

## The Principle of Montage and Literature<sup>1</sup>

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“Real montage is based on the document” (Benjamin, 1991: p. 232). What does Benjamin mean by this sentence? This statement is a singular notional crystallization in the intersection between literature and film, and it emerged in the context of a specific encounter between Walter Benjamin as a theoretician and Alfred Döblin as a writer. Benjamin’s sentence was articulated as part of his review of Döblin’s novel, which was quite over-ambitiously titled “The Crisis of the Novel.” What are the attributes of the “document” that determines montage? Definitions of the word *document* (which originated in thirteenth-century France) in various dictionaries more or less consistently relate writing to terms such as *evidence*, *proof*, and *reality*. Considering the entire intellectual milieu of the Weimar Republic, in which the novel was written and published, Benjamin’s use of the term *document* should be read as a semantic link to the notion of reality within *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement and to the connotations of film as an art that has a strong impact on reality. Hence, film is a “document” that has a special power to represent or modify objective reality. One should

- 1 This chapter is derived from the article, published as: Štrajn, Darko. The principle of montage and literature: fragmented subjectivity as the subject-matter in novel, film and in digital forms of narration. In: Zorman, Barbara (ed.), Vaupotič, Aleš (ed.). *Literatura in gibljive slike: tematski sklop = Literature and moving images: thematic section*, (Primerjalna književnost, ISSN 0351-1189, year 37, 2). pp. 39-53.
- 2 The most common English translations of this movement’s name are *New Objectivity* or *New Sobriety*.