

PREFACE

Most chapters of this book are modified versions of previously published articles. Chapters One, Two and Five were published in *Russian Literature* (XIX-3, 1986 and XXI-3, 1987); Chapter Three in *Dutch Contributions to the Tenth International Congress of Slavists*, Amsterdam 1988. Only Chapter Four has not before appeared in print.

This study is concerned with montage procedures in *Red Cavalry*, a cycle of stories by the Russian Modernist Isaak Babel (1894-1940¹). In other recent studies scholars have already touched upon the subject of montage in Babel's stories, though always in a rather sidelong manner. The term montage has usually been used to denote general compositional characteristics concerning effects of thematic and stylistic fragmentation. Most scholars thus apply a reduced notion of the montage principle, thereby obliquely referring to its cinematic origins. An exhaustive elaboration on montage as a general modernistic principle which may affect all levels of an artistic construction is not yet available. However, such an elaboration is, I think, necessary if we wish to describe any artistic construction in terms of montage.

The first chapter of this book deals with the problem of montage as a constructive principle in cinematic and narrative art. It presents a systematic discussion of the montage procedures as developed applied and analyzed by the avant-garde Russian cinema-director S.M. Eisenstein. Thereafter, the originally cinematic semantics of montage is projected onto a

¹Until recently the circumstances and date of Babel's death have been uncertain. An article by Arkadij Vaksberg, published in June 1988 in the *Literaturnaja Gazeta*, has put an end to the mystery. Arrested in May 1939 on account of his friendship with the wife of Nikolaj Ežov, who had just been 'replaced' as head of the NKVD by Lavrentij Beria, Babel was accused of participating in a Trotskyist organization and of handing over secret information on the Soviet air force to the French writer Andre Malraux. He was also reproached for the 'subversive nature' of his book *Red Cavalry*. At first Babel denied all accusations, but he is said to have afterwards confessed to being a member of this alleged Trotskyist organization. He was executed on 27 January 1940.

model of narrative constructions, as designed by Jan van der Eng. This may serve to justify the proposed connection with modernistic narrative art, and with *Red Cavalry* in particular.

The second, third and fourth chapters deal with four recurrent montage procedures in *Red Cavalry*, all of which are invariably of direct importance to the thematic essentials of the stories when taken separately and of the cycle as a whole. Chapter Two presents a treatise on various types and functions of the montage of inner stories and digressions. Chapter Three is concerned with intertextual montage, and Chapter Four with the montage of historical references. Each montage procedure will be discussed primarily within the context of the story in which it occurs, but, if relevant, also within the macro-context of the cycle.

In Chapter Five an analysis is given of one single story in order to illustrate how the four previously discussed montage procedures are semantically related with each other as well as with accessory elements of the composition. It will show that the principle of montage is functional on practically every level of the narrative construction.

Throughout this book, quotations from the *Red Cavalry* stories are given from: Isaak Babel', *Detstvo i drugie rasskazy* (Childhood and other Stories), with commentary and a bibliography by E. Sicher, Israel 1979, p. 101-235. This edition is based on publications of Babel's stories in the early nineteen twenties. They differ from the later editions (the *Izbrannye* of 1936, 1957 and 1966), where the texts are sometimes modified by the author (self-censorship), or distorted and cut up by the censor. The English translations are largely based on *Collected Stories*, translated by Walter Morison, with an introduction by Lionel Trilling, Penguin Books, 1983. I took the liberty of making some minor revisions at the few instances where Morison's text sharply deviates from the literal meaning of Babel's text. I altered his translation of some of the stories' titles. Some examples: "Crossing into Poland" I changed into "The Crossing of the

Zbruč", which comes nearer to the Russian original "Perechod čerez Zbruč"; "The Rabbi" and "The Rabbi's Son" have become "The Rebbe" and "The Rebbe's Son" because Morison confuses the Russian word "ravvin" (meaning Rabbi) with "rabbi" (meaning Rebbe). At some points Morison replaces the original present tense by the past tense - in my opinion these unnecessary interventions are best left out. Excerpts from Babel's wartime diary are all rendered in my own translation.

The translations of fragments from Eisenstein's essays are mine. Tynjanov is quoted, with some moderate revisions, according to *Russian Poetics in Translation*, Vol. 8, "Film Theory and General Semiotics", Oxford, 1981. All remaining quotations from Russian texts are represented in my own translation.

The Russian language is reproduced in this book in Latin letters in accordance with the system of scholarly transliteration, including the names in Morison's translations. The names of Eisenstein and Meyerhold are treated as an exception because they are so familiar in Latin spelling. I decided to omit the apostrophe in the scholarly spelling of Babel's name (Babel'), because of the somewhat strange appearance the name would assume when used in the possessive case (Babel's).

This study would never have been completed without the constant support and assistance of a number of people to whom I am extremely thankful. Above all, I am deeply indebted to my promotor, professor Jan van der Eng, not only for his invitation to work on this thesis and his successful effort to obtain the indispensable financial support, but mostly for his confidence in me, his patience and for the efficiency of his countless professional advice. I am also grateful to Dr. Willem G. Weststeijn, who involved me in various extrinsic projects which provided a sometimes necessary distraction and broadened my outlook. I have appreciated his encouragement very much. Heartfelt thanks are due to my dear friend and colleague, Dr. Peter Zeeman, for his critical readings of my work, and for his moral support and

practical advice. He gave me the opportunity to discuss my findings freely, never lost patience and always came up with useful suggestions. I am indebted to Otto Donkers and *Inter Access* for helping me solve many agravating computer problems. Finally, I wish to thank my family and friends for their love and understanding which never ceased to strengthen me. Without them this work would never have been written.