

**The Modernist Mandate of Montage: John Dos Passos' *U.S.A.*,  
Soviet Film Theory, and the Novel**

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Elokuvateorian kirjallista ja kirjallisuustieteellistä soveltamista käsittelevän tutkielmani päätarkoitus on modernistisen taiteen tutkimuksessa kanonisen aseman ja laajan teoreettisen käyttöasteen saaneen *montaasin* käsitteen romaaniteoreettinen uudelleenarviointi.

Määrittelen tämän 1900-luvun alun venäläisen elokuvan ja elokuvateorian suosioon nostaneen, kuvien leikkausta tai sen tyyliä kuvaavan käsitteen ensin nimenomaan elokuvateorian pohjalta. Tarkastelemalla tätä määritelmää semioottisesti sen kirjallisuustieteellisiin sovelluksiin vertaillen pyrin kyseenalaistamaan montaasin metaforisen ja analogisen käytön elinkykyisyyden ja käytännön tuloksellisuuden romaaniteorian alueella.

Tutkielmani ottaa yhtä aikaa osaa kolmeen teoreettiseen keskusteluun: kirjallisuustieteeseen ja romaanin yleiseen teoriaan, adaptaatioteoriaan sekä erityisesti montaasin käsitettä soveltaviin tiettyihin tutkimuksiin amerikkalaisen modernisti John Dos Passoksen (1896–1970) *U.S.A.*-trilogiasta (1927–1937). Trilogian teksti, vastaanotto ja sitä koskeva tutkimus toimivat esimerkkinäni montaasin soveltamisen kulttuurista romaanissa ja romaanin teoriassa.

Tietyiltä osin tutkielmani vertautuu adaptaatiotutkimukseen, joskin tässä tutkielmassa jo olemassa olevien verrannollisten tutkimuskohteiden sisällön kääntymisen sijaan käsitellään taiteidenvälisen tekniikan, rakenteen ja muodon toistamisen yleisiä mahdollisuuksia. Montaasia lähestytään täten mahdollisesti merkityksiä luovana, välittävänä ja uusinnettavana viestinnällisenä rakenteena.

Tutkielman aluksi esitän erityisesti Dos Passos -tutkimuksen näkökulmasta kohdallisen selonteon Lev Kulesovin, Sergei Eisensteinin ja Dziga Vertovin montaasin teorioista. Tältä pohjalta tarkastelen elokuvan ja romaanin viestintää niiden semioottisten rakenteellisten vastaavuuksien valossa. Pyrin määrittelemään montaasille tarkan kielellisen ja viestinnällisen roolin analogisen tai metaforisen määritelmän sijaan.

Koska montaasi on kiistämättömän merkittävä käsite sekä Dos Passoksen tuotannossa että sen tutkimuksessa, tutkielmassani käydään läpi myös kirjailijan teosten taustaa ja vastaanottoa. Vastaanoton kysymysten jälkeen tarkastelen elokuvalliseen montaasikäsitteeseen perustuvia analyyseja *U.S.A.*-trilogian sisältämistä tekstilajeista (moodeista). Erittelen tulkinnassani tutkimusten montaasikäsitteitä, painopisteitä ja mahdollisia tulkinnallisia aukkoja. Tarkoitukseni on osin Mihail Bahtinin romaaniteorioihin nojaten osoittaa, että metaforiseen tai analogiseen montaasikäsitteeseen perustuva kirjallisuustieteellinen tulkinta jättää väistämättä proosalle ja erityisesti modernille romaanille ominaisia piirteitä huomaamatta ja tarkastelematta.

Avainsanat: montaasi, John Dos Passos, elokuvateoria, romaaniteoria, modernismi

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## 1. Introduction

According to Robert Scholes (2006), it has been claimed that montage “[...] is the key device for Modernism in the verbal as well as the visual arts” (Scholes 2006, 96). French film critic André Bazin (2005), too, sees as commonly agreed upon that “[...] the novel, and particularly the American novel, has come under the influence of the cinema” (Bazin 2005, 61), and that this has “[...] helped the novelist to refurbish his technical equipment” (ibid.).

In similar vein, David Trotter (2006) writes that “[...] cinema has been proposed as a context for the work of an increasing number of writers who published in the period between the two World Wars, and whom we now regard as modernist” (Trotter 2006, 237–238). Trotter further adds, “[t]he transferable narrative technique which has featured most consistently in debates about literary modernism is montage” (ibid., 239).

That the concept of montage has been increasingly perceived, over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a major theoretical apparatus is an undeniable fact. Its lofty status stems in large part from its concurrence and affinity with Modern fiction’s simultaneous shift towards – as Eugene Lunn (1984) observes – to “Simultaneity, Juxtaposition, or ‘Montage’” (Lunn 1984, 35). In this period, the Modernist novel begun to exhibit devices and techniques such as aesthetic ordering, synchronicity, the logic of metaphor, reflexive reference, spatial form, *FID*, as well as many types of juxtaposition and reference (including *inter-* and *intratextuality*).

These emergent compositional techniques had much to do with the arts overall exhibiting a new outlook towards the world. In many ways, as James McFarlane (1978) asserts, Modernist art became “[...] a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense paradox of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (McFarlane 1978, 83). Bazin, too, adds, “[...] the American novel belongs not so much to the age of cinema as to a certain vision of the world, a vision influenced doubtless by man’s relations with a technical civilization” (Bazin 2005, 63).

This Modernist “vision,” in film, in visual arts, and in literature, emerged in an era that was, by and large, characterized by a healthy degree of intercultural and -medial exchange, fluidity, and interconnectedness. The period, sometimes called the interbellum (c. 1918–1939), was also largely (if not in a finalizing sense) demarcated by the two World Wars. Major sociopolitical structural changes in life, and in the arts, led to the emergence of certain techniques, styles, and new compositional devices, in all arts: In Expressionism, new uses for color and light; in Cubism, a focus on form, simultaneity and viewpoint; in Futurism, acceleration and shifts in spatiotemporal terms; and in the Modern novel, a fragmentation of identity (manifested as new types of narration, points of view and stream-of-consciousness).

In film and film theory, then, the above seemed to manifest chiefly as montage. In this sense, prose fiction and cinema in the Modernist period can perhaps be “[...] best be understood as constituting and constituted by parallel histories” (Trotter 2006, 239); or what Bazin calls “aesthetic convergence” (Bazin 2005, 63). Stevenson (1992) sees that “[a]nalogous innovations in so many contemporary art-forms may have arisen not from mutual influence [...] but from common apprehension of the shifting nature of life, and methods of perceiving it, in the early twentieth century” (Stevenson 1992, 8–9).

In the broadest of terms, this could be thought of what McFarlane calls Modernistic cultural “superintegration” (McFarlane 1978, 92). In Alfred Kazin’s (1969) words,

Art was the *nuova scienza*, the true science of the new period, the only possible new language—it would capture the discontinuities of the modern world and use for itself the violent motions and radical new energies of the postwar period (Kazin 1969, 18).

Many of the Modernist movement’s chief accomplishments in literature, like Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) in the United Kingdom, and William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) as well as John Dos Passos’ *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) and *U.S.A.* (1927–1937) in the United States – not to mention James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) and T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste*

*Land* (1922) somewhere in-between – are oft-cited examples of the use of the literary type of montage.

All this to state, plainly, that in the present study, montage is not posited as a theoretical solution, but rather its major quandary. Our aim is, primarily, to illustrate that neither montage nor its theory are quite what we intuitively think they are. In this thesis, we seek to dispute the idea that montage could be transported, *an sich*, or even *mutatis mutandis*, from film theory to the novel.

In illustrating the key points, we will first attempt to provide a working definition of montage, both film-theoretically, and in relation to language and the novel as semiotic systems. The focus here is on shedding light on both the equivalences, and the incompatibilities, hopefully illustrating the ways in which montage is both underdeveloped and -defined in cinema, and doubly so when applied to the novel. As Trotter notes, “The great majority of the enquiries into literary modernism’s relation to cinema [...] have been committed, implicitly or explicitly, to argument by analogy” (Trotter 2006, 239).

The simplest, crudest of critiques would outright seek to replace montage with something essentially, historically novelistic: contrast, juxtaposition, simile, et cetera. Yet due to its extensive historical baggage, the term cannot be simply done away with; it remains in wide-ranging usage, in countless works: books, journals, and essays. Therefore, as an example of its deep embedment, montage theory is posited against the backdrop of the body of criticism on the American Modernist John Dos Passos’ (1896–1970) *U.S.A.* trilogy – *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel* (1930, “42<sup>nd</sup>”), *Nineteen Nineteen* (1932, “NN”) and *The Big Money* (1936, “BM”).

To illustrate his selection as an exemplary object of study, Dos Passos, the author himself, paid close attention in 1936 to nearly all of the key points mentioned above:

Experiments in the visual arts (the invention of new ways of seeing things), are made because, due to the way the apparatus that makes up the mind is made, old processes and patterns have continually to be broken up in order to make it possible to perceive the new aspects and arrangements of evolving consciousness (Dos Passos 1988, 177).

In the foreword to his own translation of Blaise Cendrars' *Panama, Or the Adventures of My Seven Uncles* (1931), he also wrote:

The poetry of Blaise Cendrars was part of the creative tidal wave that spread over the world from the Paris of before the last European war. Under various tags: futurism, cubism, vorticism, modernism, most of the best work in the arts in our time has been the direct product of this explosion, that had an influence in its sphere comparable with that of the October revolution in social organization and politics and the Einstein formula in physics (Dos Passos 1931, vii).

Illustrating his profound understanding and knowledge of the Modernist currents of all the aforementioned arts, he went on to add how Cendrars, Apollinaire, and Picasso – among others – also profoundly influenced “Maiakovsky, Meyerhold, Eisenstein; whose ideas carom through Joyce, Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot” (ibid.).

### **1.1. Premise, Theory, and Method**

The ubiquity of the theoretical concept of montage as an analytic tool in 20<sup>th</sup> century literary criticism has resulted in its reaching a semi-canonical status, well illustrated by the earlier comments from Bazin, Trotter, and Wood. Especially in the study of Modernism, the term is taken as a given, its existence all but naturalized – as if it had been laid down in the gutter between theory and composition: unnoticed, unfronted, and uncontested.

Its prominent place in the theoretician's toolbox today is not surprising in the least, however: we are dealing, after all, with a quintessentially Modernist device that emerged in the period. Additionally, the concept is nothing if not convenient, on the one hand in its analogical richness, and in its apparent substantiveness on the other. It is also alluring in its broad applicability, and oft-valORIZED inter-, and multi-mediality, as if its usage somehow bridged the



gap between these different forms of art. Its chief functions, when theoretically applied to the novel, are nevertheless largely formalizing, conceptualizing, and totalizing.

It is in this sense that its usage goes right into the very heart of the theory of literature, forcing us to confront questions of the differentiating, unique characteristics of the novel as a genre, of novelness, and of novelization. It also raises questions of point of view, of “who sees, who speaks” (Genette), of “showing and telling” (James), and of the specificity of novelistic discourse, *prosaics* (Bakhtin).

In fact, montage may be the very best and most prominent example of the application of a chiefly non-novelistic, analogical theoretical apparatus – perhaps in addition to Bakhtin’s *polyphony* – to discourse in the novel. It is, additionally, marvelously representative of the major tendency in novel theory to rely on borrowed, analogical tools that are often ultimately unsuited to the generic specificity of the novel form. As such, an apparatus on loan will often fail to account for the intricacies of the novel – all the while failing to take into account the original richness of context of the particular term in its original scientific sphere, whether we refer to loans from psychoanalysis, sociology, history, linguistics, or, in this case, film theory.

In the case of montage, however, the problem of utilization is actually bidirectional. It is, I will argue, entirely unscientific a concept in *both* these areas of study. This is not to say that montage has not served *a* purpose – *its* purpose, the present author would like to add – but every theory, and every device, canonical or not – should be subjected to periodic re-evaluation and reappraisal.

To briefly sum up the aims of this study: We seek to re-evaluate the position of montage in the canon of the analysis of literary devices. In relating the concept to the theory of the novel, we will hopefully contribute to the understanding of the novel on the whole. The composition and structure of the three books of John Dos Passos’ *U.S.A.* trilogy – as well as the body of its criticism – will then serve as a specific example of the problems of montage in a literary

context. In this way, the discussion relates not only to the question of montage on the whole, but also to the state of literary criticism as it pertains *to a specific author*, hopefully contributing simultaneously to the re-evaluation of analytic factors important not only to Dos Passos, but also to the application of montage as a theoretical apparatus in novel criticism overall.

The present study differs somewhat from the usual ‘adaptation’ study between two different artistic mediums; such studies seek to analyze the *end-result* of the translation of content from one medium to another. Here, no such process or comparison of translation occurs. Even in the analysis of our examples, no specific point of comparison between translations exists. Instead, we approach the concept of montage as potentially generative, and productive, and compare the linguistic and compositional features from a more abstract point of view. Additionally, the focus here is on montage in film *theory* rather than in film, due to its natural affinity with literary *criticism*.

Neither does the present thesis attempt to disprove the existence of filmic, photographic qualities, or movie-like characteristics in the novel, or deny the clear cinematic influences of Dos Passos’ oeuvre. As Barry Maine (1985) points out, “[t]hat Dos Passos borrowed heavily from the narrative techniques of the cinema is not a thesis that needs defending, as Dos Passos himself has confirmed the influence” (Maine 1985, 76).

Yet, perhaps there nevertheless exists some need for theoretical reconsideration and revision; Michael North (2005), in his astute reading of the visuality of the trilogy, keenly observes that though it is common to associate the trilogy “with the documentary movements of the 1930s, on the supposition that it takes an objective visual approach to social issues of the time” (North 2005, 143), for the modern reader, nevertheless, there remains a creeping suspicion that the novel is not as visual as it “claims” to be (ibid.).

The structure of the study is effectively tripartite:

- 1) Chapter 2 forms a survey of relevant montage theory for procuring a working understanding of filmic montage; a history, a definition, and three theoretical conceptions of cinematic montage – from Kuleshov (ch. 2.2.), Eisenstein (2.3.) and Vertov (2.4.) – will be presented.
- 2) Chapter 3 consists of analysis of the equivalence of film and the novel as semiotic systems. A definition of montage.
- 3) Chapters 4–7 include a history, a survey, and an analysis of the critical and analytical reception of Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* trilogy in the context of montage.

## 1.2. Object of Study

The metatheoretical object of the study, as noted, principally consists of an analysis of the theory and application of film-theoretical montage a) to the novel and b) in novel criticism. The concrete object of study – the example “text” – is thus not only the composition and structure of the trilogy<sup>1</sup>, but in the larger sense, also the “texts” of its reception and analysis; in chapter 5, we will take a deeper look at studies from Maine (1985), Foster (1986), Edwards (1999), and Seed (2009).

The *U.S.A.* trilogy – later classified by the author himself as a “contemporary chronicle” (Dos Passos 1998<sup>2</sup>, 238), and also often characterized as “a historical novel,” “a news novel” or a “collective” novel (cf. Cowley 1974, 80) – offers perhaps the best possible view into the usage and application of filmic montage in the novel as well as in novel criticism and theory. This is in part due to Dos Passos the person, who, once hailed “the greatest writer of our time” by Jean-Paul Sartre (Sartre 1988, 173), was not only a lifelong painter and illustrator, a set

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1 For the present study, we shall largely set aside questions of plot and narrative, and only raise points regarding these factors where relevant.

2 The major source to Dos Passos' critical writings, essays, and interviews, is *The Major Nonfictional Prose* (1988).

designer, and a scriptwriter, but also the author of three plays, all in addition to a breathtaking amount of varying degrees of fictional and non-fictional prose.

As Pizer maintains, Dos Passos has been

[...] studied as a writer whose varying interests during the 1920s and 1930s clearly exemplify the broad changes occurring in American intellectual and literary life during those decades. He has also been examined as one of our principal literary modernists, as a writer who absorbed almost every vital avant-garde current of his day and evolved out of them a major experimental fictional technique (Pizer 1988, ix).

The trilogy, also characterized by Pizer as “[...] both the greatest of Dos Passos’ works and a classic of twentieth-century modernism” (ibid.), stands out as a singular exercise of the powers of novelistic narration, generic experimentation and integration, characterology, and the understanding and appreciation of discourse, speech, and alterity. In addition to the trilogy’s supremely high degree of compositional and textural complexity, and story-plot play, it is also undeniably rich, perhaps the richest American novel in its application of distinctly Modernist technique.

These three prototypical Modernist novels present, in undeniably filmic style, a decidedly synoptic view of early 20<sup>th</sup> century American culture and society. Its generic textual devices (or ‘modes,’ as they are most often called) can be classified into four different text genres: a) “Newsreels,” b) “The Camera Eye,” c) Biography and d) fictional narratives. Critical interpretations and appreciations of the trilogy, however, have chiefly tended to focus on its (admittedly equally notable) socioideological plane – despite its formal Modernist physiognomy. As Brian McHale noted as early as 1978, “*U.S.A.* has seldom received the kind of close interpretative attention that other linguistically highly-wrought modern novels have” (McHale 1978, c1).

A highly common undertaking in criticism of the trilogy has thus been to approach its narrative and plot as either ideological history, (auto)biography, or both. Time and time again,

Dos Passos' works have been analyzed with ideology and the visual arts in mind. Forty years since McHale's revelatory statement, the critical landscape remains largely unchanged, as new students and critics of Dos Passos remain – perhaps for a reason, in this age of “late” capitalism – utterly engaged in “a general ideological content or political message, declining to integrate its linguistic features with the global interpretations they have imposed” (McHale 1978, c1).

Face to face with such novelistic richness, it is not hard to see why montage, as a literary tool of analysis, has helped critics highlight some of the core compositional aspects of the trilogy. Yet, much in the same way as purely ideological readings so expertly critiqued by McHale, the application of montage as a method, too, functions as a highly totalizing, monologizing point of view.

## 2. Definition of Montage

The history of any idea is twofold; there exists a) a history of the concept as lexeme (*etymology*), and b) a socio-ideological history of thought behind the meaning(s) of that word (*intellectual history*). We shall begin with the former, and then proceed with the latter. As we shall quickly discover, to cite Trotter, “[h]istorically, the term ‘montage’ acquired in a short period of time a range of not always entirely compatible meanings” (Trotter 2006, 238).

The French word *montage* originally denoted the ‘action of ascending,’ and later, from around 1765 onwards, came to have the sense of ‘operation of assembling the parts of a mechanism to make it work’ (*OED*). The modern English sense, in use from the year 1914 onwards, is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as follows<sup>3</sup>:

n. Film and Television. The process or technique of selecting, editing, and piecing together separate sections of film to form a continuous whole; a sequence or picture resulting from such a process (*OED*).

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<sup>3</sup> Somewhat curiously, despite its use in the arts from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the cinematographical sense of the word only appears as a supplement to *OED II* as late as the year 1976.

This standard definition of the noun is obviously insufficient for covering the entire denotational territory of the concept – as well as rife with other problems and omissions. On the flipside, the very fact of its insufficiency allows us to highlight some of the deficiencies of montage theory *overall*: First, while the *OED* does mention both *process* (as editing) and *technique* (as specific type of editing), it leaves out mention of the *effect* that is all-important to any intentional (or unintentional) artistic juxtaposition.

As such, this definition acutely largely resembles – noted by Robert Scholes (2006) – simply the French word *montage*, which denotes ‘editing’ (Scholes 2006, 96). Second, while *OED*’s definition mentions ‘sections of film,’ it does not actually refer – intentionally or unintentionally – to the base unit of film, the ‘shot.’ It is not by accident, however, that *OED*’s definition should be what it is; both these highlighted issues are core problems of montage theory overall, as we shall soon discover in chapters 3.0.–3.2.

The intellectual history of the word, then, emerges from the fertile ground of a collision between early American and Soviet cinema culture – and as we have already noted in the Introduction, of the collision between film and the novel, as part of a larger currents in the culture of Modernity. Montage, as we now understand it<sup>4</sup>, is the end product of a bi-directional, cross-Atlantic pollination, and an exchange of artistic influences and theories of art between the East and the West.

Quite opportunely for the present study, the a) overall history of early montage, and b) the history of montage, as it stands in direct relation Dos Passos’ works and their reception in literary criticism, coincide and overlap almost down to a tee. Therefore, as we shall discover, the selection of the particular three historical conceptions of montage is just as relevant both to the development of montage overall as it is to that of Dos Passos’.

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<sup>4</sup> Prominent examples of the common pop cultural understanding of montage as the presentation of an accelerated sequence of actions and events today would include, for instance, *Rocky I*’s (1976) infamous training sequence, or *Forrest Gump*’s (1994) protagonist pictured running through America.

First, in chapter 2.1., we shall put together an outline of the development of montage in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then, the following three sub-chapters will provide summations of montage from the writings of three major Soviet directors of the era. In the summaries, we will focus chiefly on the following three aspects, or dimensions, of each theory:

- a) **Base units:** The definition of the base units of film, i.e. the elements of montage,
- b) **Technique:** The parameters of the application of montage as technique, and
- c) **Ideology:** Any and all potential ideological and theoretical principles that affect the usage or application of the technique.

It is these three aspects that will then allow us to further ascertain the parameters of their application, and facilitate a comparison to their novelistic applications, first in relationship to the novel overall (ch. 3.5.), and then to Dos Passos in chapter 4.

## **2.1. History of Montage**

Soviet film directors Lev Kuleshov (1899–1970) and Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948) have both testified that the seeds of montage were sown on the soil of the United States of America, yet the harvest was actually reaped by Soviet cinema.

Montage is a pre-eminently Modern concept both temporally and ideologically; according to Kuleshov (1974), prior to “the [Russian] Civil War and the [Russian] Revolution, montage, as a consciously expressed artistic method, was virtually unused” (Kuleshov 1974, 184). In Eisenstein’s view, its “[...] foundations had been laid by American film-culture, but whose full, completed, conscious use and world recognition was established by our [Soviet] films” (Eisenstein 1949, 204).

That montage should have emerged at this juncture in history obviously had everything to do with the birth and emergence of the film form, both as a technology and a form of art, at the very tail end of the 1800s, often placed in the year 1895, the year of the first public

cinematographic showing organized by the Lumière brothers. As American films began to make it over to Russia, chiefly in-between the years 1914 and 1922, it became clear to a collective of Soviet film directors that it was the brash, swift American style of cinematography that most appealed to audiences (cf. Kuleshov 1974, 127).

Therefore, a portion of the success of montage in the decades that followed simply had to do with the instantaneous popularity of a specific style of film, a style that forced Soviet film-makers to adapt and rethink their own cinematic technique. Kuleshov felt that American films were also best “[...] in terms of their influence on the viewer” (ibid., 46). This led – among many others, Kuleshov, Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin (1893–1953) and Dziga Vertov (1896–1954) – to study, emulate, and finally further develop, that early 1910s style of American film-making.

Eisenstein and Kuleshov’s view makes it clear that as a theoretical concept, the history montage is dualistic: Though both Kuleshov and Eisenstein absolutely consider the birth of montage to be an American phenomenon, it has also become all but customary to think of montage as it was conceptualized and theorized by the Soviet directors. In other words, while its birthplace may be placed in the US, its intellectual history leads from there to Russia.

Over there, we can place the origins of montage in Kuleshov’s series of experiments with found footage (c. 1919–1920), often christened “The Kuleshov Effect.”<sup>5</sup> By contrasting, each time, an identical shot of actor Ivan Mozukhin’s face with shots of a bowl of soup, a seemingly dead girl laying peacefully in a coffin, and a woman sensually lying on a divan<sup>6</sup>, Kuleshov was able to elicit different audience reactions, in essence a positive appraisal of Mozukhin’s “acting” skills. In the eyes of the viewers, the selfsame shot of Mozukhin either illustrated hunger, sadness, or lust, and so forth. The changing response, then, illustrated how the

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5 For Pudovkin’s take on the experiment, cf. Pudovkin 1954, 140.

6 There apparently exist other iterations of the experiment, which for instance replace the shot of the woman with a sunny landscape. The premise, of course, remains otherwise unchanged. The present author has only seen the “Effect” as described.



juxtaposition (i.e. “montage”) of one shot to another could subtly (or radically) change the viewer’s interpretation of the subject matter, or “theme,” of the juxtaposition.

Or, we can look to the pre-eminent director of Soviet era cinema, the widely-published Eisenstein (ch. 2.3.), who traced the theoretical roots of montage to D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* (1915). According to Eisenstein, montage in cinema will be “forever linked with the name of Griffith” (Eisenstein 1949, 204). Eisenstein believed Griffith arrived at montage “[...] through the method of parallel action, and he was led to the idea of parallel action by – Dickens!” (ibid., 205). What emerges here is an early close association with montage in the novel and in the film.

From yet another angle, it is also possible to consider Dziga Vertov as the originator of a purely documentary style of montage and film-making. His unique style of cinema will be discussed in chapter 2.4. In the following three subchapters, we shall provide a summary of three conceptions of montage: Kuleshov’s, Eisenstein’s, and Vertov’s. Each director takes a somewhat different position to film and montage, with Kuleshov taking something of a middle ground between Eisenstein and Vertov’s more extreme views; Carloss James Chamberlin (2006) quite ingeniously (as well as ironically) compares this relationship to that of a

[...] dysfunctional troika, that particularly Russian horse-rig with a shaft horse in the centre and two animals apparently pulling hard to either side. In the centre, under the painted harness arch of the duga, is Lev Kuleshov; on one side is the romantic-idealist-symbolist Sergei Eisenstein, and on the other is the archmaterialist and modernist Vertov (Chamberlin 2006).

## **2.2. Kuleshov**

In Lev Kuleshov’s terminology, *montage* was “the organization of cinematic material,” of joining “shots” into a predetermined order (Kuleshov 1974, 47–48). Montage constituted the full essence of cinema; “separate shots, separately connected pieces of film [...] did not constitute cinema, but only the material for cinema” (ibid., 48). For Kuleshov, the content of

the shots was far less important to “[...] the method of their connection and their alternation” (Kuleshov 1974, 46–47).

Kuleshov’s views had immediate and lasting effect on the Soviet film-making scene in the 1920s; being the elder, more established film-maker, he was a mentor both to Eisenstein and Pudovkin. The latter, for instance, freely admitted that Kuleshov entirely changed his views on film-making and that he learned from him the meaning of the word montage (Pudovkin 1954, 138). In Pudovkin’s recollection, Kuleshov’s montage could be defined thusly:

Film-art begins from the moment when the director begins to combine and join together the various pieces of film. By joining them in various combinations, in different orders, he obtains differing results (ibid., 139).

Kuleshov’s influence over both Eisenstein and Pudovkin came to privilege a) form over content, and as follows, b) the director over the viewer, and ultimately c) technique over material. It is also in Kuleshov’s aforementioned experiments with found footage (cf. p. 12) that the idea of montage *as more than just editing* first emerges. In some ways, it seemed as though the aforementioned “Kuleshov Effect” experiment had laid down “the ‘scientific’ basis for the supremacy of montage” (Metz 1991, 46).

In a 1922 article, written largely in response to American films, Kuleshov further de-emphasizes the role of content in the shots of a film: “[W]hat is important is not what is shot in a given piece, but how the pieces in a film succeed one another, how they are structured” (Kuleshov 1974, 129). Later, in the 1929 book *Art of the Cinema*, the director states that he and his compatriots had become convinced that

the fundamental source of the film’s impact on the viewer [...] was not simply to show the content of certain shots, but the organization of those shots among themselves, their combination and construction, that is, the interrelationship of shots, the replacement of one shot by another (ibid., 46).

Importantly to our thesis, Kuleshov defined the shot through a linguistic analogy, by comparing it to a *sign*, “[...] a letter of the alphabet, so that you can instantly read it, and so that for the viewer what is expressed in the given shot will be utterly clear” (Kuleshov 1974, 62), adding that “each separate shot must act as each letter in a word” (ibid., 62–63).

However, later in 1935, after what Christian Metz calls the “Montage-or-Bust” era (Metz 1991, 31), Kuleshov begins to take back some of his original, more extreme views. Steven Kovacs (1976) believes his changing views were due to party pressure, noting that Kuleshov’s later essays were written basically in defense (Kovacs 1976, 38). He also notes that by 1935, Eisenstein, too, had recanted his views somewhat (cf. ibid., 39–40).

Kuleshov’s later policies differ in two tangible ways. First, he pulls back on the absolute primacy of montage, which “[...] was so crucial to cinematography that everything else was secondary” (Kuleshov 1974, 183). Now, the key factor in film for Kuleshov rather becomes “[...] the live person working on the screen, real life filmed for the screen” (ibid.).

Second, where montage appeared the very essence of cinema (much like *novelization* was for Bakhtin’s theory in ch. 3.5.), Kuleshov now begins to highlight directorial, ideological point of view as the chief organizatory principle. The artist’s ideology is not only expressed by shot selection, but also in how the film is edited; according to Kuleshov, “film montage, as the entire work of filmmaking, is inextricably linked to the artist’s world-view and his ideological purpose” (ibid., 184).

Despite their direct adherence to, as Kovacs suggests, to the demands of Soviet state policy, Kuleshov’s new positions are hardly artless, or without insight. For instance, Kuleshov now argues, since artists with differing world-views and ideologies all perceive reality and events differently (i.e. through a different ‘lens!’), they will also join them differently in montage (ibid.). Therefore, he claims, “montage (the essence of all art) is inextricably tied to the world-view of the person who has the material at his disposal” (ibid., 185). It does not

matter whether the subject matter is presented as just “dry chronicle” (Kuleshov 1974, 185; cf. Dos Passos on p. 7 of this study).

Summing up his new focus on the content of the shots and the new role of the ideological viewpoint, Kuleshov adds:

[The] quality of films never depends entirely on montage. It is determined (by the way of the ideological purpose) by the material itself, especially since the material of cinema is reality itself, life itself, reflected and interpreted by the class consciousness of the artist (ibid., 195).

### 2.3. Eisenstein

For many, the name Eisenstein is synonymous with the word montage, and not just in cinema: David Seed, for instance, believes it is impossible to overstate his importance to twentieth-century US fiction (Seed 2009, 137). The film director and theorist developed his conception, often called “dialectical montage” by critics, both in several well-known silent films (*Potemkin* [1925] and *October* [1928]), and in a large series of essays and articles that kept pointing the term to new directions.

While Kuleshov’s “Effect” may be considered the starting point of montage theory, the English translations of Eisenstein’s articles in effect served to popularize the Soviet theory of montage in the US and in the UK, just as Modernism was reaching its “highest” point in both countries. Eisenstein’s works began to be published in the English language from 1927 onwards, up until the year 1946, in papers and magazines such as the *New York Times*, *Dial*, and *The New Republic* (cf. Spindler 1981, 403), and *Close Up* (1927–1933) in the United Kingdom.

Most theorists focus chiefly, and most closely, on the dialectical element of Eisenstein’s theories. It is true that Eisenstein famously claimed the basis of every art was *conflict*, in the form of “an ‘imagist’ transformation of the dialectical principle” (Eisenstein 1949, 38).

The dialectics of his theories are often seen to be purely that of the dialectical materialist position, that society changes and develops – politically and historically – from the conflict of material and social forces, effectively, through class conflict and warfare. We will indeed find Eisenstein claiming that his “intellectual principle is profoundly tinged by class” (Eisenstein 1949, 82), and that “this form [montage] is most suitable for the expression of ideologically pointed theses,” yet he will also note that “it is a pity that the critics completely overlooked the purely filmic potentialities of this approach” (ibid., 62.).

In his prescriptive attempt at a dialectics of the film, “A Dialectic Approach to Film Form” (orig. 1929), Eisenstein indeed argued that when conceived dynamically, the existence of man was “constant evolution from the interaction of two contradictory opposites” (ibid., 45) that would reach its synthesis “from the opposition between thesis and antithesis” (ibid.). This Hegelian premise was then justification for his view that, in the realm of art, this dynamic would be embodied in conflict (ibid., 46). As follows, montage and shots, too, are characterized “[b]y collision. By the conflict of two pieces in opposition to each other. By conflict” (ibid., 37). Eisenstein calls this the “dramatic” principle of montage (ibid., 49).

It is true that the gist of Eisenstein’s thought was built on a Marxist premise. Yet, even in facing the dangers of mischaracterization, the following question need be asked: What were the inherent qualities of montage that led to it being Eisenstein’s *modus operandi*? Was it official Soviet thought, and dialectical materialism, that chiefly contributed to Eisenstein’s formation of montage? Or, is it rather the very nature of juxtaposition as effect that in fact forces into key focus the role of conflict and collision? After all, was it not “that old scoundrel of a capitalist” (Dos Passos 1966, 200), David Wark Griffith, who first brought the conception to his attention?

Conversely, it could be asked – due to its nature, is it any wonder that montage should have become, for a short period in history, the go-to model of art for the Soviet authorities?

Either way, Eisenstein's faith in montage as the primary component of film was clear, frank, and unwavering: "[s]hot and montage are the basic elements of cinema" (Eisenstein 1949, 48). Much like Kuleshov's, Eisenstein's primary aim with montage was to generate a specific response in the viewer; as he explains in the 1939 essay, "Word and Image,"

The strength of montage resides in this, that it includes in the creative process the emotions and mind of the spectator. The spectator is compelled to proceed along that selfsame creative road that the author travelled in creating the image (Eisenstein 1968, 34).

He continues that "The spectator not only sees the represented elements of the finished work, but also experiences the dynamic process of the emergence and assembly of the image just as it was experienced by the author" (ibid., 34). Where Kuleshov emphasized form over subject matter absolutely (cf. p. 15), and where Vertov compared montage to brick-laying (cf. p. 23) – effectively denying individual shots their weight, or emphasis – Eisenstein argued that describing montage purely "as a means of description by placing single shots one after the other like buildingblocks [sic]" was "[a] completely false concept" (Eisenstein 1949, 48).

### **2.3.1. Analogies**

Eisenstein utilized two types of analogy to explain montage; a) biological, and b) linguistic. These analogies, then, are organically related to his conception of the basic elements and the structure of cinema.

In the first type, Eisenstein compares the 'shot' to the 'cell' of an organism or embryo (Eisenstein 1949, 37); in this analogy, the film frame becomes a "molecular case of montage" (ibid., 40). What follows is that montage is not merely a technique, but a *material part of film*: "The shot is by no means an element of montage. The shot is a montage cell" (ibid., 37).

The analogy perfectly illustrates the materiality of his conception, which had its roots in Kuleshov's views of the primacy of montage (cf. p. 14). More pertinent to our thesis than the

biological analogy – though it does allow us insight to Eisenstein’s view of the base elements of cinema, namely, the shot, the frame, and montage – are however Eisenstein’s comparisons of the film form to elements of communication and language.

The linguistic analogies arise in relation to Eisenstein’s interest in Japanese kabuki theatre. In the article “The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram” (orig. 1929), Eisenstein compares the process of montage to the “fusing” of two hieroglyphs into an ‘ideogram’ (Eisenstein 1949, 30), which then takes on a wholly different meaning; in his example, “a dog + a mouth = ‘to bark’” (ibid.). He also asserts that

The film-frame can never be an inflexible letter of the alphabet, but must always remain a multiple meaning ideogram. And it can be read only in juxtaposition, just as an ideogram acquires its specific significance, meaning, and even pronunciation [...] only when combined (ibid., 65–66).

In a different context, Eisenstein also defines montage as “a syntax for the correct construction of each particle of a film fragment” (ibid., 111).

In Eisenstein’s view, there was no “fundamental” difference in montage in different areas of art, whether “purely visual montage and to a montage that links different spheres of feeling” (Eisenstein 1968, 63–64). He also urged cinema to follow, instead of theater and painting, the “methodology of language, which allows wholly new concepts of ideas to arise from the combination of two concrete denotations of two concrete objects?” (Eisenstein 1949, 60).

It is quite important to note that Eisenstein’s theories drew massively, in addition to theatre, from poetry and fiction; as Scholes points out, he was able to pull example quotations, over the course of just one essay, from Coleridge, Browning, Milton, Bierce, Carroll, de Maupassant, Pushkin, Tolstoy and Gorky (cf. Scholes 2006, 100).

### 2.3.2. Filmic Principles

For film-making, Eisenstein's merit obviously lies in formulating a standardized list of technical principles (or 'levels') of montage: *metric*, *rhythmic*, *tonal*, *overtonal*, *intellectual*, and *vertical* (cf. Eisenstein 1949, 72–83; Eisenstein 1968, 60). Although each these levels seems largely inapplicable to the novel – in their close proximity to the film form – they have nevertheless been applied to it (cf. p. 55 in the present study) and will thus be briefly summarized here.

*Metric* montage manipulates purely shot duration, either by accelerating shot speed or by prolonging and shortening shots. *Rhythmic* montage takes into account shot duration and its content, both “possessing equal rights to consideration” (Eisenstein 1949, 73). This is perhaps best illustrated by considering that some types of shot seem to have a different sense of the passing of time depending on their content; a face staring intently at the camera compared to a serene landscape, for instance.

In *tonal* montage, consideration in editing is placed on the entirety of the frame or shot, “[...] on the characteristic emotional sound of the piece—of its dominant. The general tone of the piece” (ibid., 75). *Overtonal* montage, which relates to all the other ‘levels’ of montage, is “[...] distinguishable from tonal montage by the collective calculation of all the piece’s appeals” (ibid., 78). It is the “impression from a melodically emotional coloring to a directly physiological perception” (ibid.).

In other words, where *tonal* montage takes into account the entirety of the shot, *overtonal* montage takes into account the full effect produced by the viewing of the film as a whole, including orchestration (and later, sound). Elsewhere, Eisenstein calls this the “Filmic Fourth Dimension” (ibid., 69). Finally, *intellectual* montage is *overtonal* montage “[...] of an intellectual sort: i.e., conflict-juxtaposition of accompanying intellectual affects” where “[...]”



the intellectual principle is profoundly tinged by class” (Eisenstein 1949, 82) – a type of montage that will show the viewer some truth of the class in society.

Finally, in the essay “Synchronization of Senses” (1968), written in response to the advent of the sound film, Eisenstein also develops the conception of *vertical montage*, in which he places more weight on the composition of the shot in relationship to its sound and the soundtrack.

#### 2.4. Vertov

After first working as the editor of the “Cine Week” [*Kinonedelia*] newsreel from 1918 to 1919, Dziga Vertov eventually came to form the Kino-Eye group, which in 1922 published the “Kinoks” manifesto, laying down a prototype for the later *cinéma vérité* movement, and for documentary film-making on the whole. The group’s primary cinematic aim was to capture “film-truth” [*kinopravda*] (Vertov 1984, 41). Vertov’s most famous film, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), illustrates some of these premises in action, though perhaps above all a radical director and a theorist working with almost an ideological sense of rhythm and sequence.

According to Vertov’s 1929 essay, “From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye,” his documentary principle, the “Kino-Eye,” (translated often also as “Camera-Eye”) was a “scientifically experimental method of exploring the visible world” for systematically recording facts from life on film and then systematically organizing this material (ibid., 87). While the exact ‘systemic’ or ‘scientific’ nature of the method is left open to interpretation<sup>7</sup>, there were nevertheless several relevant components – some ideological, some methodological – to his conception of cinema that need be accounted for.

To Vertov, the concept of montage meant “[...] organizing film fragments (shots) into a film-object. It means ‘writing’ something cinematic with the recorded shots” (Vertov 1984,

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<sup>7</sup> Though claiming in his writing a great degree of formality and scientificity, Eisenstein and especially Kuleshov were undoubtedly far more formalist in their positions than Vertov ever was.

88). Vertov does not go deeper than this into montage in his writings. This is almost entirely due to a different focus in his understanding of film; where Eisenstein focused primarily on the image, and Kuleshov on acting, for Vertov, it was *movement* that was important to capture: In his first film-theoretical article, “We: A Version of a Manifesto” (orig. 1919)<sup>8</sup>, Vertov notes that “the geometrical extract of movement through an exciting succession of images is what’s required of montage” (ibid., 8). In this conception, film becomes an art “of organizing the necessary movements of objects in space as a rhythmical artistic whole” (ibid.).

Montage, in this sense, is the “interval” between two base elements of film. Much like Kuleshov, for whom “shots” did not constitute cinema, but the material for it (cf. Kuleshov 1974, 48), Vertov too believed that “[i]ntervals (the transitions from one movement to another) are the material, the elements of the art of movement, and by no means the movements themselves” (Vertov 1984, 8). The organization of these elements into ‘phrases,’ then, forms the overall composition of the film: “composition is made of phrases, just as a phrase is made of intervals of movement” (ibid., 9). It has been pointed out, by Vlada Petric, that Vertov’s idea of the ‘phrase’ in film derives largely from music theory (cf. Petric 1984, 35).

Unlike Eisenstein and Kuleshov, whose films strived for dramatic effect, Vertov’s mode of film-making resembled pure documentary. Vertov later wrote, in an April 16th 1934 journal entry, that he and his documentary team “[...] set ourselves a broader task: editing, organizing, combining together the separate shots to completely avoid falseness, to make each montage phrase, and our works as a whole, show us the truth” (Vertov 1984, 174). The Kino-Eye group was to capture life on film as it was.

This meant shooting footage of people unawares<sup>9</sup>, to show “people without masks, without makeup, to catch them through the eye of the camera in a moment when they are not

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8 Vertov’s writing on the whole resembles that of the Futurists. It is very impressionistic, fragmentary, and polemic.

9 Jeremy Hicks (2007, 23–24) problematizes Vertov’s concept of “Life Caught Unawares;” he suggests the translation ‘life off-guard’ to be more descriptive of Vertov’s intentions.

acting, to read their thoughts, laid bare by the camera” (Vertov 1984, 41). It also meant the cameraman was to remain hidden from view, unnoticed (Petric 1978, 32). The authenticity of both the footage and the editing process was a great concern of Vertov’s, as Petric observes (ibid.).

Kuleshov and Vertov’s view on the material of the shot differed in one principal way; where Kuleshov believed it was repetition and rehearsal that produced a natural effect, Vertov felt exactly the opposite<sup>10</sup>. Authenticity in film, in this way, meant to Vertov a kind of self-produced ‘found footage.’ At the same time, the Kino-Eye principle also denoted almost total freedom for the editor, including changing the spatial and temporal logic of the footage in the editing process – “the conquest of space” (Vertov 1984, 87) and “time” (ibid., 88). Vertov further urged directors to utilize “every possible means in montage, comparing and linking all points of the universe in any temporal order, breaking, when necessary, all the laws and conventions of film construction” (ibid.).

In fact, both Dos Passos and Vertov had the selfsame argument of randomness and incoherence leveled at them. In a 1924 essay, responding to claims that his footage had been shot and put together entirely at random, Vertov noted that “the newsreel is organized from bits of life into a theme, and not the reverse” (ibid., 45), adding that “Kinopravda doesn’t order life to proceed according to a writer’s scenario, but serves and records life as it is, and only then draws conclusions from these observations” (ibid.). The only qualifier Vertov would add was that the footage be objectively ‘good’: “Just as good bricks are needed for a house, good film footage is needed to organize a film-object” (ibid.).

Much like Kuleshov’s later, more apologetic point of view, and like Eisenstein’s formulation of intellectual montage, Vertov’s theory also contained a major ideological dimension; Kino-Eye, after all, was meant to “[...] further the battle for the communist

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10 For Kuleshov’s snipe at Vertov, cf. Kuleshov 1974, 61.

decoding of the world, as an attempt to show the truth on the screen – Film-truth” (Vertov 1984, 41–42). This is fully evident in Vertov’s actual cinematography, which consists largely of state projects, mostly newsreels, before the year 1929. At times, Vertov went to almost grotesque lengths to satiate the demands of state policy, once comparing the work of the movie camera to the work of the agents of the GPU, the state secret police (cf. *ibid.*, 69).

Overall, Vertov’s theory is not short on contradictions; on the one hand, it privileges direct signification over realism (by stripping away ordinary film syntax), yet claims to be ultra-realistic and truthful on the other; yet what is realism in film if not *verisimilitude* (in the Genette/Todorov sense<sup>11</sup>), a generic logic of shots? But even if we end up not considering this a problem, other interrelated contradictions still emerge in Vertov’s theory.

How can a documentary type of film exhibit the director’s absolute control over montage (that, as noted, borders on chaos), yet also provide an ideological world-view, all the while presenting the objective “truth” of the world? Of course, the relationship between ideology and truth is solved by fairly standard ideological maneuvering; as Petric suggests, “Vertov believed that these two commitments did not exclude each other, because they reflected the dialectical process of the evolution of a socialist society” (Petric 1978, 30).

The problem of the director’s dictatorship of montage as truthful, then, has considerably more weight. Vertov solves the apparent contradiction by seeing montage as analogical to seeing: “[...] to organize the film pieces wrested from life into a meaningful rhythmic visual order, a meaningful visual phrase, an essence of ‘I see’” (Vertov 1984, 88). Therefore, as Petric explains, it is the director who must “select details from reality, not merely shoot them at random, as Vertov’s method is often wrongly described” (Petric 1978, 33).

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion on *verisimilitude* as a compositional device in Finnish, cf. Ojanen, Martti 2013: “Aleksi ja Elmeri kielen poluilla: assosiaatio ja *vraisemblance* juoniperiaatteina.” In Mäkelä, Maria (ed.): *Todellisuusefekti. Tutkielmia kirjallisista maailmasuhteista*. Narrative Theory and Textuality: Publications No. 1. School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies. Tampere: University of Tampere, 27–56.

In Vertov's philosophy, the camera effectively takes the position of the point of view of the director's vision, seemingly fusing the technology of the film camera with the eye (as best exhibited by the name, Kino-Eye). The camera, then, is but an interface that repeats and reproduces the logic of the director's recording gaze on film. Vision – as a) point of view (ideology), b) eyesight, and c) the logic of selection – becomes *the logic of montage itself*, in a philosophical sense, collapsing the difference between the two.

In his written works, Vertov would consistently cite the phrase, “Kino-eye – the montage ‘I see!’” (Vertov 1984, 18). In Vertov's montage, thus, we do not find any specific attempt at defining the effects or purposes of *montage* itself – where his documentary purposes were clearly defined, montage in Vertov's theory is so powerfully intertwined with the director's ideology, vision, and technique, that it cannot be easily wrested away from it.

One final point of note to consider. Unlike Eisenstein, who drew massively from classical literature, poetry, and theatre, and unlike Pudovkin, who saw montage as analogical to language, Vertov was vehemently anti-theatre and anti-literature in cinema. While we do discover him comparing montage to writing above, ultimately, Vertov sought to free film “[...] from the tutelage of literature and the theater and brings us face to face with 100 percent cinematography” (ibid., 84).

In fact, he further wanted the Kino-Eye movement to be “[...] a movement for influence through facts as opposed to influence through fiction, no matter how strong the imprint of fiction” (ibid., 87), and that Kino-Eye montage should not “[...] mean selecting the fragments for ‘scenes’ (the theatrical bias) or for titles (the literary bias)” (ibid., 88). Vertov seemed to detest other arts than cinema and thought Kino-Eye held “[...] the ability to show and elucidate life as it is, considerably higher than the occasionally diverting doll games that people call theater, cinema, etc” (ibid., 47).

### 3. Montage, Language, and Theory of the Novel

Having outlined these varying conceptions of montage in the film, we now turn to look at the relationship of film and the novel. The most obviously taxing issue in a strictly *literary* application of montage – beyond the level of pure intuitive analogy – is the question of the various equivalences between the two different forms of art.

While there are clearly several evident dimensions of equivalence – artistic, narrative, generic, and otherwise – the most relevant question to our inquiry is actually one of the discernible structural, or semiotic, similarity of the *languages*, or the *sign systems*, of the two different artistic forms. Based on the three aforementioned theories of cinematic montage (ch. 2.2.–2.4.), we have been able to discern its basic parameters. Each theory was notably reliant on the use of analogy. Yet, at this juncture, it is no longer passable for montage to have a sense of theoretical imprecision, whether montage refers to a) the process of editing, b) to the combination of two shots, c) to the overall organizational principle, or d) to the pursued and/or achieved effect.

Instead, in transporting the concept of montage from film to literature, we are at once face to face with the following questions:

- 1) **Syntactic equivalence:** What elements of novelistic discourse should we take to correspond to the film-frames and shots of the movie?
- 2) **Pragmatic equivalence:** What, exactly, are the two elements of discourse that “collide” or “conflict” (Eisenstein) in novelistic montage?
- 3) **Communicative equivalence:** What type of effect is montage in film and in literature?

At first, it feels almost banal to note the obvious differences between the two artistic forms; yet, there are some surprising similarities to be found. David Lodge’s description of the similarity between reality and film is very illustrative here:

We move through time and space lineally and our sensory experience is a succession of contiguities. The basic units of the film, the shot and the scene, are composed along the same line of contiguity and combination (Lodge 1977, 84).

The same can be said of the novel, too, as both are forms of the specific artistic type of representation of reality that proceeds on two temporal levels, on the diegetic, “told” level, and on the received level – or, to utilize Seymour Chatman’s definition here, have a “double time structuring” that combines the “[...] time sequence of plot events, the time of the *histoire* (‘story-time’) with the time of the presentation of those events in the text, which we call ‘discourse-time’” (Chatman 1980, 122).

And though the film form has at the very least “five signifying codes” (“the visual image, the musical sound, the verbal sounds of speech, sound effects, and the graphic form of credits”) (Metz 1974, 16), the intradiegetic level of a film also often includes not just “verbal sounds,” but also what we might consider the equivalent ‘natural’ portion of linguistic communication in the novel – words, dialogue, discourse, et cetera.

In chapter 3.1., we will examine questions relating to the status of film as a semiotic system, and in chapter 3.2. as a type of productive semantic meaning-making. The ultimate aim of this chapter is, above all, to produce a working understanding and definition of montage that is not reliant on analogy, and to discover exactly the ways in which montage – in the productive sense – engenders meaning.

### **3.1. The Film as Language**

It seems undoubtedly common for scholars to bridge the gap between the film and the novel through the analogy of language. Michael Wood, for instance, in his article, “Modernism and Film” (1999), explains:

The moment we put two shots together we have a syntax, and realism in this mode, as perhaps any other, involves our thoroughly learning and thoroughly forgetting this syntax – or not even forgetting, since we usually learn it without even knowing we have (Wood 1999, 222).

Lodge, too, concludes that “[...] film is still a system of signs, a conventional language that has to be learned” (Lodge 1977, 83–84), adding, like Wood, that “[...] once the language of film has been acquired it seems natural” (ibid., 84).

Wood and Lodge’s views here echo the history of Kuleshov and Eisenstein’s ideas of shots in montage as “letter[s] of the alphabet” (Kuleshov 1974, 62) or the film-frame as “a multiple meaning ideogram” (Eisenstein 1949, 65), as well as Vertov comparing montage to “writing” (Vertov 1984, 88). Above all, the film-makers’ analogies, and Lodge and Wood’s commentary, emphasizes equally the need for finding a type of generic conventionality in film – a supremely important question in relation to montage – as well as a common ground for understanding communication and structure in both film and the novel.

Without placing excessive weight on the semiotics of pure cinema at this juncture, French film semiotician Christian Metz perhaps offers us the best two working definitions of film as language: First, “the cinema is not a language but a language of art” (Metz 1991, 64). Second, Metz suggests, “it seems appropriate to look at the cinema as a language without a system” (ibid., 65) – or, as he more famously noted in French, a “*langue ou langage*.”

Metz’s distinctly Saussurean contribution to our understanding of the film form as a system of signs lies in crystallizing the apparent similarities between the two mediums as *not* quite equivalent *when compared in a language-semiotic sense*. He concludes that while there exists, both semantically and intuitively speaking, a ‘syntax’ of the cinema, it can be seen only on a syntactic level of analysis and application; there cannot be, strictly speaking, a *morphology* of the film (cf. ibid, 67).

What this important statement means to our thesis is that while a film can be approximately segmented into shots (or frames, or perhaps even scenes!) as specific units of



meaning, they are not conducive to, or reducible into smaller, *productive* units of meaning (cf. Metz 1991, 88). This observation is surely best explained against natural languages, which function via the combination of *morphemes* (the smallest indivisible unit of meaning) and *phonemes* (sound elements) in the generation of meaning in communication – on a lower paradigmatic level of productivity that is missing from the ‘language’ of film.

Therefore, like Eisenstein had suggested (cf. Eisenstein 1949, 111), films absolutely do contain a ‘syntax’ – that is to say, generic, conventional, common features that are used and understood approximately the same way in every movie – much in the same way as the novel does as a genre of *literature*, though in addition to the dimension that we consider the ‘natural’ communicative language. *This* particular layer of syntax in the film can absolutely be thought of as a type of sign system.

Yet, beyond this level, the film has nothing that can *a priori* produce readymade meaning in the *morphological* sense – only on the *syntactic, a posteriori* one. The imposition of a syntax on the structure of the film is always a retrospective act, or a one-way street – as Metz notes, the syntax only emerges and is visible because we’ve first understood what we’ve seen (cf. Metz 1991, 41). Again, this is not to say there cannot be found some conventional ‘code’ of film to be analyzed and understood. But, as Metz concludes, such formations “do not have the constancy and stability of natural languages” (Metz 1974, 16–17).

Of course, the question and existence of a morphology of narrative discourse, too, might at first seem pertinent here<sup>12</sup>. However, since we are principally invested in the question of montage as a communicative effect, rather than in the overall generation of narrative elements, we will set aside this particular dimension – as we will questions of representation, point of view, and so forth.

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12 For a chiefly narratological treatment of novels and films, cf. Chatman 1980.

Metz's contribution clarifies two aspects here; first, that a literary critic's burning desire to see a linguistic equivalence between film and language (and consequently, film and the novel) is not entirely misguided. Yet, it also makes clear that Kuleshov and Eisenstein's ideas regarding the semiotics of the film are analogical (in the least analytic sense of the word) at best.

In the final analysis, it is in the comparison, in the observation of its knowable 'syntax' that the question of montage as a film-syntactic element finally emerges. What is the constitutive role of montage to such a syntax? What *is* juxtaposition, exactly? While Eisenstein's specification of montage as "conflict" and "collision" may give some inference, or hint of their communicative (poetic, artistic?) function, it still remains our task to find out exactly how montage works to create meaning.

The above structural inequivalence probably largely explains why montage is so often defined simply as the process of editing, or the artistic combination of shots – both which in all actuality sidestep the question of the nature of its communicative role – its position and role – in the semantic system of the film. Yet, we might add, both definitions also imply artistic intention, and in turn, lead us to the question of the end effect, and ultimately meaning. Furthermore, the implication of genericity – as illustrated by Wood and Lodge – and convention remains, hinting towards the potentiality of a knowable system, or a paradigm.

### **3.2. Equivalent Units**

It is now clear to us that while it is possible to reach a sufficient standard of semantic equivalence between *some* (but not all) of the semiotic levels between the novel and film, positioning *montage* akin to an element in the grammatical paradigm of a natural language seems impossible: an *a priori* productive role cannot be assigned to montage in communication in the same way as we can assign a role to, for example, a particular verb in a sentence – the

ultimately predictable result of paradigmatic combination in a morphophonological language system.

The ‘language,’ or ‘syntax’ of film cannot be seen to be productive on the paradigmatic level, which means that ultimately, each montage, each meaning of a particular combination of ‘shots’ – except in those combinations of shots that do begin to resemble a learnable, knowable syntax – is *always different* depending on the contents of the footage used; the juxtaposition of any two different shots should by all means generate a different effect, or meaning, every time.

This fact alone makes clear that Eisenstein’s ideas of montage as “conflict” and “collision,” or simply “the organization of cinematic material,” tell us very little of the *type* of meaning that *can* be generated by the use of montage. Christian Metz notes this problem. According to him, the problems of film “syntaxes” are “[...] derived for the most part from an initial confusion: The image is defined as a word, the sequence as a sentence. The case is, however, that the image (at least in the cinema) corresponds to one or more sentences, and the sequence is a complex segment of discourse” (Metz 1991, 65).

The issue here is actually both layered and bidirectional; not only is it fairly common to see montage as a broader concept than just the combination of two shots in film, but there also exists an equal tendency in the application of montage to the novel, as well. Critics will often be looking not for direct equivalence, but rather larger, longer conceptual units that might be in some way comparable to Roland Barthes’ *lexias* in *S/Z* (1970), or worse still, simply interpretative, impressionistic shapes or structures. It might be possible to argue that some of this has to do with the legacy of Eisenstein’s concept of *overtonal* montage (cf. p. 20), which attempts to take into account the totality of the viewing experience.

Instead of considering montage as a syntactic, grammatical element, we should rather turn to look at its more abstract communicative function – that is, as a “figure,” or an “effect” of speech. Whether we call this the “poetic,” “rhetoric,” or “communicative” function or device is

none too important; the main thing is to discover the logic behind its usage. While this type of inquiry does not side-step the issue of structural equivalence entirely, it nevertheless helps us understand the “logic” of montage, in this sense, both in film and in novelistic discourse.

### 3.2.1. The Shot as Holophrastic Oral Sentence

As David Lodge points out, the logic of the film is simply that of *succession*; the film (as frames) proceeds “in a succession of contiguities” (Lodge 1977, 84). Wood, too, writes that “[f]ilms replace grammar and causality by simple succession: then, then, then, then. We invent the missing syntax, supply all the connectives – or rather we invent and supply a good deal more than we usually recognize” (Wood 1999, 223).

In Seymour Chatman’s words, “in its essential visual mode, film does not describe at all but merely presents; or better, it depicts, in the original etymological sense of that word” (Chatman 1980, 128). It is here that the language analogy is at its most problematic; if the film form *depicts* instead of *denoting*, then, effectively, the film form collapses its *signification* into the *signified*. Furthermore, does a language not also need a *speaker* (and a *listener*, if we believe Bakhtin)?

Metz offers to us a type of solution. In Metz’s opinion, the image in the cinema – the frame – is equivalent both to an *oral sentence* and a *holophrase* (cf. Metz 1991, 66–67), or, the *sentence-word*. The holophrase is “[a] single word used instead of a phrase, or to express a combination of ideas” (*OED*). Metz’s conception here agrees handily with the distinction between denotation and depiction, for the ‘sentence-word’ includes to it a kind of statement of some intentionality, of doing, or being. In film, it follows, the image always has a depictive, illustrative purpose; a shot of a horse doesn’t strictly being *denote* ‘horse’, it *depicts* (Chatman) it. In addition, there is a type of imperative dimension to the ‘horse,’ in the sense of the director saying, “Look here: This is a horse.”

### 3.2.2. The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles

Even then, montage is not strictly speaking *a* meaning. As noted, it has no syntactic or grammatical purpose, and does not function as a productive element. As Wood explains, “[m]ontage, then, is not only the organization of cinematic material, it is the implication of meaning – of a meaning that can only be implied” (Wood 1999, 223).

This fact, of meaning by implication, was noted early on in the history of montage; Béla Balázs, according to Metz, noticed that Kuleshov’s experiments only demonstrated “[...] the existence of a ‘logic of implication,’ thanks to which the image becomes language, and which is inseparable from the film’s narrativity” (Metz 1991, 47). Even Eisenstein, in his openness to the written arts, believed montage in film and montage in other types of art to be built on the selfsame premise:

[...] two film pieces of any kind, placed together, inevitably combine into a new concept, a new quality, arising out of that juxtaposition. This is not in the least a circumstance peculiar to the cinema, but is a phenomenon invariably met with in all cases where we have to deal with juxtaposition of two facts, two phenomena, two objects (Eisenstein 1968, 14).

In other words, juxtaposition, as useful and important a concept as it is, always assumes meaning to a combination of units *a posteriori*, with the expectation of either authorial intention or interpretation on the behalf of the receiver. What is, then, the *prospective* meaning of montage as a communicative effect?

In his classic 1956 essay, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,” Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) charts two binary tendencies and paradigms in the meaning-making of a language system: the *metonymic* and the *metaphoric*, or the paradigmatic and syntagmatic types of combination of meaning.

Beginning with an analysis of two types of aphatic disorder (*contiguity* and *similarity* disorder), Jakobson then proceeds as follows: He extends – quite ingeniously – the

psycholinguistic tendencies exhibited in these two disorders to be also illustrative of human meaning-making and thinking on the whole, finally applying the results of these findings to artistic communication. First, in discussing poetry, he notes that while the “primacy of the metaphoric process in the in the literary schools of romanticism and symbolism has been repeatedly acknowledged,” (Jakobson 2002, 91–92) it is still “insufficiently realized that it is the predominance of metonymy [that] [...] underlies and actually predetermines the so-called ‘realistic’ trend” (ibid., 92).

Then, a further abstract extension occurs in his study: According to Jakobson, the predominance of these processes, the metonymic, and the metaphoric, “oscillates” in sign systems *other than language* too (ibid.). Taking the art of painting as his example, he draws attention to the “manifestly metonymical orientation of cubism,” and then notes that surrealist painters have a “patently metaphorical attitude” (ibid.).

As we noted earlier, Lodge saw the film to proceed “in a succession of contiguities” (Lodge 1977, 84). Wood, too, sees films, like dreams<sup>13</sup>, to “[...] have a syntax which functions chiefly by association and accumulation” (Wood 1999, 223). An all-important distinction thus emerges. While Wood does not differentiate between *association* (metaphor in Jakobson’s theory) and *accumulation* (metonymy), Jakobson in fact does.

For Jakobson’s theory, the film form becomes an intersectional point; it exhibits *both* the metonymic and the metaphoric process. While Jakobson believes cinema to be effectively and predominantly *synechdochic* and *metonymic* – representing and communicating syntagmatically and via contiguity – it is *montage* that is *metaphoric* in Jakobson’s binary opposition, “[...] presumably because it juxtaposes images on the basis of their similarity (or contrast) rather than their contiguity in space-time” (Lodge 1977, 84).

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13 The similarity between film and dream as metaphoric is also noted both by Jakobson and Lodge; cf. Lodge 1977, 81.

According to Jakobson, the synechdochic and metonymic devices of the film were “overlaid by a novel, metaphoric ‘montage’ with its ‘lap dissolves’ – the filmic similes” (Jakobson 2002, 92). It is quite fascinating to note that according to Lodge, Eisenstein too included in montage “juxtapositions that are metonymic as well as metaphoric” (Lodge 1977, 85).

Thus, we can now proceed as follows: a) In designating to the shot the equivalence of an *oral holophrase* on the one hand, and b) classifying montage as *metaphorical* on the other, a clear-cut parallel forms: Just like the holophrase contains an implication, a type of combination of meaning, metaphor, too is an equivalent statement – something that announces something as something. Hence, montage can be thus defined as *the metaphoric combination of two holophrastic statements*. Wood, perhaps without realizing the amazing weight of his statement, intuitively claims that “[m]ontage is metaphor here, it is what makes the image into a story<sup>14</sup>” (Wood 1999, 224).

### 3.3. Montage and Metaphor

One final note; if *montage* is a metaphoric process, then what is *metaphor*? According to Geoffrey Leech’s (1969) classic definition, metaphor works according to the ‘Metaphoric Rule’ of transference, which he formulates as “F = ‘like L’” or “F = ‘it is as if L’” (Leech 1969, 151). He also notes that from a linguistic point of view, the literal meaning (F) is always “basic,” and the figurative meaning (L) “derived” (ibid.). For metaphor, then, he gives the following formula:

‘X is like Y in respect of Z,’ where X is the tenor, Y the vehicle, and Z the ground (ibid.).

As we can immediately sense, Leech’s definition largely agrees with our definition of montage above. First, it takes into account the combination (transference) of two elements, of X and Y.

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<sup>14</sup> In reflection of our definition, this would probably rely on a specific type of definition of ‘story,’ but the point stands.

In fact, it would not be a stretch to supplant Leech's X and Y with shots in a formula of cinematic montage. The two crucial amendments to perceive Leech's definition of metaphor as montage would be to account for the transference (collision?) of meaning as *bidirectional* instead of one-way; in my estimation, it is possible in film for the montage effect to be both prospective and retrospective – despite proceeding lineally and in a succession (cf. Lodge 1977, 84). This is probably true of the novel, too. Therefore, Leech's idea of a "basic" and "derived" meaning somewhat loses its distinction in juxtaposition.

Furthermore, the "ground" of the metaphor (Z) probably requires some modifiers, too; in Jakobson's theory, metaphor operates based on similarity, selection, and substitution (cf. *ibid.*, 81). The "ground" of Leech's definition is the reasoning behind the transference of meaning, and gives us analytic access both to the (conventional) communicative intention behind the metaphor, as well as any potential ideology involved.

In problematizing the semiotic equivalence of film and the novel, and by defining its type of figurative meaning-making, we have now reached the kind of definitional specificity, as we will later show, that applies *in no way whatsoever* to the real-world usage of montage in literary criticism.

### **3.4. Montage as Juxtaposition**

Instead, the major theoretical takeaway from our approaching of a more linguistic sense and definition of montage in film is as follows: In considering theoretically the questions of semiotic, linguistic, and syntactic equivalence, it becomes clear that literary montage is above all an impressionistic concept. It is the present author's view that the idea of montage is often simply taken to be equivalent to that of *juxtaposition*, either as *contrast* or *comparison*.

Of course, 'juxtaposition', not unlike montage as a literary term, is not without its own problematic dimensions; *OED*, for instance, issues the following definition:



- a. The action of placing two or more things close together or side by side, or one thing with or beside another; the condition of being so placed (*OED*).

Much like the *OED* definition of *montage*, this too lacks in the way of intentional poetic effect. Harry Shaw's definition in *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, of "placing together, or side by side, for comparison and contrast" (Shaw 1972, 213), is much closer to its apparent real-world purpose. The *Longman Dictionary and Handbook of Poetry* (1983) further adds that "[i]t could be claimed that juxtapositions, like virtually all poetic devices, are actually abbreviated forms of METAPHOR or SIMILE" (Myers & Simms 1983, 152) – a statement that recalls our findings in the previous chapters.

Again, it is not in the least difficult to see in the modal construction of the novel a primary authorial intention, on Dos Passos' behalf, to create a kind of total impression of society by endless juxtaposition; in his own words, he was aiming "[...] at total objectivity by giving conflicting views" (Dos Passos 1988, 247), putting across "a complex state of mind, an atmosphere, and I brought in these things partly for contrast and partly for getting a different dimension" (*ibid.*, 283).

Dos Passos' statements above, of course, are jam-packed with different multi-meaning artistic intentions; a "complex state of mind" could refer to a world-view (a 'Weltanschauung,') the mind of a people, or to a singular person's psyche; "an atmosphere" can refer both to a shared time-space and to a mood as feeling, again shared or private. The multiplicity of the artistic text of course makes it extremely difficult to pinpoint exactly the ways in which the juxtapositions in the work function.

The single most stirring example of a juxtapositional effect in the entire *U.S.A.* trilogy must be the "we have only words against / POWER SUPERPOWER" (*BM*, 525) juxtaposition that forms at the very end of *The Big Money*, where the first of these two lines ends *The Camera Eye* (51), while the second functions as the title for the subsequent Thomas Edison biography. The example is extremely noteworthy in that Dos Passos actually accidentally chanced upon

the juxtaposition in the editing process (for more information of this occurrence, cf. Pizer 1988, 36; especially pages 93–95). Equally noteworthy is that this juxtaposition is of the “default” type, with the two discursive objects next to each other on paper in the physically immediate sense.

Another excellent example, this time of the larger interplay between two different modes in the trilogy, is the sandwiching of Eugene Debs’ biography, “Lover of Mankind,” between two of Mac’s narrative segments; here, the inclusion of the Debs biography seems to radiate a prospective tragic sense of the possibilities (and futilities), of ideology manifest as action into Mac’s narrative, as when Dos Passos asks, “But where were Gene Debs’ brothers in nineteen eighteen when Woodrow Wilson had him locked up in Atlanta for speaking against war” (42<sup>nd</sup>, 27).

It seems almost laughably easy, then, to consider these switches from one narrative mode to another as a kind of marker for the analogical limits of these narratives as ‘shots’ in film. But of course, given the textual and compositional facts here, the analogy remains bafflingly abstract, and takes into account strictly speaking neither art form.

It is similarly true to perceive the *U.S.A.* trilogy as working both on the basis of similarity and difference, creating a kind of comparative, total impression of society. But how does the analogy to montage exactly contribute to our understanding of the selection of these elements, as in the above example? As we have already seen, Debs’ Biography works both in contrast (difference) and in conjunction (similarity) with Mac’s narrative, both enhancing and diminishing its significance, both talking to it ironically as well as affirmatively.

At this point, it becomes clear that the allure of montage is in its totalizing nature – in the impulse to classify and categorize in broad brushstrokes – in allowing the critic not to take into account questions of equivalence and content. The focus, then, can be shifted on the moments of juxtaposition rather than its components. This is almost exactly the kind of critical procedure

that McHale criticizes in speaking of the contentness “[...] to assign to the trilogy a general ideological content or political message, declining to integrate its linguistic features with the global interpretations they have imposed” (McHale 1978, c1).

The above reason has much to do with why critics have been so entirely free to avoid the questions of equivalence, and in turn doing so developing montage-based interpretations and appropriations that are contradictory, or even binary, when compared to each other. The critical desire to perceive in the work a specific total sense, an all-important authorial intention, is massive: as Pizer noted, “Dos Passos was raising the stakes [...] beyond those present either in most films or in the fiction of other modernists” (Pizer 1988, 86). Denning, for instance, sees in the array of experimental devices in *U.S.A.*

[...] less a cure than a symptom, one of a variety of modernist attempts to square the circle of personal memory and public history, to capture private consciousness and the vast overarching social forces of modernity in a single form (Denning 1996, 170).

For Maine, the effect of this is thematic disconnectedness:

[...] often there is no immediately apparent thematic connection between one narrative sequence and the next. When this occurs, the reader is left with an unsettling sense of disconnectedness in history. As the narrative is to the reader, so is history to Dos Passos’s characters: disconnected, chaotic, out of control (Maine 1985, 77).

Foster seems equally puzzled:

However, he [Dos Passos] so fragmented his depiction of character and event that readers may well concur with critics who have concluded that he produced ‘an atomistic world: a moral chaos,’ and also failed to ‘evoke the fullest emotional response from the reader’ (Foster 1986, 189).

For Denning, ultimately, the effect was “unsettling,”

[...] the lack of any coherent connection between the characters: no family or set of families constitutes the world of the novel; no town, neighborhood, or city serves as a knowable community; no industry or business, no university or film colony unites public and private lives; and no plot, murder, or inheritance links the separate destinies (Denning 1996, 182).

### **3.5. Bakhtin and the Theory of the Novel**

Having presented three different film-theoretical conceptions of montage (ch. 2.2.–2.4.), and problematizing the semiotic equivalence of film and the novel (ch. 3.), it is finally pertinent to present a theory of the novel in comparison. It is my hope that we have already noted the purely linguistic parallels as they relate to montage; yet, some other aspects of the novel that have in many ways allowed for the incorporation of montage have yet to be discussed. As a novelistic counterpoint to the aforementioned theories of montage in cinema, I now look to Mikhailovich Bakhtin's (1895–1975) theories of the novel for an outline of the specificity of the novel as a literary genre – as compared to other forms of discursive art, and in comparison to cinema.

Bakhtin's almost jubilant, self-admittedly "somewhat abstract" (Bakhtin 1981a, 39) theory of the novel in some respects begins to border on the archaic today, especially in its total insistence on the primacy of the novel in the arts. Yet, conceptually, it remains both a highly utilizable and relevant account of the origins of the specificity of the novel – at the very least compared to most other generic theories of the novel (Watt, Frye, Benjamin, Lévi-Strauss, Lukács, Auerbach) and its criticism (Eagleton, Doležel). Furthermore, it does not damage our line of argumentation in the slightest that Bakhtin developed his theories alongside Modernism's very heyday.

In Bakhtin, we both find some of the more unique aspects of the novel as a literary genre, as well as a theory that can account for the many moves that ultimately led to the application of cinematic montage to the novel, be it from a theoretical, critical, or practical standpoint. In a

very tangible sense, his theories reverberate clearly and concisely with the interlinked and -medial nature of Modernist art.

In Bakhtin's theory<sup>15</sup>, we find a genre of the novel that is unfinished, unfinalized, incomplete, and always developing; a novel that is capable of *superintegrating* (cf. McFarlane 1978, 83) other genres (and, by extension, mediums – in the form of the visual arts, both still and moving, as we have already noted). The novel was, much like film, a genre of art that was borne directly out of the era that first made it possible. For Bakhtin, it is indeed Modernisation (in its very earliest sense, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards) that makes the novel possible, in society's move from isolation and periphery towards internationality and interlinguality<sup>16</sup> (cf. Bakhtin 1981a, 11).

Unlike other genres of literature, which have “[...] fixed pre-existing forms into which one may then pour artistic experience” (ibid., 3), Bakhtin claims, the novel works more like a vessel, or a shell, which not only parodies other genres, exposing their conventionality, and their language, but also “incorporates others into its own peculiar structure” (ibid., 5). In doing so, the novel also refreshes and refurbishes them, brings them back to relevance, infecting them with “its spirit of process and inconclusiveness” (ibid., 7), as if referring to what Trotter called “parallel history” (Trotter 2006, 239), and Bazin “aesthetic convergence” (Bazin 2005, 63).

This superintegrative feature of the genre is a phenomenon that Bakhtin calls *novelization* (Bakhtin 1981a, 7); its principal defining feature. In incorporating other genres into itself, the novel “[...] inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality” (ibid.). In

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15 In the present thesis, chiefly the essays “Epic and Novel” (orig. 1941), and “Discourse in the Novel” (1981, orig. 1934–1935) are utilized for their broad, generic view of the novel.

16 It is also the polyphonic novel that emerges in this era; cf. Bakhtin 1984: *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 19–20.

this sense, Bakhtin's theory can be seen to account for the integration of film (and, as follows, montage) both *to* the novel and *in* the novel as an incorporated genre.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, it is also perfectly clear, in light of his theory, that Dos Passos' narrative modes in *U.S.A.* – the Newsreels, Biographies, and the Camera Eye, even the basic narratives of the novel as histories – are also clearly prototypical examples of this generic incorporation. On several occasions, Bakhtin notes that it is customary for the novel to take advantage of such modes; “the novel makes wide and substantial use of letters, diaries, confessions [...] and so forth” (Bakhtin 1981a, 33).

In “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin further classifies these two types of generic incorporation; “*artistic* (inserted short stories, lyrical songs, poems, dramatic scenes, etc.) and *extra-artistic* (everyday, rhetorical, scholarly, religious genres and others)” (Bakhtin 1981b, 320). He also notes that any such genre can be included in the “construction” of the novel, adding that “it is difficult to find any genres that have not at some point been incorporated into a novel by someone” (ibid., 320–321).

Of course, the reality of the *U.S.A.* trilogy is even more complex than that, should we want to account for its position as a “library of American novels,” as Michael Denning (1996) quite accurately notes. In Denning's view, the trilogy consists of “a war novel, a Hollywood novel, a novel of the returning vet, a working-girl romance, a proletarian novel” (Denning 1996, 170).

Bakhtin exhibits here considerable theoretical foresight; he also notes that *external* theoretical definitions of a particular art are much less relevant to its development than “those normative definitions of the novel offered by novelists themselves, who produce a specific novel and then declare it the only correct, necessary and authentic form of the novel” (Bakhtin 1981a, 9); this is the exact way film theory, as we have seen, progressed in the

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17 Here, we move to make an abstract leap that Bakhtin doesn't; yet Bakhtin's theories of the incorporation of other textual genres, the transference, the adaptation, and the application, seem equally valid in terms of montage.

“Montage-or-bust” (Metz) era, where theory was perhaps even more relevant to the growth of cinema as a form of art than the actual films. This, Bakhtin notes, results in the novel becoming both a *critical* and a *self-critical* genre that is bound to revise the “fundamental concepts of literariness and poeticalness dominant at the time” (Bakhtin 1981a, 10).

Ultimately, for Bakhtin, the fundamental characteristics that differentiate the novel from other genres are a) its “stylistic three-dimensionality”, b) its change in “temporal coordinates of the literary image” and c) the “zone of maximal contact with the present” (ibid., 11). These concepts will require some further elucidation. Bakhtin traces each of these characteristics to the origins of the novel, beginning with Socratic dialogues and then proceeding as features in the serio-comical Menippean satire. These two generic antecedents, then, have given the novel the form of “spoken dialogue framed by a dialogized story” (ibid., 25) as well as its close proximity to “popular spoken language” (ibid.).

Having undergone this shift in style, the actual narration in the novel has also undergone other changes that affect the spatiotemporal situation of a) the author, b) the hero, and c) the reader, positioning each on the same contemporary plane – and the author in the “field of his represented world” (ibid., 27). Therefore, each figure partaking in the novel becomes firmly embedded in the diegesis; “time and the world become historical” (ibid., 30), historical in the sense of having a time and a place that is in direct relationship with the present. This allows the novel to take a “special relationship with extraliterary genres, with the genres of everyday life and with ideological genres” (ibid., 31).

The novel, then, by entering into a relationship with the present – topically, narratively, and spatiotemporally – becomes entirely “present”, contemporary, of the now; and it is this being in the present that any story that, it demands continuation and moves into the future and therefore becomes more and more inconclusive (ibid., 30). This is a fact that has been taken, over and over, to be a significant factor of Dos Passos’ novels.

Finally, Bakhtin's conception of the novel as "multiform" in style, and "variform" in speech and voice is exceptionally relevant in respect of Dos Passos' trilogy. As if actually describing Dos Passos' style, Bakhtin believes that in the novel, "the investigator is confronted with several heterogeneous stylistic unities, often located on different linguistic levels and subject to different stylistic controls" (Bakhtin 1981b, 261).

The generic and discursive heterogeneity will often lead analysis of the work to perceive the whole of the artistic work as a "a self-sufficient and closed authorial monologue, one that presumes only passive listeners beyond its own boundaries" (ibid., 274). Bakhtin's conception of the novel relates in its entirety to McHale's point of criticizing totalizing analogies or ideologies on the trilogy. In this case, at its very worst, the intra-medial analogy, like the utilization of film-theoretical montage, can lead novel theory to entirely non-novelistic, extra-novelistic approximations of the whole of the work, or, better yet, successfully side-stepping the issue of novelistic technique altogether.

Bakhtin points out that often, stylistical analysis will not properly take into account the "unities" of the novel, which combine "to form a structured artistic system," Bakhtin explains, they become subordinated to the "higher stylistic unity" of the work on the whole, a "unity that cannot be identified with any single one of the unities subordinated to it" (ibid., 262).

The stylistic uniqueness of the novel as a genre consists precisely in the combination of these subordinated, yet still relatively autonomous, unities (even at times comprised of different languages) into the higher unity of the work as a whole: the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of a novel is the system of its 'languages' (ibid.).

In this later definition, the novel is actually defined by Bakhtin as speech diversity, or the "diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (ibid.). In each utterance, Bakhtin sees in the utterance of the speaking subject an active intersectional point of the centrifugal and centripetal



forces that affect language, in which “[t]he processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance” (Bakhtin 1981b, 272).

## **4. Montage and Dos Passos**

Having finally defined montage, and the question of the equivalence of the film and the novel, we now turn to look at the application of the concept to and in Dos Passos’ works. The critical response to his works will serve to illustrate the deficiencies of both the concept and its application to the novel.

First, we shall take a look at Dos Passos’ personal relationship to film and montage – through his essays, presentations, and writings – in ch. 4.1. Then, in chapter 4.2., we shall analyze the emergence and development of the concept of montage (and film-likeness) in relation to his novels. Finally, in chapter 4.3., we move to survey the literary criticism of the *U.S.A.* trilogy for specific applications of montage to the devices utilized in the trilogy.

### **4.1. Dos Passos, Film, and Montage**

The present-day prevalence of montage in the description of the composition of the *U.S.A.* trilogy does not come out of nowhere; of course, equal weight must be placed both on the artistic currents of the era, as well as the actual style and content of the books. Ultimately, some of the blame for this fact also lies squarely on the author’s shoulders; in his later interviews, Dos Passos explicitly contributed to the idea. Although artists are never – so the saying goes – the most reliable source regarding the meaning of their works, here, it is pertinent to note the author’s own aiding and abetting to the critical conception of his works.

Overall, Dos Passos exhibited a degree of reluctance in opening up in his addresses, interviews, and essays. In skirting around the topics of his influences, he would make appeals to failing memory, and focus more on the signs of the times, on the social, the unconscious, and

the impressionistic – rather than the theoretic – resulting in statements such as, “Somewhere along the line I had been impressed by Eisenstein’s documentary films like the *Cruiser Potemkin*” (Dos Passos 1988, 240), and “Montage was the word in those days to describe the juxtaposition of contrasting scenes in motion pictures. I took to montage to try to make the narrative stand up off the page” (ibid.).

Therefore, though Dos Passos does begin to make mention both to montage and its leading theoreticians in late 1950s and 1960s onwards, in speaking of his movie influences, he ultimately remained both oblique and reticent. The only two directors that he would consistently cite were Griffith and Eisenstein – the joint custodians of montage. Seeing Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915 must have by all means been a factor in his artistic vision (cf. ibid., 247).

Yet, there is undeniable, considerable retrospective anachronism involved in many of his cited views on film and montage – a trap that literary critics often fall prey to in their analyses. For instance, in discussing *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), often considered perhaps his most cinematic and montage-like novel, the author noted in 1961 that he “wasn’t sure” whether or not he had seen Eisenstein’s films while working on the novel (ibid.).

He had not. He also stated he might have seen [*Battleship*] *Potemkin* (1925). He did not; the film had yet to be circulated in the US before the novel came out. Though Eisenstein’s first film, *Strike* (1925) had been released the same year as his novel, it had not been widely distributed. Michael Spindler maintains that the film had “had little distribution in Russia and none in America, although it was shown in Paris” (Spindler 1981, 402).

Hence, Dos Passos could not have seen either of Eisenstein’s films prior to the writing of the novel. According to Spindler, “his [Eisenstein’s] and other Soviet directors’ work did not begin to appear on the American scene until later that year” (ibid., 403). Here, again, we must consider the influences more from a parallelistic point of view; one that relates to the Modernist

currents in visual arts on the whole. Such a viewpoint makes the exclamation in his 1967 address, “The narrative must stand up off the page. Fragmentation. Contrast. Montage” (Dos Passos 1988, 272), to be much more understandable.

A crucial biographical note, also oft-cited, involves the relatively lengthy trip to Russia that he made in the summer of 1928, traveling through Helsinki en route to Leningrad and Moscow. In his informal memoir, Dos Passos writes of having met both Pudovkin and Eisenstein, the latter of whom had apparently boasted “[...] of how much he had learned from *The Birth of a Nation* by that old scoundrel of a capitalist D. W. Griffith” (Dos Passos 1966, 199–200). He also noted, in the same breath, that he and Eisenstein had “agreed thoroughly about the importance of montage” (ibid., 200).

Dos Passos had indeed brought some early chapters of *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel* with him to work on during the trip (cf. Dos Passos 1988, 235), and was – according to Townsend Ludington – struggling to incorporate montage to his novel (cf. Ludington 1980, 270). Dos Passos wrote that while Eisenstein was by now “[...] suffering from a damaging amount of conceit as a result of the adulation which surrounded him, [...] he had one of the most brilliantly synthesizing minds I ever ran into” (Dos Passos 1966, 200).

Estimating the true weight of his singular meetings with the directors on the style of his composition is of course difficult. It is, however, clear that even before his trip to Russia, Dos Passos had already largely mastered his preferred formula of writing, as many critics actually consider *Manhattan Transfer* to be the more successfully *cinematic* book. In addition, as Ludington notes, in beginning work on *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel* before his trip to Russia, Dos Passos already “had clearly in mind what his intentions were, and these remarks were not simply hindsight” (Ludington 1980, 256–257). In short, it would be nothing short of an exaggeration to consider these minute meetings in Russia to be artistically formative, or influential, in any way similar to Dos Passos’ relationships and friendships with Ernest Hemingway, E.E.

Cummins, and F. Scott Fitzgerald in literature, and Mike Gold and John Howard Lawson in theater.

Equally too much has been made out of his contribution to the Josef von Sternberg film, *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935). It so happens that while in Hollywood, Dos Passos was mostly bed-ridden, having been struck down by a case of rheumatic fever, and had been unable to “observe Hollywood life and the operations of the film studios” (Ludington 1980, 330).

Additionally, though Dos Passos ended up receiving actual credit for adapting the Pierre Louÿs novel, he later discovered another person had been writing the screenplay for von Sternberg in secret during Dos Passos’ stay in Hollywood (ibid.). In short, rather than giving access to any kind of new compositional techniques, if anything, this experience gave him characterological insight and material for the Margo Dowling narrative in *The Big Money*.

Finally, in regards to his abortive involvement in the production of the documentary film *The Spanish Earth* in 1938, it cannot be said with any confidence that he would have had any influence on the making of the film whatsoever; the emerging dubious circumstances of the disappearance (and ultimately, what turned out to be the murder) of his friend José Robles took the entirety of his attention during his stay in Spain.

#### **4.2. The Movie Analogy**

When did Dos Passos’ works first receive comparisons to the film? The cinematic analogy first emerges in the critical response to his fourth full-length novel of fiction, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925). There was something of a rush, on the wave of the “Montage-or-bust” era, to make note of the cinematic qualities of the novel in general; Sinclair Lewis, Michael Gold, and D.H. Lawrence all subsequently noted the novel’s filmic qualities in their reviews of the book.

Lewis, in 1925, may have very well been the first to publicly note – though not yet applying the word montage, as Eisenstein’s work became popularized from the year 1927

onwards – that *Manhattan Transfer* seemed to utilize “[...] the technique of the movie, in its flashes, its cut-backs, its speed” (Lewis 1988, 66). Michael Gold, in 1926, explicitly thought the book would have made for “an epic movie” (Gold 1988, 69). Lawrence (orig. 1927) saw Dos Passos’ compositional style akin to that of the shooting of a film:

If you set a blank record revolving to receive all the sounds, and a film-camera going to photograph all the motions of a scattered group of individuals, at the points where they meet and touch in New York, you would more or less get Mr. Dos Passos’ method (Lawrence 1988, 71).

It is quite possible that this strong early response to *Manhattan Transfer* – the one book in Dos Passos’ oeuvre that truly has something of an overt cinematic dimension – left a permanent, lasting impression and expectation of the stylistics of Dos Passos, laying down the horizon of expectations for a future response of the author’s novels.

With *U.S.A.*, his next full novel, the response is very similar to *Manhattan Transfer*’s, only now montage actually appears in the vocabulary of the critics. Pizer indeed observes that “Several commentators early in the critical history of *U.S.A.* remarked that the trilogy seemed to have been prepared in a manner similar to a film that relies heavily on montage” (Pizer 1988, 85–86).

It is indeed true (as we noted in ch. 2.1.) that by 1930, the year in which *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel* was released, Eisenstein’s theories had become part of the US and UK artistic mainstream. Yet, it was not until 1932 that F.R. Leavis, in a highly acerbic appraisal of the first two novels of the trilogy, writes that “It is more than a superficial analogy when the technique is likened to that of the film. The author might be said to conceive his function as selective photography and ‘montage’” (Leavis 1932, 177).

After the release of the final novel, *The Big Money* in 1936, Horace Gregory noted that although it had not been apparent to him from the get-go, by the release of *The Big Money*, the trilogy had begun to look like an “experiment in montage as applied to modern prose” (Gregory

1988, 136). In a prolonged analogy, Gregory likens Dos Passos' style of writing to that of the film: "images of action are superimposed and from the long rolls of film Mr. Dos Passos (to complete the analogy) like another Griffith, Pabst or Eisenstein, has made a selection of cell units in news, subjective observation, biography and fictional narrative" (ibid.).

Finally, Delmore Schwarz suggests in his 1938 review that "one would suppose that Dos Passos in fact put the book together as a motion-picture director composes his film, by a procedure of cutting, arranging, and interposing parts" (Schwartz 1988, 181).

### 4.3. Montage and Criticism

In the realm of academic research, the situation differs little from that of the contemporary reviews. Both types of analysis must have been crucially affected both by the sociohistorical background of Modern art, and by the modal composition of the book; as Pizer exclaims, "The juxtapositional richness of the trilogy is [...] almost infinite" (Pizer 1988, 54). In being confronted with the sheer length of the trilogy (approx. one and a half thousand pages), and its alternating modality; coming face to face with such total dialogism and juxtaposition of form, mode, and content – the "long rolls of film" (Gregory) – it becomes almost impossible for the researcher to resist the impulse to see artistic and discursive intention in every chapter, every paragraph.

Yet, one might add, in the absence of western knowledge of Bakhtin's theories of *dialogism* and *polyphony*, it so happens that *montage* was to become, in the minds of the critics, the most accessible analogy for a more formal reading and interpretation, one that would seemingly account for each and every type of juxtaposition in the novel. As McHale argues, partially the failures in Dos Passos criticism are due to the "lack of conceptual tools" in the form of "metacommentary" (McHale 1978, c4). McHale's statement is partially true; we

would perhaps proffer that the conceptual tools that have been utilized have simply been inadequate or unsuited to the task at hand.

In this way, it has become all but customary to note montage as an organizational principle in the novel. As Michael North (2005) suggests, “A great deal of the celebrity of *U.S.A.* comes, of course, from the excitement caused by its modernistic reference to cameras and newsreels and its mimicry of film montage” (North 2005, 150). Almost every critical study of the *U.S.A.* trilogy pays some degree of “lip service” (Maine 1985, 76) to montage.

Even researchers like Frederik Tydal (2006), or Janet Calligani Casey (1998)<sup>18</sup>, much more interested in the trilogy’s sociopolitical dimension, will adhere to this principle to some degree. Some critics, then, have gone much farther than that; sometimes absolutely *everything* in the novel is montage, as Linda Wagner (1980) explains: “He [Dos Passos] envisioned historically based fiction as a montage” (Wagner 1980, 87). Not in montage, but *a* montage. Similarly, Gretchen Foster (1986) believes that every “traditional narrative link” in *U.S.A.* is replaced with montage (Foster 1986, 187).

Michael Spindler’s (1981) characterization of Dos Passos’ use of montage is perhaps the most characteristic in terms of our thesis. To Spindler, however,

[...] out of that fragmentariness arises a powerful, coherent theme, a result also of the montage principle at work. For the importance of montage lies in its ability to bring unity to phenomena, people and events previously considered separate (Spindler 1981, 404).

Spindler’s conception, which mirrors that of many critics, is extremely revelatory to our principal thesis in three very important ways:

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18 cf. Tydal, Fredrik 2010: *Taken by Stealth: Everyday Life and Political Change in John Dos Passos’s U.S.A. Trilogy*. Uppsala: Uppsala universitet. Dissertation.  
Casey, Janet Galligani 1998: *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- 1) It reveals every critic's burning desire to discover some 'unity,' 'theme,' or coherence in the novel, especially on the highest level(s) of organization.
- 2) Montage finalizes the novel, gives it a name, but is unable to outline the actual techniques in any tangible sense compared to basic juxtapositional analysis.
- 3) In one simple conjuring trick, caring little for real equivalence between mediums, the researcher is able to simplify a multiform, superintegrative, variform novel under just one umbrella term: montage.

Worse still, it becomes clear that the concept that is being applied to the novel in practical analysis as "montage" is not in fact that of film-theoretical montage, but rather the *analogy* of what montage *looks like in film* – a juxtapositional analogy of structural equivalence.

## 5. Montage and Modality in the *U.S.A.* trilogy

Montage-specific critical treatments of the *U.S.A.* trilogy in the English language include, among others, Maine (1985), Foster (1986), Edwards (1999), and Seed (2009). The purpose of this chronological list is of course not to be exhaustive (articles on the topic of montage and cinema in Dos Passos have been published in French and Spanish as early as the 1950s), but rather simply be illustrative of the prolonged continuum of interest in the topic, through reviews, over to criticism.

Given Dos Passos' propensity for Modernist art and technique, a complete list of more fundamentally "cinematic," or "visual" treatments of the trilogy is obviously much vaster still, with excellent analyses, among others, from Martin (1991) and North (2005); these already remain beyond the comparative focus of this portion of the present study.

It is of great importance for the present thesis to note that *every single one* of the four modes in the *U.S.A.* trilogy has been, to varying degree, characterized as montage. Wagner (1980), for instance, writes that

Satisfied with some of his effects in *Manhattan Transfer*, he [Dos Passos] turned once more to montage, but a montage punctuated with spotlighted stills of the heroes of American culture (in the Biography sections). Dos Passos' vivid montage existed in the Newsreel (the external world) and the Camera Eye (the internal, autobiographical world) (Wagner 1980, 86).



By and large, it is the Camera Eye and the Newsreel sections that have attracted the most critical attention in this vein – unsurprisingly so, given the titles of the modes are, like Maine writes, “obvious borrowings from the language of motion pictures” (Maine 1985, 76). Yet, it is not in the least uncommon to see the Biography sections, as well as the narratives, in such light; Wagner, for instance, believes that Dos Passos no longer saw the novel’s narrative as a linear structure, but rather as “a montage of people and activity” (Wagner 1980, 86). Foster, too, is of the opinion that “In his biographies, Dos Passos achieves narrative symbolism by combining separate shots from an individual’s life and superimposing that montage image on the characters in his novel” (Foster 1986, 191).

In the present study, we shall largely set aside the Biographies and the narrative sections, only bringing them up in reference to the Camera Eyes and the Newsreels. No doubt the Biographies can be seen to exhibit a type of the modern-day type of filmic montage, which distills a great many events into a temporally condensed sequence; or it could be simply said that they rather display a poetic, liberal use of the literary genres of the biography, the post-mortem, and the obituary, which all function to distil a person’s life into a concise chronological portrayal of personal history and achievement.

In the following analyses, then, we will first summarize the four aforementioned studies and their conceptions of montage. Then, in chapters 6 and 7 respectively, we will proceed on to analyze the Camera Eye and the Newsreel modes in relation to these critical viewpoints.

In the article “*U.S.A.: Dos Passos and the Rhetoric of History*” (1985), Barry Maine remains the sole critic out of our four examples to refer to montage’s lexicohistorical dimension, mentioning that for French filmmakers, montage simply meant ‘editing,’ the “joining together of scenes or ‘shots’” (Maine 1985, 76; cf. p. 9). According to Maine, Griffith and Eisenstein then came to develop a “style” of juxtapositional editing that could be used for making indirect statements via shots depicting “similar or contrasting” situations (ibid.).

As we can see, Maine's definition accounts in part for Eisenstein's conception of conflict and collision, but also adds an additional metaphoric dimension (cf. Lodge 1977, 81) in "similarity" as well as "contrast," which could be taken to refer to juxtaposition overall. Maine's careful wording of "indirect statement" also seems to refer covertly to the more intentionally ideological usages of montage.

The chief way in which Maine's analogy between film and the novel works is distinctly Vertovian, even if Vertov goes unmentioned in his article. For Maine, it is the 'cut' in film that is seen analogical to the border space between any two modes in the Dos Passos novel; it is the "white space in the text between the conclusion of one narrative sequence [...] and the beginning of another [...] [that] is analogous to the 'cut' from one shot to another in an Eisenstein film (Maine 1985, 76). This analogy, as we remember, quite distinctly resembles Vertov's focus on the 'intervals' of the shots (cf. p. 22).

Here, it need be noted that although Maine's conception of montage may be somewhat limited, the rest of his complex, persuasive thesis is nothing of the sort. Maine is actually of the opinion that no-one has demonstrated satisfactorily "the degree to which montage operates as a structuring device in the narrative" (ibid.). The main point of his argument could perhaps be summarized thusly: Despite being an anomalous but clear example of the 'historic' genre of the novel in many respects, the cinematic techniques of *U.S.A.* nevertheless allow Dos Passos to avoid commentary on the material used – unlike the historian, who must provide explicit explanation, causality, and commentary as the narrator and organizer of the events.

Instead, Dos Passos can allow for history and history-like elements in the novel to speak, in a kind of dialogue, for themselves in a manner similar to cinema's 'speech'; proceeding in continuity and contiguity, leaving (and, in Maine's sense, *allowing*) readers to draw their own conclusions, "persuaded not by commentary and analysis, or by statements of cause and effect" but by "historical arguments which are, paradoxically, never asserted" (ibid., 82). This, of

course, does not mean that the book is devoid of a concept of history, or of historical explanatory power.

Gretchen Foster, in the article “John Dos Passos’ Use of Film Technique in *Manhattan Transfer* and *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel*” (1986), cites the *Random House Dictionary* for her definition of montage as the “[...] juxtaposition or partial superimposition of several shots to form a single image” (Foster 1986, 186).

Offhand, she also notes the “dialectical dynamics” of Eisenstein’s theory, as well as montage as an idea that arises from “conflict” and “collision” (ibid.; Eisenstein 1949, 49; p. 17 in this study). She also highlights the potential parallel to Vertov, but remains chiefly focused, as we shall see, on the similarity in nomenclature. Neither does she cite Vertov’s writings, or attempt at a theoretical definition beyond a secondary source that describes his documentaries as “fragments of actuality” (cf. ibid., 188; 190).

Foster’s primary aim in the article is to show montage as the trilogy’s principal compositional, form-shaping, meaning-giving principle. To Foster, Dos Passos presents *U.S.A.* as a “montage document” (ibid., 191), wherein the four modes, by borrowing from Eisenstein, “work together in a ‘vertical montage’” (ibid., 192), contrasting and combining into “[...] an overall montage upon which the structure and meaning of the novel depend” (ibid., 189). In Foster’s view, the montage structure is two-tiered; in the first, “Dos Passos organizes certain kinds of short bits within individual sections” (ibid.). In the second, he “[...] sets each section against the others in a second-stage montage” (ibid.). According to her,

This superimposition creates a total montage that draws meaning out of individual incident and symbol out of particular gesture. The four kinds of writing in *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel* work together in a ‘vertical montage’ of the kind Eisenstein saw as a vital new part of his films (ibid., 192).

Justin Edwards, in the article “The Man with a Camera Eye” (1999), claims to be interested in the ways in which cinema influenced the novel in the Modernist era. Echoing sentiments very

similar to Wood and Trotter's, Edwards believes the novel's relationship to cinema brought out "new means of understanding plot, progression, documentation and other stylistic devices" (Edwards 1999, 246). Edwards actually fantastically enunciates the great import of Griffiths' *Birth of a Nation*, noting "its use of repeated shifting scenes and rapid episodic narration, thus representing the fluctuations in American life through the accumulation of numerous shots" (ibid., 247).

Rather than focusing on these compositional, formal parallels between film and the novel (like he does above with *Birth of a Nation*), however, Edwards' focus is firmly on how the Soviet conception of montage was actually a means of political and ideological propaganda. Therefore, even in his theoretical outline of montage, Edwards almost entirely focuses on the 'dialectical' dimension of Eisenstein's theories, noting that Eisenstein believed montage should emulate the process of the dialectic, and that editing was to be done 'synthetically,' in "juxtapositions – the first being the thesis and the second being the antithesis – to produce a synthesis, thus an artist could incorporate Marxist ideology into the very structure of their films" (ibid.).

Edwards' chief aim, as follows, is to illustrate that it was this ideological dimension of Soviet film theory that most "appealed" to Dos Passos (ibid.), providing him with a "vision for the socialist employment of editing" that was lacking in Griffith as a model (ibid.). In Edwards' view, dialectical montage thus becomes a way for Dos Passos to "represent the ways in which sociological forces [...] perpetually come into conflict with each other" (ibid.). Of note, of course, is Dos Passos' personal statement in 1969 that his relationship to Eisenstein and Griffith's theories was "[e]ntirely technique. It had nothing whatever to do with content" (Dos Passos 1988, 288).

Finally, for David Seed, Dos Passos is the chief example of novelistic montage in his book *Cinematic Fictions* (2009). In Seed's retelling of the history of montage, it is Griffith that

suggested to Eisenstein this form of construction (Seed 2009, 128). While Seed's exposition largely focuses on Dos Passos' uses of cinematic topoi as *content* in his novels, as well as his profound knowledge and understanding of Modern art (including the film form), he does nevertheless mentioned Eisenstein as the principal theorist of montage.

In Seed's words, to Eisenstein, montage was "[...] the idea that arises from the collision of independent shots – shots even opposite to one another" (ibid., 134). While Seed also notes that critics have largely focused on "conflict" as the crux of Eisenstein's notion of film theory, he consciously chooses to highlight Eisenstein's organic analogy, of "every fragment being an organic part of an organically conceived whole" (ibid.). He also pays attention to the active role of the viewer, "the spectator of montage as a co-creator of visual meaning" (ibid.). The end result of his paraphrase is a slightly uneven, unconnected bird's eye view of the theory.

Seed also draws a parallel to Vertov (c.f. ch. 2.4.) on the basis of Carol Shloss' reading. Curiously, out of all of Vertov's theoretical ideas, Seed chooses to focus on Vertov's mechanical world-view: "I am a kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I see it" (ibid., 138). He also mentions Vertov's desire to "probe behind appearances" (ibid.), perhaps in reference to Vertov's documentary principles of the hidden cameraman and the capturing of footage of people unawares.

## **6. Camera Eye Montage**

After the publication of Dos Passos' memoir, *The Best Times* (1966) and two larger biographies, Townsend Ludington's *John Dos Passos: A Twentieth Century Odyssey* (1980) and Virginia Spencer Carr's *John Dos Passos: A Life* (1984), as well as focused articles from James Westerhoven (1976) and Ludington (1977), it has been clear to researchers of Dos Passos for decades now just how profoundly autobiographical the Camera Eye segments in the *U.S.A.* trilogy are.

Ludington (1977) sees the twenty-seven Camera Eyes in *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel* as the impressions of a child growing up to a young man, “uninitiated and in his own private world” (Ludington 1977, 444). In the fifteen Camera Eyes of *Nineteen Nineteen*, Dos Passos is halfway there in his personal development, experiencing the shock and awe of the war. In the final nine sections in *The Big Money*, Dos Passos goes “even farther beyond his own small world,” struggling with his own identity (ibid., 445).

There are several aspects to this revelation of the mode as a type of poetic Bildungsroman that have affected the mode’s reception as both filmic, and as montage: Together, a) its autobiographicity, b) its cinematographical name, and c) its photographic style of novelistic poetry have all seemingly awarded Dos Passos a position as author that seems analogical both to a cameraman, and to a director. This all has very much to do with Modernism’s focus on the role of an imagined camera (i.e., point of *view*, or “who sees / who speaks”) as the narrator, both in the theory of literature and in the novel.

Yet, due to its poetic, subjective style of writing and content, it is also the mode least compatible with an Eisensteinian conception of film and montage. In Hock’s view, by designating the mode as purely subjective, Dos Passos “implicitly aligned the Camera Eye against Eisenstein’s conception of a cinema based on the collision of different images” (Hock 2005, 21). In short, it has also been the mode’s antithetical quality to Eisenstein’s theory that has led some critics to speculate whether other styles or philosophies of film-making might be better suited to analogy.

As with each other mode, there exists a dialogical, two-way street between the fictional and non-fictional elements. Just as the Newsreels seemingly anchor the narratives to a specific historical time and place, so do the Camera Eyes. Only, they anchor this dimension, the events and the proceedings, to one single consciousness, opinion, feeling – albeit retrospectively, and poetically composed. Both the marks of subjectivity and historicity are thus indelible from

them, like at the very beginning of *Nineteen Nineteen*, where Dos Passos' parents die in close proximity to each other:

and He met me in the grey trainshed my eyes were stinging with vermillion bronze and chromegreen inks that oozed from the spinning April hills His moustaches were white the tired droop of an old man's cheeks She's gone Jack grief isn't a uniform and the in the parlor the waxen odor of lilies in the parlor (He and I we must bury the uniform of grief)

[...]

when the cable came that He was dead I walked through the streets full of fiveoclock Madrid seething with twilight in shivered cubes of aguardiente redwine gaslampgreen sunsetpink tileochre eyes lips red cheeks brown pillar of the throat climbed on the night train at the Norte station without knowing why (*NN*, 10).

By the same token, due to the symbiotic relationship of the four modes, montage in the case of the Camera Eyes has also been taken to refer to the thematic, topical relationships *between* the modes. Since each mode forms one quarter of the spatiotemporal diegetic backbone in the novel, they thus seem to be "in" montage, even if the connections are not in fact nearly always emergently juxtapositional, but rather, based on the logic of time. In *The Camera Eye* (26),

the garden was crowded and outside Madison Square was full of cops that made everybody move on and the bombsquad all turned out (*42<sup>nd</sup>*, 349).

Then, in the following Newsreel, number XVIII,

the American Embassy was threatened today with an attack by a mob of radical socialists led by Nicolai Lenin an exile who recently returned from Switzerland via Germany (*42<sup>nd</sup>*, 351).

Here, the juxtaposition uses context, both ideological and spatiotemporal, to inseparably inter-illuminate the active (as 'doing' and as 'seeing') perspective (in *The Camera Eye*) with the generic one (in the Newsreel) and vice versa.

Additionally, since there are often discursive and poetic similarities between modes that revolve around the same topoi, montage has also been taken to denote thematic and topical

reference and discursive *similarity* (cf. Maine 1985, 76) – not, as we would be led to believe, a type of collision or conflict. In *Camera Eye* (4), we find Dos Passos the child, together with his parents,

riding backwards through the rain in the rumbly cab looking at their two faces in the jiggly light of the fourwheeled cab and Her big trunks thumping on the roof and He reciting Othello in his lawyer's voice (42<sup>nd</sup>, 28).

The preceding recitation from Shakespeare's *Othello* ([approx. 1603], a portion of Act 1, Scene 3, set in the council chamber of the Venetian senate) emerges as an allusion a few moments later in the subsequent Mac narrative that follows the *Camera Eye*, when Doc Bingham asks, in an attempt to illustrate his unparalleled erudition and class, whether his listeners would "like to hear Othello's address to the Venetian senate" (42<sup>nd</sup>, 39).

Pizer's apt description of these *Camera Eye* sequences as "a form of autobiographical symbolic poetry" (Pizer 1988, 57) reveals to us a working parallel to Bakhtin's theories of the authorial use of language in poetry and in the novel; for Bakhtin, where the novel is multi-voiced, poetry is monological. It is poetry that trends towards the personal, singular, the impressionistic, and the monologic:

In poetic genres, artistic consciousness – understood as a unity of all the author's semantic and expressive intentions – fully realizes itself within its own language; in them alone is such consciousness fully immanent, expressing itself in it directly and without mediation, without conditions and without distance. The language of the poet is his language, he is utterly immersed in it, inseparable from it, he makes use of each form, each word, each expression according to its unmediated power to assign meaning (as it were, 'without quotation marks'), that is, as a pure and direct expression of his own intention (Bakhtin 1981b, 285).

The distinction between the usage of the author's own personal viewpoint, personal intention, and private language (even if it strictly isn't Dos Passos', but rather a poetic version of it) and that of other people's in the narratives of the trilogy is marked and clear in the *Camera Eyes*. Equally strong is the Joycean sense of the representation of the consciousness as 'stream,' with no punctuation, or initial capital letters to indicate one sentence from another, with the only



syntax in the form of sentences separated always by a tab-length space, clearly delineating one artistic rendition of a thought from the next:

when the telegram came that she was dying (the streetcarwheels screeched round the bellglass like all the pencils on all the slates in all the schools) walking around Fresh Pond the smell of puddlewater willowbuds in the raw wind shrieking streetcarwheels rattling on loose trucks through the Boston suburbs (*NV*, 9).

Here, for instance, the “bellglass” is a private, personal symbol for Dos Passos’ sheltered, fragile, unfulfilling youth spent in the artistic circles of Harvard, presented in Dos Passos’ signature agglutinative style – high on association, imagism, and symbolism, and actually relatively low on camera tricks and cinematics.

Dos Passos himself never explained the specific meaning of the mode’s title (cf. Pizer 1988, 56), leading various critics to speculate as to its true meaning. For Foster, Dos Passos “trains a camera on his own thoughts and impressions, and simultaneously offers himself a ‘camera I’ in registering and interpreting the external world” (Foster 1986, 190). Pizer discovers in the designation “the dual potential of this image of vision” (Pizer 1988, 56), where the camera on the surface is impersonal and objective, i.e., “documentary,” but that you can also look through the “eye” of the camera to see within. In this fantastic analogy, Pizer continues,

Translated into the material of *U.S.A.*, the Camera Eye mode is the consciousness of the author; the remainder of the work is the American world at large that the author has sought to depict as accurately as possible (*ibid.*, 56).

Pizer’s conception of the two directions of the camera as metaphor for artistic vision both away and towards the artist (who remains at the core of the conception) is extremely fascinating and brings to bear much of the artistic complexity that is so titillating about the trilogy. However, it is also this presence of bidirectionality that has led to some serious critical mischaracterizations. The particular view of the *U.S.A.* novels *as* montage highlights the Camera Eye sections as integral, even elementary to such a conception: Since the Camera Eye

sections are ‘subjective,’ then it must follow that the others are ‘objective,’ like the camera as an apparatus, or a piece of technology. The whole point of this, of course, is for Dos Passos to juxtapose the individual with the collective, as per Edwards:

By adjoining and intercutting the subjectivity of the Camera Eye fragments with the objectivity of the narrative sections, Dos Passos was able to use Eisenstein’s theory of montage to create a new textual form based on juxtaposition, conflict and ideology (Edwards 1999, 248).

For Edwards, it is “Eisenstein’s theory of juxtapositional imaging” (ibid., 249) that allows Dos Passos to call attention to the objectivity of the narrative sections through the personal nature of the Camera Eyes. Even for Maine, montage is “again the principal structuring device and means of historical commentary” (Maine 1985, 80).

### **6.1. Dos Passos’ “Kino-Eye”?**

Due to their incompatibility with Eisenstein’s theories, the highly personal Camera Eye sequences have instead been seen to form a parallel to Vertov’s “Kino-Eye” (also translated sometimes as “Camera-Eye”) documentary method. Despite little to no biographical verification, due to the obvious (and seemingly referential) nominal parallel, several writers have attempted to build a tenuous case of Vertov’s cinematic influence on Dos Passos’ writing.

The first of many to pay attention to this parallel might have been French researcher Georges-Albert Astre in 1956, who, according to Gretchen Foster (1986), noted the similarities between Vertov’s conception of the documentary film and Dos Passos’ novelistic techniques in *Manhattan Transfer*. Foster herself outright admits that Dos Passos’ “theoretical knowledge of film montage may have been sketchy” (Foster 1986, 186); Edwards, also, cannot be sure whether Dos Passos saw Vertov’s work, but believes that Dos Passos’ “goals in fiction corresponded to what Vertov was doing in film” (Edwards 1999, 248).

The question of the naming of the modes is perhaps even more relevant in regards to Vertov's theory than it is for the Newsreels (cf. p. 73). For North, the mode seems strangely named for an autobiographical device in an era where the (movie) camera was considered objective and documentary. (cf. North 2005, 145). Foster, like North, wonders whether the heading would have been better served for the Newsreels (Foster 1986, 190), simply because despite their similarity in name, the Camera Eye sections in the *U.S.A.* trilogy are nothing like Vertov's films or film theory. Noting the quandary, Foster speculates whether Dos Passos simply "had heard the term somewhere and [...] saw no contradiction in using a documentary term to record his private consciousness" (ibid.).

The potential of this parallel was actually not lost on Vertov himself. In 1934, he wrote in his diary that "[a] fair number of years have passed from the first part of our Kinoglaz series to the kino-eye of Dos Passos (*The Forty-Second Parallel*). But the structural scheme and even the terminology of both are the same" (Vertov 1984, 174). He further lamented that he was being accused of "corrupting" Dos Passos by infecting him with "kino-eye" (ibid.). According to Vertov, "Dos Passos' work involves a translation from film-vision into literary language. The terminology and construction are those of kino-eye" (ibid.).

The early prototypes for the "Camera Eye" mode can already be found in Dos Passos' notebooks for the first novel, unfortunately not dated (approx. 1927–1928; Ludington believes Dos Passos was working on the material at the time of the release of *Orient Express*, which came out in March 1927, cf. Ludington 1977, 260). In one preliminary scribble, Dos Passos writes,

The upside down image in the retina,  
 piece by piece immediately out of color  
shape  
 remembered bright and dark rebuilds the city [...] (Ludington 1977, 259).

In another scribble, Dos Passos writes:

Camera Eye – the careful clippings out of paper figures the old photographs the newspaper cartoons shall I make this one up [...] (Ludington 1977, 260).

In both snippets, the act of remembrance as “rebuilding” something concrete, and the idea of a selective, poetic approach (“shall I make this one up”) are already present. No biographical or autobiographical account of Dos Passos’ life, in any case, confirms his knowledge of Vertov or Vertov’s films. While it is entirely possible for Dos Passos to have bumped into either during his trip to Russia – much as he did into Eisenstein and Kuleshov – there is simply no reason for him to have left such important material out of his biography and letters

In terms of concrete influence on his novels, the most opportune moment for Dos Passos to have experienced Vertov’s works was the release of his major film, *Man with a Movie Camera* (released in January 1929); after all, Vertov’s theoretical articles remained unpublished in the English language for decades. Unfortunately, Dos Passos had just left Russia for Warsaw on December 4th 1928. The film was shown in the United States half a year later.

In respect of Vertov’s theory of film, the inverted naming policy between the Newsreel and the Camera Eye modes in *U.S.A.* relates to questions of perspective, objectivity, reportage, and documentariness. For the analogy between Dos Passos and Vertov to work, both Foster and Edwards approach the seeming incompatibility by basing their analogies not on one single mode, but rather the interrelationship, the juxtaposition, of the modes. Hence, the relationship of the Camera Eye mode to the narratives becomes analogical to Vertov’s program of “artistic and subjective editing with historical documentation” (Edwards 1999, 248).

The self-proclaimed subjectivity of the Camera Eye, combined with the apparent historicity of the narratives thus seemingly forms a Vertovian “correlation between historical representations and the modern subjectivity of the author” (ibid.). Edwards’, Foster’s, and Shloss’ maneuvering here seems based on a very selective, combinatory reading that account

accurately neither for Vertov's theory nor the content and composition of Dos Passos' novel. It is, flatly, impossible for us to consider such a combination in light of Vertov's theories.

It is indeed true that, as Dos Passos himself stated, he wanted to "write objectively" (Dos Passos 1988, 239). In this sense, the Camera Eyes operated as "a way of draining off the subjective by directly getting in little bits of my own experience (ibid., 289). They distilled his "subjective feelings about the incidents and people described" like a "safety valve" (ibid., 247).

Here, we must recall Vertov's type of subjective editing; according to Vertov, "every possible means in montage" (Vertov 1984, 88) were free for the taking. What was not to be subjective, however, was the content, the selection of the material for the film! The selection of material, according to Vertov, was to rather be 'systematic' and 'scientific' – yet we find Dos Passos' early attempts at the mode comparing the writing process to making things up (cf. Ludington 1977, 260)!

If the so-called Vertovian "montage" effect here is truly based on the combination and interplay – the very essence of Dos Passos' technique in the novel – of the modes, then how can we account for one part of the total being the polar opposite of the other, on the subjective-objective continuum, if Vertov's theory demands both absolutely be the same? Clearly, as we have already noted in chapter 2.4., Vertov's theories had zero room for poetic subjectivity – Vertov simply detested drama, after all – and even less room for such compromise; Vertov's kind of film-truth, after all, was specifically *kinopravda*, after *Pravda*. In addition, comparing Vertov's interval-based, movement-oriented montage to Dos Passos' use of juxtaposition to create a complex diegesis is nothing if not a gross misappropriation.

On the flipside, going back to a more distinctly Eisensteinian premise of montage, the existence of the subjective-objective binary does not automatically imply a pure sense of "conflict," ideological or otherwise; it is wishful thinking on behalf of some early critics to see in Dos Passos a radical sentiment that does not come to its overall fruition in the trilogy. The

fact of the matter is somewhere in-between: The Camera Eye sequences display a man deeply embedded in the currents and events of the era, or, at the very least on the very borderline of the individual and the collective. Even if we do go on to characterize the Camera Eye mode in something of a “conflict” with the other modes – rather than as a diegetic, verisimilitudinal compositional tool – the total effect remains neither dialectical nor “synthetic” in any sense that was Eisenstein’s<sup>19</sup>.

Instead, we should approach Dos Passos’ use of the Camera Eye as a “safety valve” as the illustration and manifestation of a profound understanding of the role of the artist in a multi-voiced age of art and ideology. He claimed that “[i]n the biographies, in the newsreels, and even the narrative, I aimed at total objectivity by giving conflicting views” (Dos Passos 1988, 247). In making the cognizant decision to delineate and demarcate his purely own authorial voice and person from others, and in presenting these largely free from authorial intrusion, recalls to a significant degree Bakhtin’s views of the author’s task in the *polyphonic* novel.

Bakhtin defined the polyphonic novel as the combined unity of independent voices, the combination of several individual wills, or as he claimed, “the artistic will of polyphony is a will to combine many wills, a will to the event” (Bakhtin 1984, 21). For Boris Uspensky (1983), polyphonic narration meant the various viewpoints presented in the novel are not subordinated to a single viewpoint, but rather “presented as essentially equal ideological voices” (Uspensky 1983, 10). It is important to note that much like Dos Passos’ four modes, polyphony too was for Bakhtin above all a *compositional* principle.

At the same time, it is true that Dos Passos’ narratives and biographies are tinged with a great deal of irony – which McHale compares to Flaubert’s, as defined by Jonathan Culler (cf.

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19 *The Big Money* has been seen to reach a synthetic conclusion with the speaker of the Camera Eyes reaching his own cynical conclusion together with the events of the story. Townsend Ludington, however, offers a very different view, in which Dos Passos “[...] offers at least a tentative note of hope in the subjective Camera Eye, which he consciously set apart from the other three narrative devices” (Ludington 1977, 446).

McHale 1979, d16). The effect of irony permeates the discourse almost entirely, both in topic and in style, when Fainy and Mac discuss their Marxist erudition:

Ever read Marx?

No . . . golly, I'd like to though. Me neither, I read Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, though; that's what made me a Socialist. Tell me about it; I'd just started readin' it when I left home. It's about a galoot that goes to sleep an' wakes up in the year two thousand and the social revolution's all happened and everything's socialistic an' there's no jails or poverty and nobody works for themselves an' there's no way anybody can get to be a rich bondholder or capitalist and life's pretty slick for the working class. That's what I always thought . . . It's the workers who create wealth and they ought to have it instead of a lot of drones. If you could do away with the capitalist system and the big trusts and Wall Street things 'ud be like that (42<sup>nd</sup>, 62).

McHale quite expertly notices that very often the irony (also in the above example) will be directed against registers – *all* the registers, as McHale implies – as registers of speech (McHale 1979, d15–16) more than at a specific characters in the novel. In the above, the effect seems pointed at ideology as a component of the self, or of discourse.

In presenting his characters, the author of a polyphonic work does not entirely have to draw away from means of commentary; as Bakhtin states, the author does not have to “renounce himself or his own consciousness, but he must to an extraordinary extent broaden, deepen and rearrange this consciousness (to be sure, in a specific direction) in order to accommodate the autonomous consciousnesses of others” (Bakhtin 1984, 68).

Bakhtin also believes that polyphony was not a relativistic or dogmatic compositional principle; either would make authentic dialogue either “unnecessary (relativism) or impossible (dogmatism)” (ibid., 69). As we noted, Dos Passos tried to shy away from programmatic and ideological composition. He claimed his relationship to Eisenstein and Griffith's montage was “entirely technique” (Dos Passos 1988, 288), and noted that his writing method in the *U.S.A.* trilogy was “used with the idea of coping with the particular job in hand rather than from any generalized theory about novelwriting [sic]” (ibid., 179).

## 6.2. The Hidden Cameraman

No doubt some of the analogy to Vertov is also built on his principle to shoot people “unawares” (cf. Vertov 1984, 41). As we noted, critics often see Dos Passos as a “hidden” cameraman in the narrative mode of *U.S.A.*; Wagner, for instance, claims that “there is no announced authorial perspective. Characters and events are literally presented without directional language or situation” (Wagner 1980, xx), and Edwards goes so far as to claim that “[...] the narratives of the main stories simply report on the actions and thoughts of the characters – there is no authorial intrusion” (Edwards 1999, 249).

Some part of this conception has to do with the language of the narratives; as noted in the above examples, it is colloquial, earthly, and could be taken to be highly bland by some readers. Some degree of the issue relates to Bakhtin’s description of the problem with prose arts; often, prose is seen as “an extra-artistic medium, a discourse that is not worked into any special or unique style” (Bakhtin 1981b, 260). This leads to the fact that “prose discourse is denied any artistic value at all” (ibid.).

Of course, the constant and consistent presence of irony clearly chips away at the accuracy of the above statements from Wagner and Edwards. At its core, this particular sentiment draws its apparent strength from the trilogy’s style of minimal exposition; readers will meet new characters, like Joe Williams in the following citation, absolutely *in medias res*, all in the middle of space, time, thought, and action:

Joe Williams put on the secondhand suit and dropped his uniform, with a cobblestone wrapped up in it, off the edge of the dock into the muddy water of the basin. It was noon. There was nobody around. He felt bad when he found he didn’t have the cigarbox with him. Back in the shed he found it where he’d left it (*NN*, 4).

The only indication to the reader that s/he has just met Joe for the first time is the narrator’s use of his full name; later, in the course of the story, Joe will become just “Joe” to the reader. Brian McHale (1978; 1979) has expertly critiqued this oft-cited, aforementioned “objective”



conception (as espoused by Edwards, and Wagner, for instance) of Dos Passos' style of point-of-view narration, noting quite sarcastically that

Each fictional narrative, this experienced [reading] will likely conclude, is conducted from the unvarying point-of-view of the named protagonist. In each case, this 'limited point-of-view' is rendered in language which the protagonist could plausibly use himself or herself (McHale 1979, d1).

But, as McHale goes on to show, such “[...] analysis breaks down under closer scrutiny” (ibid.). Furthermore, the question of authorial intrusion also only applies to the naturalization of the *narratives*, not in any degree to the Camera Eye sections, which, again, are nothing if not ‘subjective.’ In some sense, this distinction need not even be made, as we have already noted, the relationship of the Camera Eyes *in conjunction* with the narratives is an essential part of the selective analogy to Vertov.

McHale solves the question of authorial intrusion in the following way; rather than discovering in the novel a polyphonic structure – also a possible avenue of interpretation – he rather believes the narratives exhibit the novel's capability of showing and displaying languages; “[...] the voices that speak the characters' stories are understood to have originated in no personified source, no subject, but in the modes of social discourse themselves and in the socio-cultural situations to which they correspond” (ibid., d8). He also believes that this type of approach can be “cautiously” assimilated to notions of “intertextuality and citation in Russian and French poetics (Baxtin, Kristeva)” (ibid.).

Although the idea of the lack of authorial intrusion probably works on the level of authorial *intention*, in practice and in close analysis, the conception begins to break down. Hence, in closer analysis of the composition of the novel, even the idea of the “objective” mode – at least within the parameters of Vertov's views of objectivity – becomes untenable. Furthermore, as we noted earlier in ch. 2.4., where Vertov detested all other arts but pure documentary cinema, Dos Passos in fact loved the novel's ability to illustrate “[...] those rare

moments of suffering and delight when a man's private sensations are amplified and illuminated by a flash of insight" (Dos Passos 1988, 239).

### 6.3. The Interval in the Novel

One final aspect of Vertov's theory has also been brought up in relation to the *U.S.A.* trilogy. Carol Shloss claims that Dos Passos took the concept of *interval* from Vertov, "the thought that the space between fragments could invite participation, that the film-maker/writer/technician's job was to edit, to provide the juxtaposition of information that, when assembled in the viewing/reading, would lead to a recognition of the importance of each unit within the whole" (Shloss in Seed 2009, 139).

In a broad sense, any statement that highlights the total fact of Dos Passos' juxtapositional style and depth is not in any particular sense wrong. But in the same breath, we must note, we have already proven the historical fact of Dos Passos' familiarity with Vertov and his theory, of which there is no proof. It is equally important to note that juxtaposition was one of the major compositional methods of Modernist fiction overall; furthermore, it would be equally dishonest to set aside the fact that Dos Passos' use of this strategy is clearly already present, fully formed, in *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), half a decade before the release of Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, and almost half a century before Vertov's writings began to circulate beyond small key circles in Russia in the 1960s<sup>20</sup>, after Dos Passos had already produced most of his life's work.

In the present author's view, there is actually one parallel between Vertov's montage and Dos Passos's compositional technique has been somewhat lost on critics; the chief affinity between Vertov's theory and the *U.S.A.* trilogy is not in Vertov's insistence on "objectivity," "truth," documentariness, or collectivity, and most certainly not in his theory of the interval,

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<sup>20</sup> Probably the first of Vertov's English language translations, Samuel Brody's English translation of Vertov's 1929 speech (in French) from Paris appeared in two numbers of the magazine *Filmfront* in 1935.

but rather in Vertov's insistence in the director's ability and explicit permission to modify and exert control over spatiotemporal logic in his films.

The idea of the conquest of the space-time (cf. Vertov 1984, 87–88) brings Vertov's philosophies closest to the major Modernist trends and principles outlined in ch. 1.1. As we noted, the Camera Eye mode was originally so well-masked, and well-constructed, that it took researchers quite a while to realize the true extent of its autobiographicity. It took us equally long to realize the full significance of the interrelationships of the four modes in the novel.

That is exactly the kind of type of usage of directorial power that would have made (and clearly did make) Vertov proud. The closest to realizing this parallel was apparently Shloss, who according to Seed, had noted “the relation between planes, foreshortening, relations between movements and between light and shade, and varying speed of ‘recording’” (Seed 2009, 139).

## 7. Newsreel Montage

Raymond Fielding, the pre-eminent researcher of the Newsreels in the United States, describes in *The American Newsreel 1911–1967* (1972) that

The American newsreel [...] was a ten-minute potpourri of motion picture news footage, released twice a week to motion picture theaters throughout the country (Fielding 1972, 3).

Fielding adds that it survived, largely intact, for more than half a century, and remained a staple of every US theater's program from 1911 to 1967 (ibid.). Its contents could almost always be classified into the categories of “catastrophe, international celebrities, pageantry and ceremony, sports, political and military events, technology, and spectacle and novelty” (ibid., 48).

While the newsreel was, in Fielding's view, often “shallow, trivial, and even fraudulent” (ibid., 4), it also contained moments of “vivid, unforgettable pictures and sounds of the people,

events, wonders, and horrors which the free people of this century did their best to understand and confront” (Fielding 1972, 4). Over in Russia, the newsreels were largely personified in Vertov’s style of Communist documentary.

Out of all of Dos Passos’ critics, Donald Pizer has perhaps best understood the Newsreels’ position in the cultural landscape as both a patently, deeply shallow form of entertainment, as well as one that was often loaded with ideological, even propagandistic purposes, both realms – surprisingly interrelated as they are – which Dos Passos undoubtedly wanted to capture.

Consider, for instance, a portion of Newsreel 1:

NOISE GREETS NEW CENTURY

LABOR GREETS NEW CENTURY

CHURCHES GREET NEW CENTURY

Mr. McKinley is hard at work in his office when the new year begins.

NATION GREETS CENTURY’S DAWN

[...]

For there’s many a man been murdered in Luzon and Mindanao

GAIETY GIRLS MOBBED IN NEW JERSEY (42<sup>nd</sup>, 4).

Pizer actually suggests that in Dos Passos’ newsreels, “discernible ‘meaning’ is mixed with material that is present principally to startle or to amuse” (Pizer 1988, 83). This makes them, meaning-wise, “a kind of hoax” (ibid.). In Pizer’s view, their primary role is to present a “cacophony” that will then lead us to “recognize fully its essential emptiness,” and that the Newsreels are only “seemingly documentary” (ibid.).

What Pizer means with this complex statement is that at first, it seems perfectly sensible to assume the Newsreels, due to their basis in real-world materials, as the most authentic, and the most historical of all of the novels' modes. It may never dawn on the reader that the Newsreels only work in this role due to their relation to the three other modes; in effect, for the Newsreels to make any readerly sense, they need anchoring and support from the three other modes. Charles Marz, who tackles the relevance of historicity in the *U.S.A. Newsreels*, actually claims that even if we could identify the exact historical sources or dates for each fragment, we would come "no closer to articulating the significance of the Newsreels" (Marz 1979, 194).

The assumption of their primary historicity has nevertheless led many critics to perceive the sections analogically to the news-style montage of the cinematic newsreel. To Foster, for instance, "the [*U.S.A.*] newsreels' montages document public voices and scenes" (Foster 1986, 190). For Spindler, and Edwards (who no doubt appropriates Spindler without proper reference in his article), the Biographies and Newsreels "[...] "act as documentary 'shots' firmly grounding the fictional narratives in the context of the real historical and social developments taking place in America and Europe" (Spindler 1981, 404; cf. Edwards 1999, 249).

Thus, montage here seems to take the function of a name, a title, for assumed documentariness more than anything else, as North observes, the "[...] uncritical repetition of this inappropriate title is one of the major mysteries of its reception" (North 2005, 143). The present author wholeheartedly agrees with North, who also argues that the Newsreel sections "seem to be misnamed" (*ibid.*), as they overall "resemble a printed page much more than a series of photographs" (*ibid.*).

Dos Passos' own take on the meaning and function of the Newsreels is often in a more auditory sense; the writer mentioned having sought with the Newsreels "the clamor, the sound of daily life" (Dos Passos 1988, 283), as well as "an inkling of the common mind of the epoch" (*ibid.*, 179). Of course, given that *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel*'s origins coincided with the first-ever

“talkie” in *The Jazz Singer* (1927), it’s hard to see a true auditory parallel forming over to film, as the Newsreels of the era would have all been silent anyway.

Instead, the idea of “sound” in Dos Passos’ definition, and in the Newsreels, has to be taken in a different sense, as the “speech” of a people – like Dos Passos writes in the equivocal (in terms of the author, the trilogy, and its content), partially metafictional “*U.S.A.*” preface to the trilogy, “But mostly *U.S.A.* is the speech of the people” (*U.S.A.*, vii). Seed takes something of a philosophical middle road to the issue, believing that despite being something of a misnomer, the title “Newsreel” nevertheless invites the reader to read the sections analogically (Seed 2009, 142).

But even stretching the analogy like Seed, it is clear that the mode of the Newsreels in the *U.S.A.* novels, as well as the logic of its construction, is not that of the Newsreel film, or montage, but rather of *collage* (French for ‘sticking’ or ‘pasting’), wherein a work is assembled on a canvas (“cut and pasted”) from fragments of other works or materials. In Modernist literature, the term has been applied to, for instance, Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* and T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922). For Spindler, the Newsreels indeed illustrate “the legacy of modernist painterly techniques” (Spindler 1981, 402). Spindler’s characterization actually accounts for its meaningless juxtapositions, too, as per Pizer’s characterization of the mode as a “hoax” (Pizer 1988, 83).

Pizer, in his study, has expertly outlined Dos Passos’ actual technique in devising these sections. First, the author would make extensive notes from a single newspaper, marking down items over periods ranging from several days to several months (*ibid.*, 80–81). According to Pizer, the papers used were *Chicago Tribune* for *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel*, and the *New York World* for the rest of the trilogy (*ibid.*, 81). The selection focused chiefly on first-page stories. From his notes, then, the writer would “compose a Newsreel by careful selection, cutting, rearrangement, repunctuation, and even verbal revision” (*ibid.*).

It is true, as per Seed, that in some sense, the process of ‘editing’ here physically resembles that of the historical ‘cutting’ of footage shot on film. Like the editor, the author too occupies himself in a type of physical action like an editor would, cutting and adjoining material into a linear “montage,” as some critics would make us believe. Yet, beyond this physical dimension, the analogy ends. The cultural fact of certain artistic forms – as noted earlier – or the fact of their material, physical equivalence in the creation of certain art objects that share facets in their physical manifestation, is hardly proof of a style of filmic montage.

In other words: In this particular case, it is difficult to imagine compositional, formal equivalence between rolls of film and newspapers, if not for the sole fact that they exist on a linear, two-dimensional plane – the first on film, and the second on paper. Therefore, rather than Dos Passos’ collage in the Newsreels exhibiting some deeper type of affinity between the novel and the film, the relationship is simply a matter of physical existence. As follows, much more relevant to our analysis of the Newsreels is not the logic of the cinematic Newsreel, but rather the logic of the *newspaper* – their original source. It is this logic, prototypically, and historically, that Dos Passos incorporated into his novel.

As we can see, instead of film, the Newsreel sections rather exhibit both the *artistic* and the *extra-artistic* types of superintegration (Bakhtin 1981b, 320) and novelization (Bakhtin 1981a, 7). It is plain as day to any reader of the newspaper that the format is chock full of both accidental and intentional juxtapositions. Some meanings emerge simply from its standard, generic structure, a structure that splits into different modes, or types of text; other meanings – sad, silly, humorous, or shocking – can emerge simply from the introduction of one style, topic, or theme, to another.

Consider, for instance, the absurdity of the following juxtaposition from Newsreel XVI:

SINCE THIS TIME YESTERDAY NEARLY TWO THOUSAND MEN HAVE  
CHANGED TO CHESTERFIELDS

PEACHES FLED WITH FEW CLOTHES (*BM*, 237).

This kind of effect can and does emergently occur in the newspaper, produced quite easily simply by two disjunct headlines side by side. It need be underlined, again, that there is nothing inherently *filmic* about the logic of juxtaposition – even Eisenstein allowed for this fact as he was talking about sound and film, noting that there is no fundamental difference between visual montage and montage that links “different spheres of feeling” (cf. Eisenstein 1968, 63–64).

In fact, Bakhtin too noted the relevance of the newspaper as an important reflection of the novelist’s work; in relation to Dostoevsky’s journalistic tendencies, he described the newspaper page

[...] as a living reflection of the contradictions of contemporary society in the cross-section of a single day, where the most diverse and contradictory material is laid out, extensively, side by side and one side against the other (Bakhtin 1984, 29–30).

Out of Dos Passos’ critics, Delmore Schwartz noted in 1938 that “Dos Passos’ novel seems to at least one reader to derive from the newspaper” (Schwartz 1988, 175). In superintegrating features of the newspaper into his novels, of course, Dos Passos also applies to his works the registers of the news, of advertising, of the popular song, and all the more importantly, the logic and style of reported truth, reported fact, and the logic of reportage. And – as we often perceive to be important – the question of reported speech as representation in the novel.

To further illustrate the point of the material facts as they relate to conceiving the Newsreels as filmic montage, we must also consider its material fact as printed; its layout, typesetting, and so forth. As noted before, the copious use of whitespace seemed significant to Maine, who saw it as “analogous to the ‘cut’ from one shot to another in an Eisenstein film”



(Maine 1985, 76). In Foster's mind, even the "provocative chapter titles [...] operate like movie subtitles and create a montage of their own" (Foster 1986, 187).

Foster's analogy here seems to dismiss completely the entire thousand-year histories of the novel and the book, which have made use of this particular type of heading-subtitle structure (or, what Gérard Genette calls *paratexts*) for probably as long as they have existed. Foster's statement also considerably exaggerates the role of the chapter titles in the book; only two out of the four modes actually have an extended title (combining a particular "mode" title to a subtitle).

The functions of the combined subtitles can be summed up as such: For the Newsreels, the subtitle samples one headline out of many ("NEWSREEL I It was that emancipated race"), and the Camera Eye subtitles have a synecdochal, exemplary snippet of the major thought, occasion, or issue represented ("The Camera Eye (i) when you walk along the street you have to step carefully always").

Additionally, Foster here seems to reference 'subtitle' in the older sense of the word, not as 'captioning,' but as 'titling,' – in other words, as the 'intertitle' of the silent film. Intertitles would often work in the film by commenting retrospectively on the action, filling in the blanks and offering to the viewer whatever discourse and dialogue that was otherwise missing. As they are in their context in *U.S.A.*; the chapter titles are strictly metonymic (more specifically synecdoches) of their full content (as chapter titles often are in books) rather than in the more purely descriptive sense of the film.

In a more generic sense, the base function of the table of contents in the book is to give the reader of the novel a prospective bird's eye view into the structure of the book. Neither the role of subtitles, or intertitles, seems in any way analogous to that of the chapter titles (which are, by the way, only on display in the table of contents of *U.S.A.*, never in the following content).

Furthermore, referring back to Maine's notion of novelistic whitespace as analogical to filmic cuts, the direct equation somewhat misappropriates the whitespace's role in the *novel* not only as the historical manifestation of the conventions of typesetting, but also as the controlling of readerly, experiential effects, which relate above all to the temporal dimension of reading, in both the senses of Chatman's definition of the "double time structuring" of the novel (cf. Chatman 1980, 122; p. 27 in this study). It is in this very sense – that reading and processing takes time – that the analogy to the cut seems lacking; after all, in film, it is actually the length of the *shot* (and its content) that controls the temporal effect; not the cut, which has no duration at all, and is thus entirely conceptual.

In the novel, these temporal dimensions can be controlled (on the level of text as 'print') with the varying length of the sentence, or the paragraph, or as Dos Passos does, with the use (or misuse) of punctuation. The careful, almost poem-like collage structures in the Newsreels, with citations dispersed carefully around the page, at once both quicken the reader's gaze and slow it down by offering to the reader less immediate content for reading. The introduction of the whitespace also creates a sense of scarcity, – again, not analogically to the cut, but to the shot – forcing the eye to focus more closely on a particular slogan, headline, or snippet.

On the one hand, the space introduced sends the message of separation, distance, and difference; the juxtapositional effect is, in this way, actually weakened. On the other hand, as readers will know the whitespace functions as a compositional effect, and will know to look for the juxtapositions nevertheless. The actual effect here is almost like a plus minus zero game, where the typesetting actually works to cancel the two aforementioned effects out.

In other words, the analogy of the cut simply does not work here as it is applied from film to the novel; in the novel, the 'cut' affects the process of reading in the temporal sense (in both senses, as per Chatman); in film, the effect is actually inverse, and relates to what is *in-between* the cuts. Therefore, if there was any particular sense of montage that applied here, it would no

doubt be Eisenstein's notion of *metric* montage (cf. Eisenstein 1949, 73). But even then, the effect here remains purely textual, and belongs chiefly to the phenomenon of reading.

Of chief importance – something that the notion of montage is utterly irrelevant to – is the Newsreels' shape as other people's real discourse in the written word. The Newsreel mode is a massively complex hub, a cortex of viewpoints, visions, speeches, and words. There can be as many as three or more layers of reported speech in just one headline: a) The actual words b) the reporter's reportage c) Dos Passos' reinterpretation of the headline d) not to mention the juxtapositional effects that are created in dialogue with the other headlines.

There is absolutely *no type or form of application of the film-theoretical conception of montage* that can adequately and analytically reach such a level of discourse in the novel. For the student of the novel, the one major takeaway is not that the Newsreels are representations of historical 'fact' (even as which their status as literary effect can be problematized as noted by both North and Pizer), or manifestations of 'reality,' but that they are *reported speech* in someone else's phraseology, combined to a specific typeface, in specific layout, integrated, infused, and, ultimately, changed in meaning as they are assimilated to Dos Passos' novel.

## 8. Conclusion

It is all a matter of montage (Foster 1986, 189).

It seems clear to us by now that there simply exists no definition, or usage, that would truly bridge the gap between the use of montage as it is applied to the novel, and the montage of film theory. Furthermore, neither of these applications resembles the linguistic, communicative fact of montage (of juxtaposition!) that we have sought to illustrate in chapter 3 of the present study. As a literary analogy, montage equally fails to take into full account the problems of film-theoretical montage as it does the unique features of the novel. In being applied to linguistic, or compositional elements in the novel, it can barely point out the existence of the

literary, artistic fact of juxtaposition, seldom reaching below the surface of the “conflict” or “collision” of two particular elements.

In the particular example of Dos Passos’ *U.S.A.* trilogy, then, the quick and potent emergence of the film as a new medium, the Modernist currents in all the arts, including in its criticism, and Dos Passos’ imaginative use of the potential of the novel together with autobiographical details all contributed to the novels’ critical reception as a montage. These four facets are on display, all to a significant degree, in the critical reception that we sought to analyze above. Yet, there exists one more potential reason for the *U.S.A.* trilogy’s position in the canon of cinematic fiction, one that is both more and less obvious than the ones above: the 1937 prologue that was added to the book by Dos Passos when the three novels were first published in their entirety as the *U.S.A.* trilogy.

The prologue, also titled “U.S.A.,” introduces as well as encapsulates all the books’ major themes, their idiomatic style, and doubtless beckons the reader with fast film-like ‘cuts’ at a pace unmatched elsewhere in the novels. It is some of Dos Passos’ best and most evocative writing, and has surely led many readers on to consider it characteristic. Critics and researchers have equally perceived this all-new introductory chapter as synecdochal, representative of the book on the whole.

Often, it is concluded to be in direct juxtaposition with the very last chapter in the book, the fictional Biography titled “Vag.” Both these chapters – believed to represent the same representative type of “character” – appear exactly once in the trilogy. It is no doubt true that in combination, both the prologue and the epilogue are characteristic of the trilogy on the whole, crystallizing many of its major ideas, and themes. In truth, however, all this happens primarily on the thematic, rather than the compositional level. In fact, as perhaps the most purely photographic chapter in the whole book, the “*U.S.A.*” prologue may be quite easily taken as example in discovering some equivalence to the film form:

The young man walks fast by himself through the crowd that thins into the night streets; feet are tired from hours of walking; eyes greedy for warm curve of faces, answering flicker of eyes, the set of a head, the lift of a shoulder, the way hands spread and clench; blood tingles with wants; mind is a beehive of hopes buzzing and stinging; muscles ache for the knowledge of jobs, for the roadmender's pick and shovel work, the fisherman's knack with a hook when he hauls on the slithery net from the rail of the lurching trawler, the swing of the bridgeman's arm as he slings down the whitehot rivet, the engineer's slow grip wise on the throttle, the dirtfarmer's use of his whole body when, whoaing the mules, he yanks the plow from the furrow. The young man walks by himself searching through the crowd with greedy eyes, greedy ears taut to hear, by himself, alone (*U.S.A.*, v).

Here, the reader's speed and style of reading begins to merge with and subsume in the dynamic staccato of the sentences, which could easily be taken to resemble a basic sequence of shots in a film; in this series of heavily photographic paragraphs, the commas, and semicolons, truly seem to work as markers for 'cuts,' beckoning the reader to speed up and read through in a continuous, progressive, contiguous style – awarding to the text almost a breathless, train-like quality. Yet, at the same juncture, the actual diegesis of the text enters a kind of slowdown, a dilation of the time-space, awarding to it a more psychological dimension as rapid thought.

But, and this is the major but, is the above sequence *montage*, in the way Kuleshov's, Eisenstein's, and Vertov's theories claim? Does the section resemble our working definitions of montage in chapter 3? No doubt Dos Passos' images are solid, evocative, and dynamic, as if shot through the lens of the camera; but what type of camera? It is the present author's view that it is not the technical, impartial apparatus of film, but rather of the mind, shooting another mind; the keenly psychological, literary mind of the writer, and the mind, or logic, of the genre of the novel. As Wagner wonderfully asserts, the above images are visual more in the vein of a William Carlos Williams, who "consistently employed images for their intrinsic effect and not for their connotations" (Wagner 1980, 44).

If we are not yet convinced, we can recall our definition of filmic montage, of the metaphorical holophrase (cf. ch. 3.2.1.), and analyze the above section with that conception in mind. The sentence, "mind is a beehive of hopes buzzing and stinging" (*U.S.A.*, v), is not at all

impossible to break down to a series of holophrastic statements, and henceforth imagine it as or in a filmic ‘montage,’ one that incorporates symbols or visuals to combine “mind” to a “beehive,” and “hope” to “buzzing and stinging.” But in doing so, it becomes obvious to us that something of the psychology is lost in translation; in fact, the “languages” of the film and of the novel seem so far apart here that such a filmic translation would instead seem weak, almost infantile, in comparison to Dos Passos’ amazingly evocative, poetic sentence-making.

As close as this opening prologue comes to a literary sense of cinema, it still sorely lacks in the type of montage that the aforementioned critics have been looking for. From a readerly position, the breathlessness that Dos Passos introduces is an experiential state, a psychological effect that is enhanced by the nature of pacing and writing in punctuation. Simply thinking of the semicolons and sentences as cuts or changes in the camera position entirely fails to account for their role as language in affecting the reader.

This revelation relates in its entirety to Metz’s view that in film theory, the definition of the word ‘montage’ almost always includes ‘cutting,’ but cutting never includes montage. Hence, the moment of ordering (montage) always seems “linguistically” more important than the choosing of images (cutting) (Metz 1991, 68). Metz’s statement almost perfectly underscores the very problem of applying the concept of montage to the novel: the juxtaposed elements become secondary to the fact of juxtaposition – a fact that broadly speaking applies to all the arts! After all, did we not already note the fact of Eisenstein’s profound debt to the novel and other arts, like theater, that he worked in?

In analyzing this particular dimension of Eisenstein’s montage, Robert Scholes comes to view it in light of High Modernist art overall. Here, for Scholes, a parallel forms between Eisenstein’s montage and T.S. Eliot’s ‘objective correlative’ (c.f. Scholes 2006, 106). As Eliot (1920) writes:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked (Eliot 1920, 92).

What is this ‘objective correlative,’ if not exactly the ideal-ideological juxtaposition of Eisenstein’s montage, in which “[...] the spectator is compelled to proceed along that selfsame creative road that the author traveled in creating the image” (Eisenstein 1968, 34)? And conversely, what is Eisenstein’s montage, if not principally the ‘objective correlative’ of Eliot’s? But all this revelation does for the literary critic is reveal the principal poetic fact of the role of juxtaposition as an important part of composition in all the arts. Yet, one juxtaposition in a particular medium is not the equivalent of another in a different one. It is the *material* of the juxtaposition that must remain chief to our analyses, much as it later became for the recanting Kuleshov (cf. p. 15).

In his characterization of the *U.S.A.* trilogy, Donald Pizer manages to touch on this issue:

[The *U.S.A.* trilogy] is far more complex in origin and nature than a film, in that the units that are being cut, arranged, and interposed are strikingly different from each other, while in a film the visual image is the single mode (Pizer 1988, 86).

Put into different words, this effectively means that, as David Trotter writes, “[...] no account of modernist montage along these lines can tell us how and why works [...] such as *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*, came to be written as they were written (Trotter 2006, 238–239). If we *do* prioritize the “moment of ordering” (Metz 1991, 68) in our analyses, we have gained absolutely nothing beyond that moment – that moment of “montage,” of “conflict.” That moment of ordering, for the *viewer*, or to the reader, is always *retrospective*, and as such existing in a type of ever-present stasis.

In the final analysis, André Bazin (2005) remarks that if we understand by ‘cinema’ “the techniques of a narrative born of montage and change of camera position,” then a novel by Dos

Passos or André Malraux will seem no different from ordinary films (Bazin 2005, 62). Unlike other critics, however, instead of rooting his argument on the technical and compositional similarities of the art forms, Bazin rather bases his viewpoint on what he sees as the essence of *representation* in all arts, the existence of a “a necessary and unambiguous causal relationship [...] between feelings and their outward manifestations” (ibid.).

Hence, it appears to Bazin, “the vast majority of images on the screen conform to the psychology of the theater or to the novel of classical analysis” (ibid.). Scholes’ view of Eisenstein’s debt to the literary arts would seem analogical here. Bazin then wonders aloud “[...] whether or not the art of Dos Passos, Caldwell, Hemingway, or Malraux derives from the technique of the cinema. To tell the truth, we do not believe it for a moment” (ibid., 61).

Mikhail Bakhtin originally considered novelistic discourse “[...] the acid test for this whole way of conceiving style, exposing the narrowness of this type of thinking and its inadequacy in all areas of discourse’s artistic life” (Bakhtin 1981b, 261). Bakhtin strongly criticized the application of unfitting stylistics and theories to the novel, noting that any kind of proper formulation of the problems of the stylistics of the novel would have resulted “from a recognition of the stylistic uniqueness of novelistic (artistic-prose) discourse” (Bakhtin 1981b, 260).

In the present author’s mind, the *U.S.A.* trilogy, together with its critical reception as montage, in ultimately illustrating the theoretical incompatibility of filmic montage and the novel, entirely proves Bakhtin’s point. Better yet, in reaching this conclusion, it also endows us with a better sense of the *artistic fact of juxtaposition*, as well as a better understanding of the uniqueness of the novel – as an artistic form, as a medium among other media, and in comparison to cinema.



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*NN* = *Nineteen Nineteen* (Orig. 1932).

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