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"I had the strangest week ever!"
Metalepsis in Music Videos[1]

Film and Music Video: Big Brother vs. Little Sister?

"Music videos are probably the most creative filmmaking being done right now. [...] That's what movies should look like." "Because of music videos, there are more cinematographers, production designers, and more thoughtful craft people now. Movies never looked better" (Swallow 2003: 21, 13f.; Reiss and Feineman 2000: 0:01:02). Statements like these by former music video and current film director David Fincher are symptomatic of an attitude towards film and music video in which the two genres are treated as close relatives, distinguished almost hierarchically, opposing film as the dignified and thus portly big brother against the quick and dirty little sister, the music video, which, despite its size and brevity, inspires its sibling time and again with bold aesthetic innovations.[2]

Since their inception, and already in the context of their early predecessors, music videos (here referred to as "video clips" or "music clips") have served as a platform for aesthetic experiments and inventions which, once developed, tested and confirmed in the cheap and short medium of the clip, could then be applied in the context of more expensive and larger-scale films:[3] Claude Lelouch, today a distinguished French film direc-

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2   See for this also Keazor and Wübbena (2007: 247ff.).
3   See for this Keazor and Wübbena (2007: 288ff.). Other examples of directors starting in the business of the music video and then bringing their innovative style shaped by this experience into cinema are, e.g., Michel Gondry and Spike Jonze. See for this Keazor and Wübbena (2007: 247ff.). Due to the fact that video clips are made for promotion, they share in this respect certain parallels with commercials which, especially in the 1980s, were also considered a sort of inspiration for the film industry: a filmmaker such as, e.g., Adrian Lyne started his career as a director for TV commercials which is also why his film *Flash-*

tor, for example, earned his first spurs with the making of short films for the so-called "Scopitones," a visual juke box, developed in 1960 and already then used in order to promote Jazz- and pop songs, first in Europe, then in America.[4] Not only did Lelouch, like later his colleague David Fincher, consider the production of such musical clips as his film academy,[5] he also attributes the spontaneous approach of his Nouvelle Vague films to the earlier experimentation afforded by working with high-sensitive film-materials on his promotional short films.

The topics addressed above, including the attendant vocabulary of cinematographers such as "production designers," "craft people" and "film-material," demonstrate that the innovations contributed by the music video are seemingly restricted to mere aesthetic and technical aspects without considering dramaturgical or intellectual considerations. This may be why big brother's little sister is considered not only superficial in contrast but outright cannibalistic. The music video has frequently been confronted with "Cultural cannibalization" as a reproach: even if the genre might be innovative in its visual style and its technological prowess, it nevertheless had to lift its contents from culturally "higher" art forms such as literature and film by plundering them.[6]

This seems to be confirmed when it comes to the analysis of music clips: they show a strong entanglement with film which, on the one hand, is due to their elements, since—like movies—they combine moving images and sounds; on the other hand, their genesis is already strongly linked to the history of film. A case in point is Thomas Alva Edison's "Kineto-phone" from 1891, which later led to the development of the cinema, was first described by the inventor as a means to follow musical performances in an opera house conveniently from home.[7] Thus, the concepts designed in order to analyse films also seemed also appropriate on a one-to-one basis for the music clip—a position which failed to realize that both genres actually follow very different dramaturgies and which thus occasionally came up with absurd results, since it did not take into account the music for which the clips were actually made.[8]

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dance (1983) was often compared in its aesthetics to an advert or, respectively, considered as a "rock video" turned "into a feature-length film." See for this, e.g., Maltin (1998: 448).

4   Keazor and Wübbena (2007: 58f.).

5   Fincher said in an interview, "I didn't want to go to a film high school. I didn't see what sense this would have made." See Schnelle (2002: 234).

6   See for these reproaches, e.g., Berland (1993: 37) and Tetzlaff (1993). Against such a simple argumentation see Keazor and Wübbena (2006).

7   Keazor and Wübbena (2007: 57).

8   In a 1986 statement which misjudged the seemingly incoherent and therefore anarchic flow of the images in a music video, John Fiske wrote that "MTV fragments itself, fragments

Thus, when discussing the phenomenon of metalepsis in music clips, one obviously has to look towards the sibling medium of the film for the purposes of orientation and contrast, while also taking care to avoid falling into the convenient "Big Brother/Small Sister" trap discussed above.

"Thanks for coming—now go, vanish!" —
Gérard Genette and *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*

Hence, this look at the film as the sibling medium of the music video will be used here in order to determine whether, how and under what conditions the concept and the notion of metalepsis are applicable to the genre of the film in the first place. We shall then go on to see whether these types and categories are also applicable to the music video.

As is well known, Gérard Genette's different types of metalepsis are based on the transgression of the boundaries between three different worlds: the fictional world, the world of narration and the real world of author and audience. Monika Fludernik has distinguished these different permutations according to the following categorization (2003: 388f.):

Type 1: "Authorial" metalepsis (the author does not limit himself to narrating an action but controls and manipulates it pointedly).
Type 2: "Ontological" metalepsis 1: narratorial metalepsis (the author moves himself on the plane of the narration and enters it).
Type 3: "Ontological" metalepsis 2: lectorial metalepsis (one of the characters from the narrated story goes up a level by, e.g., listening and reacting to the narration or, respectively, by interfering with the author).
Type 4: "Rhetorical" metalepsis:[9] discourse metalepsis (while the action goes on, the author simultaneously explains something to us as if to fill in the empty parts of the action which means that he is temporally on the same level as the narration).[10]

As can be seen by reviewing Genette's concept of metalepsis, the author of a text plays an integrative role. However, the respective definitions the

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the academic theory, fragments adulthood, zaps the White House into smithereens." This is an impression, however, that results from an approach focused entirely on the images, rather than on the underlying music that, along with the lyrics and sound, "glues" together the apparently unconnected images. See Fiske (1986: 77).

9   For this notion see especially Ryan (2005: 206f.).

10   Fludernik (2003: 388) discards a possible fifth type, the "pseudo-diegetic or reduced meta-diegetic metalepsis," since, according to her, it "is only very tangentially related to a metaleptic crossing of boundaries."

author and narrator are much more complex for film than for literature. Mirroring the fact that a film is the result of a collaboration of many different constituting elements (direction, production, script for the dialogues, camera for the images, music, etc.), there has been a huge debate as to whether a film actually has "authors" and "narrators" in the proper sense of these words, and if so, how many there are, whether there is a main author[11] and/or narrator[12] and who he could be identified with.

Here, Shane Black's comedy-thriller adaptation *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (2005) is helpful to skip across the pitfalls connected with the cinematic narrator, since the film presents us with an easily identifiable narrator (or so it seems) who is conveniently also identical with the main character, Harry Lockhart (Robert Downey Jr). He not only verbally (through the occasional voice-over) tells the film's story,[13] but—suitably—is also in control of the flow of the images of the narration which he can present, stop, rewind and replay as he pleases: "I'll show you that in a minute," he announces (0:08:11) in a flash-back episode at the beginning of the film, which is supposed to explain why Harmony Faith Lane (Michelle Monaghan) is also at a party where he meets her. He also seems to be able to control the different layers of the accompanying soundtrack, since her

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11   See for this the debate, e.g., the positions of Alexandre Astruc and François Truffaut: faced with a reality where a film was rather the product of different subtasking employees directed by a commercial film company, than the product of a single creative and independent mind, Astruc, already in 1948 in his text "Manifest de la caméra-stylo," conceived conditions under which a director could and should use the medium of the film and its technical means as components of his language in order to express things mattering to him. But only with the movement of the "Nouvelle Vague" did this theory find directors that actually tried to practice the concept. See for this and the ensuing debate: Astruc (1948/1992), Wollen (1969) and Distelmeyer (2003). Since, however the "author" of a movie is not to be automatically identified with its "narrator," there still remains the ongoing question of whether a film can have a narrator at all which is still a hotbed for debates.

12   On the questions about "narration" and "narrator" in films see, concerning the state of the discussion and its most prominent literature, especially Kuhn (2007) and Griem and Voigts-Virchow (2002: 161–163); for an attempt to redefine "narrativity" in a transgeneric and transmedial sense see Rajewsky (2007). Chatman (1990: 134f.) has suggested a definition of "cinematic narrator" which, by including and encompassing almost all the vital elements of a film production, tends to become, however, too broad. As Bach (1999: 238) rightly points out, moreover, his defintion blurs the difference between "narration" and "narrator."

13   Kuhn (2007: 64ff.) taking up François Jost's notions of "ocularisation" and "auriculation," also discerns between the visual and the acoustic aspects of perception in film and develops the concepts of a "sprachliche Erzählinstanz" ("linguistically narrating entity") and a "visuelle Erzählinstanz" ("visually narrating entity") in a film. Harry's voice-over here would represent of course the "linguistically narrating entity." For Jost's notions see Jost (1987). For the distinction between the visual and the acoustic aspects of perception in film, see also already Schlickers (1997).

voice is only heard when he allows it to be, while the music from the party is all the time in the background. But apparently distracted by Harmony's looks ("Jeez—look at those stems, will you?", he incites the audience to admire her legs) and despite the titles ("How Harmony Got To The Party") introducing the whole sequence, Harry eventually forgets about the explanation: "Oh shit! I skipped something. Damn it. [...] I made a big deal, then I forgot." He criticizes himself when he realizes his error (0:09:58): "Fuck, this is bad narrating!" And with a "Anyway, I don't know if you want to see it now," he stops the sequence he is just showing the audience and starts a new episode, as if he would control the flow and order of the images while sitting outside the diegetic world at a Moviola (a device which allows the editor of a movie to view the film while editing). Only five minutes later, he has to stop the film again (0:15:20), this time excusing himself for seemingly showing a pointless scene: "That is a terrible scene. It's like, 'Why was *that* in the movie?' Gee, you think 'Maybe it'll come back later, maybe?' I hate that." Thus, it would seem as if Harry, telling the story in retrospect, is unhappy with his choice of picked and shown episodes because they actually do not contribute to the point of the narration. Only later will the audience realize that Harry was not howling because the scene was pointless, but because in his view it was too obvious. From this arose his commenting comparison to such stereotypical movie moments: "A TV's on, talking about the new power plant. Hmm— wonder where the climax will happen." And again, this time only four minutes later, Lockhart criticizes himself anew: "Okay, I was a bad narrator again" (0:19:53), because he has not clearly explained and linked an earlier scene to the rest of the film. Judging from the other moments where he stops the film at a certain point in order to then restart it at another, it seems that he has an array of previously shot footage at his disposal which he then presents more or less the same way Orson Welles did in his famous semi-documentary *F for Fake* from 1974. There, Welles depicted himself in fact sitting at a Moviola, seemingly assembling and presenting previously shot film material he started, stopped and combined according to his wishes, continuously commenting upon it. In Harry's case, however, it now appears that the images are actually only produced as he talks: "Ma and Pa Kettle.[14] I got an idea. Why not put these two lame-o extras in front of the mammoth fucking lens. Boo! Scat! Fat lady, leave!" (0:20:04). He shoos away two people, standing in front of the scene which has already been presented during the opening flash-back sequence. But since then, especially considering how the "fat lady"

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14   "Ma and Pa Kettle" were the two protagonists of an American series of popular, comedy
     movies in the 1940s and 1950s which dealt with the absurd misadventures of the Kettle
     clan. See for this McNeil (1996: 254).

blocked the view, Harry is now concerned that the audience might not be able to completely see the scene or properly follow his tale. The fact that he is able to chase away the two people suggests that they can hear him and follow his commands and that he is thus able to transgress and bridge the boundaries between the extradiegetic world and the intradiegetic world. Moreover, the way he talks about them as "two extras" hints at the fact that they all know that they are just actors in a film production. The fact that Harry commands these people and that they respond grants Harry conceptual status of director of the film[15] who, however, is miraculously able to choose from already shot footage while at the same time interfering with its production.

In syntony with this, the film's protagonists not only constantly stress the film as a historic genre ("I am sore," Harry says to Harmony the first time he speaks to her in a bar [0:17:22], adding: "I mean physically, not like a guy who's angry in a film from the 1950's").[16] And in the final scene, Harry and Perry Van Shrike (Val Kilmer), thus breaking the "fourth wall" of the film, are even addressing the audience directly by looking at it: "That's it. That's the true story of what happened last Christmas. [...] Thanks for coming," Harry says and Perry later adds "Now go, vanish!" (1:34:10), seemingly switching off the camera towards which they have been both speaking (which now, however, does not seem to be a professional film camera, but, given the suddenly modest quality of the image, appears to be rather a cheap video camera or a camera in a laptop). Hence, they show that they are aware of the fact that they are actors in a movie

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15   This shows that the general conclusion drawn by Bach (1999: 234) is problematic: stating that in Carl Reiner's film *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1982) the first-person narrator has no control over the images or the music of the film, she deduces that generally "ein voice-over-Erzähler" is "keinesfalls die filmische Entsprechung zum Erzähler in der Literatur" ("a voice-over-narrator [...] is definitively not the filmic equivalent to a narrator in literature"). Although one can still discuss about the result of her conclusion, her arguments are based on weak evidence, as the case of *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* clearly shows.

16   At the same time, this is also a reference to the novel on which Black's script is based: in Brett Halliday's novel *Bodies Are Where You Find Them* from 1941, which is credited in the film's titles as a source of inspiration for its script, the word "sore" is also very often used in this old-fashioned sense. Since Halliday's novels, centred around the detective Mike Shayne, were adapted as films from the early 1940s on (starring Lloyd Nolan), Harry's remark could be also seen as referring to Halliday's novel and their filmic adaptation. On this point, see also the following note. Black's film contains several other in-jokes referring to films and TV-series: e.g., the character of the stewardess "Flicka" in *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* owes her name to the fact that Black could thus put a pun into the dialogues which, when Harmony at one point (00:33:49) talks about "My friend Flicka" on the one hand refers to "My friend Flicka" (both the film [1943] and the TV series [1955–56]), and on the other hand to an episode from the series *L.A. Law*, titled "My friend Flicker" from November 1992, and starring actor Corbin Bernsen who, in *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, plays the actor-villain Harlan Dexter (I owe these hints to Michael Myles, Saarbrücken).

even before Perry, paradoxically, warned Harry and Harmony that "This is not a book. This is not a movie" (0:53:33), thus referring to the two media in which the plot of *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* is deployed (the novel *Bodies Are Where You Find Them* by Brett Halliday, and Black's film).[17] But even before Harry and Perry address the camera itself, Harry had addressed the audience in a voice-over close to the film's denouement (01:13:50): "How about it, filmgoer? Have you solved the case of the dead people in L.A.? Time Square audiences, please, don't shout out at the screen," Harry says at one point of the film, thus hinting at his expectation that the movie will be a blockbuster, programmed in cinemas in New York's Times Square. And again, almost behaving as if he were in the shoes of a director, Harry comments directly upon the flaws and qualities of his product. So when it turns out that he and Perry have miraculously survived the final show-down, he anticipates the audience's reaction (1:28:59): "Yeah, boo, hiss. I know. Look, I hate it too. In movies where the studio get all paranoid about a downer ending, so the guy shows up, he's magically alive on crutches, I hate that. I mean, shit, why not bring them all back." And in order to mock this practice, the film actually shows three characters who were earlier killed in the film, now walking happily into the hospital room, followed by Abraham Lincoln and Elvis Presley. "But the point is, in this

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17 Black's script borrows the central motives of the murderous scheme put up in Halliday's novel. In both stories, a man "substitutes" his daughter by replacing her with another girl in order to make her withdraw a lawsuit the real daughter has started against him, thus threatening him with the loss of her mother's estate. In both cases the events are then triggered by the fact that a former acquaintance of the real daughter (in the book, her secret husband; in the film, her boyfriend) comes to visit her and thus threatens to unmask the whole plan by identifying the false daughter. This leads in the book and in the film to the killing of the real daughter, detained in an asylum, as well as of the false daughter, and in both stories the killers then try to pin the murder on an innocent person (in the book, on detective Mike Shayne; in the film, on Harry) by constantly haunting him with the corpse (Halliday's book moreover includes a swapping of the two bodies). Since Halliday (primary pen name for Davis Dresser) wrote a series of fifty mystery novels about private detective Mike Shayne which were then also adapted for films in the 1940s and the 1960s, the "Jonny Gossamer"-novels and -films Harmony is so fond of in *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* have to be seen as a homage Black pays to Dresser's books. Black actually has variously valued the impact such books had on his formation and his writing: "If I hadn't read those stories, I wouldn't be writing movies. [...] 'Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang' specifically pays homage to the detective stories I read when I was a kid," he is quoted in an interview. But apart from these particular influences, Black generally defends a rather "literary" approach towards films: "What I missed was the ability to tell stories that felt more like novels—that had more edge to them, and more risk. [...] It's amazing to me that to this day, how many screenwriters or aspiring screenwriters you talk to and you say, 'What do you like to read?' and they say, 'Well I don't really read that much.' I say, 'You don't read, but you want to be a writer!?' They say, 'I like movies, I just want to write movies.' They don't read books. I think that's virtually an impossibility." For these quotes, see
http://www.writingstudio.co.za/page989.html and.
http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000948/bio (both last accessed 24.9.2009).

case, this time, it really happened," Harry says in defense of himself while an eager nurse chases the unreal visitors out of the room: "Yeah, it's a dumb movie thing, but what do you want me to do? Lie about it?"

And after that, when the film has apparently ended but still continues, Harry placates the audience (1:31:43): "And don't worry, I saw the last 'Lord of the Rings', I won't have the movie end 17 times. There is, though, one final scene for your viewing pleasure."

That he is actually supposed to be the narrator of the film is stated by Harry right at the beginning of the movie ("My name is Harry Lockhart. I'll be your narrator"; 0:03:47) and confirmed in the end by Perry who joins Harry in the above-mentioned final scene and tells him (1:34:06) "Get your feet off my fucking desk. [...] And stop narrating," because he wants the film to finally end.

By and large, it thus seems as if *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* would satisfy the conditions of all four of Genette's types of metalepsis. We have type 1 metalepsis because Harry is not only supposed to narrate the story, but is also thought to control its flow and sometimes manipulate it. We are also confronted with type 2 metalepsis inasmuch as Harry, concerning the plane of the narration, constantly moves to and fro by leaving it for a short while and then entering it again. In the end, when Perry, as one of "Harry's" characters, joins Harry and tells him to finish the narration, we encounter type 3 metalepsis. And finally, right at the beginning of the film we can witness type 4 metalepsis because while the action continues during the party, Harry explains (or tries to explain) to us why Harmony is here.

Of course, Harry is not the actual narrator or director of the movie, but is just presented as such by the real director, Shane Black, who thus creates a narrational cosmos within which Genette's four types of metalepsis clearly occur but which, when stepping out of the film's world, can no longer be applied due to the fact that Harry then actually turns out to be just one of the fictional characters of the film, and not its narrator or director:[18] one must therefore discern between a relative, internal metalep-

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18 This is also an example for the impracticability of the distinction introduced by Irene de Jong who suggested to discern between "actors" who "refer to the 'hic et nunc' of the primary story and thereby remain in [their] position as actor" and somebody who can "tell a secondary story himself and thereby become a 'real' narrator." (Jong 1985: 9). For a critical discussion of her approach see Nelles (1992: 80). Other than Rigby Reardon in Reiner's *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (see note 14 above), Harry is not just a combination of a fictional character and an extra-diegetic source of the narration (so Bach 1999 in her analysis of Reardon in Reiner's film), but he is also presented as a kind of personification of the "implied film maker" or "implied director" who, however, is not really to be identified with Harry. For the notion of the "implied film maker" and "implied director," see Wilson (1986: 133ff.) ("implied film maker[s]") and Kuhn (2007: 63) (as "impliziter Regisseur", i.e., "implied" or "implicit director").

sis (according to which Black's film would be metaleptic in the sense of Genette's four types) and an absolute, external metalepsis (under whose terms *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* would not be considered metaleptic).[19]

Given this, the next step will be to determine whether these notions can be also applied to the genre of the music video.

From comic-books to datamoshing

When examining the music clip in view of possible metaleptic elements one indeed encounters several phenomena pertaining to the matter.

These, however, show different grades of contiguity regarding the metalepsis and one is led distinguish between "represented metalepsis" and "enacted metalepsis." When the music video shows characters crossing the boundary between a fictional world and an embedded fictional world, the video relies on the mere representation of a metalepsis. When the music video actually transgresses the boundaries of its main fictional world, however, a metalepsis is enacted.

Concerning the first case, represented metalepsis, there are, for example, clips which present a plot based on metalepsis alone. In Steve Barron's famous award-winning 1985 music video[20] for the song "Take On Me" by the Swedish group a-ha, a young girl (Bunty Bailey) sitting in a coffee shop is literally dragged into the black and white comic strip she is reading by the comic's protagonist (played by the group's leadsinger Morten Harket). The shift from the realistically presented fictional world to the embedded fictional comic world is made evident by the fact that, once inside the strip, she too appears as a roughly-pencilled black-and-white figure (an effect achieved by rotoscoping). When stepping "behind"

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19 My nomenclature ("internal metalepsis"/"external metalepsis"), despite its apparent parallels, is independent of the notions used by Dorrit Cohn ("métalepse intérieure"/ "métalepse extérieure"), since she uses these terms rather in order to discern different relationships between the diegetic, the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic levels. Thus, while I am defining the "internal" and the "external metalepsis" according to the intra- or extradiegetic point of view on a story, "métalepse extérieure" for her is "toute métalepse qui se produit entre le niveau extradiégétique et le niveau diégétique" ("every metalepsis which occurs between the extradiegetic level and the diegetic level"), and "métalepse intérieure" is "toute métalepse qui se produit entre deux niveaux de l'histoire elle-même, c'est-à-dire entre une histoire primaire et secondaire ou entre une histoire secondaire et tertiaire" ("every metalepsis happening between the two levels of a story itself, which means between a primary and secondary story or between a secondary or a tertiary story"). See Cohn (2005: 122).

20 The video won six awards (among them for "Best Concept Video", "Most Experimental Video," "Best Direction" and "Best Special Effects") and was nominated for two others at the 1986 MTV Video Music Awards.

the panels, these frames work as a sort of window through which the young man and the girl appear to each other in live action. Three times the impact of physical action on the comic pages and its consequences are shown when the comic is crumpled up and thrown away, causing the pages to overlap in such a way that two motorcyclists, who have just lost a race against the boy, are able to get into his panel and attack the couple.[21] During their flight, the male character rips open a page so that the girl can escape back into her "real" world. Finally, when she reaches home she unfolds the crumpled comic and finds the young man, who tries to break out of the page by throwing himself against its walls, ultimately succeeding as he does so.

Although the video seems metaleptic (depicting a transgression of the borders between the "real" world of the girl and the embedded comic world), it is not fully metaleptic since the boy does not transgress the borders of the music video itself, but those of a medium which is represented only in the course of the plot, i.e., in the comic strip. Metalepsis, therefore, is only represented in the music video but not enacted or conducted.[22]

The same holds true of Michel Gondry's clip for Björk's "Bachelorette," made in 1997, where again metalepsis is represented and shown, but not carried out. Gondry shows us a girl named "Bachelorette" who first finds an empty book that starts to write itself while she is reading it, telling her future story as a first-person account in the simple past tense.[23] Moreover, the book not only narrates, but it actually dictates to the reader what she has to do by her future experience. It is part of the book's plot that she gives her story to a publisher who then sells it to a musical impresario (this is a development not foreseen in the book). The book is adapted as a stage production, and since Bachelorette plays herself, she re-enacts her story, including the moments when she gives the book to the publisher, who in turn sells it to the impresario who then transforms it into a stage show with Bachelorette playing herself.

21 This idea was also taken up later, e.g., in David Wiesner's 2001 book *The Three Pigs,* where the traditional tale of the "The Three Little Pigs" is changed inasmuch as the pages of the book, telling the story, come into contact with the pages of other children's books, allowing their characters to enter the story of the pigs and to interfere with their story.

22 Genette (2004: 61) describes a later TV-advert (contemporaneous with the publication of his book) which works in a similar way to the a-ha-clip but—given that its own medium, the television is addressed here—can be considered as more precise example for metalepsis: in the advert, a banker, appearing in a TV spot ("une publicité en abyme," as Genette puts it, a pun, meaning both "an abysmal advert" and "an infinite advert"), extends his hand out of the TV set and shakes the hand of the surprised viewer of this spot.

23 In 1998, the German author Michael Kleeberg, in his novel *Ein Garten im Norden,* used this motive the other way round by having his protagonist find an empty book which transforms everything written into it in reality.

This transformation means that on the stage a second stage appears on which Bachelorette re-enacts her story which also includes the moments with the publisher, the impresario and the stage production; a third stage thus appears on the stage of the second stage, which itself already appears on a stage. In the end, therefore, as in a kaleidoscope, the different levels of reality are staggered in a "mise en abyme" of increasingly smaller stages upon even smaller stages.[24]

Because the narrating book appears within the diegetic universe at the same time, it telling the narratee what to do within the story itself, we can identify an "intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe." This means that a character from the narration, i.e., Bachelorette, interferes with the narrator, i.e., the book. However, the actual medium in which the whole story is told is not the book, but a music video, the boundaries of which remain intact. Therefore, we here again have a case where metalepsis is shown and represented without being enacted or conducted.

Nevertheless, there are frequent examples where the boundaries of the music clip are made evident. The 2004 music video for the Good Charlotte song, "I Just Wanna Live," tells the story of an unsuccessful rock group. Dressed up as food products (such as a slice of pizza, a corn on the cob, a hamburger, etc.), we see the musicians distributing leaflets in front of a supermarket in order to earn money when they are discovered by a greedy producer. Inspired by the musicians' outfits, the producer transforms the currently nameless band into the "Food Group." Forcing them to continue wearing their silly costumes, the producer launches their career through well-placed gossip and scandals. Creating part of the hype around the "Food Group" is of course a music video. Presented in the first third of the clip, this video-within-a-video has everything usually associated with a music video, including the titles naming the band, the song title "All U Can Eat," the record company "Epicurous Records," and "Bread Simon," the name of the fictional music video's director. But despite the ironic hints in the music video that we are watching the actual band, Good Charlotte (signed up with the record company "Epic"), in a video directed by Brett Simon, the clip is at best metareferential, ironically referring to its own medium.[25]

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24 This motive goes back to works such as Ludwig Tieck's play *Die verkehrte Welt* from 1798, where an on-stage audience is following a play within a play. See, e.g., Petzold (2000). But also apart from such precise models, Gondry generally is very fond of such kaleidoscopic and mise en abyme constellations—see for this Keazor and Wübbena (2007: 106f.).

25 For the video by Björk and Good Charlotte see also Keazor and Wübbena (2007: 90ff., 436f.).

The same holds true of John Landis' 1991 music video for Michael Jackson's song "Black or White." Here, too, the medium and the making of the music video is made evident, in this case even more directly than in the clip for Good Charlotte, particularly since the actual shooting of the video itself is part of the clip. After the famous morphing sequence where faces of different ethnic provenances blend into each other, the camera pans back in tandem with the last beats of the music, revealing the film set and the crew working on it. But since none of them really transgresses the boundaries of the diegetic universe, the panning back of the camera has only a metareferential effect. Given that the actual filming of the clip is shown,[26] the effect is stronger, but in a way that still relates to the Good Charlotte clip.

Finally, the same can be said about two examples from the early fore-runners of the music video. Regarding the "Scopitones" mentioned above, a music film for Betty Claire's song "Scopitone Party" was shot in 1964, where not only bits and pieces from other Scopitone films are scattered throughout the clip, but where Claire is also shown handling a Scopitone, seemingly "choosing" her favourite titles. For the farcical song "Merci Patron!" by the French comedians "Les Charlots," a promo clip was shot in 1971 which is set in the factory of a Scopitone production plant that allowed the singers to climb into the empty shells of the machines and look of out of the screens, thereby substituting the expected faces of pre-viously recorded glamorous pop stars with their own "live-action" heads. Thus, in a certain way, they inverted the usual function of a promotional music film which, almost since its inception, was and is to work as a sub-stitute for expensive and time-consuming live performances.[27] By replac-ing the musicians, usually appearing on a screen, by the members of the "Charlots" popping their heads out of the screen, the film for "Merci Patron!" renders an ironic comment on the usually harboured expecta-tions concerning a Scopitone film. Again, however, the achieved effects are metareferential rather than metaleptic, given that in both cases the medium (the film) and its devices (the Scopitones) are made evident, but without infringing any diegetic boundaries.

Even cases where the material of the medium is stressed belong to that category. In Walter Stern's 2006 music video for "The Prayer" by Bloc Party, lead singer Kele Okereke is shown wandering through a room in which a dancing party takes place. Okereke hallucinates intense heat, but instead of burning the people and the items in the room, as Okereke

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26   Genette (2004: 35, 65), following Cerisuelo (2000), here uses the notion "métafilmique."
27   See for this Keazor and Wübbena (2007: 57–65).

moves and observes, the heat melts the film, and therefore the medium of the music clip itself.

This concept (referring to the medium of a clip by showing its "material" defects) has by now also been realized with reference to the fact that music videos, when downloaded as digital files, can be damaged and defective, thus, when played, showing colourful and abstract shapes and fractal patterns instead of the expected clear images. Referred to as "Datamoshing," such digital glitches are now used as an aesthetic means in order to create alienating effects in music videos. Examples include Ray Tintori's clip for the song "Evident Utensil" by the Band Chairlift or Nabil Elderkin's music video for Kanye West's "Welcome To The Heartbreak," both produced in 2009.[28] As stated above, however, even though the emphasis on the carrier medium of a clip, i.e., the film, videotape or data file obviously destroys the illusion of following an action directly with our own eyes (instead of taking into account that we are actually watching something filmed and edited) and has obvious metareferential qualities, it nevertheless cannot be considered metaleptic, since no diegetic boundaries are transgressed.

Being fictitious

Things are different, however, in Marty Callner's 1993 clip for the song "Amazing" by the rock band Aerosmith. The video depicts the virtual adventures of an adolescent boy (interpreted by Jason London) who enters an Aerosmith video clip thanks to computer technology. He first downloads the previous clip released by the band, "Cryin' " (also shot by Marty Callner in 1993), and then enters its world by creating his avatar and equipping himself with a data-glove and a cyber-casket. In the story world of the clip, he meets its heroine (played by Alicia Silverstone). However, she turns out to be a capricious and stubborn bore. Just as the adolescent had previously corrected the appearance of his avatar by getting rid of his pimples and adjusting his haircut, with a few clicks he now modifies the young woman's attitude before taking her on a motorbike ride, which ends in passionate love-making on top of the bike. When the fuel tank is empty, the couple are taken on a ride by an airplane which gives both of them the possibility to do some sky surfing. The boy then ends the virtual adventure and prints out several portraits of her, but while putting the portraits together, the camera pans back, revealing that the image of the young man actually is on the screen of another computer monitor in front

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28 See Müller (2009).

of which the girl sits just finishing her cyber-adventure with him. It turns out, therefore, that things are not as they seemed to be. The boy himself is actually just a fabricated virtual creation controlled by the girl. Whereas it first seemed that the boy had entered the diegetic world of "Cryin' ," manipulated the girl and controlled the action, now two things become clear: first, that boy's cyber-adventure was actually just part of her virtual game whose setting is situated in his (and in a certain way, the viewer's) diegetic world; second, that his game is thus intra-diegetic while hers turns out to be extradiegetic, and that while she first appeared to be the fictitious protagonist of a music video, watched and directed by him, in the end the tables are turned and it is she who appears to be the "real" person, watching and directing him, the protagonist of a music video.

That this denouement also has its eerie touch is signalled by the fact that the boy apparently has a slight inkling that he is being observed while printing the portraits of her. This is due to the fact that when the camera pans back, he looks over his shoulder towards it with an irritated, quizzical expression, as if he could feel the presence of an observer. But does he also suspect that he is not a real person, only a virtual creation?

Although in this example we are still in a situation where the medium in which the story is told (the music video) is not identical with the medium in which the metalepsis takes place (the cyber world), we are very close to it. Callner obviously wants the viewer to closely associate the music video with the cyber world, which is why the boy first downloads the previous "Cryin' " clip by Aerosmith in order to then enter its particular story world. Moreover, when the boy scans through his playlist at the beginning of the video, we also learn that the "Amazing" clip we are currently watching likewise appears on the list. This is already a hint towards the end of the music video where it is made clear that the girl had obviously chosen the story world of "Amazing" (including its protagonist) as her virtual playground. The narrated reality we were following for more than six minutes, taking it for the real world (as opposed to the cyber world the boy visits), is disclosed as being nothing more than another level of virtual reality.

Jorge Luis Borges has suitably put into words why such "nested realities" provoke a strong feeling of unease in us: "Why does it disturb us that the map be included in the map and the thousand and one nights in the book of the *Thousand and One Nights*? Why does it disturb us that Don Quixote be a reader of the *Quixote* and Hamlet a spectator of *Hamlet*? I believe I have found the reason: these inversions suggest that if the char-

acters of a fictional work can be readers or spectators, then we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious."[29]

"I had the strangest week ever!"

"Amazing" does not seem to have a direct, identifiable narrator, although part of its effect is achieved through the fact that we first get everything presented through the point of view of the boy, who thus also serves as a sort of narrative medium[30] —at least until the perspective of the clip suddenly changes from the perspective of the boy to that of the girl, provoking the surprising shift. While his perception initially seemed to be the central viewpoint from which the plot is told, and while he seemed to be a freely acting individual, we now learn that he is rather the diegetic character in a narration, manipulated and observed by the girl who ultimately now takes his place also with respect to the "identifying proximity."

Usually when listening to a song we spontaneously (though incorrectly) identify the singer with the subject of the text (especially when the lyrics are in the first person). This leads us to consider the singer as either the protagonist and/or narrator of the story a song often tells.[31]

When presented in the context of a music film, however, things get slightly more complicated, since the visible protagonists are not always (although very often) identical with the musical protagonists. In the case of the "Amazing" video, for instance, we have a "set" of different protagonists for each component of the clip. Whereas multiple scenes of "Amazing" depict singer Steve Tyler performing with his band outside of the narrative, thereby linking the musical portion of the video with the actual band Aerosmith, the fictional boy and the girl are linked only to the narrative sequences of the video. Since the lyrics, sung by Tyler, deal with the return of someone (apparently more mature) back into a hopeful life after he has experienced an abysmal phase of errors, lies and desperation, the text is not really related to adolescent ideas and thoughts and hence there are no moments when the words can be successfully interpreted as

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29 Borges (1952/1964: 196). See also Genette's comment: "The most troubling thing about metalepsis indeed lies in this unacceptable and insistent hypothesis, that the extradiegetic is perhaps always diegetic, and that the narrator and his narratees—you and I—perhaps belong to some narrative." (Genette 1972/1983: 236).

30 Knut Hickethier has here suggested the fitting notion of the "identifikatorische Nähe," the "identifying proximity" between a character and the viewer (Hickethier 2007: 128). One could here also apply the notion of the "focalizer" to the boy—see for this concept Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 83).

31 See also Ben-Merre's contribution to this volume.

thoughts of the boy. The fact that the lyrics need to be understood as an utterance of the lead-singer (or the character he impersonates while performing) is, apart from their content, confirmed by the fact that the performance scenes take place in a labyrinthine system of tunnels which correspond to the final words of the text, where Tyler leaves the audience with the words "Remember—the light at the end of the tunnel/May be you. Goodnight!"

With "Amazing," Callner thus created a video clip for Aerosmith which builds upon his previous music video for "Cryin' " in order to tie together the different videos for the two songs (both contained on same the album, *Get a Grip*,)[32] by reusing the same protagonist (Alicia Silverstone)[33] and by telling the story of a young Aerosmith fan, seemingly entering the story world of the first clip.[34]

Nevertheless, since a music film is basically conceived as a vehicle for to stylizing and presenting musicians to their public (thus trying to make up for and top the qualities of a direct encounter the audience usually has when following a live concert), it focuses more often on the musician(s) interpreting a musical piece, shifting their already fixed role as protagonists of the lyrics to the visual level by telling a story from what appears to be their point of view, based on or linked to the sung text.

A typical example is the music video for Craig David's song "Seven Days," shot in 2000 by the director-team MAD (= Max Giwa and Dania Pasquini). Here too, however, one has to be careful when identifying David directly with the subject of his song. In this case, however, the clip itself invites such identification, especially in its original, extended version.[35] At the beginning of the clip, even before the music plays, we see the protagonist (who seems to be identical with the singer and is thus also named "David" here) enter a barber shop for a haircut. When the barber asks him how he is doing, David replies by saying: "Let me tell you: I had

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32 Towards the end of the "Amazing" video, there is even a hint at the cover-photo of the album which shows a pierced udder, thus interpreting the title "Get a Grip" as an invitation. The girl has a plastic cow standing on one of her shelves.

33 Silverstone also features in a third music video, shot by Callner in May 2004 for a song from the album. In "Crazy," she teams up with Tyler's daughter, Liv Tyler, in order to snub their (mostly male) environment with their "crazy" behaviour.

34 Presenting Silverstone as the protagonist of the former "Cyrin'" clip in the context of the narration of the "Amazing" video also hints at a "sideways metalepsis" (a metalepsis between storyworlds) or the "breaking of the fifth wall" which is supposed to separate the different storyworlds in which one and the same actor/actress plays different roles.

35 According to the common practice of shortening music videos for frequent airing, the clip for "Seven Days" was also presented mostly in its shorter version, where the scenes without the song's music were cut out, thus abridging it by about a minute.

the strangest week ever." Following this 30–second introduction, the real plot of the music video starts, making it clear that the scene in the barber shop serves as a narrational framework which is now filled with a flashback into the events of David's life from the previous week. In order to remind the viewer of this frame, scenes of David telling his story in the barber shop are repeatedly interspersed throughout the clip. That these events are closely associated with the lyrics of the song is made evident by the fact that David starts his narration of the past events only as the music sets in and the song begins. Thus, the seven days of the "strangest week ever" are obviously linked to the "Seven Days" of the song title and to the content of its lyrics. Throughout the lyrics, David tells us about how, on his way to see friends, he met "a beautiful honey with a beautiful body" who asked him for the time. At this point, the ensuing dialogue between David and the woman is then dissolved into a series of questions (like "What did she say?") and answers ("She said she'd love to rendezvous") which seem to unfold between David and a listener of his story, and which seem to have also inspired the narrational frame of the barber shop for the music video.

The images do not just replicate the content of the lyrics, but actually specify it. In the text, particularly in the rhyming game-like refrain, we learn only about David's everyday approach to the girl ("I met this girl on Monday/took her for a drink on Tuesday") followed by immediately and continuous lovemaking ("we were making love by Wednesday/and on Thursday & Friday & Saturday we chilled on Sunday"). However, the story narrated by the clip not only takes up the daily structure indicated by the line "I had the strangest week ever," but specifies that the Monday (when he meets her) and the Tuesday (when he takes her out for a drink) were of a very special nature, because in this regard, the plot of the music video resembles the plight of Phil (Bill Murray) in the 1993 movie *Ground-hog Day*, directed by Harold Ramis: just as Phil, David is condemned (or blessed) to have the same things happen to him over and over again until things develop in an ideal way. Thus (unlike the events told by the song lyrics), David is initially without his watch when the "special lady" asks him for the time; then, after the first re-run of the events, he remembers to wear one and is thus able to fix a date with her. But when he is about to leave in order to meet her, he discovers that the tank of his car is empty (at this moment, Max and Dania even interrupt the flow of the music in order to clearly state this for the viewer: "I was in the car, looked at the gauge—it was empty!"; David tells his audience in the barber shop); then, when he finally seems to have done everything right (not just concerning

the girl, but also for himself and his surroundings)[36] and eventually finds himself in a bar with his date, he accidentally pushes his glass of wine onto her, thus—again—ruining their encounter.

It is at that very moment that the clip by Max and Dania leaves the trail established by its model, *Groundhog Day*, and instead opts for another motive, introduced earlier in film history:[37] unhappy with the course things take (and probably as unnerved by the idea of replaying the same run of events a fifth time again as the viewer), David presses a first invisible and then suddenly appearing "pause" sign on the upper left corner and thus (Harry Lockhart will do this in a similar way five years later) stops the flow of images in order to then rewind them. But while Harry does this while seemingly sitting at a Moviola outside the diegetic world and thus manipulating the film, David literally steps out of the film's frame and manually pulls it back to a moment previous to the accident with the wine glass; then, while smirking at the audience, he returns into the picture, positions himself, catches his breath and presses the "pause" sign again in order to let the action and the music continue. Knowing about the possible risk, he now behaves more carefully, and the date is a success. The last images of the clip show us David (again smirking at the audience) and the girl cuddling and smooching, thus hinting at the continuous lovemaking the refrain repeatedly has been telling about us before (the very last scene of the video actually shows us David sitting in the barber shop and voicing the refrain a-cappella in front of an incredulous listener).

In these video clips, we have seen several types of Genette's metalepsis enacted. If we accept David as the actual narrator of the story (following the narrational framework with the barber shop where he is clearly established as such), he, as the author/narrator, controls and manipulates the action (type 1) by moving in or, respectively, out of the story and controlling the narrating images (type 2). If, however, we do not accept him as the actual narrator (that is, as a character presented to us only as part of the story, told by the "real" authors, Max and Dania), then the type 1 and

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36 In the first run of the events, someone steps on his white sneakers and smudges them, he apparently has no money to give to a beggar, and he witnesses an old lady loose a balloon into the wind; in the later course of the events, David is able to avoid the smudging of his shoes, has money to give to the beggar and catches the lady's balloon.

37 The motive had already been used in early American animation films where the characters sometimes also show a clear awareness of finding themselves in the context of a sequence, created out of a succession of single film frames whose boundaries they can transgress. See for example Michael Maltese's and Charles M. Jones' animated cartoon classic, "Duck Amuck" from 1953, where Duffy Duck finds himself split up in two when the film suddenly stops between two frames so that a kind of paternoster effect is given: Duffy's lower body is in the upper frame while his upper body is stuck in the lower frame, leading eventually to the existence of two identical Duffys when one Duffy transgresses the borders of his film frame and joins his double counterpart.

2 metalepses would have to be considered relative, internal ones. Nevertheless, since David is presented in the clip as a character in the narrated story who goes up a level in order to interfere with the narration by manipulating its images, this would fulfil the terms of Genette's type 3, but this time as absolute, external metalepsis: relative, internal and absolute, external metalepsis would not exclude each other, but (concerning type 3) would actually overlap.

If, finally, we look back to Black's *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* with all this in mind, we discover similarities as well as differences when comparing the movie and the music video. As to the similarities. even if we do not accept Harry as the "real" narrator of the story but merely as one of the characters, he is still presented as a narrated diegetic character who goes up one level in order to comment upon and interfere with the narration. Just as the "Seven Days" music video, Black's film can be considered as covering the relative, internal as well as the absolute, external metalepsis, overlapping in type 3. And in both cases, the narrators are suspending the time difference between the narrated moments and the moment of their narration when they intervene into the narrated action which, however, to be "narratable," should have been somehow finished and concluded. Both *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* and "Seven Days" rely on the resulting ambivalence. In the case of the movie, this ambivalence is interpreted through the film's footage when the narrator Harry not only seemingly edits it as previously shot material, but when he is nevertheless at the same time able to interfere with its production by shooing away the extras, for example. Likewise, the narrator David in the music video for "Seven Days" literally steps out of his story while telling it in order to manipulate the course of the told events into the desired direction; theoretically, this stepping-out of the story must be then understood as part of the narrated tale for otherwise its story would lack an ending which it would only get while being told by David. However, when he enters the barber shop his words of the "strangest week ever" indicate that for him the course of the events is already completed and that he "only" wants to narrate and not thereby finalize them. Nevertheless, it not only seems as if David would tell his audience how he leaves his narration in order to manipulate the course of the events so that they eventually lead to the happy end, but it appears that he actually *requires* the narration in order to be able to achieve this correction in the first place: it is the narration that provides him with the necessary frame for (literally) getting the grip on the events he needs in order to rewind and then correct them. It is precisely this paradox (while telling a story with a happy ending, its narrator and protagonist leaves and manipulates it

in order to achieve this happy ending)[38] sets "Seven Days" apart from *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, where the paradoxical condition of its narration (Harry manipulates the production of already shot footage) is less crucial. Although the narrator/protagonist here also has the images and their flow at his command and is able to influence their production and sequence, this has no real impact on the denouement of the storyline, but rather concerns the question (often raised throughout the film) of the quality of the narration (and it is certainly not by accident that metaleptic effects occur mostly when this issue is addressed). Instead, in the music video for "Seven Days," the interference of the narrator with his narration has consequences not only for *the way* in which things are told, but also for *what* is told because without the narrator's intervention there would most likely have been no happy ending to tell: the "beautiful honey with a beautiful body," soaked in the wine accidentally pushed upon her, would have walked away, leaving David only with the hope for yet another re-run of the events that would grant him the opportunity to do *all* things right this time. But instead of passively waiting for this, as he has done before, David is now shown as somebody actively (and literally) taking his fate into his own hands, thus eventually breaking free out of the time loop. Compared to the way metalepsis is used in Black's film, this resolution appears to be a more audacious and bold manner of applying it.

As we have seen, there are significant, though at the same time also gradual, differences between the way metalepses can be deployed in feature films and music videos. This seems to be due to the implications resulting from the levels of the song's lyrics and their performance in a music video.[39] Since the genre of the music video was fostered and deployed as a substitute for live performance, the fact that the musician addresses his audience is less surprising than in a feature film such as *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*. Here, the viewer in the suspenseful course of events occasionally forgets that Harry is not only the protagonist of the story, but also presented as its narrator, and hence the audience is astonished when Harry reminds it of his double status by addressing it directly. In the music video, however, due to the almost constant presence of the musician in words and voice, we are continuously reminded of his or her double function as narrator and protagonist of the told story. In order to achieve metaleptic effects, the respective strategies must be more spectacular, thus adopting for ex-

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38   In this respect, MAD's music video for David is a typical example of the so-called "strange loop," a term concept proposed and developed by Hofstadter (1979) and generally defined as a phenomenon arising when, by moving up or down through a hierarchical system, one finds oneself back where one started.

39   See also Ben-Merre's contribution to this volume.

ample typical elements from cartoon films (as in the case of the music video for "Seven Days").

But such differences at the same serve to shed light on the functional parallels shared by films and video clips: their status as siblings is confirmed, while the often implied "big brother"/"little sister" hierarchy is refuted.

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