

BETWEEN THE AXE AND THE ANVIL:
INTERNAL (RE)CONSTRUCTIONS
OF MODERN SUBJECTIVITY IN
BERLIN, ALEXANDERPLATZ

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Scholarship surrounding Alfred Döblin's *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* has mainly focused on the novel's cinematic qualities, epic structure, or its subversion of traditional narratology. Less often examined are the ways in which modern constructions of subjectivity are transformed as the barriers between interior and exterior space are threatened, subverted, and deconstructed within the text. Compounding this oversight is the fact that although *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* is considered one of the major Großstadt (big city) novels (such as *Ulysses*, *Manhattan Transfer*, *Petersburg*, *Mrs. Dalloway*), continued scholarship has largely neglected it. Perhaps the closest that recent criticism has come to addressing the "modern dilemma" — the struggle of the individual to maintain subjectivity while wishing to participate in a community consistently threatened by statistical anonymity — is Sabine Hake's 2008 book that explores the cultural architecture of Weimar Berlin. However, her treatment of *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* fails to consider how the novel evidences its own unique reconstruction of subjectivity. It is within this liminal space I make my case: that subjectivity is forced to retreat and reconstruct itself through the occupation of interior spaces. By underscoring the socially violent and invasive aspects of the process of modernization, I plan to demonstrate how this retreat is both space-forming and space-contingent. Such an analysis will resist the notion introduced in 1903 by Georg Simmel that within the metropolis the individual "become[s] a mere cog in an enormous organization of things and powers which tear from his hands all progress, spirituality, and value in order to transform them from their subjective form into the form of a purely objective life" (10). That is, I believe that there exists the potential for the individual to retain their subjectivity; to deny inclusion as a "mere cog"; to be able to stand within the lobby of their mind and look out through the windows upon modern life. By proposing that the individual (re)constructs a peculiar form of

subjectivity, a spatial production that retains their “progress, spirituality, and value,” this paper will demand the reconsideration of the representations of subjectivity both within the textual and industrial city alike.

Written in 1929 and likewise set during the Weimar Republic, *Berlin, Alexanderplatz*: *The Story of Franz Biberkopf* holds a unique place in literary history. Despite often being considered the German *equivalent* of *Ulysses* or *Manhattan Transfer* (Koepke 1), it has received a fraction of the critical attention that those works have garnered. I highlight the characterization of *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* as *equivalent* rather than *comparable*, for it underscores the paradoxical neglect by continued scholarship. Following the recognition of early scholars for the need to “affirm [...] Döblin’s rank and significance” due to his status “as a ‘forgotten writer’ of considerable stature who ha[s] been excluded from the canon of German literature” (Koepke 72), the question is raised: why has this affirmation failed? Or, rather, why has *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* fallen from the critical eye when other Großstadt novels have not? The problem of Döblin’s (and by extension *Berlin, Alexanderplatz*) status as a “forgotten writer” is one of many that this paper will seek to answer. Through examining how the novel (re)constructs subjectivity, I will demonstrate not only the need for renewed critical attention, but also how the conclusions raised can subsequently be used as an interpretative tool for both literature and culture. Our task now becomes that of the intellectual flâneur: to observe and critique as we walk through and as we peek at the construction sites that constitute modern subjectivity.

Therefore, we shall begin with the simple and work towards the complex as we traverse the Alexanderplatz. An example of the novel’s apparent brevity can be found on page one, in which the entire story of Franz Biberkopf is outlined. The narrator relates:

The subject of this book is the life of the former cement worker and haulier Franz Biberkopf in Berlin. As our story begins, he has just been released from prison, where he did time for some stupid stuff; now he is back in Berlin, determined to go straight.

To begin with, he succeeds. But then, though doing all right for himself financially, he gets involved in a set-to with an unpredictable external agency that looks an awful lot like fate.

Three times the force attacks him and disrupts his scheme. The first time it comes at him with dishonesty and deception. Our man is able to get to his feet, he is still good to stand.

Then it strikes him a low blow. He has trouble getting up from that, he is almost counted out.

And finally it hits him with monstrous and extreme violence.

[...] Before he can make an end, however, his blindness is taken from him in a way I do not describe here. His fault is revealed to him in the clearest of terms.

[...] The terrible thing that was his life acquires a purpose. A radical cure has been performed on Franz Biberkopf. And in the end we see our man back on Alexanderplatz, greatly changed, considerably worse for wear, but straightened out.

To see and hear this will be worthwhile for many readers who, like Franz Biberkopf, fill out a human skin, but, again like Franz Biberkopf, happen to want more from life than a piece of bread. (Döblin 1)

I refer to the brevity of the novel as apparent, for regardless of this straightforward outline, the subsequent sections of the text can hardly be considered as such. The first complication the

reader encounters is that the story of Franz Biberkopf, despite being presented as *the* story (evidenced by the subtitle) is largely absent. In fact, his subordinate position within the title suggests that it is really the city, Berlin, that is the primary subject of the novel. Perhaps, then, Biberkopf is better understood as *a* man rather than “our man” (1). The displacement of Biberkopf from the central position of his own story will become vital in exploring the pressures of modernization that contribute to a deconstruction of internal space. Moreover, reading Biberkopf as a secondary protagonist begins the transition from viewing the novel along a simple and complex opposition to one of singular and multiple.

Through the adoption of the terms singular and multiple, we begin to approach the language of the city—that is, we begin to see the pressures placed on the individual (singular) by the crowds (multiple). These pressures strike at the heart of the modern dilemma. I propose that the struggle of the individual to maintain subjectivity while wishing, needing to participate in the community of modernity—a community consistently threatened by statistical anonymity—is one of the products of modernization. As Marxist humanist writer Marshall Berman describes it, the process of modernization is a “maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish” (15). Further, modernization may also be understood as the problem of becoming urban, a concern that cultural historians Ignacio Farís and Stefan Höhne interpret as being “a particular form of becoming multiple, indifferent, imperceptible” which results in “urban desubjectivation” (19). The state of becoming indifferent, or anonymous, is one that literary critic Sharon O’Dair reminds us is “an inescapable feature of modern social life” (14). The inescapable “maelstrom” (Berman 15) of modernization brings with it a certain violence; a violence marked predominantly by the struggle to retain or assert

one's subjectivity. That is, there exists a tension between "equalization and differentiation" (Soja 221). Therefore, in order to examine the (re)constructions of subjectivity within the textual city of *Berlin, Alexanderplatz*, it is necessary to consider how those constructions are contingent on social life. For as we shall see, it is ultimately the pressures of social life that form an anvil against which Biberkopf's subjectivity is "straightened out" (Döblin 1) and (re)constructed.

Yet, the social pressures exhibited in the novel are not enough to solely explain the transformations of subjectivity. Rather, I believe that we must simultaneously approach the text from a spatial angle. An additional reframing is now called for, one that contains the singular-multiple tension while accounting for the influence of the social *and* the spatial. Consequently, I plan to follow Sabine Hake in her use of the socio-spatial dialectic. In her book, *Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin*, Hake explicates how Berlin and its process of modernization deconstruct subjectivity through the permeation of the city into all aspects of the individual. She notes how the novel follows Biberkopf as he "face[s] death in order to be reborn as part of the modern masses and the city's anonymous system of production and consumption [...] breaking down the boundaries between the real and imagined (external and internal)" through a process of "inner urbanization" (Hake 218, 221, 223). By reading the novel as dialectal, I will demonstrate that the product of the synthesis (via "inner urbanization") resulting from the Biberkopf-Berlin opposition is the forced retreat of the individual, further and

further inward, until they¹ are able to separate themselves from the external and subsequently (re)construct their subjectivity.

While Hake uses the novel to argue for the destruction of individual subjectivity, I plan to continue her approach and extend it to considering how the novel also evidences a reconstruction. Pivotal to her analysis of *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* is a tool introduced by Marxist critic Edward Soja called the socio-spatial dialectic. Soja claims that, “social and spatial relationships are dialectally inter-reactive, interdependent; that social relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent (insofar as we maintain a view of space as socially constructed)” (211). At the time of his writing (1980) this formulation was somewhat radical for the equal weight given to the social (class) and spatial (core-periphery). Orthodox Marxism favors the former, but Soja’s framework grapples with the latter, which in turn raises questions that had previously been overshadowed by a privileging of class. Among these new questions is the one that I put forward; that being—to frame it in terms of the dialectic—how is the individual’s internally constructed space dependent on and formed by the social pressures of the modernization?

Let’s pause for a moment and examine what Soja means when he states that the “social relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent” (211). Soja claims that historically space has been regarded as “a context *for* society—its container—rather than a

¹ Throughout this paper I will be using they/their to replace his/her. I do this primarily because the gender of the imagined urban “individual” is neither specifically male nor female. Given this irrelevancy, I find a privileging on either side to be problematic. Moreover, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* use of the singular “they” traces back at early as 1375 and the *MLA Style Guide 8th Edition* advises use of singular they when the gender is irrelevant, unknown, or if it is a generic subject (such as the “individual” imagined in this paper).

structure created *by* society” (210). I interpret “a context for society” to mean that spaces are contingent on social (re)production, whereas “a structure created by society” defines space as being formed by it. In other words, social (re)production is predicated on the contextual space for society, while that very same social (re)production can be held responsible for the creation of said space. This is an important aspect of Soja’s dialectic for it parallels my belief that Biberkopf and Berlin are constitutive of each other, possessing an inter-reactivity and interdependence that makes the two inseparable. Contained within this inseparability is the assumption that the individual and the city can be considered as one entity possessing an interior and exterior space. This assumption will be evidenced by the pages to follow, in which any barrier between internal and external space will be deconstructed. Following this deconstruction is the sublation of Biberkopf to Berlin, a process which synthesizes the two while containing the former within the latter. As I noted earlier, the space constructed from the individual’s retreat mirrors that from which it is fleeing. Therefore, by examining how the social relations of (re)production are “both space-forming and space-contingent,” a greater investigation into the (re)constructions of subjectivity within the process of modernization can be conducted. Further, the (re)construction of subjectivity will be shown to resemble the architecture surrounding, creating the peculiar phenomenon in which the individual looks out the window, so to speak, at themselves.

Soja defines the spatial dialectic largely by focusing on the tension between core-periphery. By “core-periphery” he means a relationship similar to the one often highlighted in the 19th-century novel between the city and the country. Specifically he writes:

The opposition between dominant centers of production, exploration, and accumulation, and subordinate, dependent, exploited peripheries represents the primary horizontal

structure arising from the process of geographically uneven development and from the dynamic tension between equalization and differentiation. (221)

Or: “in this sense, core and periphery are the spatial expressions of the same underlying relations of production which define bourgeoisie and proletariat” (222). The relation of core-periphery to bourgeoisie-proletariat is key to understanding the socio-spatial dialectic. Through these oppositions, Soja is underscoring exploitation as a driving factor in the dialectic. That is, similar to the way the bourgeoisie exploits the proletariat, so too does the core exploit the periphery by taking its production and using it to further its own capital (i.e. the reproduced labor power is not applied to the betterment of the periphery but rather to supplement and advance the core).

Addressing the tenets of the socio-spatial dialectic is important in understanding Hake’s analysis of the novel. She builds upon Soja as she analyzes and interprets the ways in which *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* deconstructs subjectivity. She argues:

Franz Biberkopf, the former cement and transport worker, occasional street peddler, and small-time thief and pimp, is a man from the lumpenproletariat (sometimes translated as rabble proletariat) or, to cite the curious term coined by one contemporary reviewer, the “upper lumpenproletariat.” Biberkopf’s precarious position in the city economy resists easy categorization and is therefore ideally suited to problematizing the crisis of traditional class society. In Marxist terms, the lumpenproletariat usually refers to those members of the working class who are not proletarians, that is, those who live outside the wage-labor system. Found primarily in industrial centers, they include small-time criminals, prostitutes, beggars, swindlers, hoodlums, homeless people, and the permanently unemployed.

[...] As the embodiment of nonproductivity and nonintegrability, a type like Biberkopf challenges the centrality of industrial labor and of labor struggles in the politically polarized atmosphere of the late 1920s. At the same time, by profiting from the city economy through his criminal activities, he draws attention to the dark underside of the capitalist system of exploitation. (220-221)

Biberkopf's inclusion in the lumpenproletariat would seem, according to orthodox Marxist categories, to exclude him from the larger context of class conflict. Further, the lumpenproletariat is often considered a "dangerous [...] counterrevolutionary force" (220). This is one way in which I believe the horizontal conflict functions as a better analytical frame. By focusing on the way in which members of the same class inflict violence upon themselves, the importance of social pressures of modernization will be highlighted. While Hake focuses on the impact of the city, specifying two motifs (that of falling roofs and pile driver), and how they break down the barriers between internal and external space, I shall also examine the impact of those motifs—but will conclude that the impact of the social, embodied by the character Reinhold, is the primary motivator for the deconstruction of subjectivity. The difference that arises by underscoring the social rather than the spatial is the justification it provides for the subsequent (re)construction of subjectivity.

Lastly, note Hake's detail that the lumpenproletariat is "found primarily in industrial centers" (220). Given Biberkopf's mobility between the "center," or core, and periphery, he makes for an excellent figure through which to frame the socio-spatial dialectic. Additionally, Biberkopf, despite being a member of the lumpenproletariat, still participates in the city's economy by which he draws attention to the "dark underside of the capitalist system of

exploitation” (221). Effectively Biberkopf complicates the orthodox Marxist view that the lumpenproletariat is constructed by an economy as beyond the wage-labor system as beholden to it. I plan to begin within this constructed space of the lumpenproletariat— the streets, alleys, and corners surrounding the Alexanderplatz—for by first looking at how subjectivity is deconstructed externally, we can consequently better understand how it is (re)constructed internally.

Invasive Exteriority²

As Franz Biberkopf returns to Berlin, after having spent four years in Tegel Penitentiary for “some stupid stuff” (1)—that stupid stuff being the murder of his girlfriend—it is noted that “his real punishment is just beginning” (5). The reader is not left wondering for long, however, as to what this “punishment” entails, for Biberkopf is immediately subject to the overwhelming and violent aspects of the modern metropolis. Accompanying Biberkopf’s arrival to Berlin are the overwhelming, militaristic qualities of the city. As he sits on the train staring back at Tegel’s “red wall” (5) with a near-nostalgia, suddenly it “turn[s] a corner,” causing “trees and buildings to interpos[e] themselves” as “something in him scream[s]: Watch out, watch out.” (5). Note the period that follows his screaming. Despite the scene demonstrating Biberkopf’s early “overwhelming ochlophobia and agoraphobia” (Dollenmayer 67), two characteristics which will ebb and flow throughout the narrative, it is as though he is deprived of autonomy; more specifically, his engagement with the city is unavoidable. Whereas both screaming and the phrase

² I would like to note that external and internal space is meant in both literal and figurative ways. It is not enough to consider solely how external space invades and shapes the internal in a physical sense; we must simultaneously look at how the abstract quality of external space invades that of the internal. I equate the external with the objective, insofar as objectivity is considered the opposite of subjectivity. That is, as the external invades the internal, so too does objective space invade the consequent subject-less space.

“watch out” would typically suggest a warning, an attempt to alert someone so that they might avoid their immediate danger, here Biberkopf’s screams fall flat. Notably, they fall flat *within* him, there is no external vocalization of these fears. The language and contradictory grammar (e.g. the period following the exclamation) suggest two interrelated conclusions: (a) despite the volatility, action, and emotion gestured towards, Biberkopf is not able to express himself (b) due to the fact that, as David Dollenmayer contends, “though he has physically arrived in Berlin, he is ‘Still Not There,’ as the title of the second chapter avows, [...] he cannot yet draw the line between himself and his surroundings. He is not yet capable of perceiving the city objectively” (68). Dollenmayer’s claim sounds similar to one made by art historian Monika Wagner on the experience of Weimar Berlin in the 1920s. Wagner contends that “the new optical urban space, by engaging the whole body and not just a hand that might reach out to touch something beyond it, demands that one be in the thick of it, in its midst” (Wagner 62). The demand on the individual to be “in the thick” of the city, compounded by Dollenmayer’s interpretation of Biberkopf’s inability to perceive his surroundings, evidences the tensions already placed on the barriers between internal and external space in the opening pages of the novel. In a microcosm, the text reverses the relation of external-internal (through Biberkopf’s vocalization *within* himself), while at the same time retaining a degree of separation left to be deconstructed (the screaming cannot communicate with that which is beyond Biberkopf, full-stop).

Further, the reversal of the external-internal is supported by my earlier sketching of Biberkopf’s sublation to Berlin. As he gets off the train and begins to walk, he chronicles:

Shoe shops, hat shops, electric lights, bars. People will need shoes to run around in, we had a shoe shop too, once, let's not forget that. Hundreds of shiny windows, let them flash at you, they're nothing to be afraid of, it's just that they've been cleaned, you can always smash them if you want. They were walking up the road at Rosenthaler Platz, he was walking on duckboards with everyone else. Just mingle with the crowd, man, that'll make everything better, then you won't suffer. There were mannequins in the windows in suits and coats, in skirts, with shoes and stockings on their feet. It was all seething and swarming, but it had nothing going on! It wasn't alive. It had complacent facial expressions, it was grinning, it was standing in groups of two or three on the traffic island in front of Aschinger's waiting to cross, smoking cigarettes, browsing in newspapers. Stood there like lamp-posts, and getting stiffer all the time. It was just like the buildings, all painted, all wood. (6)

The line "it was all seething and swarming, but it had nothing going on" reads as though an external echo of the disconnect that Biberkopf experiences as he screams "watch out." Secondly, look to Biberkopf's attempt at self-assurance, "just mingle with the crowd, man, that'll make everything better, then you won't suffer." The insistence on blending in, coupled with his observations of "shoe shops, hat shops, electric lights, bars [...] hundreds of shiny windows [...] mannequins in the windows," represents the earlier introduced "modern dilemma." Moreover, the displacement of the mannequins of inside the window to suddenly "standing in groups of two or three on the traffic island" is reminiscent of the way in which critic Stijn De Cauwer interprets the windows in Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* as inverting the "spatial setting of inside and outside" (111). De Cauwer argues that "from behind the rigid frame of the window

[...] the hustle and bustle on the street, all the motion of the traffic, can only appear as incomprehensible chaos” (98). Interestingly, however, is the way in which De Cauwer’s interpretation of the effects of the window can be applied to *Berlin, Alexanderplatz*; for, unlike in Musil’s work, Biberkopf is spatially located amidst “the hustle and bustle” of the street. Consequently, it follows that rather than viewing those within the window as an “incomprehensible chaos,” Biberkopf experiences the opposite, viewing the mannequins more like the surrounding buildings, “all painted, all wood” while not being “alive” (6). Further, Biberkopf *does* remark that they are “all seething and swarming” but concludes that “it had nothing going on! It wasn’t alive” (6). The disconnect between Biberkopf’s language and observation returns us to Dollenmayer’s interpretation that Biberkopf is “not yet capable of perceiving the city objectively” (68). Moreover, Biberkopf wishes to lose himself within, to become part of the masses of the city so that, deprived of subjectivity, *he* cannot suffer — for there will be no *he*, simply *we*. As this passage evidences, part of the effacement is self induced; that is, one must sacrifice a degree of their subjectivity in order to blend in with the crowds and avoid punishment. Further, this self-effacement is a part of the transformation of subjectivity into objectivity. It is the mannequins with “complacent facial expressions” that avoid the violence of the city, not those like Biberkopf who still retain a sense of subjectivity.

The notion of an external self-effacement is further underscored by how the windows function in this scene. There are two ways to read their description and incorporation in the narrative. Allow me to begin with the more nuanced interpretation; an interpretation that I think develops through the course of reading the novel and is only obvious upon one’s second crossing up into Rosenthaler Platz. That is, the windows refer not to the “shoe shops, hat shops, electric

lights, [and] bars” but rather to “the crowds, the crowds” (6). I argue that the text transforms its urban subjects into buildings, wherein they are represented as little more than architectural façades. This transformation is underscored by the immediately following observation that “there were mannequins in the windows in suits and coats, in skirts, with shoes and stockings on their feet,” but Biberkopf concludes that they aren’t alive despite their “seething and swarming” (6). He then conflates these mannequins in the windows with the people he is walking past, noting their “complacent facial expressions, it was grinning, it was standing in groups of two or three on the traffic island in front of Aschinger’s waiting to cross, smoking cigarettes, browsing in newspapers” (6). Further stressing the crowds’ lack of life is Biberkopf’s referral to them not only as mannequins but as *it*. He does not see men or women, nor boys or girls, but things, objects, buildings. Or, take for example when he conflates the people in the square with mannequins, claiming that they are “just like the buildings, all painted, all wood” (6). I find it interesting that the text refers to the crowds as “it” yet to the buildings as “they/them,” a difference complicated by the fact that both are plural. The windows become “them,” but the mannequins, the people, do not. The difference lies in the constructive aspect of the windows. The way in which the windows mediate between the external-internal will be important to remember when the time comes to look past the (de)construction of subjectivity and towards its (re)construction within the city.

Exploring how the text depicts “modern life [as] a war” (40), Veronika Fuechtner underscores the martial tones of the city. She argues that “as the sound of war invades Biberkopf’s head to the point of complete breakdown, it also invades [the] human relationships” of the text, resulting in a “depict[ion of] the dehumanizing effects of the capitalist economy and

the deep connection between material and psychological misery” (40-41). I find her interpretations vital to comprehending the ways in which Biberkopf’s external sufferings later impact his internal spatiality. Notably, Fuechtner’s psycho-analytical reading of the text discusses the conflation of these spheres of spatiality at length as well as the violent and invasive nature of Berlin.

Fuechtner argues that the backdrop of the novel is a series of:

war stories, military ranks, marching, Biberkopf’s “war walk,” and the accompanying soundtrack, which includes march music (*Tschingdaradada*), alarms, gunshots, and explosions, all of which come to stand for the dehumanized and dehumanizing violence that surrounds and floods Biberkopf. (40-41)

This description couples nicely with my reading of the windows as representative of enemy fire, as does the “dehumanizing violence” of the transformation of individuals into mannequins (Döblin 6). The title of a later section—“third conquest of Berlin” (Döblin 227)—further frames the campaign waged between Biberkopf and Berlin (simultaneously: subjectivity vs. objectivity). Yet, I want to stress that the opposition is not as neat as Biberkopf-Berlin, for as my prior reading suggests, the text begins from the outset with a blurring of the two — specifically that Berlin constantly and continually invades.

Fuechtner gestures towards Biberkopf’s mobility in the above passage, which she describes as being a “war walk” representative of the “dehumanized and dehumanizing violence” of the city (41). This contrasts with Klaus Scherpe’s description of the act of Biberkopf’s walking, which he notes as being symbolic of Biberkopf’s position as a “flâneur and occasional worker” (Scherpe 168). Interestingly, I find the disparity between these two descriptions

indicative of the way in which Biberkopf complicates a straightforward class assignment.

Further, the interpretation of Biberkopf as *solider* (implied by his “war walk”) juxtaposed with that of *flâneur*—the disassociated and self-exiled inhabitant, wanderer, and observer of the city—is representative of the tension between core-periphery. That is, as Biberkopf moves from the periphery into the core, so too does he transition from idler into warrior. His walking effectively retains within its action the horizontal conflict that occurs between the core-periphery.

Not only does Biberkopf represent the horizontal conflict through his mobility, his walking also “establishes the rhythm and pace of his wanderings and organizes the dynamic of internalization and externalization that gives rise to the textual city” (Hake 233). Hake notes the textual city of *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* rises around:

two recurring motifs, the falling roofs and the pile driver, which come to signify the problem of modern subjectivity within the imaginary city body and the audiovisual cityscape. Their invasive movements dissolve the boundaries between the real and imagined (external and internal) cityscape[...] Throughout, the falling roofs function as an indicator of Biberkopf’s struggle for physical survival and mental integrity, whereas the pile driver represents the heart of the modernist project, with its rhythmic pounding a constant reminder of irrational forces below the appearance of order and stability.

[...] The falling roofs [then ...] become [representative of] an ongoing negotiation between identification with [Berlin’s] physical structures and [a] projection of his anxieties onto its spatial features. [... Whereas] the pile driver from the construction site reveals the textual city as the site of a perpetual invasion, unearthing, and violation. (221, 223)

Note how both the falling roofs and pile driver function as deconstructive tools; specifically, how the pile driver deconstructs in order to provide space for subsequent reconstruction. I would like to expand on Hake's characterization of the falling roofs by claiming that they also represent the crumbling of any distinction between external-internal space. Though she highlights the pile driver as the primary symbol of invasion, I would argue that the slipping of roofs likewise represents the slipping of the external-internal barrier. In this expansion, it is important to retain her notion of how the roofs function as "projection of [Biberkopf's] anxieties." I believe that these anxieties are quite similar to those exhibited in the act of perceiving "the crowds, the crowds" as nothing but paint and wood (Döblin 6). Moreover, both the threat of the roofs falling and Biberkopf's reintroduction into Berlin are *sudden* acts, whereas the pile driver follows a rhythm, a perpetual rhythm, but a rhythm nonetheless. I underscore their suddenness to parallel Biberkopf's reintroduction and the falling roof motifs with the "unpredictable" (1) violence foreshadowed in the narrator's outline of the story.

Whereas Hake examines the invasion of Berlin along deconstructive acts, acts committed in the name of "modernization," Fuechtner contends that the invasion is predicated on sudden acts of violence. She argues that unpredictable violence lingers everywhere in the lines of *Berlin, Alexanderplatz*, ready "to erupt at any second, even accidentally" (41). Rather than the pile driver, she examines the cannonball imagery introduced as Reinhold, Biberkopf's friend and nemesis, kills Mitzi, Biberkopf's love. Fuechtner writes:

Reinhold's loss of control and the unleashing of violence are described with the image of a cannonball's inevitability and destruction: "Then it breaks and it splinters and no storms or falling rocks can hold up against it, that which is ammunition from a cannon, a

flying mine. That flies to the encounter, breaks through, pushes it aside, further, it goes further, further” [Döblin 333.] The image of the cannonball is reminiscent of the bullets from nowhere that strike Elli and the other protagonists in *Two Girlfriends Commit Murder*. However, those bullets emanate from the invisible, and move from outside to the inside, while in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* there is no outside anymore. Semantically, the cannonball’s origin is the German word *es* — literally “it,” but also the term in Freud’s writings translated to English as “id” — and it no longer seems to matter whether “es” is inside or outside. (41)

There are a lot of significant moments in this quotation. My eye immediately falls to the language employed: “inevitability and destruction,” and “breaks and splinters” finally “break[ing] through, push[ing ...] further, further.” However, the coupling of the inevitability of destruction alongside with the sounds of splintering are not immediately explained within the novel alongside the passage quoted. The setting of the scene is in a wooded dell, the site of Mitzi’s murder and burial, and so on one hand the splintering refers to the breaking of trees; yet, on the other, there is an allusion in this scene that is important for understanding the (re)construction of subjectivity. A few pages later the narrator remarks, “if you want to knock over a building you don’t do it by hand, you need to take a wrecking-ball to it” and shortly after, “breath is a weight, a ball thrown against the woods” (Döblin 339).

I highlight these two sentences as they form a neat bridge between Fuechtner’s argument and mine. However, pairing the “cannonball’s destruction” with the “ball thrown against the woods” results in a somewhat confused interpretation. The latter line seems to suggest that the (cannon)ball being thrown is Mitzi’s dying breath, whereas Fuechtner underscores the way in

which the former line claims that it is Reinhold's violence that is symbolized in the imagery. Further complicating the reading of the cannonball is the text's later description of the wrecking-ball; specifically, the image of the building echoes the "break[ing] and splinter[ing]" of Mitzi's death. The textual confusion around Mitzi's death reminds me of the contradictory nature of Biberkopf's scream as he enters Berlin. Not only does her death scene draw on that earlier passage, but the cannon- and wrecking-ball also function as yet another motif of invasion and deconstruction, similar to Hake's formulation of the pile driver. The balls are representative of the conflation of the exterior-interior; of the subjective-objective; of the individual and the city. At once they are both invading and destroying (from outside in; e.g. Reinhold's violence to Mitzi), while also fleeing and sublating (from inside out; e.g. Mitzi's dying breath and subsequent burial).

In addition to destroying any sense of separation, the reader also encounters another moment in which the text constructs individuals into buildings. Note the line: "if you want to knock over a building you don't do it by hand, you need to take a wrecking-ball to it" (339) and pair that with the action the remarks are paralleling — Reinhold's bludgeoning of Mitzi. Now, consider the abstraction of Reinhold into a cannonball and the result is an analogy of Mitzi's death at the hands of Reinhold alongside the destruction of a building by a wrecking-ball. The way the text relates the murder, accompanied by the sounds of breaking and splintering, all work to paint a picture of Mitzi as a building; her death as its demolition. This picture echoes the projection of the mannequins unto the street, both leading to the conclusion that in the absence of any exterior-interior demarcation, people become constructions like buildings; that is, they shape and are shaped by their surroundings. That conclusion is furthered by Fuechtner's analysis of the

cannonball scene wherein she states how “semantically, the cannonball’s origin is the German word *es* — literally ‘it,’ but also the term in Freud’s writings translated to English as ‘id’” (Fuechtner 41). This is important as the id constitutes our desires and anxieties; the drives of sex and aggression; it is what Freud called a “seething cauldron of excitations” and those desires have now become projected upon the external world. The description of the id as “seething” parallels with Biberkopf’s account of the crowds as “seething” (Döblin 6), and the way in which the id represents our anxieties advances Hake’s observation that Biberkopf’s relation to Berlin becomes marked by a “projection of his anxieties onto its spatial features” (Hake 221).

It’s necessary to consider the horizontal motion of both the cannon- and wrecking-ball from the earlier passage alongside the external projection of Biberkopf’s internal anxieties, for the horizontality creates a bridge between the concepts of core-periphery and external-internal. I propose another way of reading the core-periphery tension, aside from being representative of the bourgeoisie-proletariat: how the two include the external-internal respectively. Notably, recall the way in which the text stages an inversion of the external-internal. One would assume (via straightforward definition of the words) that the core and the internal are linked, consequently causing the periphery to represent the external. However, as I’ve already gestured towards, the novel reverses the external and internal; which subsequently would connect core with external and periphery with internal. These relations are crucial in understanding invasion and violence of Berlin onto the individual as well as the way in addition to how the core-periphery breaks down alongside the external-internal. In one sense, Biberkopf physically moves from internal to external (e.g. leaving a structure, in this case Tegel, on the outskirts of the city and marching the

streets of the city), simultaneously transitioning from idler to soldier as he goes to war with the buildings and windows of Berlin. And yet another reading of this move from internal-external is evidenced by the projection of Biberkopf's anxieties and imaginings onto the spatial features of the city. Or, as Fuechtner argues, "and it no longer seems to matter whether 'es'"—that is, the id, Biberkopf's subconscious—"is inside or outside" (41). The breakdown of core-periphery in tandem with external-internal questions Biberkopf's ability to retain his mobility. It also raises the concern of the link between his mobility and his autonomy, both of which are expressions of his subjectivity. The following section will explore these two considerations and examine how they contribute to a retreat within.

As with Beasts and Buildings, So It Is with Man

The time has come to return to dear Biberkopf on his walk through Berlin's streets and focus on the way in which he is wholly sublated. There are two important passages for elucidating Biberkopf's liminal state, the moments in which he is inseparable from both the city and its products. I will begin by looking at the way in which the text treats Biberkopf and Berlin equally as protagonists, a relation which becomes vital for understanding Biberkopf's curious absence in the novel. Following this, I shall take us, dear reader, on a tour of the Berlin Meat Markets; a tour which promises examples of Fuechtner's conclusions about the novel's violence as the text skins and debones subjectivity from the individual. The text's conflation of individuals and buildings alongside the sacrificial violence of the Meat Market demonstrates two internal shifts within the novel; that is, first the novel encroaches on the "inner urbanized" individual (Hake 223) before "regress[ing ...]" to their innermost depths (Fuechtner 45). Following the prior section, the pressures of restricted autonomy and mobility only further

motivate the individual to retreat in an attempt to preserve their subjectivity. First, Biberkopf loses his autonomy; second, his mobility is taken from him. Yet, as we shall see, the (re)construction of subjectivity can only occur following its complete deconstruction.

As evidenced by the title of the novel, the story centers on *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* perhaps more than it does on *Biberkopf, Franz*; for despite Biberkopf occupying the focus of this paper, within the novel he is, at times, largely absent. As I gestured towards earlier, this absence is underscored by the narrator's ability to summarize Biberkopf's narrative in one out of four-hundred-and-eighty pages. It would appear that Biberkopf, perhaps unwillingly, follows his own sentiment—"just mingle with the crowd, man, that'll make everything better, then you won't suffer" (6). However, as we shall see, much suffering is to come.

Throughout the relatively simple plot of Biberkopf's narrative, the reader is bombarded by montages of passing faces, episodes of petty theft, architectural plans for urban expansion, reports of the markets, daily production, weather, etc. What is notably absent from these is Biberkopf. Where has our man gone? A curious example of his absence can be found in the beginning of chapter two, wherein Biberkopf is explicitly referenced in the opening section title — Biberkopf enters Berlin (Döblin 39) — yet does not appear until the second section of the chapter (ten pages later). Further, six of the nine chapters in *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* either open or close with such montages. And it's important to stress that these intrusions by the narrator are (in the earlier parts of the novel) off-set by their own section heading, such as: "markets opening directionless, gradually drifting lower, Hamburg out of bed the wrong side, London continuing weak;" largely tangential "a handful of people around the Alex [...] Pussi Uhl, the flood of

American visitors, and do you write Wilma with a V or W;” or used as comparison in hindsight, with concluding remarks like “our Franz was not like that” (Döblin 21, 113, 288, 91).

How does the content of these intrusions move the text further away from Biberkopf? The majority of the montages function as lists, catalogs of the going-ons of Berlin, wholly concerned with assessing and relating external identifiers. For example, in “a handful of people round the Alex,” the narrator relates:

On Alexanderplatz they’re tearing up the road for the underground railway. People are made to walk on duckboards. The trams cross the square and head up Alexander- and Münzstrasse to get to Rosenthaler Tor. There are streets on either side. In the streets, there’s one house after another. They are full of people, from cellar to attic. On the ground floor are usually shops and businesses.

Bars and restaurants, greengrocers and grocers, delicatessens and haulage businesses, painters and decorators, ladies’ outfitters, flour and grain products, garages, insurance: the advantages of the fuel injection engine are simple design, ease of use, light weight, no clutter. [...]

Above and behind commercial premises are apartments, and behind them are more courtyards, side buildings, cross-buildings, back-buildings, garden-buildings. [...]

At six in the evening a cleaning lady comes into the office, swabs the linoleum in the waiting room. The solicitor has not yet run to a vacuum cleaner, miserly git, when the man’s not even married and Frau Zieske, who calls herself housekeeper, would know. The cleaning lady scrubs and scours away, she is incredibly thin but supple, she works to feed her two children. The role of fat in nutrition, fat covers jutting bones and protects

the sensitive tissue below from impact, excessively thin persons may complain of pains in their foot soles when walking. That at least wasn't the case with the cleaning lady.

(Döblin 113-15)

Despite moving from a physically external to an internal setting, there remains a consistent lack of focused detail. That is, despite the construction workers “tearing up the road” in order to access and develop that which lies beneath the surface, the reader is forced to stand with the narrator outside. I would like to draw attention to the line “in the streets, there's one house after another [...] full of people, from cellar to attic.” Bearing in mind my earlier analysis of the conflation of Mitzi with a building, coupled with Hake's mention of the inner urbanized individual, I cannot help but find this line significant due to the way in which it speaks to the scale of the city and the way in which this scale prevents detailed presentation of all. Moreover, how the text glosses over people *en masse* returns us to the modern dilemma. Specifically, it calls to attention the threat of statistical anonymity. As Biberkopf attempts to reintegrate with Berlin society, this intrusion by the narrator provides a useful example of the process of self-effacement that occurs—whether by the individual or the narrator—when representing urban society.

Further, the passage gestures towards an idea of multiplicity. That is, throughout the experience of living within the city, one is forced to embody multiple personalities or modes of being. The text suggests this in the way it may refer to someone by their patronymic (“Frau Zieske”), their job title (“cleaning lady”), their self-defined profession (“housekeeper”), their class (“middle class are finding themselves out on the street”), and also evidenced by by details such as “incredibly thin but supple, she works to feed her two children [...] and doesn't] complain of pains”; related advertisements (“insurance: the benefits of a fuel injection engine”); possession

of goods (“he has not yet run to a vacuum cleaner, miserly git”); and, finally, nationality (“German”) (Döblin 113, 115). All of these function as identifiers, such as one might list the color, shape, or design of a building. In contrast is the manner in which the individual functions as a synecdoche for urban society. By this I mean both to the ability for all of the above referents (with perhaps the exclusion of the patronymic) to be describing any number of people. As much as Frau Zieske is *the* cleaning lady, she is also, much like Biberkopf, able to be considered an “everywoman.” These everymen and everywomen of Berlin might as well be viewed, without descriptors other than external ones, as analogous to the houses, “one [...] after another” (Döblin 113).

Considering Frau Zieske as an everywoman also returns us to an aspect of the core-periphery relationship. Recall when building the foundation for the socio-spatial dialectic, Soja details that the “exploited peripheries represents the primary horizontal structure arising from the process of geographically uneven development and from the dynamic tension between equalization and differentiation” (221). The tension between “equalization and differentiation” is the precise issue that modern dilemma encapsulates. Perhaps this tension finds its answer in the above introduced idea of multiplicity; by which I mean the exhibition of multiple identities, so to speak, or attempts to equalize the individual and allow them to relate to their fellows. At the same time, Frau Zieske represents the process of modernization—a process that critic Erik Grimm believed resulted in the “polycentric subject (polyzentrisches Subjekt)” being “disintegrated in modernity and trapped in its alienation (in der Moderne zerfallen und in seiner Alienation gefangen)” (qtd. in Rock 145). The alienation and disintegration represented by Frau Zieske as she becomes “modern” speaks to the fragmentation of subjectivity that occurs as the

barriers between internal and external space are deconstructed. That is, the individual remains indistinguishable as well as unable to perceive their surroundings.

At the same time, it would be a misconception to conclude that no one is distinguishable within the city—specifically, in the realm of the lumpenproletariat. Consider Pums, the leader of the Pums gang, as an example. As Biberkopf first lays eyes on him, he is hazily introduced —“who’s standing at the bar, the place of refreshment, the place of song and shongsong, who’s smiling in the shmoke [...] it’d take a broom to see anything in here” (183-184). Yet, what is made clear by the text is the “three lads making their way towards him [...] same types, identical caps. [...] The four of them scratch their heads together, whinny together, look around together” (184). I am aware that Pums lacks an explicit distinguishability in this section. However, I find it useful in exploring how this passage reinforces the concept of equalization alongside a moment of differentiation. That is, while Pums is known by his role as the head of the pums gang—he is equally distinguishable by the capital he possesses. I highlight Pums’ capital as a distinguishing aspect for it complicates the orthodox Marxist belief that the lumpenproletariat is beyond class considerations. Further, Pums is a useful example as to how the lumpenproletariat establishes its own hierarchical structure. Pums is identifiable as the leader not so much by himself as he is by the way in which those around him imitate him. The imitation aspect is important to seize on, for this detail evidences that those subordinate to the dominant figure consequently construct themselves (their appearance and actions) in such a way as to reflect the larger power. This reflection is analogous to the way the internal spatial construction of the individual reflects the buildings around it. That is, it appears the construction of subjectivity is necessarily dependent on the architectural construction surrounding.

Moreover, the imagery of smoke is a significant inclusion. On one hand, it further reiterates the inseparability between different spaces, whether it's internal-external or the different physical locations within a bar. On the other, it shows how alongside the deconstruction of the barriers between different spaces, distinction between core-periphery is also complicated. If Pums may be understood as a core of production, exploiting the labor of his workers in order to further his own capital, then his workers, the three identical lads around him, can be seen as representative of the periphery. The ability for the Pums gang to represent the core-periphery, as well as complicate that relationship, will be important to bear in mind as we begin to consider how the inner urbanized individual forces a containment (via a construction) of subjectivity in order to prevent it from being exploited.

Despite the significance of Frau Zieske, it must be stressed that her account occupies a span of five sentences in a novel of four-hundred-and-eighty pages. In his companion to the works of Alfred Döblin, David Dollenmayer underscores this aspect of the text, stating:

We cannot conceive of the story of Franz Biberkopf without the Alexanderplatz, while the reverse is not the case. Throughout the novel, Döblin is at pains to demonstrate that Biberkopf's story, although exemplary, is merely one of many within the city. The frequent encapsulated narratives are all potential novels, whether they be several pages in length or only one sentence [...] Most of these novels *in ovo* surface only to disappear immediately, and have only an indirect, comparative relation to Biberkopf's story. What relates them to it and to each other is primarily the space in which they occur [...] It is the city itself which makes these parallel narratives plausible. (66)

Dollenmayer considers Biberkopf's story as "merely one of many," underscoring that it is the city that "makes these parallel narratives plausible." Hake holds a similar position when she recounts a critic's remark that the "Alexanderplatz is at once a landscape of stone and of the soul" (232). Further, Hake concludes that given this polyphony of stories, the "mass individual is reconstituted as a subject without voice, the modern metropolis is confirmed as a machine without a subject" (224). If we interpret the modern metropolis as a machine without a subject, Dollenmayer's claim that we can consider the story of Alexanderplatz without Biberkopf gains some weight. That is, through the deconstruction of all internal-external boundaries, the text (as well as the city) has rendered its inhabitants, its subjects, disposable (in the way that it introduces characters as quickly as it leaves them behind) and at times superfluous. In its sublation to the objective, subjectivity has been lost, and the individual is defined by the city rather than the opposite. Further, the disposability of the inhabitants of the city simultaneously speaks to their exploitability. Significant in this parallel is that it is the socio-spatial exploitation of the individual that renders them disposable. That is, it is the horizontal conflict, not the vertical, which aids in the deconstruction between internal and external space.

I promised a tour of the meat markets, and that is where I shall now lead us. *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* introduces the slaughterhouses primarily by emphasizing scale, noting how they occupy "47.88 hectares" and on one edge of this "united economic entity" extends ten additional miles of railways (126). It is as though the meat markets are their own separate city within the city (this will be important for the way in which the inner urbanized individual can be read as a city within a city). After defining how large they are, the text chronicles the arrival of pigs:

The beasts are brought in from the provinces, onvine, bovine, porcine specimens from East Prussia, Pomerania, Brandenburg, West Prussia. They come mooing and bleating down the ramps. Pigs grunt and snuffle, they can't look where they're going, the drovers are after them, swinging sticks. They lie down in their pens, tight together, white, fat, snoring, sleeping. They have been made to walk a long way, then shaken up in railway cars, now the ground under their feet is steady, only the flagstones are cold, they wake up, seek each other's warmth. They are laid out in levels. Here's two fighting, the bay leaves them enough room for that, they butt heads, snap at each other's throats, turn in circles, gurgle, sometimes they are completely silent, gnashing in fear. In panic one scrambles over the bodies of the others, and the other gives chase, snaps, and those below start up, the two combatants fall, seek each other out (127).

The arrival of the animals reads like the arrival of prisoners or immigrants as well as paralleling the reader's own arrival to the meat markets. The text continues to build upon this parallel in this section equating people to beasts rather than their usual equation to buildings. Compare the description of Biberkopf's arrival in Berlin (who is also "shaken up in [a] railway car") with the line, "they come mooing and bleating down the ramps [...] they can't look where they're going" (127). Note how they both are driven on by "the crowds, the crowds" who keep their heads down (6-7) and continue on. It is almost as if the "mooing and bleating" can be read as the murmuring of the arrival crowd. As the passage continues, the subject becomes increasingly lost. *They* come down the ramps, *they* can't look ahead, *they* have traveled a long way, *they* lay snoring and sleeping (127). This passage also furthers the inescapability of their new home: "in panic one scrambles over the bodies of the others, and the other gives chase, snaps, and those

below start up” (127). Or, perhaps one might say that this passage evidences how individuals are pitted against each other, against the crowds, in order to survive. The entire scene is highly claustrophobic (which must be remembered in regards to the description of Biberkopf as ochlophobic and agoraphobic) — a cramped and caged feeling that only tightens.

An important transition in the following paragraph furthers the conflation of human and beast. As the pigs begin to be led to the slaughter, no longer are they referred to in the third person, but rather the text switches to “you” (127). The narrator relates, “take a look at the slaughterhouse, it’s for you [...] it’s light, built of red brick, from the outside one might have guessed engineering works, shop or office premises, or a construction hall [or prison]” (127). I add the easy comparison to the Tegel prison which is repeatedly described and remembered by its “red wall” (5). Further, the use of *you* underscores the way in which the entire scene addresses the reader directly. There is a brief moment of separation, “because I’m human, I’ll be going through this door here” but it does not last long (128). Quickly the reader is forced back into a bewildering state as they are instructed to “shoulder the door open, it’s a swing door, on a spring. Whew, the steam in here. What are they steaming? [...] You’re going somewhere, you can’t see where, your glasses are misted over, perhaps you’re naked [...] you’re shuffling along” (128). The steam reminds me of the smoke surrounding Pums. Perhaps because Biberkopf is unable to distinguish *himself*, he lacks the ability to perceive others in such a manner.

We proceed in the steam with the narrator and the pigs until we arrive at the meticulous slaughter of a bull. Fuechtner contends that although the scene begins with:

the location and layout of the slaughterhouse and the numbers of animals that are processed there daily, a scene that has been described as an example of Döblin’s

seemingly factual and depersonalized style [...] different voices [begin] to emerge and the narrator appears everywhere, addressing both the animals and the reader. In the narrator's brief interjection into an otherwise technical description of a slaughter, he reveals that the slaughter is only a prefiguration of future violence: 'now the knife is positioned, and the blood will pour out, I can already imagine, a fountain thick like an arm, black beautiful, jubilant blood.' The narrator describes the blood as triumphant — a judgement that ties into the narrator's reading of Biberkopf's path as a path of sacrificial and healing violence. The bull is likened to a building that has been sold and torn down by the new owner for profit's sake. (63)

I agree with Fuechtner that the line quoted from the text — “now the knife is positioned, and the blood will pour out, I can already imagine, a fountain thick like an arm, black beautiful jubilant blood” (Döblin 131) — prefigures future violence. In fact, I would argue that it is a direct echo of one of the novel's central refrains: “there is a reaper, Death yclept, by Almighty God employed. His blade he whets, it cuts much better, soon he will cut, and we must suffer” (174). Further, it foreshadows the loss of Biberkopf's arm as well as the beauty of the “sacrificial and healing violence” underscored by Fuechtner. This is also stated on the following page, where as the narrator follows the slicing of the blade, he states “the blood burbles over the knife, over the slaughterman's arm, the ecstatic blood, the red hot blood, transformation is at hand, from the sun is come your blood, the sun has been hiding in your body, now look at it come out to play” (132).

As evidenced by the narrator's preoccupation with the blood and its beauty, the violence within the novel seeks to ultimately bring about some form of transformation. So far I have explored the death and deconstruction of subjectivity within the novel and the way in which,

through violence and the process of modernization, it begins not to matter whether one is outside or inside, for any barrier between the two is gone. Consequently, given the lack of distinction between the subjective and the objective, individuals steadily become conflated not just with beasts, but with buildings. Moreover, they lose their mobility alongside their autonomy. The inhabitants of Berlin both constitute the city as much as the city constitutes them. That is, they are contingent upon each other for existence; both immobile and rigid as the buildings surrounding the Alex. I have shown how aside from the conflation of the inhabitants with their respective buildings, the text also focuses on the invasive aspects of the city — an aspect that continually verges on the possibility for sudden and abrupt violence. However, if the deconstruction of subjectivity (or: the process of modernization) can be considered a form of violence, then by the text's own example of the slaughterhouse, there must be some (healing) transformation to come. It is examining what this transformation consists of and how it is brought about within the text that I now turn.

Behold Death's Axe as It Strikes Upon the Anvil

If our cartographic walk has so far been of the streets and alleys, of the exterior, let us now enter the bars and apartments of Berlin so that we might look upon the soul of Franz Biberkopf, “former transport worker, pimp, manslaughterer” (Döblin 428), and, above all, everyman. As Fuechtner notes: “mapping the city becomes part of mapping the soul, and the devastated and disjointed inner landscape of [...] Franz Biberkopf [...] become[s] a mirror of the social and mental misery and disjunction of post-war Berlin” (64). Consequently, I believe we must follow Biberkopf's footsteps once more, not simply as he walks Berlin, but as he *enters* it. I argue that there are two demonstrable shifts within the novel. If the narrative begins in the city, it

then moves into the body, and ultimately relocates to the mind. Be as that may, the lack of separation between these locations is what makes these shifts confusing and complex. That is, despite the text moving internally, the language of the external is still invoked, making it difficult to tell whether we are within or without, or: “it no longer seems to matter” (Fuechtner 41). This, compounded by Berlin’s invasion and urbanization of the inner individual, allows for the text to retain a façade of exteriority — specifically, it allows the narration to proceed along the Alexanderplatz, or up Rosenthaler Strasse, while simultaneously further exploring and depicting the individual’s interiority.

Let us refocus on where Biberkopf has gotten to. After departing the train, being overwhelmed by the crowds and buildings of Rosenthaler Platz, he turns down a narrow street in an attempt to escape, unaware of where he is going — “the darker the better” (7). As he flees, the narrator’s interjects:

prisoners may be held in isolation, solitary confinement or general confinement. In isolation, a man is kept apart from his fellows day and night. In solitary, the prisoner is kept in a cell, but is permitted to exercise, take classes and attend worship with others. Traffic hooted and honked (7).

What’s significant in this passage is the way in which the text equates Biberkopf amid “the crowds, the crowds” (6) with a prisoner “kept apart from his fellows; kept in a cell” (7). It’s an impactful analogy that helps emphasize the isolating quality of the city as well as the textual reversal (in an attempt to further deconstruct and conflate) external and internal space. Rather than be “able to exercise, take classes and attend worship” with others; or more bluntly, rather than be able to *connect* with others *outside*, subsequently suggesting it is *inside* that the

“prisoner” is kept in isolation, the text maintains that isolation is *outside* and that one can only connect with their “fellows” *inside* (7). Outside there are only buildings, lamp-posts, mannequins, façades, “all painted, all wood” (6). It is *inside* where one finds the *inhabitants* of the city.

In his description of the socio-spatial dialectic, Soja notes that space has historically been considered a “container” for society (210). Pairing the idea of space as a container and the conflation of people with buildings, I believe that we can subsequently view internal (or: modern) space as a container for (re)constructed subjectivity. In this interpretation, the “cell” that allows “fellows” to interact with each other is the socially produced internal space. This container for subjectivity is similar to the one proposed by Soja, with a notable difference. While he argues that historical space functions as a container for society, I propose that modern spatial constructions are best understood as containers for subjectivity. By which I mean that insofar as we view the space of the city, framed by its buildings and streets, as the container for society, the inner urbanized individual, with their closets, living rooms, and bars, functions as the container for subjectivity. Moreover, by viewing the external experience analogous to a prisoner “in isolation,” the way in which the interior “cell” allows connection with others is underscored. Lastly, the concluding sentence, “the traffic hooted and honked,” both brings attention back to the invasive qualities of the city while also furthering my interpretation that the internal cell is not-isolated. That is, throughout the narrator’s interjection we are taken deeper within the text, and yet even in this sub-narrative we are exposed to the sounds of traffic. This demonstrates that despite internal space functioning as a container for subjectivity, it is as of this moment, a container full of holes.

Given the inability to distinctly separate Biberkopf from Berlin, I propose to continue from a different angle. We shall continue to follow Biberkopf as he enters Berlin, but not by following his actions and relations to the city. Rather, the relationship between Reinhold and Biberkopf is an excellent representation of how the external forces a [re]construction of the internal.

Biberkopf first meets Reinhold in a bar, where he is described as follows:

He was slender, wore a battered army coat — could he be a Commie? — had a long, bony, yellowish face and striking horizontal creases on his brow. He was in his early thirties, no more, but there were deep pleats from the nose down either side of the mouth. The nose, Franz was looking at him precisely and often, was short, blunt, matter-of-fact. He inclined his head towards his left hand, which was holding a lit pipe. His hair was black and spiky. When he went across to the bar later — he seemed to be dragging both feet, it was as though they were forever getting stuck in something[.] [...] Franz couldn't take his eyes off him. What a sad expression. He'll have been inside, I guess; he'll come over, see if he don't, thinking I'll have done time as well. (Döblin, 167)

I find it highly significant how *decrepit* Reinhold is initially described as being. One gets the sense that, from both the above description and his earlier-mentioned refrain (“there is a reaper, Death yclept, by Almighty God employed” [174]), Reinhold carries with him the look of death. His nose is described as short and blunt, almost as if it's not there; the *bony, yellowish* face, as if he is stricken with disease. Even Biberkopf wonders, “was it TB?” (Döblin 167). Indeed, it is as though Reinhold hasn't the muscle to lighten his feet, slowly, *slowly* advancing as does Death (evidenced by the title of a later section, “Franz hears the slow song of Death” [Döblin 415]).

Given the suggestion above that it is within that one is able to connect with “his fellows” (7), I cannot help but pause on the reading of the line, “he’ll have been inside, I guess; he’ll come over, see if he don’t, thinking I’ll have done time as well” (167). This line suggests that which initially draws Biberkopf to Reinhold is of internal relations; Biberkopf believes that since both he and Reinhold have spent time inside, they will understand one another. However, Biberkopf quickly learns that Reinhold has ever only been a captive to women, and it turns out that Reinhold used to be “involved in politics,” and “had almost blown up a gasworks,” only to be “snitched on, but he was never nabbed”; subsequently, Reinhold tells Biberkopf that he now works in “fruit and veg” — which, in turn, refers to his “booming trade in girls” (Döblin 167-168). It’s important to underscore that despite Biberkopf initially relating to Reinhold based on a shared past/understanding of the inside, this proves to be false, for not only will Biberkopf subsequently be unable to understand Reinhold, the latter becomes increasingly related to the “unpredictable external force” (1) foreshadowed by the text in its outline of Biberkopf’s story — suggesting that he is wholly isolated from Biberkopf’s understanding.

Reinhold quickly ropes Biberkopf into his schemes, having Franz take one girl after another off his hands, which quickly establishes Reinhold as Biberkopf’s “true friend” (168-169). As their relationship proceeds, we begin to see the unpredictable nature of Reinhold, not only evidenced by his inability to remain with one partner longer than a couple of weeks, but also by a sudden trip to the Salvation Army. Reinhold’s reasoning for going is to “listen to the music,” yet he quickly breaks down, confiding in Biberkopf that he’s got a problem that he can’t kick, but refuses to seek help, for he “is not a believer” (173-174). Biberkopf begins to feel sorry for Reinhold’s ex-partners, listening to one, Cilly, relate how Reinhold is “not a

lover and he's not a pimp, he's not a man at all, just a thug" (175). Note: "he's not a man at all" and recall his refrain. Biberkopf acknowledges that "ensnaring a woman with love and feeling, and then giving her the heave-ho, serially, that wasn't on" (178). And so, when Reinhold inevitably asks Biberkopf to get rid of Cilly (so he might "take True off his hands") Biberkopf denies him, to which Reinhold coldly replies that "he's managed without his help in the past. Then pushes off, [claiming] he's got stuff to do" — a reaction that affects Biberkopf in a way he cannot quite understand (178). He later reflects in bed:

There's something inside of him, his heart, his lungs, his inner self, it's there and it's being buffeted and bent, who by? It doesn't know, the mystery thing don't, who by. All it can say for sure is that it's not asleep.

A bird sits up in a tree, a snake just slipped by while it was asleep, the rustle it made woke the bird, and now it's sitting there with its feathers all plugged up, it didn't even register there was a snake. Keep breathing, draw even breaths, one after the other. Reinhold's hatred is weighing on him and attacking him. It makes its way through wooden doors, and has woken him up. Reinhold too is lying there. He is lying fast asleep, in his area, he is a murderer, in his dream he is making room for himself to breathe. (178)

There are a number of important observations to note in this scene. The text references "something inside of him [...] his inner self," and then questions, "it's there and it's being buffeted and bent, who by?" I have shown earlier that the answer to "who by?" in numerous circumstances refers to (a) the invasive city and its subsequent inherent (b) violence of modernization. Here I would like to underscore the quality that both (a) and (b) have in common:

exteriority. Namely, that their exteriority invades upon the individual's interiority. Recall Fuechtner's assessment of the cannonball imagery which travels from outside-in or Hake's analysis of the pile driver's penetrating invasion. Referred to in this passage is a third representative of the external: Reinhold. For we know, from prior context, that it is Reinhold's dissatisfaction and anger with Biberkopf that prompts these reflections.

Biberkopf does not comprehend what is happening and does not realize the danger that Reinhold embodies. Note the lines concerning the bird that "sits up in a tree" following "a snake [who] just slipped by" who is now sitting with "its feathers all plugged up" and doesn't "even register there was a snake" (178). Recall the observation made by Dollenmayer that as Biberkopf enters the city "he cannot yet draw the line between himself and his surroundings. He is not yet capable of perceiving the city objectively" (Dollenmayer 68). Pair that interpretation with my demonstration of the full destruction of any boundary between external-internal, and what I believe results from the two is a reason for Biberkopf's inability to perceive the threat of Reinhold. That is, given Biberkopf's complete sublation to the city, he lacks a subject position by which to interpret what is going on around him. He is, in a sense, like the mannequins mentioned prior — "seething and swarming, but [with] nothing going on" (6).

Following Biberkopf's refusal to help Reinhold, Pums enrolls him to help them pick up some goods, which later turns out to be a robbery — much to Biberkopf's horror. As they are making their getaway, Reinhold suddenly remembers "this is the Biberkopf who let [me] down" (200) and proceeds, with a couple of punches, to throw Biberkopf out of the car, who is then run over by the one pursuing them. He is left for dead in the middle of the street and is only narrowly rescued by some old friends, who take him to the hospital where, in order to save him,

the doctors are forced to amputate his arm; or: “now the knife is positioned, and the blood will pour out, I can already imagine, a fountain thick like an arm, black beautiful jubilant blood” (Döblin 131). At this moment the first internal shift of the novel occurs. This shift is marked in three subtle ways. First, we have the outline of Biberkopf’s story—whose being thrown out of the car by Reinhold is contained within the lines “then it strikes him a low blow. He has trouble getting up from that, he is almost counted out” (1). Secondly, the narrator, intrudes and speaks directly to the reader, stating:

There are no grounds for despair. As I continue my story, and follow it through to its rough, awful, bitter conclusion, I will often have cause to repeat: there are no grounds for despair. [...] I promise, although this is not customary, not to keep silent during the story. [...] I say again: no cause for despair. I have the odd surprise still up my sleeve, perhaps some readers can already sense something. A slow revelation is in progress, you will see Franz undergo it, and finally everything will be made clear. (Döblin 205)

Again the narrator stresses the transformative, revelatory quality of violence. The narrator appeals to the reader: “do not despair” for soon “everything will be made clear.” Note, in relation to this appeal, the closing remarks of Biberkopf’s opening outline, “to see and hear this will be worthwhile for many readers who, like Franz Biberkopf, fill out a human skin, but, again like Franz Biberkopf, happen to want more from life than a piece of bread” (1). The narrator’s prescriptive tone (“this will be worthwhile for many readers [...] who] want more from life than a piece of bread”) suggests that Biberkopf’s entire story—sacrifice, salvation, transformation—is of pedagogical importance. I argue that the text not only serves as an excellent grounds for a case-study of the (re)construction of subjectivity, but it also stresses the importance of protecting

and preserving one's subjectivity. Otherwise, if you lose yourself in the crowds, then perhaps the same fate as Biberkopf awaits.

Lastly, the text becomes, both in this section as well as in the final shift inwards, increasingly preoccupied with myth and allegory. The novel has not been devoid of religious allusions so far, but following the loss of Biberkopf's arm, instead of being on the periphery, or used only occasionally as a counterpoint to Biberkopf, the narrator's intrusions become direct metaphors and analogies to Biberkopf. For example, the narrator introduces what they believe is stalking Biberkopf:

Come on, I want to show you something. The harlot of Babylon, the great harlot, that sitteth upon many water. I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. (225)

Another example shows how these intrusions begin to directly relate to Biberkopf:

The shield of Achilles, how armed and accoutered he went into battle, I can't exactly bring to mind, but I have a dim sense of forearms and greaves.

But how Franz looked, as he moved to his next engagement, that's something I can tell you. So, Franz is wearing his old and dusty, lightly horse-soiled gear, a seaman's peaked cap with a curved anchor on it, over-jacket and trousers of worn brown serge. (231)

The obvious connection between these two intrusions is that of myth. More specifically, and here is a departure from the earlier passages invoking myths, these two do not change the setting when they begin to relate either the description of the harlot of Babylon or the similarities between Achilles and Biberkopf. That is, whereas the earlier invocations of myth would take the

reader away from the city, either to a cabbage patch with Job (133) or the wilderness with Jeremiah (187), these later invocations of myth leave the reader within the city, and rather center the mythic figures around Biberkopf. I underscore this continuity as it retains the city as the context yet projects imaginative figures upon it. Or: the continuity of setting within these later allusions to myth further conflate the city and individual, the external and internal. Take, for example, the section “A conversation with Job” that takes place in a cabbage patch (133) and juxtapose it with the conversation between two angels “on Berlin’s Alexanderplatz in 1928 alongside a former manslayer, then burglar and pimp [...] Franz Biberkopf” (380). It becomes incrementally clearer as the text proceeds, that there is no more distinction between the cabbage patch of Biberkopf’s mind and the Alexanderplatz. The militaristic connotations in the comparison to Biberkopf and Achilles is a reminder that Biberkopf is not a habitant of Berlin but, as of this moment in the story, a combatant.

The internal shifts in the novel may be better understood as deaths. Scholar Dominique Bauer, in interpreting “the crisis of the interior in the modern city as a crisis of the contingent subject,” argues that:

When the city exists as a collective being, an unanime, and breaks through the walls of the interior, the alienated subject finds itself in surroundings where nothing ceases to be “interior.” The subject is everywhere at once, thinking, experiencing what others think.

The price for this simultaneity is the ultimate dissolution in death. (32)

As I have already explicated, *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* facilitates a complete deconstruction between interior and exterior space. Proceeding with Bauer’s interpretation, it would follow that the only available path for Biberkopf is “dissolution in death.” This presents an interesting

answer to the modern dilemma. That is, one response to the tension between “equalization and differentiation” (Soja 221) could consist of the individual’s death. *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* testifies to this necessity, as Biberkopf must die in order to (re)construct his subjectivity. However, the novel responds to this necessity in an intriguing way, staging the deaths not as literal but as symbolic.

Following the loss of Biberkopf’s arm, the loss of his external space, the reader next encounters Biberkopf bedridden and realizing that “there is an exhaustion that is like the living death [...] I am close to dying, I can feel death near me” and is told by the narrator that if he doesn’t “pick up a stick, a sword [...] and sally forth welding something [...] then it’s all up with you for good” (224). Here we see how two major motifs of the novel begin to synthesize: (a) the militaristic tones of the novel and (b) an increasing focus with “what someone’s head looks like from the inside” (Döblin 286). The lines above call on Biberkopf to sally forth and fight, while referring to the “death-like” exhaustion that he is experiencing. This exhaustion that is close to the experience of death supports my interpretation that the two internal shifts in the novel are analogous to deaths. Further, the loss of his arm as representative of an external death can be supported by the section title, “Get up, you feeble spirit, and stand on your own two feet” (224). Again I would like to recall Biberkopf’s initial outline and note the parallel between this section and when Biberkopf, after being struck a low blow, has “trouble getting up” (1). Interestingly, however, despite my reading of the novel shifting internally, Biberkopf decides that the only way to proceed is by “forbid[ding] all reflection” and concluding that “it’s happened, that’s all there is to it” (212, 219). Perhaps here I can gesture once more to his being invaded by the city, subsequently forcing his internal reflections to be similar to the description of the mannequins I

have so often invoked. That is, Biberkopf is still *outside* the window peering in, despite the novel encroaching on his interior space. Moreover, keeping in mind Biberkopf's inability to distinguish himself from his surroundings, and noting that he remains outside the window, so to speak, will aid in understanding the subsequent internal shift.

Following the betrayal by his "true friend" (169), the crippled Biberkopf lies low for a bit, falls in with some old friends (the same who rescued him) who incredulously wonder why, if he was going to fall off the straight and narrow, he wouldn't do it with them. Biberkopf and Reinhold once more meet nearly one hundred pages later, the impetus being that Biberkopf "just want[s] to see [him]" (280). They slowly begin getting together again, and one night as Biberkopf is telling him about Mitzi, a girl who was introduced to him by an old friend and who he is convinced he ought to marry, Reinhold decides "I'll take her off him, and that'll throw him in the dirt for good" (285). Despite his advances, Mitzi does not submit to Reinhold for she is wholly in love with Biberkopf. Consequently, in a last-ditch effort to bring "the hammer [...] down on Franz Biberkopf" (287) Reinhold convinces Mitzi to take a drive with him and a friend to the spa-garden Freienwalde (325), following which, in a secluded dell, he brutally beats, rapes, and murders her (338).

A detail in the scene just before Mitzi's death helps to explain the role Reinhold plays in Biberkopf's "radical cure" (1). As he and Mitzi are sitting in the dell, before she tries to leave and he restrains her, Reinhold shows off his chest tattoo: "an anvil, and a laurel wreath around it" (331). She then questions why he would get a tattoo of an anvil:

'It's my emblem.' 'An anvil?' 'Yeah. Someone has to lie down on it, get banged.' He gives her a grin. 'You're filthy. You should have had a bed on there.' 'Na, nanvil's

better.’ ‘You a blacksmith, then?’ ‘A bit of one. Jack of all trades, you know. But I don’t think you understand about the anvil, Mitzi. No one’s to get too close to me, else there’ll be a blaze. (332)

I said prior that I believed Reinhold to be related to the “unpredictable external agency” (1) responsible for Biberkopf’s transformation. Though Reinhold embodies violent and external space in many ways, he is not the sole agent of Biberkopf’s transformation. Rather, the space of Berlin is the “unpredictable external agency” (1) that brings “the hammer [...] down on Franz Biberkopf” (287) as he is against the social “the anvil[, ...] the blacksmith,” Reinhold (332). It is against this anvil and through the hammer blows (the violence done to and deaths of Biberkopf) against it which ultimately produces the “radical cure” that leaves Biberkopf “greatly changed [...] and] straightened out” (1).

Despite its unpredictability, by this point in the novel the “external agency” against Biberkopf is shown to have a focus: to perform a radical cure upon him. With this in mind, the narrator begins to more explicitly foreshadow Biberkopf’s fate as well as comment on his suffering. As Biberkopf begins to wonder where Mitzi is, unaware that she has been murdered, the narrator interjects, comparing Biberkopf explicitly to Job and telling him that he will be “burnt to [his] innermost core. See the whore rejoicing! The whore of Babylon!” (Döblin 365-66). And when Biberkopf finally learns of Mitzi’s death (via a newspaper article that portrays him, Biberkopf, as the killer) he states that “terror beckons to him” and that it is:

the reaper, Death yclept, he comes with axes and rods, he blows a flute, then he cracks open his jaws and he takes a trombone, will he play the trombone, will he hit the

cymbals, will the terrible black storm goat come, boom, always gently, boom-vroom.

(Döblin 370)

Biberkopf quickly begins to break down, sobbing and wandering the streets of Berlin evading the cops and unsure what to do. Eventually he decides he's "taken enough and done enough [...] and] because I can't kill Reinhold, I'm going to kill myself. I'm going to hell with a great fanfare" (384). The narrator immediately interjects: "who's this on Alexanderstrasse, very slowly pushing one foot after the other? His name is Franz Biberkopf [...] his time has come. Damn the fists that beat him" (384).

The hammer-like fists will not stop beating him until he's straightened out. He gets picked up by the cops, charged for Mitzi's murder, sent to an infirmary (for refusing food), and subsequently sent to the Buch insane asylum as he is still refusing food, all the while lying "buck-naked" with "his eyes squeezed shut, lay[ing] there stiffly and refus[ing] all nourishment" (405-406). Starving himself, Biberkopf hears Death "sing[ing] his slow, slow song" which, I should note is rather similar to Reinhold, for Death is noted as "sing[ing] like a stammerer" (415). It is at this point in the novel, evidenced by Biberkopf's corpse-like rigor, that all of the action proceeds to regress to "the most ancient stages of the soul" (Feuchtner 45)—by which I mean the innermost areas of the individual. The narrator chronicles how Biberkopf hears and speaks with Death, slowly inching his way towards him as, piece by piece, he is chopped up with an axe. This confrontation continues as Biberkopf is instructed to "suffer them to approach, the cars, the cabs, you know how many of them you sat in, rattling along [...] No. 20147" (422).

Following the reduction of Biberkopf to nothing but a number, we witness the complete reforging of his subjectivity as he hallucinates his past, confronts his sins, weeps over himself,

lays himself in the burning flame (recall Reinhold the anvil, the blacksmith, the blaze), so that he might be killed, lies and “howls and howls, I am guilty” (425-428). It is then related that:

At that hour of the evening, Franz Biberkopf, former transport worker, housebreaker, pimp, manslaughterer, died. Another lay in his bed. This one has the same papers as Franz, looks like Franz, but in another world he bears a different name. (428)

Our man Biberkopf is then metaphorically baptized with the middle name “Karl” becoming “Franz Karl Biberkopf” (432-433), who is only referred to as Biberkopf “in memory of the departed” (431). The reconstructed Biberkopf’s story concludes with his becoming an “assistant porter in a medium sized factory [...] no longer standing alone on Alexanderplatz” (438) and who subsequently watches from his window the men, narrator, and himself below as the “drums whirl behind him. Marching, marching [...] going into battle with a firm stride” (438-439).

Before moving on from this scene, I would like to underscore two things. Firstly, the narrator re-summarizes Biberkopf’s story as him running “pell-mell in the dark” striking tree after tree, each time shutting his eyes tighter, until he finally falls and sees the “lamp burning over his head, and [...] can] read the street sign” (438). I find this significant in the way it relates to the following paragraphs which feature Biberkopf simultaneously watching himself marching from within his window. I read these final moments of the dark streets through which Biberkopf was running “pell-mell” as being the alleyways of his inner self. The location of Biberkopf at the end is important since it directly converses with the beginning where he saw the mannequins in the window and believed they were simply wood and paint. By the end, however, Biberkopf is within the window, suggesting that in order to demarcate himself from his surroundings he must figuratively construct a separate spatiality within himself.

Looking Out from the Lobby of Biberkopf's Mind

As this paper has argued, the dialectic between Biberkopf and Berlin is not a spoken back-and-forth as much as it is a continued shouting within his ear. Perhaps this continued shouting is what Berman meant when describing the “maelstrom” of modernity (15). The invading, though not deafening, city is shown to deconstruct all of the barriers between Biberkopf's internal and external space, resulting in his “ultimate dissolution in death” (Bauer 32). Yet, the deaths experienced by Biberkopf are complex. Not only are they symbolic, it would be a misconception to categorize them simply as “deaths.” Nor could I argue that he is murdered by the forces of modernity. Rather, Biberkopf is forced to sacrifice his subjectivity in order to produce a space in which he might subsequently reconstruct it. First Biberkopf loses his arm, a symbol of his autonomy. Secondly, his mobility is taken from him as he lays bedridden. It is only following these sacrifices, which do not stop at the loss of his autonomy and mobility but extend into the depths of his subjectivity that *he* —that is his subjectivity— is reconstructed. It's a peculiar inversion of Simmel's belief that “the most significant characteristic of the metropolis is [... a] functional extension beyond its physical boundaries. [...] Man does not end with the limits of his body or the area comprising his immediate activity” (8). Rather than the individual extending beyond their boundaries, the novel demonstrates the city encroaching within—deconstructing and subsuming all in its path.

The deconstruction and conflation of external and internal space is likewise shown within the novel to reflect the breakdown of core-periphery tensions. As Biberkopf continues to move between the spaces of production, the question of who is exploiting him becomes increasingly obfuscated. At one moment it's the core, the city, at the next it's the periphery, his fellow

lumpenproletariat using him to further their own capital. The individual is both invaded and exploited constantly; nothing is exempt from the powers of modernization as the pile drivers and wrecking balls push further and further into the constructions of individual space. Notably, it is the way in which the social aspects of Berlin violate and destroy their own spatial constructions that dominate the story of Biberkopf. These pressures, also known as those of equalization and differentiation, ultimately culminate in complete self-effacement. That is, there are bodies without faces, bodies which keep the city running, mannequins all painted and wooden; or, as Hake concludes, “the mass individual is reconstituted as a subject without voice, the modern metropolis is confirmed as a machine without a subject” (224).

However, the individual cannot sustain complete self-effacement. As Biberkopf illustrates, along with the disintegration into society comes suffering—comes the inability to objectively understand this suffering—which in turn leads to only more suffering. Multiple times throughout the novel Biberkopf attempts to avoid this suffering by staying inside, a poor attempt at containing his subjectivity, for despite placing himself in a cell—the cell is full of holes. As the sounds of Berlin hammer into his interior space, the wrecking ball of Mitzi’s death caving in the walls, it is through these holes that Biberkopf’s anxieties and imaginings begin to be projected onto the surrounding architectural façades.

Throughout my explication of the story of Biberkopf there is a crucial motif: the mediating role of windows. The novel begins with Biberkopf outside and peering in, unable to register the individuals beyond the rigid frame. It ends, however, with this relationship reversed. By the final pages of the novel Biberkopf stands at the window looking out, not just at the men marching in the street but at *himself as he marches with them*. This returns us to De Cauwer’s

observation of the power of windows to inverse spatial relations, yet it extends beyond that—the windows *fuse* the disparate spatialities together. Perhaps the struggle of subjectivity can be represented by this viewing, shattering, and reforging of the window. That is, Biberkopf begins by viewing the window and unable to distinguish between the represented interior and exterior space. Moreover, through the course of the novel, the social pressures of Berlin function as wrecking balls that shatter this window. Following this shattering comes the reforging of the window as Biberkopf is laid against Reinhold the anvil and Death's axe. He is beaten and hammered and beaten until the window is reforged and he is able to stand within it, evidenced by the addition of a middle name: Karl. The reconstruction of the window is what allows him to demarcate between himself and the city. Despite the continued fusing of perspectives, by being on the *inside* Biberkopf remains aware and alert.

Interestingly, this aligns with Hake's conclusion that "the crisis of modern subjectivity and the fragmentation of urban life [can be overcome] through forms of spectatorship [...] modeled on modern consumer culture" (241). Yet, Hake believes that this triumph of subjectivity does not occur within *Berlin, Alexanderplatz*. Rather, she argues that it is in Walter Ruttmann's film *Berlin, Symphony of the Big City* that the individual is transformed into a spectator. However, as I have demonstrated, by the end of the novel Biberkopf finds himself not only alert and aware, but as an active spectator. Further, the emphasis on the mannequins in the windows incorporates Hake's belief that the forms of spectatorship will be modeled on "consumer culture." Consequently, Biberkopf arises as the new individual—functioning both as part of the crowds as well as the spectator. He is both an armchair flâneur and anonymous laborer, participating while observing the "perpetual disintegration and renewal" (Berman 15).

Considering Biberkopf as the (re)constructed individual *par excellence* allows us to explore what implications this new figure may hold for how we understand the process of living within the modern metropolis—especially given the increasing (or, perhaps, persistent) domination of the urban experience upon our everyday lives. As Biberkopf testifies, we cannot privilege self-effacement in order to gain access to the community of modernity; that is, we must retain our subjectivity in order to avoid disintegration and alienation. Despite O’Dair’s claiming that anonymity is an “an inescapable feature of modern social life” (14), Biberkopf provides a model by which we might escape *total* anonymity. The answer to the modern dilemma appears to lie in the construction of an internal spatiality, a space that contains subjectivity so that as the individual enters the external space of the city they are not stripped and deboned of their subjectivity. That is, the individual encloses their subjectivity while participating with the masses in a depersonalized, external sense. This allows one to be a statistic while retaining their identity.

Further, I believe that the way in which the city comes to dominate the imagination and demand sacrifice in the modernist novel speaks to the way in which our modern myths come to be constructed. The myth-making of *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* is further evidenced by—as cultural geographer Maoz Azaryahu argues regarding the creation of the mythic city—the transformation of Berlin “from an abstraction into a concrete entity that is actively involved in its own shaping” (26). Or, as Anette Meyhöfer remarks, “Berlin, always in search of itself, always ready for a new beginning, constantly forced to be a symbol, a myth” (qtd. in Azaryahu 15). Raising the metropolis, to the position of creator and progenitor, in turn recasts Biberkopf’s suffering and sacrifice as necessary tithes rather than a warning against complete self-effacement. That is, it

implies that the tax required by the capitalist city is not purely economic. The price of living and interacting with others is the necessary loss of one's autonomy and mobility.

Yet, *Berlin, Alexanderplatz* presents us with a way to subvert these taxes and tithes. As becomes Biberkopf's newfound mantra, the text warns us: "be alert" (439). It concludes with emphasizing the importance of community ("much misfortune comes from walking alone" [438]) while also retaining the need to separate oneself, to remain on the proper side of the window, to stay inside and watch what is going on. That is, the novel concludes by stressing the need to differentiate oneself while also becoming an equal while outside. Does such a development allow for the continued connection between individuals, does it allow for a sense of community? I believe so, but it requires a greater degree of intimacy, it requires one to enter, so to speak, the construction of another. Yet, through that process it also calls for the cessation of the exploitation of those around oneself. In a sense, the novel seeks to put an end to the horizontal conflict so that the vertical may be waged and won. Moreover, the insistence on staying inside and alert proves to be an enduring course of action. Consider the windows from which we look out onto the world and how those have steadily become replaced by the screens that constantly surround us; a phenomenon which has only increased with the advent of the pandemic. This could be read as yet another attempt at the invasion and inner urbanization of the individual by the forces of modernization. Therefore, now more than ever, it is necessary to reconsider the relationship between internally constructed space (both those spaces literal and figurative) and subjectivity—both within the textual and industrial city alike. It is my hope that this paper sparks that much needed conversation.

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