between sound and image. The examples of sound montage I have cited – perspectival aural disruption and associative sound montage in Jutzi, on the one hand, and various voice-over commentaries in Fassbinder, on the other – illustrate this point well. In Jutzi’s adaptation one type of sound montage includes shifts in visual perspective accompanied by unconventional shifts in the aural one, which result in disruptive fluctuations in the volume. The other type amounts to the relocation of diegetic sound from its original source space to an adjacent one with repercussions for the meaning of the image. In Fassbinder’s adaptation sound montage involves the use of voice-overs, the source of which is spatio-temporally unidentifiable, which present a sequential break in the audio track, and whose representational content is sufficiently disparate from the representational content of the image.

It is important to remember that not all spatio-temporal dislocations of the image and/or sound track amount to montage. What is perceived as disruptive depends, of course, on what conventions are in place at the time. It is a convention that, on most occasions when epistemic discrepancies among the characters are *not* being established, a shift in visual perspective does not entail an equivalent shift in aural perspective. This is why the manipulation of the soundtrack volume alongside the insertions of long-shots in the Alexanderplatz hawking shot-sequence is perceptibly disruptive and warrants being called sound montage. Likewise, we expect the image and the soundtrack to coincide. Whenever this is not the case, it is usually perceived either as poor sound editing or as deliberate disruption. This is also why conventional voice-over does not come across as disruptive though, as Kozloff points out, it is often criticized for its alleged “non-filmic” character. On the other hand, a voice-over that suddenly interjects only to grow mute a second later, speaking of something quite unrelated to the image does come across as disruptive. Moreover, it can usually be said that the agents of standard voice-overs inhabit a future temporal relation to events they recount, for they commonly recount them in the past tense. In contrast to this, Fassbinder exhibits no clear temporal relation to the visually depicted events in the instances of voice-over montage. It is not even clear if he has any such relation since the interjections neither narrate nor describe these events. In other words, because the deictics employed in the voice-over montages in Fassbinder’s adaptation have no relation to the events depicted (as is the case in standard voice-overs), the temporal (and spatial) link between the agent of the voice-over and the fictional world conveyed is lost.

This is also why for the most part Haag inaccurately describes the use of music in the film’s Epilogue as sound montage. Although it is true that the music was

not originally composed for the series, unlike much of the music during the first thirteen episodes, the use of pre-existing music in the Epilogue (Kraftwerk's "Radioactivity", Glen Miller's "In the Mood", etc.) does not contravene any conventions of the time. Such non-diegetic music (as it is usually called) has been a mainstay of cinema at least since the Hollywood era. There is nothing out of the ordinary when such music accompanies the action, regardless of whether it was originally composed for the screen or not. Moreover, it is typically the case that one non-diegetic melody gradually subsides before the next picks up, making for a smooth transition. Admittedly, there are a few instances of abrupt sound transitions between songs in Fassbinder's adaptation. But as is the case with the sudden transition from "Radioactivity" to an aria once the mice break a hole in the wall, or again with the jump from "Radioactivity" to another aria when Franz kisses Reinhold in the boxing ring, the transitions are grounded diegetically. In other words, the sudden transitions emphasize a key event in the shot – the appearance of the tunnel and the kiss, respectively. Moreover, the cacophony of voices in the Epilogue's opening shot-sequence and the cacophony of musical pieces in the Epilogue's final shot are in essence no different than the cacophony of Franz's and the prostitute's voice-overs. Even if we were inclined to refer to some of these sequences as sound montage, that would have no bearing on my main point, namely that in film as in literature, the ready-made character of a textual segment – compiled music in this case – does not suffice on its own to produce a disruptive effect.

The power of conventions to smooth out potential disruptions applies to visual montage as well as sound montage. For instance, although parallel editing clearly presents us with spatio-temporal dislocations, since its popularization by D. W.



Griffith it does not come across as disruptive.<sup>326</sup> On the other hand, the spatio-temporal dislocations characteristic of Soviet montage including the production of movement (“the rising lions” of the Odessa steps in *Potemkin*), associative montage (the slaughter sequence in *Strike*) and intellectual montage (Kerensky repeatedly ascending the stairs in *October*) all make far less regular appearances in film practice. The first two types of montage introduce shots whose representational content is difficult if not impossible to place within the spatio-temporal coordinates of what had previously been represented on screen. One way to describe them would be to say that they are non-diegetic. Intellectual montage, on the other hand, results from the negation of the standard convention according to which the events depicted are to be shown only once within a shot-sequence. In Fassbinder’s adaptation, as we have seen, the abattoir shot-sequences and the spider animation are very close to associative montage, whereas the flashback in which Franz is thrown in front of a moving car serves as an example of intellectual montage.<sup>327</sup>

There are a number of other conventions which make spatio-temporal dislocations appear non-disruptive. These include, among others, the use of establishing shots, shot/counter-shot structures, cuts on action, eye-line matches, application of the 180-degrees and the 30-degrees rules, introduction of recollection through dissolves. Not following these rules is why abrupt flashbacks in Fassbinder’s adaptation such as recollections of Ida and prison-time appear sufficiently non-

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<sup>326</sup> This is not to say that it did not come across as disruptive during its initial broader use at the beginning of the transition period (1907-1913). What might appear as disruptive for us now, on the other hand, is the type of editing used for simultaneous actions which preceded parallel editing and which might be found in films such as Edwin S. Porter’s *The Life of an American Fireman* (USA, 1902). There the whole action of rescuing a family is seen first from the outside of the house, and then from the inside of the house.

<sup>327</sup> The ejection-sequence is even more similar to the raising of the bridge in *October* discussed by Pudovkin (1988).

conventional to count as montage.<sup>328</sup> This is also why shot-sequences such as the Zannowich story and the exchanges with Baumann appear sufficiently distinct as to warrant attention in my work. Of course, this does not mean that all of the devices I discuss were introduced specifically in response to Döblin's montage techniques, for both flashbacks and atypical shot/counter-shot structures can be found in some form in Fassbinder's previous work.<sup>329</sup> In fact, even the devices Hurst calls "non-filmic" (voice-over and intertitles) play a crucial role in Fassbinder's *Fontane Effi Briest*. However, we should recognize that much of the visual editing in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is not classical.<sup>330</sup> We should also point out that *Berlin Alexanderplatz* introduces a number of altogether novel montage techniques to Fassbinder's oeuvre – the voice-over montage, the abattoir shot-sequences, the spider-animation, and Franz's ejection from the car.<sup>331</sup>

#### VISUAL IN-SHOT MONTAGE

It is not my intention to claim that visual in-shot montage is impossible. If visual in-shot montage is possible, however, it is not of a type envisaged by Eisenstein and

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<sup>328</sup> Because the cuts in these flashbacks appear to me disruptive even today when it is quite common to see recollections introduced by sharp cuts I would not be surprised if there are some types of editing which, regardless of how conventional they become, still appear perceptually disruptive. This might be thought of as similar to those perceptual illusions where the knowledge that they are illusory does not impact how we perceive them.

<sup>329</sup> For instance, we can find abrupt flashbacks in *Händler der vier Jahreszeiten/Merchant of Four Seasons* (Germany, 1971) and *Ich will doch nur, daß ihr mich liebt/I Only Want You to Love Me* (Germany, 1976). Atypical shot/counter-shot structure can be found in almost all of Fassbinder films. Its low-angle variant appears already in one of the exchanges between Walter Kranz (Kurt Raab) and André (Margit Carstensen) in *Satansbraten/Satan's Brew* (Germany, 1976).

<sup>330</sup> The same holds for other Fassbinder films.

<sup>331</sup> *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden/In a Year with 13 Moons* (Fassbinder, Germany, 1978) has an abattoir sequence accompanied by a voice-over but as the sequence progresses it becomes clear that the voice is in fact diegetic. In addition, the sequence is clearly introduced with Elvira's (Volker Spengler) invitation to Red Zora (Ingrid Caven) to accompany her to her old place of work. As for the voice-over interjections in *Fontane Effi Briest*, all of them relate directly to the events at hand and allow for the reconstruction of the temporal position of the agent behind the voice-overs.

Mitry. If the idea of spatio-temporal dislocation is followed through and if, even more specifically, the idea of synchronization is kept in mind, we can talk of special types of rear projection as montage. Seen in this light, rear projection might be thought of as photomontage – another technique characterized by the experience of disruption – but one with a temporal duration in which the distinct elements overlap spatially. In most cases, of course, rear projection is deployed in order to conceal the fact that the characters and the background were not shot on the same location at the same time – none of these routine instances of rear projection would count as in-shot montage. When rear-projection is not used to this end, however, the space for montage opens up. Two examples that come to mind are *Orphée/Orpheus* (Jean Cocteau, France, 1950) and *Europa* (von Trier, Denmark, 1991). In the former, rear projection is used in the shot in which Orphée (Jean Marais) follows Heurtebise (François Périer) into the underworld: while Orphée labours on foot, Heurtebise in the foreground glides seemingly effortlessly through space. Here, the rear projection includes Orphée with the background. In *Europa*, rear projection is used throughout but I shall only single out the shot near the beginning of the film in which Leopold Kessler (Jean-Marc Barr) speaks to the Inspector (Dietrich Kuhlbrodt) in the presence of Uncle Kessler (Ernst-Hugo Järegård) with the background appearing curiously out of joint. This perplexing effect is exacerbated by the fact that the establishing shot presents all of the characters on location.<sup>332</sup> In both cases, rear-projection is used deliberately, albeit for different reasons, to produce an effect of displacement between the foreground and the

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<sup>332</sup> There are also shots in *Europa* in which the front is in colour and the rear-projected part in black and white which exacerbates the disruptive effect even further.

background. In the sense in which a cut separates distinct elements in photomontages, in these shots a stitch surrounds the elements in the foreground.<sup>333</sup>

Something similar happens in the Epilogue to *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, in the shot-sequence in which Franz and Reinhold are about to engage in a boxing match. The establishing long shot introduces Franz and Reinhold as they prepare to fight one another. The background is filled with a rear projection of an excited, cheering crowd in a continuous counter-clockwise medium close-up pan.<sup>334</sup> Franz's and Reinhold's mutual flaunting is represented through an asymmetric shot/counter-shot structure, fluctuating between "American shots" and close-ups. Simultaneously, the background starts to rotate ever faster, accompanied by the increasing tempo of drum beats which introduces the melody of "Radioactivity". The artificial nature of the rear-projection is emphasized further with an embedded shot-sequence in which Franz turns around in the ring to look at the crowd (figure 4.17.1). The crowd appears in corresponding panning point of view shots, but these shots are clearly of the crowd directly and not of the rear-projection. The contestants in the ring eventually grow silent and lower their fists down in the second and last long shot of the sequence. Just when it seems that nothing will come of the episode, Franz embraces and kisses Reinhold. This brings both "Radioactivity" and the cheering to an abrupt halt and is immediately followed by an aria. The two boxers are then separated and Franz falls to the ground (4.17.2).

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<sup>333</sup> I also imagine overlapping could be made disruptive enough to count as in-shot montage. I do not believe, however, that the overlapping of the shot of Franz overwhelmed with the extreme low-angle shot of the roofs revolving goes far enough in this direction. Put simply, the appearance and the disappearance of the second image is too gradual and the low-angle shots are subjective.

<sup>334</sup> The cheers grow louder or quieter mostly depending on whether Franz and Reinhold are speaking or not. These changes in volume are, however, too gradual to be perceived as disruptive.



**Figure 4.17.1** and **4.17.2** Towards visual in-shot montage

Although at first sight it appears that this shot-sequence is in all relevant aspects the same as the rear projection sequences in *Orpheus* and *Europa*, there is a slight but potentially crucial difference. In the boxing scene, the opening and the closing long shots – which frame the shot/counter-shot structured exchange and serve as the first and the last shots in which rear projection is visible – reveal rear projection to be taking place across only a part of the screen. More specifically, we can see that the lower edge of the rear-projection extends no further than the lower edge of the boxing ring, leaving perhaps a fourth of the screen in darkness (figure 4.17.2). This, I would suggest, makes rear projection feel much more like a part of the *mise-en-scène* rather than a separate space over which the boxing ring is superimposed. Moreover, this is precisely the impression that the explosion of the atom bomb rear-projected in place of Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* elicits in the shot-sequence in which Franz is crucified. This surrealist *mise-en-scène* includes, among other things, a crane, a nativity scene, and crates of Coca-Cola.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Again, rear-projection is another device which may be found in Fassbinder's earlier work. In *Bremer Freiheit/Bremen Freedom* (Germany, 1972), a TV adaptation of a play Fassbinder wrote and staged a year before, rear-projections of the sea, shore and port are used throughout the film. There, the screen upon which these images are rear-projected is clearly a part of a minimalistic *mise-en-scène*. In the opening shot-sequence, however, in which Gottfried (Ulli Lommel) orders his wife Geesche (Margit Carstensen) about, this is far from obvious. A close-up profile of Gottfried with the images of waves on the shore in the background alternates with the shots of Geesche's feet running on an oddly lit, flat white surface. It is only with the establishing long shot that the stage-like setting is revealed. With that

With all of the above in mind, we can conclude that where the experience of disruption can be accounted for in literature in terms of stylistic shifts, in film we can do so with recourse to spatio-temporal dislocations which depart from the conventions of classical Hollywood style. In other words, just as stylistic distinctiveness serves as a necessary but not sufficient condition for literary montage, spatio-temporal dislocation serves as a necessary but not sufficient condition for film montage. We may think of these features, then, as medium specific aspects of montage which allow us to articulate more precisely the phenomenology of disruption common to all montage. It remains to be said what the effects of montage as they pertain to the question of the narrator in film are.

#### THE CONTROLLING FICTIONAL NARRATOR IN FASSBINDER'S ADAPTATION

In the first section of the chapter I argued for the near-absence of controlling fictional narrators in fiction film by claiming that all of the devices usually invoked as markers of enunciation by the enunciation theorists are in no way indicative of an alleged fictional agency responsible for the images and sounds we see and hear. Therefore, although they both produce an effect of defamiliarization or estrangement, neither atypical editing patterns nor film montage as used in Fassbinder are sufficient by themselves to usher in a controlling fictional narrator. The same holds for numerous other unconventional stylistic devices including artificial appropriation of literary montage inserts into characters' discourse, obtrusive camera movement, character

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in mind, I would be more inclined to include the opening of *Bremer Freiheit* as an instance of in-shot montage (and an across-shot one) rather than the boxing ring shot-sequence in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

blocking, double framing, use of mirrors, excessive darkness, expressionist colour, surrealist mise-en-scène, and cacophony of sound to name a few.<sup>336</sup>

What about intertitles or episode titles?<sup>337</sup> Do they not, as Pleimling (2010: 72) claims, force us to consider who the source of these words is? Almost certainly they do: for neither the intertitles nor titles in the film are of the conventional kind. However, on many occasions it is impossible to identify the source behind the words, for a number of intertitles and the majority of episode titles are simply non-narrative. Even on those occasions where we are able to ascertain through the “linguistic version of the ontological gap argument” that there must be a fictional source behind these words, this does not prove that there is a fictional source behind *the images* which allow us to read the words in question – i.e. that there is a controlling fictional narrator. It is only the title of the last episode in the series – “Mein Traum vom Traum des Franz Biberkopf von Alfred Döblin: Ein Epilog (“My Dream of the Dream of Franz Biberkopf by Alfred Döblin, An Epilogue”) – that gives us a sufficient prompt to *imagine*, on top of believing, that Fassbinder is responsible for the images and sounds that follow. The key prompt here is the use of the deictic personal pronoun “my”.<sup>338</sup>

There is, of course, another way to understand this title. We may take the title to be an actual utterance, which like the title of the series “Berlin Alexanderplatz” does not invite us to imagine anything except possibly that what follows concerns a

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<sup>336</sup> Given the state of scholarship, obtrusive camera movement appears to be the device in most urgent need of detailed analysis.

<sup>337</sup> The latter may appear as late as mid-episode as is the case in Episode Ten.

<sup>338</sup> Wilson (2011) believes that the presence of superimposed writings of any kind onto the image track gives strong reason to accept the “Fictional Showing Hypothesis”. But, as Carroll (2006) and Currie (1995) have noted, we need not imagine that we see these writings at all; instead, we just use the content of these writings to imagine particular elements of the story. Otherwise, if we were to imagine everything we see on the image track we would also have to imagine that the world of *Casablanca* is black and white.

square in Berlin. In this case “my dream” acts as a metaphor for how the historical individual Fassbinder would like to stage Franz’s mental breakdown. What we see is precisely this staging, a staging that is different from the preceding episodes only insofar it departs from the source text and introduces a dream-like construction of space. But as for somebody being *fictionally* responsible for what we see and hear, it is exactly the same as the other episodes. The decision whether “my” is to be taken actually or fictionally, to repeat Wilson’s formulation, comes down to our preferred phenomenological engagement with the text.

Whether we refer to the voice-over lines spoken by the real-life Fassbinder as Fassbinder’s instead of as “Fassbinder’s” also rests on this preference. I have opted for the former mainly because of Fassbinder’s status as an auteur. Whatever we decide, however, almost all of these voice-over interjections, regardless of whether they are examples of sound montage or not, do not establish the presence of a controlling fictional narrator. As Kozloff has already conceded, in fiction film there is generally no reason to imagine that the source of the image is the person who speaks in voice-over. There is, however, at least one occasion in Fassbinder’s adaptation when we could legitimately claim that the voice is in control of the image track, namely the first occurrence of Fassbinder’s voice-over in the series. Just as Nachum is about to tell Franz the story of Zannowich, Fassbinder addresses Franz in the words of the novel, inquiring why he moans and groans (E14-15; G18).<sup>339</sup> This is not a voice-over montage because there is a direct, albeit unusual, reference to the matter at hand, namely an address to Franz. There is, however, a very striking development on the visual track, one very close to the case of Addison DeWitt that Kozloff discusses,

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<sup>339</sup> As I noted in Chapter Two, in the novel these words are usually attributed to Death by the critics. In the film, however, it seems that all of the various materials Fassbinder reports ought to be imagined as coming from him, in the same sense that the appropriated montage inserts are to be imagined as uttered by characters.



namely the simulated freeze image for the duration of the voice-over interjection. At the very moment Fassbinder begins to speak, the shot of Nachum sitting next to Franz appears to “freeze” by virtue of actors keeping almost perfectly still for a full fifteen seconds. As soon as the voice-over interjection comes to an end, the image returns to life. The device is even more striking as the interjection takes place in the middle of Nachum’s speech. It would appear that for the duration of these fifteen seconds Fassbinder takes over full control of the image and the sound track, thereby fulfilling the function of a local controlling fictional narrator.

The only point of contention here is that the sounds of the clock ticking and Franz moaning continue during the voice-over interjection without any change in volume. The elimination of this aural background, or at least its tuning down as is the case in the *Ida*-flashbacks, would have certainly made the claim to control even more glaring. At the same time, however, the presence of this sound is not like that of the non-diegetic music in the opening shot-sequence of *All About Eve*. The music there is far more difficult to reconcile with DeWitt’s alleged full control for it reappears in the film following various characters’ recollections. As such it bears the stamp of a foreign signature throughout. In Fassbinder’s adaptation, on the other hand, much like we imagine the image and speech to be stopped by Fassbinder’s voice, the sound of the clock ticking and Franz moaning may also be imagined as under the control of Fassbinder. What matters is simply that Fassbinder *allowed* them to continue, whereas he stopped the remainder of the audiovisual track.

We are, admittedly, in the domain of interpretation here. Whether we accept or deny that this device introduces a local controlling fictional narrator, we are making an interpretative move. But this should not concern us for this practice of interpretation is not of the type criticized at the beginning of Chapter Three, namely

one in search of “what a text is really about”.<sup>340</sup> Rather this type of interpretation should be understood to be at the core of how new devices are turned into conventions. It is simply an attempt to make sense of a novel device and its narratological meaning. As such it is no different from interpretative strategies that must have been made by the audiences during the transitional period in cinema between 1907 and 1913 in attempting to make sense of devices such as parallel editing. In this sense I believe that the greatest value of interpretation might lie precisely in determining what the meaning of a potential convention in the making will be. In our case, interpretation allows us to answer the question of whether or not stopping the image whilst allowing for some intradiegetic sound introduces local fictional control. Indeed, interpretation so understood is also a way to legitimize one phenomenological engagement with the text over another and to sway the opinions of others accordingly.

There is another shot in which the simulated freeze-frame is introduced via Fassbinder’s interjection – the confrontation between Franz and the communists in the underground station in Episode Two. Although even more atypical than the first freeze-frame because the camera is not static but circles around the adversaries, the shot affords Fassbinder less control over the audiovisual track. The reasons for this include the use of non-diegetic music, which continues throughout the shot, and a cut which restores normal movement in the following shot.

It cannot, of course, be claimed that the freeze-frames or the use of intertitles were thought up as direct responses to local eliminations of the zero-level narrator in

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<sup>340</sup> Pleimling gives in to this temptation when discussing both of these freeze-frames (2010: 81-82, 125-127).

Döblin: for both can be found in *Fontane Effi Briest* as well.<sup>341</sup> Nevertheless, the same procedures can be appropriated for different functions in different contexts; in the case of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, these devices do have a striking resonance with the source text's narrative experiments.<sup>342</sup> In other words, they appear as reciprocal equivalents to the controlling fictional narrator's extremely uncommon absence in literature – the controlling fictional narrator's equally uncommon presence in film. Moreover, there is one key device in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* that is not present in Fassbinder's earlier work – namely, a potential claim to fictional control that is embedded in the very title of the Epilogue.

Unlike in the preceding chapters, my account of editing in Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and in particular my discussion of the experience of disruption necessary for the identification of montage, is not grounded in an analysis of the contemporary reception. The reason is that, for the most part, the reviewers – as Shattuc (1995) has explained – were far more interested in questions of authorship, Fassbinder's persona, and the relation of art cinema to public television, than in matters of style.<sup>343</sup> In the first three chapters, the formal procedures were one of the key loci of contemporary engagements with the texts in question – the disruptive editing of “Russian films”, its phenomenological similarity to Döblin's use of ready-mades, and the level to which this film-like character was retained in Jutzi's

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<sup>341</sup> For a detailed analysis see Elke Siegel (2012).

<sup>342</sup> Similarly, the almost obsessive use of mirrors in Fassbinder's oeuvre finally finds its first full intradiegetic motivation in a story of simulacra and simulated realities in *Welt am Draht/World on a Wire* (Germany, 1973).

<sup>343</sup> Notable exceptions are Hermann Burger (1980) and Wolfram Schütte (1981).

adaptation. By the time Fassbinder had made his adaptation, interest in formal considerations had simply receded into the background.

Another way of explaining this development is to admit that what I have called montage proper (flashbacks, abattoir-sequences, the spider animation, and voice-over montage) is, unlike in the novel, simply not the key device in the series (nor was it at the time a wholly innovative technique). Moreover, the atypical editing patterns of the first episode – which are far more recurrent than existing secondary literature acknowledges – are simply not as striking as montage proper because they operate within a single spatio-temporal location during exchanges between characters. As the same space within a continuous linear temporality is represented, it is far more difficult to spot these patterns than those which subscribe to “dream logic” or which jump even more obtrusively across space and time. However, all of this does not make the discussion of montage from a phenomenological perspective vacuous or arbitrary, for I have specified intersubjective criteria – various types of unconventional spatio-temporal dislocation – as conditions for the experience of disruption. It is true that I cannot insist that the “dream logic” in the Epilogue is less experientially disruptive than the flashbacks. But I also cannot claim that some readers of the novel will not find spatio-temporal dislocations to be more disruptive than the montage inserts. Audiences vary as far as their familiarity with the conventions and their sensitivity to various devices are concerned. I can, however, ground the historical reports on the experience of disruption in precisely articulated narrative and stylistic categories available to everybody for verification. Moreover, where there are no historical reports of the kind I am interested in, I can still provide a detailed intersubjective explanation of the effect I surmise was intended, and this explanation can be checked against the texts.

## Conclusion

The organizing principle of this thesis has been the interweaving of three key threads. The most important of those – and the one that runs through all four chapters and the Literature Review – has been the historical and theoretical articulation of montage as a device spanning a range of different media. Building on the work of Hanno Möbius, who has demonstrated that montage appeared concurrently in a number of arts around the beginning of the twentieth century, I have sought to give a historical account of why Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was the first major novel to be perceived as exhibiting literary montage. The use of ready-mades *together* with their disruptive experiential effect similar to that of recent “Russian films” and Dada photomontages, I have claimed, allowed the Weimar critics of the late 1920s and early 1930s to identify literary montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* but not in James Joyce's *Ulysses* or John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*. These same critics also had far more nuanced understanding of film editing than the later proponents of the “modernity thesis” cared to acknowledge. Unlike those critics who, under the sway of Walter Benjamin, sought to give an account of all editing under the umbrella of the experience of modernity, I have shown that contemporary critics regularly distinguished between at least three experiential axes when it came to film editing: speed and dynamism, continuity/disruption, and confusion. In the chapters on film adaptations of the novel, my analysis of a number of types of film montage made it possible for me to develop an initial definition of film montage as experientially disruptive editing. I have proposed that the experience of disruption amounts to a certain type of spatio-temporal dislocation, regardless of whether montage takes place across or within shots and regardless of whether montage is visual or aural. In film, this spatio-temporal

dislocation may be construed as a manner of eliciting disruption on the representational plane, analogous to the deployment of intradiegetically unmotivated shifts in style to produce the same experience on the representational plane in literature. The narratological effects of these devices, unlike the experiential ones, however, differ significantly.

This brings me to the second thread of this thesis, which seeks to integrate my discussions of Döblin's novel and Rainer Werner Fassbinder's adaptation. I have claimed that the historically sensitive definition of literary montage referred to above allows us to articulate a key narratological innovation introduced in Döblin's novel. This amounts to the elimination of the narrator fictionally in control of the whole of the text, present in the great majority of literary fiction. Moreover, unlike literary genres that have also managed to dispense with these narrators – novels in dialogue form and a number of epistolary novels – Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* achieves the same effect through the proliferation of zero-level heterodiegetic narrators. Most importantly, Döblin even succeeds on occasions in eliminating zero-level narrators altogether. In so doing he brings about in literature the narratological condition of standard fiction film – the absence of the controlling fictional narrator. I have argued that in his adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Fassbinder attempts and perhaps even manages to accomplish the opposite. Through the use of voice-over which simulates the freezing of the image track, rather than the use of montage per se, Fassbinder appears to bring about in film the narratological conditions of standard literary fiction – the ubiquity of the controlling fictional narrator.

The final thread running through the chapters concerns the specificities and advantages of formal analysis over interpretative work. Focusing on *Berlin Alexanderplatz* scholarship, I have identified a trend in academic criticism that

favours interpretative work over formal analysis. This, I have claimed, has led to the hyper-inflation of the use of the term montage. As I have argued, once interpretation is regarded from the perspective of contemporary adaptation theory, it becomes readily apparent that it is actually an adaptation of the work under interpretation. Interpretation professes to articulate “what a text really is about” while, at the same time, and quite paradoxically, maintaining that such interpretation is an original text. I have proposed that formal analysis avoids both of the problems that interpretative approaches to *Berlin Alexanderplatz* face. First, it allows a precise specification of the experiential, stylistic and narratological parameters of both film and literary montage. Second, it does not concern itself with “what a text really is about” but rather with what a text *is*, i.e. with what I have called wrinkles on its body.

Finally, I would like to conclude with some evaluative reflections, particularly as they pertain to this last thread. Christian Schärf has stated that all of the work hitherto undertaken on Fassbinder’s adaptation, regardless of whether it evaluates the film positively or negatively, hinges on whether or not the film is perceived as fulfilling the modernist norm set by Döblin’s novel. In other words, the deployment of various modernist devices, with montage in the vanguard, is considered by these critics to be the gold standard by which all adaptations can be measured. Indeed, it appears that, for these critics, the use of modernist devices like montage is “what a text really is about.” This raises two questions. Does my work not implicitly evaluate *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and its adaptations by focusing on montage and other unconventional devices? Do I not implicitly side, that is, with the view that montage is what Döblin’s novel “is really about”? And most importantly, if montage is the essence of Döblin’s novel have I – in performing a formal analysis of the novel and its

adaptation – not fallen into the same trap which I claim plagues interpretative work – namely, articulating “what a text really is about”?

I have no illusions that my work is implicitly evaluative. But this has less to do with what I focus on in the thesis and more to do with the very fact that I am speaking about some cultural artefacts rather than others. Even Siegfried Kracauer and Hermann Burger, perhaps the harshest critics of Piel Jutzi’s and Fassbinder’s adaptation, respectively, bestow some cultural capital on those same films. They do so by the very fact they deem the films important enough to discuss.

As for the second question, I admit that my work can be read as saying that montage is what Döblin’s novel “is really about”, but only as long as we qualify that statement. As I have emphasised in Chapter Three, statements like this are valid only if we say that montage is *partially* what Döblin’s novel “is really about”. This, however, does not mean I am open to the same critique as those conducting more conventional interpretative work. The statement “montage is partially what Döblin’s novel really is about” remains a verbal articulation of a pre-existing thought/language item. Formal analysis is not concerned with unpacking this statement, but rather with articulating and analysing the non-verbal nature of the device – viz. montage.



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*Bronx Morning*. Dir. Jay Leyda, USA, 1931.

*De brug/Bridge*. Dir. Joris Ivens, Netherlands, 1928.

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*Double Indemnity*. Dir. Billy Wilder, USA, 1944.

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*In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden/In a Year with 13 Moons.* Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Germany, 1978.

*Das Kaffeehaus/The Coffeehouse.* Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Germany, 1970.

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*Love Me Tonight.* Dir. Rouben Mamoulian, USA, 1932.

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*Manhatta.* Dir. Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler, USA, 1921.

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*Metropolis.* Dir. Fritz Lang, Germany, 1927.

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*Regen/Rain*. Dir. Joris Ivens, Netherlands, 1929.

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*Shestaya chast mira/One Sixth of the World*. Dir. Dziga Vertov, USSR, 1926.

*Skyscraper Symphony*. Dir. Robert Flaherty, USA, 1929.

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*Stachka/Strike*. Dir. Sergei M. Eisenstein, USSR, 1925.

*Staroye i novoye/Old and New*. Dir. Grigori V. Aleksandrov and Sergei M. Eisenstein, USSR, 1929.

*Die Stra e/The Street*. Dir. Karl Grune, Germany, 1923.

*Sunset Blvd.* Dir. Billy Wilder, USA, 1950.

*The Thin Red Line*. Dir. Terrence Malick, USA, 1998.

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*Warum läuft Herr R. amok?/Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?* Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Germany, 1970.

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*[Rec]*. Dir. Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza, Spain, 2007.

## **Word Count**

Total number of words in thesis excluding bibliography, filmography, and footnotes:

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