

Lunds Universitet

Språk-och Litteraturcentrum

Literature-Culture-Media

Supervisor: Prof. Lars Gustaf Andersson

2010-12-20

Brendan Burke

15-Credit Thesis

Film Adaptation Theory:
Secondary Speech Genres in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction***
- II. Bakhtin's Theory of Adaptation***
- III. The Current State of Film Theory***
- IV. A Brief Introduction to Alfred Döblin***
- V. Fassbinder and Döblin: An Intersection of Styles***
- VI. A Theory of Adaptation as Applied to Berlin Alexanderplatz***
- VII. Conclusion***

I. Introduction

The theory of film adaptation, although prevalent in modern academia, has much more to establish. Although much has been written about various methods of film adaptation, the amount of hard theory in existence is still seriously lacking. The theory which does exist could use an injection of new perspective to more completely establish a base of theoretical knowledge from which to draw upon when critiquing film. Furthermore, some books which claim to be theoretical are actually books dealing largely with method of film adaptation which further confuses the situation. Also, some academics end up speaking too widely about film studies as a whole and lack the specificity required in order to create a strong theoretical base. In order to establish a specific theory, in depth examples are required. If film adaptation theory is to be considered as serious a subject as its literary counterparts then a more substantial body of academic knowledge needs to be created.

Instead of trying to develop a theory of film adaptation from scratch it is more feasible to draw inspiration from the tremendous body of literary theory which has already dealt with the issue of the way in which individuals communicate through art. It is the aim of this paper to communicate the fact that although literary theory deals solely with the medium of literature, these theories can be expanded to deal with the medium of film. Literary theory has had to deal with the relationship between the creator of a work and the receiver of said work just as film theorists do.

A particularly interesting concept relevant to this theoretical discussion is Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the utterance. The utterance is, according to Bakhtin, the essence of dialogue¹. It can be as short as a word or as long as an entire work, but it is in proper use or, conversely, in misuse of the utterance that an adapted work either succeeds or fails. The utterance, unlike a word or sentence, functions within a speech genre and, therefore, has meaning beyond that which is merely of a linguistic nature. The utterance in film functions in largely the same way as it does in literature and so it is probable to use Bakhtin's literary theory regarding the utterance to establish film theory. In other words,

¹ Although dialogue will be explain in depth during the theoretical portion of the paper, suffice it so say that dialogue is the collection of utterance being exchange between two individuals. This exchange could be a face-to-face conversation or, as is the case here, an adaptation.

just as Bakhtin understood that the utterance, not the word or sentence, was the true unit of dialogue, so too must the film theorist understand that it is how the utterance functions in film which is the key to the successful adaptation. As a side note, it is also important to understand that according to Bakhtin, the source material is not the first part of the equation in a dialogue.² All material which comes before the source material that the creator drew influence from is also relevant.

In the effort to establish more substantial film adaptation theory, relevant in the creation and criticism of adapted films, it is necessary to examine a single example of film adaptation which epitomizes the art form and use it to establish specific examples with which to judge success or failure of the theory. Furthermore, it is necessary to examine the way in which Bakhtin's theory of speech communication function in film. This has been an issue for earlier film theorist like, Linda Hutcheon whose *A Theory of Adaptation* falls short of establishing the hard theory that film studies needs because her scope was far too wide. This issue is also prevalent in the works of legendary film theorist George Bluestone; perhaps because of the time period he lived and worked within.³ At any rate, the existing theories of adaptation will be examined and augmented with new ideas.

Once the theory of speech communication is established and the current field of adaptation theory is examined it then becomes possible to see how Bakhtin's theory function in the film medium. In this case the work of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, as adapted from the novel of the same name by Alfred Döblin, will be used to illustrate how film adaptation theory works in practice. This is a piece which successfully demonstrates a dialogue between the writer of the source material, the adaptor, and the viewer. By making specific comparisons between the work of Döblin and the work of Fassbinder with the application of Bakhtin's theory of Dialogue, a strong theory of film adaptation will be established.

In summation, the aim of this work will be to establish how Bakhtin conceived of speech communication. Then, after introducing an exemplary example of film adaptation, apply Bakhtin's theory of communication to the process used to create said adaptation.

² By source material I mean the work which the adaptation is based off of.

³ George Bluestone's seminal work *Novels Into Film* was published in 1957.

The goal of this endeavor being the expansion of current film theory which sorely lacks a theory of adaptation that is as coherent as Bakhtin's theory of speech communication.

On a more technical note, Bakhtin's theories are difficult to understand when learned as individual pieces. The theory at hand works so well because it functions as a coherent unit in which all the individual pieces work in tandem. Therefore, I encourage the reader to be patient while sifting through the definitions of all of the founding parts of the theory. I have carefully debated the most effective way to explain the topic and have determined that the reader needs to be aware of all of the pieces of the theory before it becomes possible to assemble them into a complete picture. As such, there is quite a bit of waiting before the theory becomes whole, but I believe that through repetition of key terms in the context of the essay, the overall picture will become clear in the most effective manner.

II. Bakhtin's Theory of Adaptation

Considering the field of film adaptation theory is so small it is possible to begin almost anywhere in an attempt to augment the theory which already exists. Although developing an entirely new theory from scratch could be interesting, it wouldn't fit the restrictions of the current endeavor and, moreover, would certainly overlap into certain areas of literary theory which have already dealt with the subject. Specifically, the way in which individuals communicate with each other through artistic endeavors functions in a similar fashion regardless of medium. In this case, Bakhtin's theories on secondary speech genres can be used as the foundation for building a new theory of adaptation as Bakhtin dealt specifically with communication through the arts and how individuals in this communication chain interpret and digest information.

Bakhtin's work, in the general sense, covers a lot of ground and can seem somewhat scattered. This is largely due to the fact that much of his work was published many years after it was written, and, other important pieces of it are missing entirely. The essays themselves are carefully constructed and stand on their own as well as they do as part of a catalogue, and can therefore be separated and analyzed productively without having to know the entire history of Bakhtin's work. Furthermore, narrowing the scope of Bakhtin's ideas provides clarity where it may be missing from the overall picture of his

body of work. It is for these reasons that an in-depth analysis of Bakhtin's essay *The Problem of Speech Genres* makes for the most precise study.

This essay deals with a variety of concepts including speech genres, primary and secondary speech genres, the utterance, language styles, dialogue, and chains of speech communication. All of these topics, though applied to the medium of the novel by Bakhtin, can be applied directly to the process of adaptation in film. There are many concepts to understand in order to get the total picture of the theory that Bakhtin presents. In order to understand this picture, it is best to explain all of the components and then tie them all together once each piece is understood. Bakhtin's concept of speech genres, specifically that of secondary speech genres, can be applied most directly to the ideas of film adaptation. However, since the concept of the utterance needs to be understood before defining speech genres it is best to start there.

Bakhtin emphasizes the necessity of the utterance in speech by saying, "For Speech can exist in reality only in the form of the concrete utterances of individual speaking people, speech subjects. Speech is always cast in the form of an utterance belonging to a particular speaking subject, and outside this form it cannot exist" (Bakhtin 71). Break down the utterance further by stating that it consists of three parts.

"Language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity. These utterances reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area not only through their content (thematic) and linguistic style, that is, the selection of the lexical, phraseological, and grammatical resources of the language, but above all through their compositional structure. All three of these aspects-thematic content, style, and compositional structure are inseparably linked to the *whole* of the utterance and are equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication" (Bakhtin 60).⁴

⁴ The use of Hyphens between words, although not grammatically correct, has been left as it seems to be Bakhtin's preferred way of dividing and managing thoughts.

The first and perhaps most notable distinction Bakhtin makes in this opening statement is that the linguistic content of speech cannot be considered on its own. This differs greatly from literary thought at the time and provides a more broad understanding of communication by suggesting that it is not only linguistics which needs to be discussed but also contextual clues. Bakhtin clearly feels that previous methods of understanding speech and, more generally, dialogue have been insufficient in capturing the process of communication. This is an important distinction to note as it states that words and sentences alone can not be credited with giving meaning in dialogue.

This is of upmost importance in the process and critique of film adaptation because of the temptation to keep every word in the adaptation the same as in the source document. Also, the audience is often tempted to judge the quality of an adaptation based on whether or not its dialogue corresponds exactly with the source. However, it is important to remember that in film adaptation it is impossible to have every word represented in the film as every word in a novel would fill many hours of film and lead to a thoroughly unwatchable piece. The solution to this issue is to absorb the way in which the utterance functions and, once this is understood, the linguistic content of the novel becomes less important and all of the components of the utterance (content, style, and compositional structure) allow for the message to be understood. Now that the content of the utterance is clear it is important to further define its boundaries.

Bakhtin states the boundaries of the utterance “are determined by a *change of speaking subjects*, that is, a change of speakers” (Bakhtin 71). On the surface, this is a straightforward restriction, but the possibilities it offers are quite large in scope. For example, when two individuals are engaged in a conversation the rejoinders in the dialogue which clearly delineate the change of speaking subjects are obvious. However, when analyzing a dialogue which occurs in a less obvious fashion (like the dialogue between the writer of a novel and the director of an adapted film) the change of speaking subject is the actual act of adaptation itself and much more significant. This is where Bakhtin begins to expound upon the concept of secondary speech genres and how they work.

In order to understand secondary speech genres which are the prime concern of the adaptor one must obviously understand primary speech genres. Bakhtin is quick to

note the “extreme heterogeneity” (Bakhtin 60) of speech genres. He states that most contexts of conversation have their own speech genre.

“The wealth and diversity of speech genres are boundless because the various possibilities of human activity are inexhaustible, and because each sphere of activity contains an entire repertoire of speech genres that differentiate and grow as the particular sphere develops and becomes more complex...Special emphasis should be placed on the extreme *heterogeneity* of speech genres (oral and written)” (Bakhtin 60).

It becomes evident that everything that is discussed in daily life has its own speech genre. This may make the concept seem, as Bakhtin calls it, “abstract and empty” (Bakhtin 61). However, he makes the point that it is not identifying all speech genres or using them based on that identification which is the important part. What is important is understanding that speech genres exist and function by coloring our speech and dialogue. He clarifies the usage and function of speech genre further on in the essay while discussing the selection of speech genre.

In order to “choose” a speech genre the individual must have something to choose from.

“We know our native language-its lexical composition and grammatical structure-not from dictionaries and grammars but from concrete utterances that we hear and that we ourselves reproduce in live speech communication with people around us. We assimilate forms of language only in forms of utterances and in conjunction with these forms...To learn to speak means to learn to construct utterances” (Bakhtin 78).

This is a particularly interesting point when dealing with film adaptation as it relates to the style of the adaptor. This is one of the primary points Bakhtin makes which not only supports the reason for using his theories when adapting film, but also the way in which the adaptor begins to develop his own style of film making. This concept will be

referenced again when dealing with style, but for now the speech genre has been explicated enough to allow for a deeper discussion on the secondary speech genre which is the genre which encompasses film adaptation and needs to be understood before discussing style.

The secondary speech genre is what is critical to understanding how objects like novels and adaptation fit into Bakhtin's literary theory.

“Secondary (complex) speech genres—novels, dramas, all kinds of scientific research, major genres of commentary, and so forth—arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication (primarily written) that is artistic, scientific, sociopolitical, and so on. During the process of their formation, they absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communication” (Bakhtin 62).

It is within the secondary speech genre that the understanding of how adaptation works begins to take form. Once it is understood that the use of the utterance through primary speech genres allows for all “real-world” dialogue, it then becomes possible to see how adaptation from novel to film is really just a collection of utterance on a more complex scale. Before diving too deeply into the process of adaptation it is important to explain a few more concepts that exist within and around the utterance.

In order to fully understand speech genres and the utterance it is necessary to understand the concept of speech communication according to Bakhtin. In Bakhtin's theory it is stated that when the utterance is in use in speech communication this communication is *active*.

“The fact that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude towards it. He either agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on” (Bakhtin 68).

To apply this in an even deeper fashion to the utterance Bakhtin states, “These relations [the specific relations among rejoinders in a dialogue] are possible only among utterances of different speech subjects; they presuppose other (with respect to the speaker) participants in speech communication” (Bakhtin 72). The relating of this concept to film adaptation theory allows for the justification of film adaptation in general as opposed to what has been discussed up until this point in the field which is concerned primarily with the process. It is the nature of dialogue for the participants to actively engage in speech whether that speech is direct (as in a face-to-face conversation) or indirect (as in a novel). This direct or indirect speech is what is meant when Bakhtin discusses primary and secondary speech genres. Therefore, it is not only in direct face-to-face dialogue that we are active participants, but in secondary speech genres as well. So it becomes not a question of whether or not to have some response to an adaptation (which is implied) but with what medium to have the response. For some it may be an evaluative conversation with a colleague, while for others (like Fassbinder) the response may take the form of a secondary speech genre.

Bakhtin’s thoughts on style are, of course, related directly to understand speech genre and the utterance and style functions as an *upper layer* of communication. By upper layer I mean that they are based on the foundation of the utterance and speech genre without which communication could not exist. Although style is inseparable from these two factors, it is an additional concept which adds dimension to them.

“Any utterance-oral or written, primary or secondary, and in any sphere of communication-is individual and therefore can reflect the individuality of the speaker (or writer); that is, it possesses individual style. But not all genres are equally conducive to reflecting the individuality of the speaker of the utterance, that is, to an individual style. The most conducive genres are those of artistic literature” (Bakhtin 63).

It is important to read film in addition to literature into this statement. What Bakhtin is discussing here are secondary speech genres being the most conducive to reflecting the individuality of the speaker. Here is another piece of information which

needs to be taken into account when analyzing or making an adaptation of a film. Again, Bakhtin emphasizes that any utterance has style which is unique to the speaker, and this style is particularly evident in the secondary speech genre.

This is relevant when discussing the adaptation as most audiences judge the quality of an adaptation on how faithful it was to the novel.⁵ It seems as if these audiences are not privy to the concept of style and how embracing it allows for a richer experience in viewing an adaptation. Also, there is no need to reproduce a novel word for word in film as the word for word version of the piece already exists as the novel itself. Furthermore, there is no choice as to whether or not an adaptor's style will become part of the adaptation as style is the nature of dialogue. Therefore, the only way to avoid any changes when moving from medium to medium is by not making the adaptation at all.

Before moving on to a discussion of the work itself it is necessary to briefly summarize the ideas Bakhtin had on language. This is a significant topic of discussion for Bakhtin, but for the sake of keeping the discussion on adaptation focused it is best to highlight the main ideas and apply them to a real life example. Bakhtin was keenly aware that language is a complex, dynamic system which is constantly evolving and changing. Suffice it to say that language is developed through the use of speech genre and undergoes a process of testing and modification before being accepted by the user. In other words, "Historical changes in language styles are inseparably linked to changes in speech genres" (Bakhtin 65). Without getting too in-depth into the history and progress of language, the important thing to understand is that the language used at one point in time in a secondary speech genre takes on different meaning at different points in time. For example, the language which Döblin uses in his novel written in 1929, takes on new meaning when used in Fassbinder's film which was produced in 1980. This is something which must be considered carefully, but can also allow for tremendous, new meaning to be created in the adaptation as is evidenced in the comparison of the historical context between these two pieces. This will be discussed in depth while applying the theory to the example of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

Once the concept of the utterance and the influence speech genres have on dialogue is established it becomes possible to move on to the work itself. The work is

⁵ Faithful, in this case, implies a close adherence to the dialogue, plot, and structure of the work.

associated with secondary speech genres and functions largely in the same fashion that real-life dialogue functions.

“They [works], too, are clearly demarcated by a change of speaking subjects, and these boundaries, while retaining their *external* clarity, acquire here a special internal aspect because the speaking subject-in this case, the *author* of the work-manifests his own individuality in his style, his world view, and in all aspects of the design of his work”(Bakhtin 75).

Once one already has the understanding of the utterance it is then possible to understand to a greater extent the dialogue which takes place within and surrounding the work. However, there are some special considerations when dealing with the work.

“This imprint of individuality marking the work also creates special internal boundaries that distinguish this work from other works connected with it in the overall processes of speech communication in that particular cultural sphere: from the works of predecessors on whom the author relies, from other works of the same school, from the works of opposing schools with which the author is contending, and so on” (Bakhtin 75).

What is finally becoming clear is that no work exists on its own. All works, like utterances, require response from the audience. This response is colored by influence which the audience has collected over a lifetime of dialogue. As Bakhtin puts it, “The work is a link in the chain of speech communion.” (Bakhtin 76) In the case of film adaptation this is manifested in two different ways.

Firstly, as an observer of art it is understood that there will be comparisons made between other works (of any medium) as well as judgment made based on influence from other sources like criticism, academia, peers, and so forth. Secondly, as an adaptor, it is understood that the piece will contain influence which has been accrued by the adaptor. Since no two individuals have the same histories of dialogue it is natural that the two works will be very different, even if they are based on the same source material. This

may seem somewhat obvious, but if it were already understood then the judgment which a film adaptation is subjected to would be very different. The criticism would be free from the hard judgments created by the audience's demand for "authenticity" and they would instead allow the adaptation to be new unique piece free from having to be just like the original in order to be valid. Furthermore, according to Bakhtin there is no truly original work. What is called the source piece is really just another link in the chain of speech communication. It has been influenced by all things which have had dialogue with it or the author previous to its creation.

The immediate response to the level of freedom which Bakhtin's theory provides for is the concern that the essence of the source work will somehow be lost in the process of adaptation. The more modern art becomes, and the more it deconstructs what is linear and coherent about a piece the more of an issue this becomes, but Bakhtin remarks on this as well. The concept of *assimilation* is one which very closely ties all of the various influences that occur in dialogue together.

"This experience can be characterized to some degree as the process of assimilation-more or less creative-of others' words (and not the words of a language). Our speech, that is, all our utterances (including creative works), is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of 'our-own-ness,' varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate" (Bakhtin 89).

As discussed earlier style comes into play here and functions in a similar way to assimilation. It is through the influence of various speech genres and the utterances contained therein which shape the final object, in this case, the adapted film. There is no way the adaptor can lose the thread of the source piece since he is engaged in a dialogue with the creator of the original piece. Furthermore, the adaptor and creator are in dialogue with society which forces them to assimilate to conventions of adaptation. Therefore, assimilation prevents the adaptor from straying too far from the source material, as it will either become a work no longer associated with the source material or unsuccessful in

representing the essence of the source material. The overwhelming negative response caused by this will essentially negate the adaptation as viable.

Having presented all of the material in Bakhtin's theory of speech genres it is finally possible to discuss what the theory means for film adaptation and tie all the loose ends together. To do this it is necessary to explain what occurs when an individual enters into the chain of communication. When observing the source material the adaptor is having a dialogue with the creator of said source material. Based on the way utterances and speech genres work, the two participants are also engaged in dialogue with everything around them which has influence them in some way, present or past. As part of this dialogue the adaptor creates a work which is a new link in this chain of speech communication. The work then becomes engaged in dialogue with anyone else who encounters it and the chain continues. Through the adaptation, which is really the utterance of a secondary speech genre, the adaptation undergoes a process of assimilation based on the various dialogues which the adaptor has encountered. These dialogues also have served to develop the adaptors style which in turn feeds into the process of assimilation and influences the final work. This is the overall schema which is to be the foundation of new film adaptation theory. It is through this understanding that the mysteries of adaptation are revealed. For critics, it is in understanding this theory which provides a less opinionated and more theoretically based critique of an adaptation. And for audiences, it is this understanding which allows a more concise view of adaptation which, in turn, leads to a more complete enjoyment of the work. The next logical step is to examine the state of film adaptation theory as it stands and see how this new theory fits within what already exists.

III. The Current State of Film Theory

As previously stated, this essay is an attempt at adapting literary theory in the hopes of creating new and substantial theory relating specifically to film adaptation. In order to begin branching out into new territory it is imperative that the current field of film adaptation studies is examined. There are many books that claim to be on theory of adaptation, but are really on method of adaptation. There are still more that are mostly case studies and have no substantial theoretical component. In order to move on to new film adaptation theory it is imperative to examine these texts and note their strengths and

weaknesses since we do not want to repeat previous statements, and conversely, want to know what has not yet been said. There have been a huge number of texts written on the subject by authors like Judith Buchanan, Brian McFarlane, and Christine Geraghty. Many of these texts are very helpful, but since this paper deals solely with establishing a specific theory of adaptation, it is not prudent to explore the entire field of adaptation theory to date. That being said, examining perhaps two texts which exist in different time periods is much more size appropriate to the task at hand. There are two particularly interesting texts which relate to this discussion; George Bluestone's *Novels into Film* and Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*.

George Bluestone's *Novels into Film* is considered a classic and is still very useful even though it was first published in 1957. It is comprised of sections discussing the various aspects of filmmaking applied specifically to the art of adaptation, and also contains six case studies of films which have been adapted from novels. This book is a seminal work in the study of adaptation of film and has many great points to lend to the discussion. Primarily Bluestone provides a great defense for the film adaptation. At the time of the writing of this piece, the film had a lesser reputation than the novel. Bluestone is quick to note that most qualitative analysis of film was based on its success in reproducing the novel and its characters.

“What is common to all these assumptions is the lack of awareness that mutations are probable the moment one goes from a given set of fluid, but relatively homogeneous, conventions to another; that changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium. Finally, it is insufficiently recognized that the end products of novel and film represent different aesthetic genera, as different from each other as ballet is from architecture” (Bluestone 5).

In today's film studies departments this concept is well understood, but the significance of establishing this fact in the 50's and 60's cannot be understated. It is fair to say that without this establishing factor by George Bluestone the theories I am now trying to apply would have no foundation upon which to exist.

Regarding the new theory based on Bakhtin, Bluestone is describing what Bakhtin referred to as style. The process of assimilation is also essential to the process of transfer from one medium to another. Bluestone explains the process as a kind of mutation which is a strong argument for the changes which occur in adaptation. However, the argument would be greatly strengthened if he had proven theory to use in support of his argument. This is a prime example of how building a new theory based on the works of Bakhtin can strengthen the discussion on adaptation.

Once the misconceptions of the hierarchy of the arts are dispelled, Bluestone goes on to discuss some of the particular non-artistic factors which influence film differently than the novel. He also discusses the way in which an audience reacts to the different mediums and how this influences the popularity of the medium. Although these are interesting topics they don't serve to establish any theory about film adaptation, they mainly serve to explain the way in which film is so heavily influenced by the things surrounding it.

The only other relevant section which could be used as a starting point for the theoretical discussion is Bluestone's discussion of language. This discussion centers on the distinction between rendering tropes in the novel and in film. It is in this section that the old way of thinking about dialogue in film is shown. This is another excellent case for using a newer, more substantial theory to support what already exists which leads to a more convincing point being made.

“We observe that word-symbols must be translated into images of things, feelings and concepts through the process of thought. Where the moving picture comes to us directly through perception, language must be filtered through the screen of conceptual apprehension. And the conceptual process though allied to and often taking its point of departure from the precept represents a different mode of experience, a different way of apprehending the universe” (Bluestone 20).

Although this is a very interesting way of comparing the key components of the novel and film, it is discussing the subject based on literary terms. This is exactly the

reason why there should be a theory of film which is based more on the way in which communication takes place than the way in which literary concepts appear on screen. In a way, Bluestone's approach is too close in its focus to be able to discern the big picture of adaptation which involves the utterance and secondary speech genre. Using theory which is more generally applied to the act of communication and which allow film to be a part of the process of communication is a more effective way to support the manner in which adaptations are produced.

The second text which is relevant to the discussion is *A Theory of Adaptation* written by Linda Hutcheon and published in 2006. The dates are particularly significant as they demonstrate that although the field of adaptation has come a long way, film theorists still have quite a bit of work to do in order to establish film theory which is as serious or substantial as its contemporaries in other artistic mediums. Hutcheon's text deals mainly with the various aspects of filmmaking and how they apply to adaptation. Instead of having deep explication of adaptations, she takes the approach of peppering the entire text with examples of adaptation across all mediums (not only novels into film).

Hutcheon has quite a few interesting things to say about the process of adaptation in her book. She covers a tremendous amount of ground, discussing various aspects of adaptation like that of the audience's preconceptions, the different showing and telling aspects of various media, and, very interestingly, what is *not* an adaptation. The most natural starting point in discussing her novel is how she defines adaptation.

Hutcheon defines the process of adaptation in roughly three ways by saying that an adaptation is, "An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; A creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging; An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work" (Hutcheon 8). Perhaps simply because of the chronological time difference between these two books Hutcheon is able to state that film exists as an art form on its own even if it "borrows" words from literature. In the 50's Bluestone was struggling more with the concept of film being as serious a pursuit as literature while Hutcheon writes in an academic environment where film studies programs are steadily growing. Although this is a positive step forward in the process, the argument could be bolstered by adding theory which is on par with someone like Bakhtin. For example, she could supersede the concept of an intertextual engagement by

acknowledging the fact that secondary speech genres themselves are pieces of a dialogue, and regardless of medium function as a part of that dialogue. Also, with the support of Bakhtin's theory it becomes possible to define the "creative and interpretive act" as the natural occurrence in the chain of speech communication. In short, once Bakhtin's theory defines the way in which communication works, it is no longer necessary to build a new set of rules around adaptation as the rules of communication work better in proving the point.

This brings up a further point of consideration which is perhaps the crux of the argument for expanding books like Hutcheon's to include theory. It is fine to use terms like "transposing" when discussing adaptation, but it is more significant to establish a theory of communication which is stable and then fit works of art into the matrix which has already been established. When one has a thorough understanding of speech genres (particularly secondary speech genres and their dependence on the utterance) it becomes possible to move on to film as a part of a dialogue contained within a secondary speech genre and then have discussion. In this way the point of arguments like, "This film was not faithful to the book" are moot since the question is no longer about retaining the integrity of the source work, but understanding that there is a dialogue going on and the product of that dialogue is less a conscious choice than an inevitability. Furthermore, if there is a dialogue between the adaptor and the creator of the source work then there will naturally be some stylistic changes, but the essence of the source will remain intact as this is the way in which dialogue works. Just as in a primary speech genre where one participant is discussing physics, another participant wouldn't suddenly begin talking about sports, so too in the process of adaptation the adaptor will not make the message of the adaptation something which has nothing to do with the source work.

Getting back to Hutcheon, further on in the text she discusses the key concept which naturally occurs when discussing adaptation: the "telling" vs. "showing" argument. This argument engages a specific segment of literary audiences who often preconceive film to be a medium which shows everything explicitly.

"Most of the talk about film adaptation, however, is in negative terms of loss. Sometimes what is meant is simply a reduction of scope: of length, of

accretion of detail, of commentary. Ray Bradbury's script for John Huston's 1956 film version of Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) might stand as a typical example of the pragmatic necessity of cutting a sprawling novel to make it fit the screen in terms of time and space, because it usually takes longer to perform an action than to read a written report of it" (Hutcheon 37).

This is another prime example of how having a theory already established could support arguments presented. For example, once it is understood that the utterance is the most basic unit of communication of any type, the emphasis on the words and sentences that make up a novel fade. It becomes possible to say that it is not that a film adaptation of a novel should contain every word explicitly stated or acted out, but that if the utterances of the work, as well as the utterance within the work remain intact, there will be a successful interpretation. For viewers who hold steadfastly to the idea that everything needs to be read and imagined this point will be lost, but if it can be demonstrated that it is evident that the film can allow just as much for its own artistic nuance while still allowing for interpretation then the audience is much more likely to experience an adaptation in a positive manner.

After examining some of the typical texts on the subject of adaptation it is readily apparent that, although they are fine texts, they don't truly classify as theory. When these texts try to establish theory they are unable to succeed because they do not establish as complete a theory as someone like Bakhtin. Bluestone is unable to escape the hierarchy of the arts while Hutcheon has perhaps too many examples of various adaptations to specifically examine what the core of adaptation is. It is evident that one first needs to establish a theory of communication and then "lay it over" what is already understood to be adaptation. This way, if there is any disagreement over the quality of an adaptation, one needs simply to examine the utterances and speech genres present in order to settle the argument.

Before finally applying all the theory discussed to an actual adaptation, something must be said about the particular adaptation in a more general sense in order to give it meaning to reader's who are not familiar with *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in either medium. In this particular case, this general knowledge will also be essential in unlocking

the way in which speech genre affects the adaptation. This introduction serves not only to give context, but also to help the theorist remember that although a greater understanding of adaptation can be gained through theory, it is important not to make the piece so technical that it no longer has artistic relevance. Therefore, we will take a break from theory for the moment and return to once the aforementioned contextual knowledge is in hand.

IV. A Brief Introduction to Alfred Döblin

In 1929 Alfred Döblin published his novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* which takes the reader through late 1920's Berlin. At the helm of the experience is Franz Biberkopf, a criminal recently released from prison, trying to navigate the city and to remain free from the lifestyle which led him to prison in the first place. This piece was Döblin's most famous novel, which wasn't exactly his intent, as he conceived of his novels as a collection which painted a total picture when perceived together. That being said the novel by itself reflects a great deal of what defines Döblin's style. For example, the piece examines the politics of the time, the nature of humanity, temptation, homosexuality, and morality through the character of Franz and the people he knows. The influence of the life of the author cannot be understated as he was a Jewish physician who supported liberal politics and wrote many well received articles on futurist art.

All of the experiences of Döblin's life are in some way captured in the piece and are much more accessible to the reader. This accessibility comes from the fact that Döblin's style is such that grammar is secondary to the images which are evoked by stream of conscious writing as David B. Dollenmayer puts it in his introduction to the Döblin collection *The Berlin Novels of Alfred Döblin*.

“At its best, this technique does indeed set free Döblin's imagination to create visions of extraordinary dynamism and power. At its worst, it results in flabbiness, obscurity, and banal tedium (almost all of Döblin's works could stand some cutting). But it also means that the writer's own subconscious is very near the surface of his text” (Dollenmayer 4).

This is a key point in understanding Döblin, but also a key component in dissecting the dialogue which occurs between him and Fassbinder during the course of the adaptation. In a way this novel is perfect to use for this discussion as Döblin's style allows for his views to be very close to the surface of this piece. This style of writing makes the dialogue between Döblin and Fassbinder is much easier to discuss.

V. Fassbinder and Döblin: An Intersection of Styles

Fassbinder's style is somewhat different than Döblin's and since style is such an important concept in Bakhtin, and will be referenced later on, now is a good time to explore what Fassbinder's style entailed. Once the comparison between the novel and the adaptation is actually done there will be a more in depth discussion of how Fassbinder's style works within specific scenes through the medium of film, but for now a general overview of Fassbinder's style will do. The shot composition of Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* could be described as cluttered. The reader is consistently crammed into cluttered apartments which are strewn with bottles, hanging clothing, and obstructive building supports. On top of that, the overall lighting of the piece is very low which makes details hard to make out. Furthermore, there are a huge number of interior sets in this piece. In fact, most of the scenes take place indoors which is somewhat odd considering the piece is named "Berlin Alexanderplatz." All of these devices provide the same feeling of claustrophobia and disorder which adds to the audience's overall interaction with the characters. In much the same way that Döblin makes the audience feel like a citizen of Berlin, even if they have never been there, Fassbinder gives the audience the feel of the people of the city even though we have never really met them. Also, since 1929 Alexanderplatz can never possibly exist again, Fassbinder has cleverly given the audience a feel for the nooks and crannies of the city without ever showing the square that the piece is named after. Further insight into understanding the style of the adaptation can be gained from finding out how the dialogue between Döblin and Fassbinder was outside of the adaptation. In other words, what was Fassbinder's attitude towards the novel and how did that impact the adaptation?

Fassbinder was a long time fan of Döblin and had considered doing a version of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* for a while before he actually did it. He was a fan of the work for many reasons, but the most interesting reason is that he seems to have felt that a film

version of the book was a necessary work based on what he saw happening in the Germany he lived in some 50 years after the release of the novellas he states in an interview with Hans Guther Pflaum.

“I mean, the fact that I’ve thought so much about the novel, maybe not continuously over the years, but very specifically and intensely in recent times, to the point that I also wanted to make a film out of it-that certainly has to do with my seeing so many things nowadays that frighten me again. I see citizens who’d rather have peace, order, and discipline again, and this in a society that in many respects is falling apart, in a negative way, not a productive way” (Töteberg and Lensing 46).

This is obviously a very powerful sentiment that Fassbinder is expressing about his connection to the novel. It will become important to the theoretical aspect when the connection between the creator of the source piece and the adaptor is examined further. It is not just the ability to have dialogue that is important as anyone can have dialogue with any work from any secondary speech genre. The important piece is that the utterances of the dialogue somehow remain intact and are expressed with the same force even across mediums.

At the time Fassbinder decided to create his adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* there had already been a successful adaptation by Piel Jutzi which occurred just two years after the release of the book. As this book was very popular upon its release, while also creating a lot of controversy, it is not surprising that it was made into a film right away. Some would find it curious that Fassbinder decided to make another film version after one was already made.

“As a film it’s not bad (Piel Jutzi’s version). It just seems to me that the film doesn’t have much to do with the book. Not much is an understatement; I should say nothing at all. It used the book as a pretext for telling a story. Maybe it’s a story that can be found in the book, if you want to. But I’d say it was a mistake to call it a film version of the book.” (Töteberg and Lensing 48).

As has been discussed, feeling strongly for a novel is not enough to create a strong adaptation. It is in recognizing the utterances that allow the adaptor to successfully create an adaptation. In this case, it seems that some of the reason for Fassbinder's adaptation is the fact that he didn't feel that the utterance of the novel had been properly expressed through film. Further supporting this is the fact that although the earlier interpretation was well received, it did not become its own stand alone work in the way that Fassbinder's did. A further important comparison to be made between the two adaptations is of a more technical nature.

Fassbinder's adaptation is roughly fifteen hours long while Piel Jutzi's is only an hour and a half. Generally speaking, it is the utterance that is the important part of adaptation not the words and sentences, so the length of the adaptation is of secondary importance. That being said, the adaptor must also be practical in the transfer of utterances from one medium to another. Given the fact that the novel is quite sizeable and rich with imagery, it is safe to say that one and a half hours is not a sufficient length to satisfy plot demands while at the same time keeping the integrity of the work intact.

Another point about Fassbinder adaptation is it is interesting to know that he had two scripts for *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, one for television and one for cinema. The script for the television series was 3000 pages and filled fifteen hours of film. The script for the film version was only meant to fill three hours of film, but was never made. What is so interesting about this is that it confirms that it is not so much the length of the adaptation but the transmission of the utterance which is critical. Fassbinder planned on making both pieces at the same time based on the novel but with some differences in impact because of the length.

“When I was still intending to do both versions simultaneously-for reasons of economy, by the way, because of the sets...I actually wanted to have an entirely different cast, not use the same actors at all. That has to do with having an entirely different narrative method, depending on whether you're presenting a story in fifteen hours or only three” (Töteberg and Lensing 52).

This is a particularly interesting point in that it demonstrates with the same director and same work how the utterance is the component of adaptation which is the most critical. It would have been further illuminating to have the cinema version to compare with but unfortunately, it was never made. However, judging by the way Fassbinder speaks about the two pieces, there is an understanding that they convey the same message (utterance) but have a different way of impacting the viewer.

Fassbinder goes on to discuss how length is a crucial point in understanding the kind of impact the piece has on the viewer. This consideration is evident in Fassbinder's discussion of his choice of actor Gunter Lamprecht for the TV series when he says, "And Lamprecht, it seems to me, is someone who has such a broad range of expression that it can easily cover fifteen hours, but he lacks the intensity...that I'd be interested in having for a two-and-a-half hour version. For that I'd want someone whose acting was just more intense" (Töteberg and Lensing 52). This demonstrates the fact that the medium is pliable as far as being able to keep the integrity of the original work intact. However, there needs to be careful consideration as to how the message will be transmitted. In other words, once the medium of the adaptation is determined it is natural that the piece is modified if only in method of transmission. However, as long as the utterance remains intact the strength with which the audience receives that utterance is variable. In the case of the television series it takes longer for the message to be revealed but allows for a different level of connection with the characters. In the case of a shorter length (3 hour) film the message is much more intense and reveals itself much quicker. Either way, there is no change in the way in which the dialogue takes place, but simply that size and inflection of the utterances.

VI. A Theory of Adaptation as Applied to Berlin Alexanderplatz

Now that all the components of the theory are in place it is finally possible to apply the theory to the actual adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. There are a few different pieces of the adaptation which are to be examined. First, the overall content including the structure and plot points will be examined. Next, some of the differences in the way the characters function between the source and the adaptation. Finally, an in depth account of key scenes and how they compare and manifest themselves in the adaptation. For this final part a few scenes which are of strong consequence in the plot

will be selected and some key components of those scenes will be analyzed. What is critical here is not to see how the various literary elements manifest themselves through film elements like *Mise-en-Scene*, but more to understand how the components of dialogue are at work based on the theories of Bakhtin.

Generally speaking, almost all of the scenes which are in the book are present in the film. The major cutting point for Fassbinder was many of the scenes in the book which talk almost endlessly about tiny details of average life on the streets of Berlin. Most of these heavily detailed parts occur in the first third of the book, but since it is a key part of Döblin's style, they are also scattered throughout. These scenes serve no real plot purpose, but do add to the overall feel of the novel and help to establish the reader in 1920's Berlin. Getting the feel of what it means to be a citizen of Berlin is a crucial point to understanding the novel.

On the other hand, Fassbinder had a strong reaction to these scenes and postulates a different reason for their existence.

“The first pages-maybe two hundred-bored me so completely and utterly that I might easily have put the book aside...In fact the author skirts around his theme, or rather the actual theme of the novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* for many chapters, for many, many pages, possibly out of cowardice, possibly out of an inexplicable timidity toward the prevailing morality of his time and his class, possibly out of the subconscious fear of a man who was somehow personally implicated. The “hero” Franz Biberkopf meets the other “hero” of the novel, Reinhold, a meeting that determines the future course of the lives of these two men, on page 155 of the 410 page paperback edition, more than a third of the way into the novel, and at least 150 pages too late, or so it seemed to me on first reading, an impression, by the way, that has basically not changed for me, though it has necessarily undergone some refinement” (Töteberg and Lensing 160).

Fassbinder observes that the first third of the novel is really just setting up the action for the rest of the novel as well as setting the scene by discussing Berlin at the time. The key component that Fassbinder has observed here is that it is the relationship

between Franz and Reinhold upon which the action of the whole story relies upon. Having determined this it becomes possible for Fassbinder to lay the groundwork for the audience to “meet” Reinhold and, even though this meeting occurs at the same chronological point in the novel and adaptation, the power of the meeting is underscored.

In his book *Fassbinder's Germany*, Thomas Elsaesser discusses Fassbinder's treatment of the plot by saying, “Fassbinder cut a relatively simple story, making sure that Biberkopf does not, as often happens in Döblin's novel, disappear from narrative view in the undergrowth of statistical, documentary and archival information about Berlin as a metropolis and home to several million souls” (Elsaesser 219). This is one of the first major ways which Fassbinder differs slightly from the novel and adds his own style to the story. The essence of the story remains intact but Fassbinder chose to remove certain extraneous detail in order to highlight the character of Franz. This choice makes the narrative much more clear and, therefore, much easier to follow.

In applying this adaptive choice to the theory of dialogue according to Bakhtin, it is apparent that that the choice Fassbinder makes with the narrative is closely tied to his style. As we recall from the theory of Bakhtin,

“Any style is inseparably related to the utterance and to typical forms of utterances, that is, speech genres. Any utterance-oral or written, primary or secondary, and in any sphere of communication-is individual and therefore can reflect the individuality of the speaker (or writer)...the most conducive genres are those of artistic literature: here the individual style enters directly into the very task of the utterance” (Bakhtin 63).

In this case it is possible to read “film” when Bakhtin writes literature. So, the justification for this modification of the text is less of a modification of the work, and more of a transfer of style. As noted earlier, Döblin's style is that of extreme detail and trying to replicate this level of detail is merely trying to replicate a style. Fassbinder was adverse to this level of detail and, frankly, bored by it and so he chose to downplay the level of factual detail of the novel. If he had chose to try and replicate the detailed word for word descriptions of Döblin a kind of style clash or plagiarism would occur. This

“style plagiarism” leads to a poor adaptation as it goes against what is understood as the way in which the utterance naturally functions. That is to say that it is impossible for one individual to copy the style of another individual as the core aspect of style is originality.

In a similar fashion to the way in which Fassbinder chose to accentuate the life of Franz Biberkopf, he also chose to make the role of Eva more significant in the film. In the novel Eva (as played by Hanna Schygulla) doesn't appear as a significant character until much later in the novel, and her importance is not understood until her connection with Meize is revealed. Just as Fassbinder felt that the first third of the novel was ponderous and skirted the “true essence” of the novel, he seems to have felt that Döblin waited too long to introduce Eva and because of this, he chose to introduce her in the first part of the series. The complete significance of her character cannot be understood until much later, but the choice of introducing her so early affirms the fact that Fassbinder wanted the audience to understand that this is a character to pay attention to. It appears that just as Fassbinder felt Döblin was too timid in getting the substance of the storyline based around Franz, he also felt that the neglect of the character of Eva in the beginning of the novel could lead to missing the significance of her character later on.

There are many incredible scenes in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* for their aesthetic beauty as well as their significance. Many books could be filled with a point by point explication of every scene in the film, but since the aim is to prove the significance of the theory of adaptation it is necessary to explicate only a few of them. The thing to notice in each scene for explication is how it is not the words and sentences of the novel which are transferred to the adaptation as these are mere linguistic construction. It is the utterances of the novel which are present in the film, but displayed in a different medium. This “transformation” is really just an interpretation of the utterances as well as an interpretation of the overall utterance which is the work of Döblin. Remember, an utterance may consist of words and sentences but is not bound by them as linguistic constructs. Therefore, it is not necessary to read word for word from the book and compare it to the script of the film, but more to enter a dialogue with the collection of utterances of Döblin and see how the utterances compare between the novel and the film. This is the way in which the chain of speech communication works. Döblin wrote the novel, Fassbinder made the adaptation, and we as viewers and critics now view both and

add another link to this chain. Anyone who reads and critiques this paper is also adding themselves to the chain and so forth.

The first example relevant to the discussion occurs in the first episode of the television series. The first episode of the television series of Fassbinder corresponds largely to the first chapter of the novel. In it, Franz is released from prison after four years and begins the process of re-acclimating to the city of Berlin. The title of this episode is “The Punishment Begins,” which is a line from the first page of the book. The book has some “titles” which are really more headings which contain some information, distinguishable from the text only by their change in font. This is a point, similar to the character modifications made, where Fassbinder decides to accentuate certain points. The words and sentences do not have any dynamic marking which serve to clue the reader into significant themes. This is what is meant when Bakhtin discusses the benefits of the concept of utterances over other linguistic concepts. Context is what gives words and sentences meaning, and according to Bakhtin context is speech genres modifying the linguistic components and giving them meaning. This transforms them into utterances which are the true units of language and communication. The key to understanding this point is to leave the more generic term of “context” and, instead, use the term “speech genre”, as it has a clearly defined meaning.

Fassbinder used many interesting techniques in order to adapt the utterances of Döblin. In his deep understanding of the novel, he took various intricacies in the text and highlighted them in various ways. For example, he chose to title an episode after a theme or removing extraneous description in order to bring a particular interaction between characters to the forefront. In regards to theory, this exemplifies the way in which secondary speech genres work in dialogue. In primary speech genres, there is communication going on between one or more parties which is complemented with gestures, facial expression, inflection, etc. In secondary speech genres like the novel (especially modern novels) it is the receiver’s responsibility to interpret the opposite end of the dialogue and imply the “clues” that primary speech genres contain but certain secondary speech genres lack. As an adaptor the extra step is then recreating these clues in the adaptation. Just as no one person can understand entirely what another person means, so too can no adaptor understand fully what the creator of the source means.

However, this is an inevitability of dialogue and every receiver of the adaptation joins the dialogue by agreeing or disagreeing with the adaptation.

Returning to the first episode of the adaptation, the first pivotal scenes in the plot comes almost immediately. Franz has been released from Tegel prison and runs into a Jewish man named Nachum who, seeing Franz's disoriented manner, takes him to the home where he is staying. Nachum goes on to try and ease Franz's suffering by telling him the story of Stefan Zannovich. Zannovich was a man who used his intelligence to make a substantial sum of money in life, and according to Nachum, died happily in old age. It turns out Nachum has left some of the important details out of the story as his brother-in-law Elizer enters and explains to Franz that the ending to the story is not as positive as Nachum led on. The truth of the story is that Zannovich is really a crook who ends up killing himself and is left in the city dump. This fact highly disturbs Franz who exclaims, "Yes, sir, are we nothing, just because we did something once? Everybody who has been to jail can get back on his feet again and it don't matter what he did" (Döblin 16). This is a pivotal point in the story as it is laced with meaning for people of different classes, but also for the German people specifically. In Döblin's time this could have implied that World War I was the "Something" that was done, while in Fassbinder's time it could be referring to World War II. Either way, it is the speech genre which gives this utterance its significance.

As far as this scene's importance in adaptation is concerned, what is most important about this scene is that Fassbinder chose to make it more significant in his adaptation than in Döblin's work. In the novel this scene takes up roughly four pages, while in the film the scene is about fifteen minutes long. What is also significant is the power with which the scene comes across in the film. In the novel, before the climax of the speech, Döblin simply states, "The walls no longer existed. A small room with a hanging lamp, two Jews running around, one with brown hair and one with red hair, both wearing black plush hats, quarreling with each other" (Döblin 16). In the film however, the lighting gets very dark, a thunder storm rages in the background, and Franz goes on a tirade about the callousness of people, wailing and waving wildly. Again, this scene demonstrates that Fassbinder chose to highlight a particular piece of the story to lay the groundwork for Franz's storyline, while Döblin's chose to use constant, consistent

repetition to allow the meaning to brew in the subconscious of the reader until the climax of the whole piece when all is finally realized. This is not to say that one is more successful in transmitting a message, but that medium and style impact how the message is transmitted. This is the nature of the secondary speech genre and the works that function within it. This sort of choice should encourage the viewer not to get stuck on whether one medium tries to accomplish the same thing as another medium since the method of transmission is so different and there is a new perspective to be gained by seeing different works through different mediums. The viewer should focus on the dialogue itself and allow the utterances to function regardless of personal preference. More directly, utterances supersede the medium or type of speech genre even while they are defined and function within said medium or speech genre.

Before moving on to another section there is one nuance which should be made clear before getting further into the adaptation. There has been quite a bit stated so far relating to the accentuation or negation of certain pieces of the novel. It must be understood that Fassbinder does not entirely ignore or undermine all the nuance of Döblin's writing style. As has been previously stated Döblin utilizes an almost obsessive amount of repetition to let meaning grow slowly inside of the reader. The way in which Fassbinder deals with this is by interjecting certain phrases from Döblin's "day in the life" vocabulary into the film. Fassbinder deals with this in largely three different ways. The first is by "titling" different sections of film using phrases from the novel. For example, as already discussed in the first part, Fassbinder chose to name the episode "The Punishment Begins" from a line in one the first page of the novel. This serves to inundate the viewer into the significance of the episode and where it fits into the scheme of the work.

The second method Fassbinder uses to transfer Döblin's phraseology from the novel to the film is through narration. Moving on to episode two of the adaptation there is a perfect example of this device. In his quest for work Franz encounters a newspaper vendor who also sells a selection of pornography. The vendor suggests the perhaps Franz would be interested in this kind of work and gives him a few magazines to take with him. Franz then shows these magazines to Lina his girlfriend at the time, making her very upset and prompting her to return to the train station in order to scold the newspaper

vendor. In the novel this scene is described by the narrator who states, “Franz Biberkopf noble sufferer, found it expedient to stay in the background. He stood back grounded in front of the cigar-store of Schröder Import Export and from there observed, slightly impeded by fog, street-cars and passers-by, the progress of the action just engaged”(Döblin 54).

Fassbinder treats the dialogue of the scene in a similar way by narrating it almost word for word while the action is displayed on screen. The camera is movement is static and shot from the point of view of Franz. The key difference is that the audience is not only subjected to the narrator’s voice but also to the action on screen. Thomas Elsaesser explains this device in his book *Fassbinder’s Germany*.

“While the presence of narrators (including Fassbinder’s own voice-over commentary) and other narrational instances are thus overstated, the logic of the actions, their sequence and causal connexions are massively understated, giving the characters’ interchanges a tantalizingly elliptical quality, leaving the viewer baffled as to their motives or goals” (Elsaesser 219).

This link between dialogue and picture is one of the most important aspects of this adaptation and of many of the works of Fassbinder. In relation to the present theory, what is created by this combination of the aural utterance and the visual interpretation of the utterance is a doubling effect. This concept is so crucial to understanding the series that a further example is necessary in order to fully explicate this point.

This further example also includes Lina and Franz, but instead of a newspaper vendor there is Lina’s Uncle Lüders. Franz and Lüders are working together as shoelace salesman, dividing the routes, and splitting the profits. As Franz is on his route one day, he visits a war widow to sell her shoelaces. Entering her apartment, he realizes he bears a strange resemblance to her husband who died in the First World War. She too notices this fact and this resemblance leads an intense emotional and physical connection between the pair. Franz, in his elation over this new found affair, tells Lüders about the experience and splits the money he received from the widow with him. Lüders is both enraged at what he sees as a sex for money relationship and also jealous that it was Franz who was

lucky enough to meet the widow instead of him. He ventures out to the widow's apartment in order to take his revenge on her. The contents of the rest of the scene are not important in this case as the point relevant to this essay relates to the relationships between these characters.

This event is a perfect example of the doubling which occurs in the series in that Franz serves as a double to the war widow's husband. The significance of this scene is in the relationship grouping which is created by the characters and their interactions.

“What can be glimpsed, but only as an instant flash in the form of a ‘positive’ image, are the outlines of a kind of utopia, the vision of a way of being *in* the world without being *of* the world, where *eros* and *agape*, but also an ethical imperative and a bodily transfiguration miraculously come together as a new experience of identity, in the strange circuit of erotic, economic and family ties that briefly binds Biberkopf to Lüders and to Lina, Lina to the widow, the widow to her dead husband, and the husband to Biberkopf. They are all each others’ doubles and stand-ins, making up a relay of giving and receiving, a de-territorialized and exteriorized manner of being for each other, in a time-shifting and space-shifting continuum, where the dead can come back to life, and even murder can be undone” (Elsaesser 223).

Just as arranging the characters in this way creates the doubling effect that Elsaesser is talking about, so too does layering the narration over the action on screen serve to create the same effect. As far as theory is concerned, doubling is the place where the utterance of a novel meets the utterance of the cinema. In fact, there is no better way to illustrate the way in which the utterance is represented in two different mediums. The novel uses words to create an utterance and engage in dialogue with other parties, while the film uses visual and aural mediums to create its utterances. Fassbinder has utilized this theoretical meeting of different utterances in a way which creates an artistic effect. In this way, the actual adapting itself has become the art.

The final way in which Fassbinder adds Döblin's vocabulary to the adaptation is through externalizing the dialogue in the characters. One of the most famous and most

amusing scenes in the film is when Franz, while stopping into a bar, has a pseudo-dialogue with his drinks. This scene occurs in part seven of the television series and in book six of the novel. Franz has just recovered from losing his arm after being pushed out of the car and he is out in the fine weather. He stops into a bar and orders three beers and schnapps. There is slight variation between the book and the film as to exactly what he orders and in what order he drinks, but it is the utterance of the scene which is most important. In the novel, the scene is portrayed as the drinks actually talking to Franz, or the implication is that he is having some kind of dialogic interaction with them. If a filmmaker was to literally adapt this scene it could appear rather silly to have talking beer schooners. So, what Fassbinder does is to write both parts of the dialogue as coming from Franz himself. The end result is as if he is asking questions and also giving the responses of the drinks in a different voice. For example, in the book a piece of the dialogue appears like this: "The first schooner says: I come from the cellar, from hops and malt. Now I am cool, what do I taste like? Franz says: Bitter, fine, cool. Yes, I cool you off, I cool all men off, then I make them warm and then I dispel their idle thoughts." (Döblin 192) In the film the dialogue begins with Franz drinking an entire beer and then knocking on the second one asking, "Where do you come from?" Franz then leans in and playing the part of the beer says, "I come from the cellar, from hope and malt. Now I'm cool. How do I taste?" Franz (as himself) answers, "A little bit bitter, but otherwise nice and cool." Granted some of these differences could be caused by the different translations used by Criterion for the film or by the publishers at Continuum but regardless, the differences in presentation are significant. Fassbinder chose to take what was a relatively straightforward dialogue from the novel and adapt it into a very interesting dialogue between an alcoholic and his vice.

Theoretically speaking, what has happened is that the scene in the book could be viewed as an utterance, or a collection of utterances operating within a speech genre. Fassbinder entered the dialogue with the novel while implicitly understanding the speech genre, and then received the utterances as part of that dialogue. In adapting this collecting of utterances or one big utterance (Bakhtin states that an utterance could be any size) Fassbinder adds to the dialogue by interpreting how this scene could be acted out. Then we as the viewer receive this part of the dialogue and the cycle continues. Again, it is

clear that it is not the words and sentences of this scene which are the most important but the utterances themselves. It is clear when looking at the novel and the adaptation that the essence of the piece (as embodied by the utterance) remains intact regardless of the linguistic component.

One of the most pivotal scenes in the novel or the adaptation is when Franz meets Reinhold. As has been discussed the groupings of characters is the key to true understanding of their purpose and, therefore, the purpose of the work. Elsaesser explains the significance of Franz and Reinhold's interactions.

“Biberkopf is an archetypal Fassbinder hero not least because he appreciates perverse couplings, not only of a sexual kind. Through Reinhold and Pums, for instance, Franz tries to redraw binary divisions apart from those of gender, such as employed/unemployed, legal/illegal, rich/poor. A hallmark of the ‘other’ economy is that it operates with the traditional figures of the in-between and the go-between, outlawed by respectable society: the thief, the fence and the black marketer... This is the narrative's major provocation, because at first sight it is so under motivated: we never quite understand why Reinhold did push Franz from the speeding car, and secondly, we never learn from Franz why he is so ready to forget, and so anxious to forgive. The least satisfactory explanation is Franz's infatuation with Reinhold, masochistically seeking humiliation and punishment” (Elsaesser 226).

Once the similarities between the dialogues used to describe the Reinhold/Franz relationship are established in the novel and the film, the next step is to understand how the process of manifesting the relationship in the adaptation is theoretically significant. As has been discussed earlier, the key concept to understanding Bakhtin's theory is to understand how style influences the utterance. As has been shown Fassbinder was not happy with the way that some of the significant points were layered deeply into extraneous detail in the novel. Therefore, he chose to highlight specific interactions in order to make their relevance more clear. This one of the key cases of this as his style is deeply dependent on the interactions between characters and the effect these grouping

create. Therefore, even though the explicate plot significance of the relationship between Franz and Reinhold is somewhat frustrating, it is the relationship grouping which can be created by the characters which is most significant.

VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, adaptation is an art form which should be considered in as serious a fashion as other art forms and their respective adaptations. This consideration cannot be based on opinion based judgments of authenticity as this type of judgment has no theoretical basis. However, when adaptation is understood as a method of communication and is, therefore, subject to the rules and theories of speech communication, there can be a real dialogue about validity of specific adaptations as they relate to various sources. It is this kind of theory which is lacking in today's study of film.

There is an inherent risk in trying to determine the success or failure of an adaptation regardless of whether or not it is based on communication theory. The risk is that no matter how clearly defined the theory is, there is still a human element to judgment which is much harder to dictate. However, the present theory is an attempt at making judgments of adaptations less subjective and also to help audiences understand the inevitabilities of differing styles which occur in adaptation. Through understanding these inevitabilities, the audience gains more from viewing the film and the academic world can understand in greater detail the way in which adaptations can reach their maximum potential.

As in every scientific analysis there are outliers in the results the trends which are observed can lead to much more substantial theory. Furthermore, as this study deals with the humanities and not the sciences it would be impossible to create a theory which satisfies everyone, but the intent of creating more substantial theory is still present. At any rate, this kind of theoretical exploration will prevent individuals from feeling that their opinion is a sufficient judgment of film adaptations, and that these opinions require no theoretical basis in order to be valid. Once the understanding that this kind of thinking is false occurs, film theory can truly exist on an equal footing with its peers in academia.

Work-Cited

- Berlin Alexanderplatz. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Teleculture, 1980. Film.
- Bakhtin, Michail. *The Bakhtin Reader : selected writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*. Ed. Pam Morris. London: Arnold, cop. 1994. Print.
- Bluestone, George. *Novels into Film*. Berkeley, 1966. Print.
- Dentith, Simon. *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Dollenmayer, David B. *The Berlin Novels of Alfred Döblin*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1988. Print.
- Döblin, Alfred. *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. London and New York: Continuum, 1961. Print.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. *Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996. Print.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Töteberg, Micheal, and Leo A. Lensing. *The Anarchy of the Imagination: Interviews, Essays, Notes Rainer Werner Fassbinder*. Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. Print.