

tually, reading of Döblin's novel could well be described as an activity of a "distracted perception", which Benjamin finds in a film viewing: "The audience's identification with the actor is really identification with the camera. Consequently the audience takes the position of the camera; its approach is that of testing" (Benjamin, 1969: p. 228-229).

Montage and De-montage

It seems that Benjamin's methodological materialism, "hidden" behind his unique theoretical articulations—a kind of revealing insightful descriptivism—generated such reading of the novel that transcends aesthetics, but retains it at the same time in a sense of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. Benjamin's singular attitude is characterized by his inexplicit philosophical discourse. He actually never really enters problems such as subject-object relations, transcendentalism, speculations, and so forth in explicit philosophical terms, but his writing nonetheless addresses these problems. Perhaps Benjamin's shunning of explicit philosophy prevented him from taking a step further in defining Döblin's novel as a work of montage. Taking into account the notion of *das Subjekt* as a fundamental concept could make it possible for Benjamin to see Döblin's montage as *de-montage*⁴ simultaneously reflecting the decentring of subjectivity as an agency and shattering its "outcomes" in a form of crushed (psychological) subjectivity. However, the process of de-montage, obvious only as the "hidden" and constitutive movement in Döblin's novel, surfaces only much later in Fassbinder's adaptation of the novel in his 1980 TV series.

Nonetheless, the most relevant aspect in Benjamin's reading remains his elucidatory linking of Döblin's novel to the logic of cinematic production, including the notion of *montage*. Comprehension of the text as "directly" linked to the notion of reality is facilitated by Döblin's category of *epic fiction*. This category obviously forms a link with the Brechtian category of *epic theatre*, in which the famous *V-effekt* confronts a spectator with a reality, say, of class exploitation or repressive domination. Döblin's narration style transfers Brecht's idea into the form of a novel and so it gives even a naive reader the chance to take part in an interplay of identification linkages. In this respect, the notion of de-montage would also func-

4 The idea for introducing the term *de-montage* in this context was suggested to me by Thomas Elsaesser when we discussed the topics of this chapter before it was finished. Of course, the elaboration of the term is my own responsibility. I am also indebted to Elsaesser for numerous other suggestions and thought-provoking remarks.