

= Wadzeks Kampf mit der Dampfturbine =

Wadzeks Kampf mit der Dampfturbine (Wadzek 's Struggle with the Steam Turbine) is a 1918 comic novel by the German author Alfred Döblin . Set in Berlin , it narrates the futile and often delusional struggle of the eponymous industrialist Wadzek against Rommel , his more powerful competitor . In its narrative technique and its refusal to psychologize its characters , as well as in its vivid evocations of Berlin as a modern metropolis , Wadzeks Kampf mit der Dampfturbine has been read as a precursor to Döblin 's better @-@ known 1929 novel Berlin Alexanderplatz .

= = Plot = =

As the novel opens , Wadzek , owner of a factory that produces steam engines , is locked in a struggle with his more powerful rival Rommel , whose much larger company manufactures turbines . He can be seen as representing a new type of entrepreneur , more technologically advanced and less scrupulous than Wadzek . Losing value , the stock of Wadzek 's company is being bought up by Rommel ; in desperation , Wadzek teams up with Schneemann , an engineer working at one of Rommel 's factories , to thwart his company 's takeover by Rommel . This effort includes the misguided theft of some of Rommel 's business correspondence . Fearing legal retribution for this theft , Wadzek , accompanied by Schneemann , flees with his wife Pauline and daughter Herta to his house in Reinickendorf , where the two men fortify the house in delusional preparation for a siege that never comes . Financially and spiritually broken , Wadzek returns to Berlin and with Schneemann attempts to turn himself in at a police station , where they learn that no warrant has even been issued for their arrest . There follows a temporary reconciliation with his estranged family and the first attempts to begin a new career in education ? Wadzek would instruct his students in a new , moralistic and humane approach to technology . However , after walking in on an erotically and exotically charged debauch held in his own parlor (the aftermath of an African @-@ themed birthday party Pauline held with her two new friends from Reinickendorf) , Wadzek suffers a further breakdown . The novel ends aboard a ship bound for America , Wadzek eloping with Gaby , an old acquaintance and erstwhile lover of Rommel 's , to begin a new life .

= = Stylistic and thematic aspects = =

The novel , originally conceived by Döblin as a novel in " Kino @-@ Stil " (" cinematic style ") , is characterized by rapid shifts of perspective and the increasingly sophisticated use of montage . Döblin , having emphatically rejected the psychological novel in his 1913 essay " To novel writers and their critics , " presents the reader of Wadzek with a depiction of characters from a perspective that , rather than offering psychological motivations for their actions , opts for a " psychiatric method " that records events and processes without commenting on them or attempting to explain them . Condemned by contemporary critics for its overly @-@ detailed and grotesque descriptive language , the novel 's style has since received acknowledgment for its " radical naturalism " . Describing the narrative technique used in Wadzek , the critic Judith Ryan has written ,

At times Wadzek and his co @-@ actors are seen from without , as if by a [...] camera , at times his perceptions are given from within , but regardless of the observational standpoint , we have no access to Wadzek 's psyche . What we know of his emotions and his internal responses to events is solely what we have deduced from his external actions .

Döblin 's refusal to make Wadzek a tragic figure , as well as the novel 's thematization and satire of tragedy , earned the praise of a young Bertolt Brecht , who declared , " Ich liebe das Buch . " Other themes of the novel include monopoly capitalism , modern technology , the bourgeois family , and the modern metropolis . Certain aspects of the plot , such as Schneemann 's dislike of Stettin (Szczecin) and Wadzek 's elopement for America , recapitulate elements of Döblin 's own biography .

= = Genesis and publication = =

By his own account , Döblin wrote *Wadzeks Kampf mit der Dampfturbine* " in one go " from August to December 1914 , at which time he had to begin work as a military doctor near the western front in Sarreguemines . While he had originally conceived of the work as a three @-@ stage narrative about the progress of modern technology (represented by the steam engine , the steam turbine , and the oil motor) , his planned sequel , *Der Ölmotor* (The Oil Motor) , never came to fruition . He conducted extensive research for the novel , spending time in the facilities of AEG and learning about the construction of machines , turbines , and motors . Döblin submitted the draft to rigorous stylistic overhaul during the war years , shortening the novel considerably and radicalizing the syntax . The novel was published in May 1918 by Fischer Verlag and was not reprinted until a critical edition , based on the text of the first edition with minor corrections drawn from the manuscript and typescript , was published by Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag in 1987 . The original manuscript and subsequent typescript are preserved in the German Literary Archive in Marbach . As of 2016 , no English translation is available .