FROM ASSEMBLED IMAGES TO ASSEMBLED TEXTS: LITERARY MONTAGE IN WEIMAR GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

FROM ASSEMBLED IMAGES TO ASSEMBLED TEXTS: LITERARY MONTAGE IN WEIMAR GERMANY

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During the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), montage emerged as a key formal innovation across the arts, sparking new developments in photomontage, assemblage, typography, and literature. While numerous examples of montage in literature exist from the period, their material and stylistic diversity present a significant hurdle to a comprehensive account of literary montage. I propose that literary montage emerges alongside photomontage as a reaction to transformations in the distribution and materiality of print. Literary montage is not a translation of or reaction to montage in the visual arts, but a parallel development that responds to similar political and representational concerns. I offer readings of montage experiments in literature from avant-garde artists Raoul Hausmann, Johannes Baader, and Kurt Schwitters, alongside readings of canonical montage texts by Walter Benjamin and Alfred Döblin. I argue that literary montage engages with literature both as a process and a product. The authors of this study use literary montage as an engagement with the specific materiality of and material conditions for literature and its production, using the various components of literature and its production, from the print apparatus, the print product itself, and the role of the author, as ready-mades they can deploy to refashion literature. They seek to reanimate literature in response to its perceived rigidity, conservativism, and

inexpressiveness in order to create new possibilities for signification and political action. Rather than destroy literature or make something new in its place, literary montage combines the existing elements of literature, including its materiality and means of production, in new, surprising constellations which rejuvenate and reanimate not only the formal possibilities of literature, but also its role in society and material basis.

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Introduction

In *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* [*Heritage of Our Times*], a philosophical review of the Weimar Republic, Ernst Bloch identifies montage as the most significant aesthetic development of the period. Published in 1935, while Bloch was in exile due to the Nazis' rise to power, the work sees few bright spots in the ruins of bourgeois Weimar society. Yet the possibility to use montage to rearrange existing pieces of the era into a new image of its history emerges for Bloch as a key feature of the art and literature of the era. As the avant-garde of Weimar Germany breaks under capitalism and fascism, montage emerges not only as one of the dominant stylistic traits of the time, but perhaps also the key means for coming to terms with its turbulent history.

What is montage for Bloch? One might assume Bloch refers to photomontage, the process of creating composite images by cutting, pasting, and rearranging existing photographs. He could also refer to filmic montage, an editing technique in which different, usually contrasting shots are sutured together into one sequence. Both techniques flourished during the period and would seem obvious choices.[1] Bloch, however, has a more general principle in mind. Bloch paints in broad strokes, including not only "Klebebildern [collages, literally pasted pictures]" in his examples of montage, but also the works of Irish author James Joyce and Bertolt Brecht as examples of

[1] Photomontage predates this period, despite Dadaist claims to the "invention of photomontage." See Elizabeth Siegel. *Playing with Pictures: The Art of Victorian Photocollage* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2009), 12-35. Collage also predates the modernist period. See Elliot Patrick, Freya Gowrley, and Yuval Etgar, *Cut and Paste: 400 Years of Collage* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2019).

montage.[2] Bloch's notion of montage goes far beyond the narrow genres of photomontage or filmic montage; while admitting that the general use of the term captures only the "geschnittene, neu geklebte Lichtbild [cut, newly pasted photograph],"[3] he takes this notion and expands it, metaphorically, to a general "technischen und kulturellen Montage [technological and cultural montage]" that he sees at play in any number of cultural products that rearrange the surface phenomena of modernity into a new, equally fragile composition. In this logic, nearly any work of art that uses juxtaposition, recombinatory logic, or works creatively against naturalistic modes of representation can fall under the term montage.

This understanding of montage as a general principle, rather than a medially specific practice, largely still obtains in contemporary scholarship. For example, Michael Jennings opens an article on the writings of Alfred Döblin, discussed in the last chapter of the present study, with the claim that by the middle of the Weimar period, "montage had established itself as the dominant syntax in the formal language utilized by writers, artists, and architects on the left in the Weimar Republic."[4] The generalization of montage into a principle or syntax allows for powerful comparisons between different artistic mediums, providing a heuristic for comparing the wide range of cultural products of the period. Having such a heuristic is at some level necessary, as the Weimar Republic is a period characterized by both extreme turmoil and extreme artistic creativity.

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[2] Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Zurich: Verlag Oprecht & Helbling, 1935), 13. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
[3] Ibid, 162.
[4] Michael W. Jennings, "Of Weimar's First and Last Things: Montage, Revolution, and Fascism in Alfred Döblin's *November 1918* and *Berlin Alexanderplatz*," in *Politics in German Literature*, ed. Beth Bjorklund and Mark E. Cory, 132-152 (Rochester, N. Y.: Camden House, 1998); 132.

The Weimar Republic (1919-1933) was a period marked by unprecedented social and political tension.[5] Following Germany's defeat in the First World War, the establishment of Germany's first republic was hotly contested by leading literary and artistic figures. The failure of a Communist revolution or the establishment of a more progressive government was made all the worse by the perceived continuities between Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic. Critics on the left accused the new republic of handing power over to the very people who caused the disaster of the First World War. The early years of the republic were characterized by crisis and political turmoil, culminating in massive hyperinflation in 1923. After this, the Republic went through a period of stabilization, which was ended by the onset of the Great Depression and the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party. The Weimar Republic was also a remarkable period of artistic flourishing and experimentation. Not only did new media such as photomontage emerge as an avant-garde medium, developing media such as film and the illustrated press reached an unprecedented level of development, becoming mainstream phenomena. Literature was not spared from these changes, as authors turned to little magazines and the feuilletons as an avenue for publication. Reportage and cultural criticism became key literary genres, alongside more traditional venues like the novel. Meanwhile, theater and architecture, which fall outside the goals of this study, underwent remarkable transformations as well, with the emergence of Brecht's epic theater and the Bauhaus.

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[5] There have been numerous overviews of Weimar culture. Peter Gay's account marks one of the earliest attempts to come to terms with the period and still remains foundational. See Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). See also Jost Hermann and Frank Trommler, *Die Kultur in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1978). For a more up-to-date account of the period, see ed. John A. Williams, *Weimar Culture Revisited* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Any cultural history of this period will inevitably have to come to terms with this medial diversity, and montage provides such a tool. Montage holds a fragmented mirror to the fragmented political and social conditions of the era.

The dates and geographic extent of the Weimar Republic correspond imperfectly with the subject of this study, but provide a necessary heuristic. Experiments with collage and montage were not isolated in Germany, and in fact the Dadaists with which this study begins were fully aware of the collages of the Cubists in France and the Futurists in Italy. Kurt Schwitters, who is discussed in chapter two of this study, actively collaborated Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg, and the literary experiments of Walter Benjamin and Alfred Döblin, discussed in chapters three and four of this study, respectively, were influenced by developments in montage theory in the Soviet Union. Despite this widespread interest in collage and montage throughout Europe, a convergence of influences around Berlin in the 1920s created a set of conditions in which allowed for a flourishing of experimental literature.

The First World War left Germany devastated politically, physically, and psychologically. The unprecedented violence of the war ended with the crushing disappointment of the Weimar Republic, a government that many leading figures of the period saw as a weak continuation of Wilhelmine politics and political interests through other means. At the same time, Berlin emerged for the first time as a global, industrial metropolis. The rapid growth and development of Berlin immediately prior to this period confronted its inhabitants with a new reality, one that required new representational strategies. Moreover, the violence of the war left an indeliable mark on the face of the

country and its citizens, one that the destructive and constructive tendencies of montage seeks to work through.

These important historical and geographical concerns, however, should not distract from the transformations in the circulation of print that created an impetus for new modes of reading and writing. Technological innovations accelerated publishers' capacities to produce print documents en masse, and in the early twentieth century the newspaper emerged in its modern form. As a cheap, inexpensive, mobile form, the newspaper emerged as a characteristic medium of the period. As Anke te Heesen contends, its thin pages and speed of transmission stood in contrast to the book form. While the book stood for authority and tradition, the newspaper was seen as a transient means of mass communication.[6] Nonetheless, its printed texts could at some level be assimilated into a larger print culture; the newspaper became a coveted source of information that, due to its ephemeral nature, one could cut up, fold up, and otherwise physically manipulate.[7] The transformation of print publication caused by these new, mobile media, such as the newspaper and the illustrated press, challenged the legitimacy of the traditional book form and its monopoly on literature. The authors considered in this study see creative potentials in these ephemeral forms for a refashioning of literature on the basis of montage.

While montage may accurately describe a wide variety of developments across the arts, the transmedial usage of the term should not efface the specificity of each medium's use of montage. While it is possible to compare general practices of

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[6] Anke te Heesen, *Der Zeitungsausschnitt: Ein Papierobject der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2006). 10-11.
[7] Ibid., 11-12.

juxtaposition or stylistic change between two different media, each medium has its own representational tools at its disposal. In this study, I will consider the practice of literary montage in the Weimar period. The phrase "literary montage" gives more coherence to this practice, however, than actually existed: the attempts of Weimar era writers to use montage principles, developed formally through photomontage experiments in Berlin Dada, in narrative, poetic, and philosophical forms of writing vary greatly in scope and execution. Some writers use montage principles to transform fundamentally the nature of the text, combining pieces of type at will into nonsense poetry. Others continue to write in recognizable narratives and genres. Some use ready-made sources from the newspaper or literary canon, while others merely imitate the effects of combining preexisting materials. All are united by a general dissatisfaction with the capability of language to represent adequately the complexity of modernism.

Literary montage thus emerges as the response to a crisis of representation. In particular, the writers treated in this study are guided by a suspicion towards print media. In a medial landscape that produces "Heuschreckenschwärme von Schrift [locust swarms of script]," as Walter Benjamin contends,[8] the book and narrative seem inadequate tools for expression. The lengthy tomes which hold philosophical discourse or the weighty bound pages of a novel compete for readers' attention against advertisements, illustrated journals, and the newspaper. These ephemeral, popular forms are better suited to the rapid pace of modernity, yet none of the figures treated in this study embrace them uncritically. As products of capitalism and imperialism, they are tools that, at their worst,

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[8] Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, ed. Detlev Schöttker and Steffen Haug (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 30.

can be used to spread misinformation about Germany's role in the First World War, as Dadaists Raoul Hausmann and Johannes Baader contend, or to promote industrial and corporate profits at the expense of critical thought, as Walter Benjamin contends. However, the mobile, changeable materials forms of advertisements and the popular press offer the writers of this study a creative locus from which they attempt to rejuvenate and refashion language and print media. Montage emerges for the writers in this study as a tool for transforming and giving new life to the rigid, inflexible tools of traditional print media. Through the deployment of aspects of advertisement, the newspaper, and mass-cultural print forms in unexpected contexts, the authors of this study seek ways to reawaken latent critical potentials of these forms. In so doing, they creatively imagine new modes of signification for the written letter and the written word that can reanimate the practice of literature and criticism.

Collage, Montage, and Literature

The term "montage," as one sees in Bloch's use of the term, often has a great degree of definitional flexibility or uncertainty. The word often appears in conjunction with "collage," which is sometimes used synonymously with and sometimes in contradistinction to "montage." While both refer to specific practices of reusing found material in the visual arts, often by pasting these elements into a new work, they also refer more generally to artistic products that use or appear to use ready-made materials or works that imitate the effects of collage and montage. Throughout this study, I treat both "montage" and "collage," as well as other contemporary terms such as "Klebebild [pasted

picture]" or Kurt Schwitters' *Merz*, as contested terms that require explication in its specific context.[9]

Nonetheless, some preliminary definitions are necessary. The word "montage" appears relatively late in the Weimar period. The earliest usages in the context of this study occur in 1928, over a decade after the earliest Dadaist photomontages and attempts at literary montage. In this year, Georg Grosz laid claim to the invention of "photomontage," using a word not found during the Dadaist experiments following the First World War.[10] In the same year, Ernst Bloch used the word in reference to literature, calling Walter Benjamin's *One-Way Street* a "Photomontage."[11] The relatively late emergence of the term "montage" does not mean that it does not accurately describe a cohesive set of practices. In fact, the necessity of such a term to cover the range of experiments with ready-made products, juxtaposition of elements, and fragmentary compositions is evidence for awareness of the deep connections between these practices, realized after the fact. However, as the word emerged after the fact and none of the artists

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[9] Collage and montage have received more attention in art history than literary studies. For a comprehensive overview, see Herta Wescher, *Collage*, trans. Robert E. Wolf (New York: Abrams, 1971). Christine Poggi's investigation of Cubist and Futurist collage practices, while not immediately concerning the period discussed in the present study, is also relevant here. See Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1992). For an account of montage in the period covered in this dissertation, see Hanne Bergius, *Montage und Metamechanik. Dada Berlin—Artistik von Polaritäten* (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 2000).

[10] For a history of the contested origins of photomontage, see Brigid Doherty, "Berlin," *in Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris*, ed. Leah Dickerman (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 90-100.

[11] Ernst Bloch, "Revueform in der Philosophie," in Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, ed. Detlev Schöttker and Steffen Haug (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 526.

and writers covered in this study used the word before or during the composition of the works discussed, its validity as a primary metaphor must be questioned.

Many accounts of montage in Weimar Germany emphasize the origins of the terms in mechanics and construction. The word "montage," applying to technologically aided processes of production in industrial capitalism, would emphasize here the authors' hostility to the autonomous, seemingly organic work of art, and instead emphasizes its construction and the process thereof.[12] Such concerns are indeed valid for the authors considered. Raoul Hausmann, for example, calls for a "literarische Fabrik [literary factory],"[13] and the term *Konstruktion* [construction] features prominently in Walter Benjamin's *One-Way Street*. Since the term emerges more than halfway through the period and its status was thus not a guiding concern for the authors of this study, I caution against applying its connotations too broadly in this context. Its meaning cannot be deduced from the metaphors of construction it implies, but would better be determined inductively from its application in a given context.

Things are not made easier by the fact that little scholarly consensus exists for the use of the term "montage" in reference to literature.[14] As early as 1988, Wolfgang Seibel

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[12] Patrizia McBride, for example, writes that for the German artists of Dada and Constructivism, "montage appeared preferable to the clumsy translations of the French *collage* because it directly evoked the world of machines, industrial production, and mass consumption, thus emphasizing the constructed quality of artifacts and their reliance on found materials and ready-made parts." See Patrizia McBride, *Chatter of the Visible: Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 14-5.

[13] *Der Dada* 1 (June, 1919): n.p.

[14] Hanno Möbius has provided the most comprehensive overview of montage and collage in literature. Möbius takes an expansive view of collage and montage, comparing quotational practices in antiquity with modernist typographical experiments. See Hanno Möbius, *Montage und Collage: Literatur, bildende Künste, Film, Fotografie, Musik,*

lamented the confusion surrounding the term, arguing that scholars tended to use it "intuitiv [intuitively]" rather than with a rigorous conceptual framework.[15] Viktor Žmegač has attempted to differentiate the use of the terms "montage" and "collage" in reference to literature. For him, "montage" refers to the practice of "fremde Textsegmente in einen eigenen Text aufzunehmen, sie mit eigenem zu verbinden bzw. zu konfrontieren [taking foreign text segments up into one's own text, and combining or as the case may be confronting them with one's own writing]."[16] Collage, on the other hand, would consist of a text made up exclusively of foreign elements, with nothing by the author. For Žmegač, collage and montage both consist primarily of using ready-made texts in the composition of a larger text. Both do not mark or denote foreign material in any special way, in contradistinction to quotation. Collage is a more extreme case of montage, in which only ready-made material is used.

While Žmegač's definition provides some clarity, it largely proves insufficient for the objects at hand in this study. Significantly, Žmegač does not consider how the materiality of the texts at hand informs their use of montage and collage practices. In his influential essay from 1972 on Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Jürgen Stenzel distinguishes between montage and collage on the basis of whether or not the ready-made

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Theater bis 1993 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2000). For a more general account of the theoretical basis for the use of the term "collage" in literary studies, see Gérard Dessons, "Dérive du collage en théorie de la littérature," in *Montages / Collages: Actes du second colloque du Cicada*, ed. Bertrand Rougé (Pau: Publications de l'Université de Pau, 1993), 15-24.

[15] Wolfgang Seibel, *Die Formenwelt der Fertigteile: Künstlerische Montagetechnik und ihre Anwendung im Drama* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann: 1988), 8.

[16] Viktor Žmegač, "Montage/Collage," in Dieter Borchmeyer and Viktor Žmegač, eds, *Moderne Literatur in Grundbegriffen* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1994), 286.

texts are materially present or not.[17] For him, a manuscript in which newspapers and other printed materials are materially present as insertion is collage, while the finished product in which all elements, both foreign and not, are presented in a uniform typeface qualifies as montage. As all of the authors in this study are concerned with the specific materiality of print media, this definition comes closer to describing adequately the objects of this study.[18]

On the other hand, both Žmegač and Stenzel require that montage incorporate other texts as a ready-made element. Each author in this study does use appropriated texts or linguistic material to some extent. Even Walter Benjamin's *One-Way Street*, which appears to be a series of his own poetic and philosophical reflections, incorporates signs and placards from the city street. Yet many of the authors also conceive of ready-made elements of literature in far broader terms than defined here. Raoul Hausmann and Kurt Schwitters both decompose written language down to individual pieces of type. These pieces of type can then be combined, to form words, pictures, or sounds. We can say, thus, for the authors of this study that ready-made elements are a crucial part of montage; however, more important is the relationship of these products to contemporary practices of collage and photomontage in the visual arts. Hausmann, Schwitters and Johannes Baader develop their montage practice in literature concurrently with their montage and collage experiments in the visual arts. Walter Benjamin and Alfred Döblin both name

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[17] Jürgen Stenzel, "Mit Kleister und Schere: Zur Handschrift von *Berlin* Alexanderplatz," *Text + Kritik* 13/14 (1972): 42.

[18] For Antoine Compagnon, the physical process of collage provides the key metaphor and model for forms of quotation in writing, though Compagnon does not restrict his analysis to texts composed with collage techniques. See Antoine Compagnon, *La seconde main: ou, Le travail de la citation* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1979), especially 15-19.

Dadaist experiments with montage as a primary inspiration and respond to this in their writing. This study attempts to recover a historically contingent idea and practice of literary montage, one that evolves in conjunction with the development of collage and montage in the visual arts. These new methods for writing and printing texts seek to revolutionize writing in the same way collage and montage were transforming the visual arts. As such, literary montage forms a key component of these writers' attempts to reanimate and rejuvenate the rigidity and fixedness of the printed word.

Montage as Practice, Not Principle

As Mario Slugan contends, montage in the 1920s was not understood in a generalized sense. Rather, it was tied specifically to the concrete practices of photomontage and filmic montage.[19] Authors in the 1920s who invoke the idea of montage do so always with reference to a specific medial understanding of photomontage. The emergence of a broader idea of montage as "principle" or "syntax" begins, as discussed above, with Ernst Bloch, but does not take off significantly until after the Second World War.

The idea of a "Prinzip Collage [principle of collage]" or "Prinzip Montage [principle of montage]" finds one of its earliest expressions in a conference on the topic "prinzip collage," held in 1968 in Nuremberg. The participants in this conference included not only visual artists, but also authors, dramatists, and composers. In his

[19] Mario Slugan, *Montage as Perceptual Experience: Berlin Alexanderplatz from Döblin to Fassbinder* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2017), esp. 1-20 and 81-88.

introduction to the conference proceedings, Dietrich Mahlow advocates for the broadest possible interpretation of the word:

> betrachtet man aber die collage-technik näher, so stellt man fest, daß mit diesem wort sehr unterschiedliche tätigkeiten bezeichnet werden, nicht etwa nur das kleben (das wort ist von dem französischen "coller" abgeleitet), sondern auch das nageln, binden, schweißen, die fotomontage – kurz: jegliches zusammenbringen und zusammenfügen.[20]
>
> [If one looks more closely at the techniques of collage, one realizes that very different activities are denoted with this word, not only gluing (the word is derived from the French "coller"), but also nailing, binding, welding, photomontage – in short: every kind of bringing together and assembling].

The expansion of this term is useful for the present study insofar as it identifies the practice of montage and collage beyond the traditional constraints of the visual arts. It isolates a tendency towards a combinatory logic of de- and recontextualization that also applies to the works of this study.

The principle of collage, for Mahlow, is nothing short of a complete revolution of art and life:

> der collage-künstler braucht keine regeln, kein formprinzip: ja sein prinzip ist geradezu, alles mögliche außerhalb der bisherigen möglichkeiten, formen und nutzungen zu versuchen. das werk repräsentiert eine fähigkeit, keinen stil. es ist spiegel dessen, womit die zeit nicht fertig geworden ist, was sie übrig ließ und was sie verwarf. es provoziert die unvoreingenommenheit, stößt ab, zieht an, macht erstaunen, und gleichzeitig transzendiert dieser spiegel in eine andere realität.[21]
>
> [The collage artist needs no rules, no principle of form: indeed, his principle is virtually to try everything possible outside of the existing possibilities, forms, and uses. The work represents an ability, not a style. It

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[20] Dietrich Mahlow, "zum prinzip collage," in *prinzip collage*, ed. Franz Mon and Heinz Neidel (Neuwied/Berlin: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1968), 7.
[21] Ibid, 8.

> is a mirror of the things with which the era was not finished, what it left behind, and what it threw away. It provokes impartiality, repels us, attracts us, makes us astonished and at the same time this mirror transcends into a different reality.]

Collage seems to encompass nearly every possible emotion and formal principle. Certain parts of Mahlow's description have resonance for the present study. Certainly, in turning to ephemeral, marginal forms of literature, the authors under consideration here rework the forgotten, discarded material of the era. They were also aware of the possibility for art, as a fractured mirror of reality, to reflect that reality back in new and transformative ways. On the other hand, the specific technologies and mediums of art were important for them, even as they worked against them and towards their transformation.

As the context of the conference makes clear, Mahlow and his colleagues are interested in a continuation of the avant-garde practice of collage. In collage, they see critical energies that can be applied to their own moment in the 1960s. That their theories are not fully applicable to historical montage practices makes sense. In fact, the expansion of collage to a general principle can serve productively as a driver of further innovation in contemporary art. Theodor Adorno and Peter Bürger take a different approach. They present a notion of montage as a general principle in art that nonetheless is confined to a specific historical moment, that of the historical avant-garde. This approach presents more problems for the current study.

In his *Ästhetische Theorie*, Adorno discusses montage in the context of aesthetic autonomy. For Adorno, the appearance or illusion of aesthetic autonomy remains important as a formal principle of art, but is counterbalanced by its historical and social relationships. Art's social character in modernism, as the "gesellschaftliche

Antithesis zur Gesellschaft [social antithesis of society],"[22] derives from the structural autonomy perceived in the work of art. As the illusion of aesthetic autonomy becomes harder to maintain following Aestheticism, montage emerges as a "Negation der Synthesis [negation of the synthesis]" that threatens to emerge between art and life, maintaining a separate autonomous sphere for art.[23] Montage, however, reemerges as an unrepeatable moment in the history of art:

> Das Montageprinzip war, als Aktion gegen die erschlichene organische Einheit, auf den Schock angelegt. Nachdem dieser sich abgestumpft hat, wird das Montierte abermals zum bloßen indifferenten Stoff; das Verfahren reicht nicht mehr hin, durch Zündung Kommunikation zwischen Ästhetischem und Außerästhetischem zu bewirken, das Interesse wird neutralisiert zu einem kulturhistorischen.[24]
>
> [The principle of montage, as a campaign against the surreptitious organic unity, was designed for shock. After it had been dulled, the assembled [das Montierte] becomes mere neutral material; the process is no longer adequate to bring about communication between the aesthetic and the nonaesthetic through a spark. The interest is neutralized into a historico-cultural one.]

For Adorno, montage's artistic effects only work to reestablish art's unique autonomy through the shocking combination of aesthetic and nonaesthetic material. Once such a negation has been attempted, it is no longer possible to repeat. As such, montage exists only as a historical category for Adorno.

Peter Bürger builds on the work of Adorno and helpfully provides a more concrete framework for Adorno's abstract philosophical discussion. For Bürger, montage is a driving principle of modern art, informing both the Cubist collages of Picasso as well

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[22] Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 11.
[23] Ibid, 232-3.
[24] Ibid, 233-4.

as the literary works of Surrealist authors such as André Breton and Louis Aragon. For Bürger, the use of real materials as a referent for reality in Cubist collage[25] is motivated by the same impulses and principles as the incorporation of real places and events in the Surrealist text. In Bürger's reading, the incorporation of realia dialectically negates the perceived autonomy of the work of art, much as the confrontation of aesthetic and non-aesthetic material is the negation of the synthesis for Adorno. While Bürger also holds to Adorno's historical specificity of montage, he does provide a broader account of montage's relevancy for modern art. For Bürger, any artwork that proclaims its own artificiality engages with principles of montage:

> The organic work of art seeks to make unrecognizable the fact that it has been made. The opposite holds true for the avant-gardiste work: it proclaims itself an artificial construct, an artifact. To this extent, montage may be considered the fundamental principle of avant-gardiste art. The 'fitted' (montierte) work calls attention to the fact that it is made up of reality fragments; it breaks through the appearance (*Schein*) of totality. Paradoxically, the avant-gardiste intention to destroy art as an institution is thus realized in the work of art itself.[26]

If montage's primary purpose is to reveal the illusory character of the cohesive work of art, can it be used to reshape reality productively? Can it be used towards a revitalization of language and art, or does its efforts "to destroy art as an institution" render it incompatible with the further development of art? While Adorno and Bürger helpfully

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[25] Art historians contest the notion that collage elements unproblematically refer to external reality. For example, Christine Poggi's emphasis on the degraded, mass-produced status of the chair caning in Picasso's collages critiques Bürger's account of unmediated reality in montage. See Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992).

[26] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 72.

illuminate montage as one of the overarching principles informing artistic production during this time, the overly generalized notion of montage as a principle they promote does not allow for a more granular discussion of how specific implementations of montage in a given medium respond to the possibilities and constraints of that medium. This is to say, while on the one hand the broad notion of a "principle of montage" may be a necessary condition for even imagining the possibility of montage in literature, such a definition also cannot be so overly broad such that individual differences between mediums are effaced. By focusing on the productive interplay between literature and the visual arts, this study attempts to recover some degree of medial specificity to both.

Medium, Media, Medial Interaction

In 1971, Hannah Höch provides an idiosyncratic account of the history and scope of collage. She describes the invention of collage as a translation of the principles of poetry into the visual arts:

> In der Literatur seit eh und je geübt, als dichterische Freiheit deklariert, hängen wir Buchstaben ab oder an. Worten geben wir einen falschen Inhalt durch sinnwidriges Einsetzen "sein Herz jemandem zu Füßen zu legen"—Skrupellos mißachten wir die Syntax, wenn unsere Wortschöpfung dadurch an Gewicht oder Farbe gewinnen könnte.
>
> Diese Technik, die in der Dichtung zur Perfektion gekommen ist, hat in der Bildenden Kunst, also auf optischem Gebiet, ihre Parallele gefunden.[27]
>
> [In literature practiced from time immemorial, declared a poetic freedom, we de- and reattach letters. We give words a wrong content through nonsensical insertion "laying his heart at someone's feet"—without scruples, with disregard syntax, if our poetic creation can gain more weight or color.

[27] Hannah Höch, "Zur Collage," in *Hannah Höch. Collagen aus den Jahren 1916-1971* (Berlin, Academy of Arts, 1971), 18-19; here, 19.

> This technique, which has reached perfection in poetry, has found in the visual arts, that is, in optical domain, its parallel.]

Höch describes collage as a type of transformation of certain principles of literature into the visual arts. As the poet can allow herself certain freedoms, the collage artist is not confined to formal principles of painting anymore. She can combine materials from different sources as she wishes, with no need to obey formal conditions of genre or representation.

The absolute freedom Höch imagines for poets does not, however, accurately reflect the medium. Poets are also constrained by their medium, having to fulfill genre conventions such as meter, rhyme, or narrative structure. They may be further constrained by the language they use, the style guides of their publishers, or the size and shape of the page. Such conditions inform the medial character specific to literature, and they provide the components available for authors to use.

The authors of this study conceive of these components in broad and sometimes radically different terms. Kurt Schwitters and Raoul Hausmann decompose language into the barest of building blocks, questioning the integrity of the word and using instead individual letters and punctuation marks in their writing. Benjamin and Döblin, on the other hand, still follow the formal conventions provided by the aphorism and the novel, respectively. In each case, a specific understanding of literature is at play, and this understanding informs how the authors attempt to incorporate elements of montage in their work.

At times, I engage with theories of intermediality. Theories of intermediality attempt to provide a framework from which to discuss the interaction between two

different mediums These theories presuppose that stable media exist, and that each medium has specific representational capacities it can use. These representational capacities do not translate seamlessly between media. For example, a novel cannot imitate directly the three-dimensionality of sculpture. To suggest sculpture in writing, an author must find some equivalent in language.

Theories of medial interaction largely trace back to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's 1767 treatise *Laocoön: or, The Limits of Poetry and Painting*. Lessing argues against attempts to imitate the visual arts in literature and vice versa.[28] For Lessing, each medium has a unique semiotic structure that does not readily translate into the other. Painting operates in natural signs, which are immediately understandable to the eye and portray static, descriptive events. Painting moreover is a spatial medium, portraying a single moment in time. The successful painter can suggest action through choice of a "pregnant moment" in which change is about to occur, but otherwise cannot portray longer narratives. Literature, on the other hand, operates in artificial signs and is a temporal medium. The artificial signs of literature are suited to describing narratives or actions, but will falter at describing spatial phenomena. Despite this formal distinction, Lessing does allow for modest interaction between the two systems: Lessing praises Homer's description of Achilles's shield for such a rapid presentation of artificial signs that they appear as if they were natural signs, conjuring a vivid image of the shield in the reader's mind.

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[28] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon*, in *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. Wilfried Barner, vol. 5/2 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990). For a good overview of Lessing's theory of semiotics with regard to *Laocoön*, see David Wellbery, *Lessing's Laocoon: Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

The semiotic distinction between literature and painting provided by Lessing has been much criticized.[29] Literature is not fully a temporal medium, requiring the spatial arrangement of type on the page. As we will see in this study, avant-garde artists were acutely aware of the spatiality of the page. Visual arts are also not fully spatial. The viewing of a painting unfolds in time as the viewer comes to understand better the work. Moreover, I would question whether such basic ontological categories such as "space" and "time" are adequate to describing fully the complexity of a given medium's semiosis. Lessing helpfully formalizes the distinction between media, but his semiotic categories are not immediately applicable to the literature and art of the avant-garde.

Moreover, in suggesting that one medium is more suited to one task than another, Lessing implies a radical otherness of painting to literature. The problem of alterity and antagonism or rivalry between media continues into more modern accounts of medial interaction. In his work on ekphrasis, W. J. T. Mitchell emphasizes the radical alterity of the image.[30] Ekphrasis as a literary trope is, according to Mitchell, an attempt to overcome by a male spectator the otherness of the invariably female image, a moment marked first by indifference due to the impossibility of the task, then a voyeuristic, masturbatory hope for conquest of the image, and finally collapsing into the fear of the successful overcoming of difference, which Mitchell sometimes connotes with castration anxiety.[31] Mitchell's insistence on radical alterity and the rivalry between different

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[29] See especially W. J. T. Mitchell, "Space and Time: Lessing's *Laocoon* and the Politics of Genre," in Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 95-115.
[30] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 156ff.
[31] Ibid, 151-181.

semiotic structures leaves little room for literary montage. For literary montage is the borrowing of a representational structure of the image for use in a literary text. That is, the very fact that literary montage is possible suggests that texts and images are not in fact radically different but share some common ground. Here, the recent turn towards intermediality represented in the works of Liliane Louvel is informative: Louvel proposes the category of the *iconotext* to describe various types of textual strategies for representing the image. The iconotext exhibits "the attempt to merge text and image in a pluriform fusion, as in an oxymoron."[32] The strength of Louvel's definition of the iconotext is that it preserves the specificity of the respective semiotic structures of images and texts while still acknowledging the possibility of merger. That is to say, images and texts may be fundamentally different, but the attempt to reproduce an image in language relies upon a creative appropriation of a nonliterary representational structure. The tension between these two systems of representation produces effects that are not possible in language or images alone. Other recent approaches to intermediality, such as those theorized by Irina Rajewsky, Claus Clüver, and Peter Wagner similarly attempt to rethink intermediality without resorting to binary oppositions, radical alterity, and rivalry.[33]

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[32] Liliane Louvel, *Poetics of the Iconotext*, trans. Laurence Petit (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 99, 15.

[33] See Irina Rajewsky's comprehensive account of intermediality. Irina Rajewsky, *Intermedialität* (Tübingen: Francke, 2008). For a shorter account of related ideas in English, see Irina Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality," *Intermédialités* 6 (Autumn 2005): 43-64. See also Claus Clüver, "Intermediality and Interarts Studies," in *Changing Borders: Contemporary Positions in Intermediality,* ed. Jens Arvidson, Mikael Askander, Jørgen Bruhn and Heidrun Führer (Lund: Intermedia Studies Press, Lund University, 2008), 19–37. See also Peter Wagner, "Introduction: Ekphrasis, Iconotexts, and Intermediality -- the State(s) of the Art(s)," in Wagner, ed., *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), 1-40.

Nonetheless, Louvel's approach still presents certain challenges for this study. Montage at times seems hostile to the very notion of medium. In incorporating foreign elements into their composition, montage works constantly refashion and renegotiate the boundaries of their media. They question not only what belongs or does not belong to a certain genre or medium, they also challenge and refashion the representational capacities of that medium. The challenge, thus, is to discuss intermedial interaction while also acknowledging the fact that montage seeks to unsettle the stable categories of medial division and refashion a given medium into a new form.

The concept of remediation provides some help here. Coined by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, the term "remediation" describes the paradox of medial proliferation: Modern culture "wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them."[34] As new media emerge, many strive for a greater sense of immediacy than their predecessors. As Bolter and Grusin contend, mediums such as film and photography seek to present the world as it is, denying their own status as representation. For example, the latest forms of digital photography seem to present an ever greater degree of realism. At the same time, other media assume a status of "hypermediacy" that responds not only to the perceived immediacy of newer media, but also existing media. One could think here of the emergence of "filters" in digital photography that replicate older forms of photography, signaling the photograph's status as a mediated object. In a condition of "hypermediacy,"

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[34] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 1999), 5. See also Irina Rajewsky's reformulation of the concept: Irina Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation," 43-64.

the medium constantly signals to the observer its status as construction and mediation. For Bolter and Grusin, media exist in a sort of competitive environment, in which they respond to changes in other media and attain ever more sophisticated degrees of immediacy or hypermediacy.[35] Their framework is useful insofar as it provides a means for examining the character of a given medium while also acknowledging how that character might change as it responds to other media. As one medium advances in its capabilities, it "remediates" other media, shifting the representational and semiotic capacities available to them.

Andreas Huyssen takes issue with the category of "remediation" as applied to literature. Huyssen objects to what Bolter and Grusin term "retrograde remediation," that is the refashioning of an older medium through the influence of a newer medium, and proposes instead the term "remediation in reverse" for what he understands as the assertion of old media against the influence of the new.[36] Literature, rather than modeling itself on the new, asserts itself without compromising its fundamental medial character. In other words, modernist literature, particularly in short forms, remains dense and linguistically complex rather than compromising its character through the introduction of images or modeling its language on, say, the newspaper or the radio. Especially with regard to Benjamin, the concept of "remediation in reverse" has some relevance to this study. However, Huyssen underemphasizes the extent to which the dense, complex style of modernism is itself a product of remediation. It falsely places literature on the side of

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[35] For the relevant discussion of "hypermediacy," see Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 31-50.

[36] Andreas Huyssen, *Miniature Metropolis: Literature in an Age of Photography and Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 8-11.

the "old" or "archaic," denying the extent to which authors of the period seek transformation and reinvigoration.

As with the concept of "montage," I treat "literature" as a contested term that is actively being remediated in a new fashion for each author. As the authors work to refashion and rejuvenate language in the face of a rapidly changing media landscape, they push and probe the parameters of literature and print. They actively question the mode of signification proper to literature and seek alternatives to existing modes of representation. The prospect of montage serves as an impetus for transformation, even when the author's actual practice of montage takes little inspiration from the practice of montage in the visual arts. In so doing, they envision a new mode of language and writing that transforms and refashions the significatory powers of print.

Overview of Chapters

The first chapter of this study turns to Berlin Dada and the possible origins of both photomontage and literary montage. Though the process of creating composite works through the cutting and pasting of existing photographs existed before Berlin Dada, the popularization of photomontage as an artistic medium is often considered one of the most significant achievements of the movement. Dada, founded as an anti-art movement during the First World War in Zurich, quickly became a global movement, with local branches in Paris, New York, and even Hanover. In contrast to Zurich Dada, which was famous for its live performances of experimental poetry at the Cabaret Voltaire, literature formed a much smaller portion of the artistic products of Berlin Dada. Nonetheless, as I will argue, the printed works of Raoul Hausmann and Johannes Baader

engage critically with the concept of literature and seek a way forward for printed publications in a time of medial and political chaos.

Berlin Dada, active primarily between 1918 and 1920, responded to the political chaos of the end of the First World War and the revolutions of 1918-19 with its own medial chaos. Responding to the press of the day, Hausmann and Baader embarked on a series of press hoaxes that sought to intervene critically in the discourse surrounding the end of the First World War and the formation of a new German government. While these hoaxes are often read in terms of performance, they also contain a theory of literature and the press. These press actions culminate in the publication of the first issue of *Der Dada*, a journal that attempts to rearrange narratives and features of existing print sources into a new, fragmented product that provides a means of envisioning an alternative to existing political, semiotic, and discursive orders.

I argue that the development of the typographical and material aspects of Berlin Dada that reach a high point in *Der Dada* (1919) develops alongside photomontage and share a number of concerns with it. Rather than medial translation, the montage of the press Hausmann and Baader develop arises concurrently with photomontage from a shared set of principles and concerns. Both emerge as a form of media critique, rearranging the components of recognizable popular genres into new compositions that attempt to engage critically with the material and formal properties of their sources. In their literary works, Baader and Hausmann decompose print media into constituent parts at varying levels of granularity and rearrange these into creative reimaginings of the media. These new products weakly suggest the possibility of a total refashioning of language, society, and mediation.

The second chapter turns to Kurt Schwitters, an artist associated with Dada but not formally part of Berlin Dada. Schwitters developed an idiosyncratic practice of montage that he described with the word *MERZ*. Taken from an advertisement for the Kommerz- und Privatbank, the word phonologically suggests "Schmerz [pain]" and "ausmerzen [expunge]," and also perhaps the French *merde*. Implying refuse and decomposition, the word describes a process of ripping objects out of their original context and placing them in new ones, where they accrue new meanings. Through this practice of resignification, Schwitters imagines a form of semiosis in which signs can generate near infinite referents. Though Schwitters is mostly known for his collages and assemblages, he wrote literary works throughout his career, which he also saw as part of *Merz*.

Schwitters retained the word *Merz* for his art throughout his career, yet much of his programmatic statements on it come from the earliest years of his artistic production and are focused on his collages and assemblage art. In this chapter, I critically survey his programmatic statements on *Merz* and work towards a theory of *Merz* in literature. In particular, I focus on Schwitters' attention to the materiality of literature and the constraints of the page. The gesture of turning the page becomes a key feature of *Merz* in literature. To turn the page is to reveal a different side of the object, one present and identical with its reverse yet always obscured. Through a sustained close reading of Schwitters' typographic fairy tale *Die Scheuche* [*The Scarecrow*] (1925), I explore how Schwitters refashions language into a medium that approaches universal correspondence, in which a sign can equate with and transform into its opposite. Moreover, *Merz* describes not only a mode of signification but also a process of producing art and

literature. Schwitters' attention to all aspects of the production of literature, including not only the author's composition of the work but also its printing and the labor done in the print shop, suggests an alternative means of creating literature that allows for the type of resignification he describes.

In the third chapter, I focus on Walter Benjamin's *One-Way Street* (1928). While Benjamin would only use the word "montage" in the context of the later *Arcades Project*, *One-Way Street* occurs in the immediate context of the Berlin avant-garde. Written from 1923 to 1926, the work corresponds with Benjamin's interest in Constructivism and the Berlin avant-garde. In this chapter, I attempt in particular to contextualize the work not only in larger Constructivist discourses but also in the oeuvre of Sasha Stone, the photographer who produced the photomontage that appeared on the dust jacket of the first edition of *One-Way Street*.

In *One-Way Street*, Benjamin grapples with the question of the efficacy of literature and philosophy in the current media landscape. The proliferation of print media in brochures, fliers, illustrated journals, advertisements, and the newspaper has turned writing into a mobile, speedy, distracting medium. The weighty statements of long books have no chance of garnering a reader's attention under such conditions. Benjamin thus imagines a form of literature which appropriates certain features of these ephemeral forms of print, but not without retaining the form's key literary and critical functions. Rather, Benjamin seeks to activate key critical potentials latent in the forms of advertisement, the flier, or the poster and make them useful for literature. As such, he creates a product which presents a dialectical reverse of these popular media and envisions a new mode of literature and criticism.

The final chapter focuses on Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929). Widely regarded as one of the most significant montage novels, the work engages literally with collage and montage principles. The manuscript of the work, housed today at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach, is a literal collage, featuring newspapers and other printed matter pasted next to Döblin's own writing. Yet even without knowledge of the manuscript, the earliest readers of the novel identified montage as its key structural principle. This chapter grapples with the competing notions of montage and collage surrounding this work.

While the manuscript of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* highlights the conflicting materialities of Döblin's source materials, the final print version of the novel does not mark inserted materials in any way. Rather, it is printed in a uniform print style that effaces material differences between sources. The varying articles, advertisements, and narratives Döblin incorporates physically into the manuscript are only noticeable through rapid, sudden changes in style. I argue that Döblin shares the concerns about the role of literature and criticism of the other authors in this study. He worries that the endless pages of the book provide the author with no chance of establishing a genuine connection with her readers. His montage practice seeks to reestablish a direct line of contact with his audience through a return to the scene of the work's composition. This emphasis on materiality, however, is then effaced in the process of reading, so that the work does not succumb to its own materiality. Döblin seeks a form of transparency in his literary montage that the other authors of this study do not. While the Dadaists and Benjamin see critical potential in a revived material focus to literature, Döblin only emphasizes the materiality of literature to a point. While montage's foregrounding of print's materiality

is useful to Döblin insofar as it points to the creation of the work, Döblin sees montage largely as a means to overcome the limitations of literature's material constraints. As such, Döblin's novel marks a transformation in the idea of literary montage, from a specific mode of engagement with the material forms of and conditions for literature to a general stylistic and syntactical principle. Döblin incorporates both elements at once in his work, bridging the gap between the materially focused notion of montage found in the Dadaists and the later, more general version that has become well established in scholarship.

Berlin Dada and the "Absolute Freedom of the Press": Probing the Origins of Literary Montage

In 1920, at the "erste internationale Dada-Messe [First International Dada Fair]," Johannes Baader exhibited his "Plasto-Dio-Dada-Drama" (Figure 1). This large assemblage, often considered among the first example of the genre,[37] was composed largely of textual material, including repurposed newspaper clippings and Dadaist publications. The work, destroyed after the fair, survives only in photographic reproduction and an accompanying literary text Baader wrote as means of explanation. This description, published in Richard Huelsenbeck's *Dada Almanach* around the end of the exhibition, lends some coherence to the confusing mass of printed matter. Here, Baader explains that the work narrates simultaneously his life story and the recent history and impending demise of Germany. He describes the most recent stage of German history, which corresponds to material just below the very top of the structure, as follows:

> Der Weltkrieg ist ein Krieg der Zeitungen. In Wirklichkeit hat er niemals existiert. Die Figur der Geschichte, deren abgehackter Kopf aus echtem bayrischem Bienenwachs vor den Resten einer königlich preußischen "Rex"-Einkochmaschine aufgehängt ist, wird niemals zulassen, daß eine so maniakalische Paroxie wie der Weltkrieg Wirklichkeit wird. Darum glaube man keiner Zeitung. Es ist alles Gewäsch, von den ersten Nachrichten der Mobilmachung an bis zu Lüttich, der Marneschlacht, dem Rückzug aus Rußland und dem Waffenstillstand, die Presse hat den Weltkrieg geschaffen. Der Oberdada wird ihn beendigen.[38]
>
> [The World War is a newspaper war. In reality, it never existed. The figure of History, whose severed head of genuine Bavarian beeswax has been

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[37] Michael White, "Johannes Baader's Plasto-Dio-Dada-Drama: the Mysticism of the Mass Media," *Modernism/Modernity* 8, no. 4 (November, 2001): 584.

[38] Johannes Baader, "Deutschlands Größe und Untergang," in *Dada Almanach. Im Auftrag des Zentralamts der Deutschen Dada-Bewegung*, ed. Richard Huelsenbeck (Berlin: Erich Reiss Verlag, 1920; New York: Something Else Press, 1966), 94-5. Citations refer to the Something Else edition.

> hung in front of the remains of a royal Prussian "Rex" pressure-cooker, will never allow such a maniacal paroxysm as the World War to become a reality. So one should never believe newspaper. It is all eyewash. From the first reports of the mobilization, to Liège, the Battle of the Marne, the retreat from Russia, and the armistice — the press has created the World War. The Superdada {Baader} will end it].[39]

Here, Baader writes in a curious eternal present, reporting on the First World War, ended nearly two years prior to the publication of this text, as if it were an ongoing battle. The description combines details from the assemblage, such as the mask representing the "Figur der Geschichte [figure of history]," visible towards the top of the structure, with narrative details that extend beyond the immediate material of the structure.

Baader's assertion that the First World War was "ein Krieg der Zeitungen [a war of newspapers]" gets to the heart of Berlin Dada's understanding and use of media. In proclaiming that media have the power to create historical events, Baader questions the notion that language comfortably represents reality as it is. In place of signs that merely react to the events of history and the world as it is, Baader proposes a model in which signs do not merely stand in for the events they represent, but at some level effect these events in reality. Such an understanding must be immediately relativized. While Baader claims that the press "invented" the war, he simultaneously claims to be able to see through this façade. Thus while he on the one hand suggests that media shape and even come to eclipse reality, he on the other hand maintains a distinction between reality as constructed by signs and media and reality as such. However, his assertion that the press

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[39] Johannes Baader, "Germany's Greatness and Decline or The Fantastic Life Story of the Superdada," trans. Derek Wynand, in *The Dada Almanac*, ed. Richard Huelsenbeck and Malcolm Green (London: Atlas press, 1993), 101. Translation modified.

Figure 1: Johannes Baader, *Das große Plasto-Dio-Dada-Drama* (1920). Lost, presumed destroyed. Photograph Archives Nakov, Paris.

can create an event of such weight as the First World War questions fundamentally any recourse to reality as such.

Baader's insertion of himself into this medial landscape provides further insight into his understanding of the relationship between the sign and its referent. Using his alter ego the "Oberdada" [Superdada], a contentious title that Baader pilfered from a negative review of a Dada publication,[40] Baader styles himself as the end to this press-created crisis.[41] Baader, however, had already crafted a reputation for himself as a skilled manipulator of the press. Immediately following the war, Baader began an elaborate series of press hoaxes. With the cooperation of Raoul Hausmann, Baader published a number of false advertisements and stories in the press, including a fake candidacy for the Reichstag, his self-declaration as president of the world, and reports of his own death. Hausmann and Baader, whose collaborations will be the focus of this chapter,[42] were skilled manipulators of the apparatus of the press, including not only its verbal and visual forms but also its means of distribution and operations on the level of discourse.

Here, the status of Baader's "Plasto-Dio-Dada-Drama" is relevant. The assemblage, which through its attempts to rewrite history through the use of realia and

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[40] For further information on the source of Baader's title "Oberdada" and the strife it caused among the Dadaists, see Adrian Sudhalter, "Johannes Baader Baader and the Decline of Wilhelmine Culture: Architecture, Dada, and Social Critique" (PhD diss, New York University, 2005), 237-8, ProQuest(305463477).

[41] Hanne Bergius argues that Berlin Dada's remediations of the illustrated press seek both to show their status as illusory and then to destroy this illusion. See Hanne Bergius, "Dada, the Montage, and the Press: Catchphrase and Cliché as Basic Twentieth-Century Principles," in ed. Stephen Foster, *Dada: The Coordinates of Cultural Politics* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co, 1996), 107-134.

[42] For an overview of the friendship and collaborations of Johannes Baader and Raoul Hausmann, in which Hannah Höch played an important role, see Michael White, *Generation Dada*: *The Berlin Avant-Garde and the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013),139-178.

documentary evidence qualifies not merely as montage but, in the words of Hanne Bergius, "*démontage*,"[43] a form of montage that destroys as much as it constructs, suffers a curious fate. The work, which sought to construct a new narrative of history out of the destruction of the physical carriers of that history, is now lost, perhaps destroyed by Baader himself.[44] It thus exists today only in a constructed historical record, based largely on Baader's own narrative description. The work, which remediated faulty textual matter, now exists as text and photograph. The remediation of print is thus subsumed into a larger historical narrative about print, existing now only as text and the written narratives that surround it. Yet simultaneously, the narrative framing is a necessary condition for the understanding of the work. The acts of montage and démontage that construct the work only gain coherence through the parallel textual narrative.

While later authors in this study, notably Benjamin, have no problem referring to "montage" in literature, there is scant evidence that the Dadaists used the term at all during the heyday of Berlin Dada (ca. 1918-1920), either in reference to literature or visual arts, discussed further below. This chapter seeks to chart possible origins of the practice of using montage techniques in literature. While scholarship, particularly in Germany, has tended to view all of the artistic production of Berlin Dada as informed by

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[43] Hanne Bergius, "Architecture as the Dionysian-Apollonian Process of Dada," in *Nietzsche and "An Architecture of Our Minds*," eds. Alexandre Kostka and Irving Wohlfarth (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute Publications and Exhibitions Program, 1999), 127.

[44] Stephen Foster, among others, suggests that Baader destroyed many of his own works. See Stephen C. Foster, "Johannes Baader: The Complete Dada," in *Dada/Dimensions*, ed. Stephen Foster (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), 258.

a "Prinzip Montage" [montage principle],[45] the historical development of montage in print unites many disparate characteristics, some of which apparently have little to do with the main characteristics of montage, such as the use of ready-made material, sudden juxtaposition of disparate material, and the incorporation of "found" objects or texts. Baader's accompanying text to the "Plasto-Dio-Dada-Drama" makes no obvious use of found or ready-made material, and its narrative structure is not characterized by sudden jumps of style or content. Yet its symbiotic relationship with Baader's assemblage forces us to consider the role of textuality in the development of Dada's *Prinzip Montage*.

It is my contention that what comes to be known as "literary montage" emerges from early Dadaist experiments with print as a medium. Johannes Baader and Raoul Hausmann pursue what they term an "absolute Preßfreiheit" [absolute freedom of the press],[46] which seeks to transform linguistic signification and the narrative of history through a transformation of the work of printed matter. In doing so, they hope to provide the arbitrary forms of print with a new aesthetic and political dimension that has the power to suggest, if not bring about, radical cultural and societal change.[47] By "arbitrary

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[45] Hanne Bergius' massive study *Montage und Metamechanik* provides one prominent example of the tendency to view a multitude of distinct artistic practices under the rubric of a montage principle. See Hanne Bergius, *Montage und Metamechanik: Dada Berlin, Artistik von Polaritäten* (Berlin: Mann, 2000). For one of the earliest examples of the use of a *Prinzip Collage* to explain avant-garde art, see eds. Franz Mon and Heinz Neidel, *prinzip collage* (Neuwied/Berlin: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1968).

[46] *Der Dada* 1 (June, 1919): n.p.

[47] Timothy Benson argues that the social use of texts was fundamental to Berlin Dada's work. Their experiments, which challenge the instrumental use of language and texts, situate texts within social circumstances thus allowing them to act performatively in given cultural and historical situations. While I agree in stressing the Dadaists' use of the social context of a work, I distance myself from his argument to the extent that it emphasizes the work's status as performance or event. I am interested, rather, in the processes of signification themselves the Dadaists challenge and less in their social

forms of print," I mean those elements of a text given by its print genre and process of production. For the Dadaists, anything is fair game, including running titles, page numbers, colophons, and the margins of the page. Baader and Hausmann were not the only Dadaists to work intensively with the materiality of printed matter and the press,[48] but the sophistication of their endeavors and their self-awareness of their procedure merit special consideration. From Hausmann's *Plakatgedichte*, poems composed of pieces of oversized type chosen at random by the typesetter, to Baader's hoaxes, which used the newspaper as a tool for Dadaist communication, to the short-lived journal *Der Dada*, which imitated the press in both content and form, Hausmann and Baader show an abiding interest in the production of print at all levels, from the physical act of producing a page, through the visual and verbal arrangement of information, to the distribution and reception of the product. It is their engagement with the medium of print and the press that provides the impetus for the development of literary montage. Rather than viewing montage experiments in literature as an attempt to translate or remediate the effects of photomontage and collage in the visual arts into a literary form, I argue that literary montage develops concurrently with photomontage and other Dadaist practices of

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effects. See Timothy O. Benson, "Conventions and Constructions: The Performative Text in Dada", in *Dada: The Coordinates of Cultural Politics*, ed. Stephen C. Foster (Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1996), 83-106

[48] Wieland Herzfelde, for example, was the primary figure behind the Dadaists' own publishing house, the Malik-Verlag. See Wieland Herzfelde, *Der Malik-Verlag, 1916-1947: Ausstellungskatalog* (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Künste, 1967). For a history of the Malik-Verlag, see Germaine Stucki-Volz, *Der Malik-Verlag und der Buchmarkt der Weimarer Republik* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1993). The isolation of Baader and Hausmann as a specific pair, working together separately from the rest of the group, is well supported by recent interest in the role of friendship in Dadaism. For Michael White, Berlin Dada is characterized by interpersonal relationships that coalesce occasionally into specific collaborations. See White, *Generation Dada*, 7-28.

montage. In fact, Dadaist experiments with what would later be known as "montage" show an interest in the active ability of signs and discursive modes of representation to shape or interrupt existing systems of knowledge and representation. It is through this attempt at intervention in a given discourse or mode of signification that the possibility for radical change exists.

The "Invention" of Photomontage

If the present study tracks the development and evolution of literary montage in Weimar Germany, the origins and development of the larger notion of montage is a necessary starting point. Nearly no study of Berlin Dada today can get by without some reference to "montage," yet the word does not appear to have been used until after the period's heyday. The earliest debates on the origins of the term date from as early as 1928, in an essay in which George Grosz claims to have invented "Fotomontage" with John Heartfield.[49] Yet in the publications of the Berlin Dadaists immediately following the war, the term "Klebebild" is preferred, a term that is a simple translation of the French "collage."[50] As Timothy Benson contends, for Berlin Dada immediately following

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[49] Timothy O. Benson, *Raoul Hausmann and Berlin Dada* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), 110.

[50] Benson, *Raoul Hausmann*, 111. *Der Dada* 2 (Berlin, December 1919): n. p. Available online as part of the University of Iowa's Dada Digital Collection: https://dada.lib.uiowa.edu/items/show/62. The word is also absent in the catalog that accompanied the *Erste internationale Dada-Messe* in 1920, despite featuring several well-known photomontages. *Erste internationale Dada-Messe: Katalog*, eds. Wieland Herzfelde and Raoul Hausmann (Berlin: Kunsthandlung Dr. Otto Burchard, 1920). Available online as part of the University of Iowa's Dada Digital Collection: https://dada.lib.uiowa.edu/items/show/218. Grosz and Heartfield frequently signed their works "Grosz-Heartfield mont." and Heartfield took up the nickname "der Dadamonteur," which, as Benson recounts, has led to the claim that the principle of "montieren" as a mechanical and technological process formed an essential aspect of Berlin Dada's early collage and montage practice. Yet Benson convincingly argues that

the First World War "the 'invention' of 'photomontage' seemed of decisive importance only later and probably had little to do with the artists' concerns of the era."[51] Photomontage was one innovative artistic practice among many, and its position as the defining characteristic of the movement was only obvious much later. Yet the significance of photomontage for Berlin Dada can hardly be understated. If Dada in Zurich is defined by the performances and happenings of Cabaret Voltaire, Berlin Dada is chiefly characterized by its experimentations with photomontage and the various forms of assemblage art that these experiments inspire. This is not to deny the importance of performance and sound art to Berlin Dada. Particularly for Hausmann, public performances of his *Lautgedichte* and the reading of Dadaist manifestos formed a key aspect of his artistic production and self-promotion. However, in contrast to Dada in Zurich, for which the performances at the Cabaret Voltaire assumed such a central position, there is no such central performance venue for Berlin Dada. While there are frequent references to a "Club Dada," the address given is usually Hausmann's. While Dadaist soirees and exhibitions remain important means for promoting the movement, photomontage and the circulation of materials in print also become key modes of artistic production and communication.

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the presence of "mont." and "Monteur" in this context refers not primarily to the technique employed, which remained constant before and after the introduction of the term, but rather Heartfield's social posturing: Heartfield favored appearing publically in a "Monteuranzug," allying himself neither with the bourgeois artist nor the business man. This is not to deny the connotations of engineering and assembly that the word carries, but rather to emphasize their social, rather than artistic or aesthetic, context. See Benson, *Raoul Hausmann*, 121-123; here, 123.

[51] Benson, *Raoul Hausmann*, 116.

Given the central importance of photomontage to Berlin Dada, it should not be surprising that nearly every Dadaist associated with the movement made some claim to having invented or participated in the invention of photomontage.[52] The goal of this discussion is not to weigh the historical truth of these claims, nor to provide a comprehensive overview of them. As Hausmann himself readily acknowledges, photomontage was inspired by collage experiments of the Cubists and especially the Italian Futurists. Moreover, as Hanno Möbius has documented, the practice of cutting, rearranging, and pasting photographs existed long before the first Dadaist photomontages.[53] I consider the narratives around the invention of photomontage here not to establish historical origins, but rather to consider how Berlin Dada conceived of one of its chief artistic media.

Before considering these origin stories, I will first turn to Raoul Hausmann's manifesto, "Synthetisches Cino der Malerei" [Synthetic Cinema of Painting], one of the earliest Dada texts to call for the use of found material, following the model of Cubist and Futurist collage. The work was originally delivered under the title "Das neue Material in der Malerei" on April 12, 1918 at the first Dada-Soirée in Berlin[54] and thus precedes the earliest known Dadaist photomontage, John Heartfield's "Wer ist der

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[52] For an account of the various claims to the invention or discovery of photomontage, see Brigid Doherty, "Berlin," *in Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris*, ed. Leah Dickerman (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 90-100.
[53] Hanno Möbius, *Montage und Collage: Literatur, bildende Künste, Film, Fotografie, Musik, Theater bis 1933* (Munich: Fink, 2000). 99-104
[54] This first official event, on April 12, 1918, was not the first Dadaist event in Berlin. Matthew Biro contests that Huelsenbeck's "First Dada Speech in Germany," delivered January 22, 1918, marks the first public event. See Matthew Biro, *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

Schönste?" [Who is the Most Beautiful], which appeared in *Jedermann sein eigener Fußball*, published on February 15, 1919. Montage thus exists as an idea or principle before documented use of the practice.

The manifesto seeks a new mode of expression that is adequate to the contradictory experience of human life under modernity. Hausmann accuses Expressionism of succumbing to the same pressures of repression that characterize bourgeois society:

> Der Maler malt wie der Ochs brüllt […]. Die weggeworfene Puppe des Kindes oder ein bunter Lappen sind notwendigere Expressionen als die irgend eines Esels, der sich in Ölfarben ewig in endliche gute Stuben verpflanzen will. Die unklar verschlungenen Komplexauflösungen der inneren Notwendigkeit als einer ethischen Entschuldigung, auf Leinwand projiziert – ein primitiver Versuch psychophysischer Gesundbeterei. Aber Gesundbeterei, wie Psychoanalyse, sind objektive Medizin, statt subjektiver Balancierfähigkeit in Widersprüchen zusammenbruchloser Auflösungen.[55]
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> [The painter paints as the ox bellows … The child's cast-aside doll or a bright rag are more necessary expressions than those of any ass who believes to transplant himself into living rooms using oil colors. The unclearly entwined resolutions of complexes of inner necessity projected on canvas as an ethical apology – a primitive attempt at healing through psycho-physiological prayer. But healing through prayer, like

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[55] Raoul Hausmann, *Bilanz der Feierlichkeit: Texte bis 1933* (Munich: text + kritik, 1982). I:14. Hausmann's cryptic, rhetorically dense text has not, to my knowledge been translated into English. Hausmann did however prepare a French translation for his "bio-bibliography" *Courrier Dada*, published in 1958. This translation helpfully expands some of his concise syntax and is quoted here for comparison: "Le peintre peint comme le bœuf beugle […] La poupée rejetée par l'enfant ou le chiffon coloré sont des expressions plus nécessaires que celles d'un âne quelconque, qui veut s'immortaliser au moyen de ses peintures à l'huile accrochées dans de beaux salons. Les dissolutions de complexes inexactement entrelacées d'une nécessité intérieure sont une excuse éthique, projetées sur une toile, elles sont l'essai primitive de guérir par la prière psycho-physiologique. Mais la guérison par la prière ainsi que la psychanalyse sont de la médicine objective, plutôt qu'une capacité d'équilibre subjective, dans de dissolutions sans déchéance." Hausmann, *Courrier Dada* (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1958), 39.

> psychoanalysis, are objective medicine, instead of the ability to balance unfailing resolutions in contradictions.]

As Hausmann describes it, Expressionism aspires to a mode of representation in which the internal states of the artist are externalized in a quasi-organic process: as oxen express their inner nature in their cry, so do painters express themselves. For Hausmann, though, this type of painting will never bring painters beyond the limited confines of bourgeois society. While Expressionism seems to express the inner conflict and turmoil of human experience, its failed attempt at resolving these conflicts, rather than holding them forward as contractions, repeats the same repressive measures of bourgeois society that artists believe to escape. Hausmann's use of a metaphor from the world of botany—"der sich in Ölfarben ewig in endliche gute Stuben verpflanzen will [who believes to transplant himself into living rooms using oil colors]"—subtly hints at the stakes of his polemic. The artist mistakenly believes to express her subjectivity organically into the painting, which then finds a new home in which to grow and flourish. For Hausmann, though, this "grafting" of subjectivity into painting never leaves the circulation of bourgeois society. The anguish of the Expressionist comes to decorate a fine sitting room. The chance detritus of the moment, such as the cast-aside doll, which is only mediated through the artist's selection and which moreover exists on the margins of bourgeois culture, is thus more adequate to the paradoxes of experience, precisely because it presents immediate evidence of experience with little chance for manipulation. Expressionism's reliance on the bourgeois medium of paint, which culminates in a "beinahe astralen Blödigkeit der Farb- und Linienwerte zur Ausdeutung sogenannter seelischer Klänge" [nearly astral stupidity of color and line values for the purpose of

interpreting so-called mental sounds],[56] moves its artists further and further away from the immediacy of experience.

If Hausmann criticizes Expressionism for the failings of its medium, he praises Cubism and Futurism for their use of found material, which he characterizes as "d[ie] große[.] Geste des Durchbruchs des Erlebens in die vierte Dimension" [the grand gesture of the penetration of experience into the fourth dimension].[57] The use of new materials liberates painting from the constraints of its medium, transgressing not only the two dimensions of painting, but also the three dimensions of space itself. The border between representation and reality is blurred as the materials of art penetrate directly into reality. And yet, for Hausmann, Cubism and Futurism were unable to realize the radical potential of their discovery, "von ihrer eigenen wissenschaftlichen Objektivität gehemmt" [impeded by their own scientific objectivity].[58]

The task of Dada, thus, is to realize the potential of new material for art:

> Jeder der in sich seine eigenste Tendenz zur Erlösung bringt, ist Dadaist. In Dada werden Sie Ihren wirklichen Zustand erkennen: wunderbare Konstellationen in wirklichem Material, Draht, Glas, Pappe, Stoff, organisch entsprechend Ihrer eigenen geradezu vollendeten Brüchigkeit, Ausgebeultheit: Nur hier gibt es erstmals keinerlei Verdrängungen, Angstobstinantionen, wir sind weit entfernt von der Symbolik, dem Totemismus.[59]

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[56] Hausmann, *Bilanz*, I:16. This paragraph has been omitted from the French translation.
[57] Hausmann, *Bilanz*, I:15. . "le grand geste d'une percée du comportement dans la quatrième dimension." Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, 40.
[58] Hausmann, *Bilanz*, I:16. "limités eux-mêmes par leur propre objectivité scientifique." Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, 40.
[59] Hausmann, I:16. "chacun qui libère en soi sa propre tendance est dadaïste. En dada vous reconnaître votre état réel : des constellations miraculeuses dans du matériel véritable: fils de fer, verre, carton, tissu, correspondant organiquement à leur propre fragilité cassante ou bombante. Ici et pour la première fois, il n'y a ni refoulements, ni obstinations d'angoisse, nous sommes loin de la symbolique, du totémisme." Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, 40.

> [Anyone who brings her most particular tendency to completion is a Dadaist. In Dada you will recognize your real state: marvelous constellations in real material, wire, glass, cardboard, fabric, corresponding organically to your own nearly perfected fragility, dentedness: Only here is there for the first time no repressions, obstinations of anxiety, we are far away from symbolism, totemism.]

Dadaism allows no compromises in the representation of the self. Whereas Expressionism failed to portray the self in all of its contradictions, Dada will accept nothing less than a reflection of the imperfections and fragmentations of reality. Through the unmediated presentation of raw material, Dada aspires to do justice to the contradictions that characterize modernity.[60] Hausmann's use of "organic" here can be understood with a degree of irony. The materials he chooses to express an organic relationship between the subject and art are not products of nature or direct outpourings of human expression. They are rather excess products of industrial modernity, demonstrating the distance between the subject and an organic, unified, natural whole. If an organic relationship between art and the subject remained possible, it would be one of fragments, discontinuities, blemishes.[61]

While Hausmann calls for a radical variety of material in art, the first years of Berlin Dada practice montage almost exclusively with print and photographic material.[62]

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[60] Matthew Biro emphasizes the degree to which Hausmann's notion of human subjectivity is not only contradictory, but also assembled. See Biro, *Dada Cyborg*, 31.
[61] Timothy Benson emphasizes that Hausmann's early work is not a total rejection of the Expressionist search for the "New Man" and a revitalization of life and spirit, but rather an attempt at "a synthesis of conflicting tendencies associated generally with reconciling Lebensphilosophie and Positivism, Expressionism and Naturalism." See Benson, *Raoul Hausmann*, 80. For a discussion of Raoul Hausmann's continued engagement with the Expressionist notion of *Geist*, see Timothy O. Benson, "Mysticism, Materialism, and the Machine in Berlin Dada," *Art Journal* 46, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 46-55.
[62] Doherty, "Berlin," 90.

Hausmann's radical call for a revolution of painting seems to have produced only belated results, and its relevance for the development of montage must correspondingly be relativized. Moreover, and more germane to the topic here, Hausmann frames his discussion exclusively in terms of painting. The work's second title, "Synthetisches Cino der Malerei," cryptically invokes the medium of film,[63] but the original title, "Das neue Material in der Malerei," remains squarely grounded in painting. If Dadaist montage, as a practice, revolutionized multiple genres of art, not only painting but also photography, performance, and literature, this essay would suggest little of that transformative power.

Nonetheless, the material history of the work allows for some consideration of the role of language and print history. During the Weimar period, it remained unpublished in its complete state. It would not be published until significantly later, first in Hausmann's "bio-bibliographie" *Courrier Dada*, in French translation, and then in 1972 in the original German in *Am Anfang war Dada*, an anthology of Hausmann's writings related to Dada.[64] During the Dadaist period, thus, it seems knowledge of the text was only possible through observing Hausmann's performance of the work,[65] an event which Hausmann himself portrays as one of confusion and disorientation.[66] Nonetheless, a much-abridged

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[63] Benson argues Hausmann's gestures towards film have less to do with the medium itself and more to do with its machine character and emphasis on simultaneity. See Benson, *Raoul Hausmann*, 144.

[64] Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, 38-41. Raoul Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, eds. Karl Riha and Günter Kämpf (Steinbach/Gießen: Anabas-Verlag, 1972), 27ff.

[65] See Michael Erloff's editorial commentary in Hausmann, *Bilanz*, 205.

[66] Hausmann recounts the following about his performance: "Mein Text […] löste eine solche Bewegung aus, daß die Saalleitung, die für die ausgestellten Bilder an den Wänden fürchtete, mir mitten im Satz das elektrische Licht ausdrehte, und ich in der Finsternis zum Schweigen verurteilt war" [My text caused such a commotion that the gallery staff, fearing for the paintings on the wall, turned off the electric light on me in

version of the text formed the basis of at least two collages. Both present an identical version of the text on the lower half of the page. The top half is occupied by the title on the right, in an asymmetrical arrangement featuring a different size of type for each word, and the collage element on the left. One version, now lost and surviving only in photographic reproduction eschews radical material and features a photomontage of Hausmann's face (Figure 2). Hausmann's mouth appears framed by a large circle. The bottom of the nose is visible above the mouth but is otherwise missing from the image. The only other features of the face reproduced are the eyes. Hausmann's left eye appears just above his mouth, slightly below its actual position. His monocled right eye, however, has been displaced to the left of the mouth. Both eyes, but particularly the displaced right eye, extend beyond the circle that frames the mouth. The image seems to imply a sensory displacement. The mouth, as source of the voice and sound production, is accompanied not by an organ that complement its function, such as the ear, but by an organ responsible for an entirely different sense. Vision frames the sound production of the mouth, but also extends its reach beyond its prescribed domain. The displaced right eye moves close to the position of the ear, pointing towards a theoretical union of these two senses. Yet the face remains disfigured and incomplete. If Dada is to present a fragmented completion of the self to the viewer, reflecting the world's own fragmentation, this image applies this fragmentation and confusion to the sensory apparatus responsible for piecing together this broken and disordered material.

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the middle of a sentence and I was condemned to silence in the darkness." Hausmann, *Bilanz*, I;205.

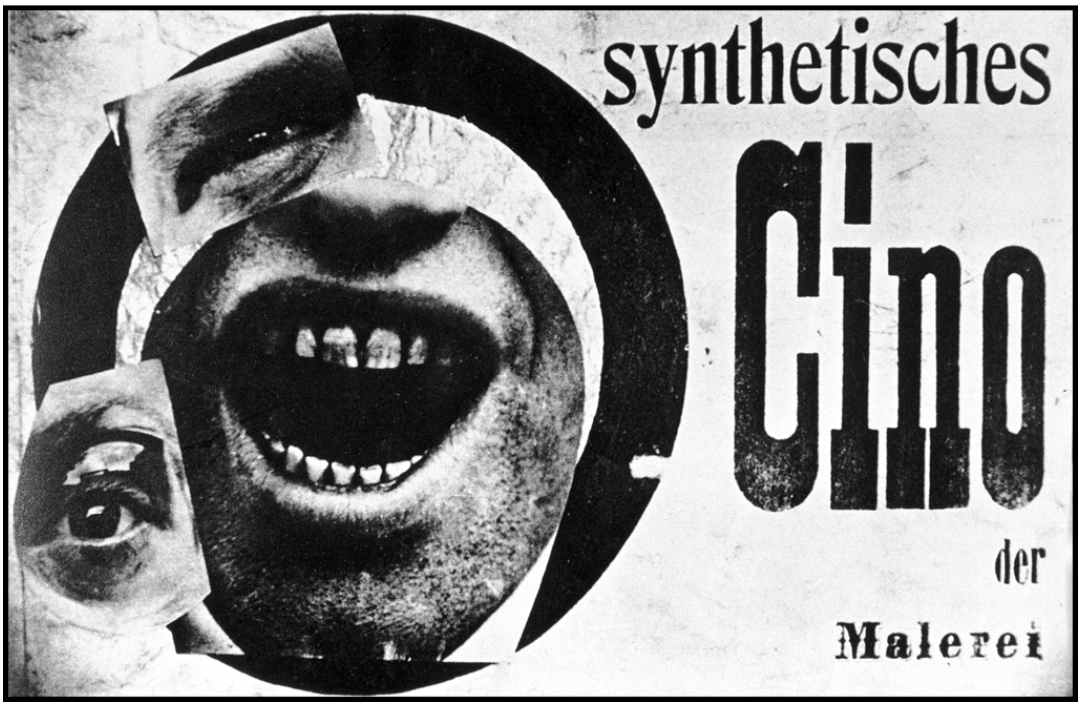

Figure 2: Detail from Raoul Hausmann, *Synthetisches Cino der Malerei* (1919?). Lost. Gelatine silver print. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art.

In Hausmann's call for sight to respond to the voice, the presence of his manifesto text, itself a fragmented textual, and hence visual through the ocular nature of reading, representation of his longer, oral performance, takes on a particular importance. The text comes to stand in not only for the missing performance, supplying optically the aural text—as reading in general does—, but also, through the condensed, elliptical nature of the edited text, it suggests a means for a parallel sensory confusion and complementarity in writing. This is not to say that montage in literature consists only in a syntactically confusing style or in abrupt juxtapositions of disparate sentences. The claim is rather that the condensation and distortion of the text, as well as its transformation from

performance piece to print document, is as much a part of the development of montage as the inclusion of the photomontage.

Moreover, while only two versions of this montage survive, it is significant that Hausmann chooses to use a printed version of the text. Due to both the typeface used and the use of multiple sizes for the work's title, whose asymmetrical arrangement would have required careful setting, it is safe to assume the work was not typewritten but instead printed by some means. In terms of genre, it resembles a broadside, in which the visual tension of the title and photomontage arrest the viewer's attention in order to entice the reader into reading the work. Text and image thus form a unit, each playing a role in the construction of the work. Yet they are at significant tension here. Even if the printed text was not intended for distribution, its status as a print object, as well as the genre of the broadside, suggests mobility and mass distribution. The photomontage, on the other hand, takes a readily reproducible object—the photograph—and manipulates it so that it becomes a unique artifact that cannot be reproduced without medial distortion. The work, which here includes both Hausmann's text and the photomontage, on the one hand documents the reliability, repeatability, and mobility of the work of print, while on the other hand calling for its manipulation into an object that invokes these categories—the broadside as a genre connotes mass production and distribution—but no longer embodies them.

The possibility of montage in which language plays a significant role thus emerges concurrently with the theoretical justification for montage. If Hausmann's manifesto on new material in art emphasizes raw material as a building block for its ability to represent the fragmented, discontinuous experience of modernity, his own

account of the "invention" of photomontage provides a specific example of the use of this principle of composition.[67] Hausmann claims to have discovered the principle of photomontage in the summer of 1918, thus shortly after the delivery of his manifesto in April of the same year. While on vacation with Hannah Höch, with whom he was romantically involved during the Dadaist period, he discovered

> un lithographe en couleurs représentant sur un fond de caserne, l'image d'un grenadier. Pour rendre ce memento militaire plus personnel, on avait collé à la place de la tête un portrait photographique du soldat. Ce fut comme un éclair, on pourrait – je le vis instantanément – faire des *tableaux* entièrement composés de photos découpées. De retour en septembre à Berlin, je commençais à réaliser cette vision nouvelle en me servant de photos de presse et de cinéma.[68]

In this account, Dadaist photomontage emerges as a transformation of painting that occurs through inspiration by popular culture. While Hausmann emphasizes the origins of photomontage in popular culture and commemorative practices related to the war—work often done by women—,[69] he is at pains to separate the work of photomontage from its popular inspiration. Not only is there a temporal gap between Hausmann's encounter with these military mementos, there is also a difference in material and form. While the source material is composed of photographs pasted on a stock lithograph, thus taking its form entirely from the ready-made image of the lithograph, Hausmann ignores the stock

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[67] Hausmann's account is significant for its focus nearly exclusively on the artistic possibilities of photomontage and its status as a transformation of Cubist and Futurist collage. Other accounts, notably those of Höch, Grosz, Heartfield and Herzfelde, which fall outside of the focus of this study, emphasize, variously, the practice's connection to popular, its connection to the war, and its ability to transform the relationship between artistic production and the role of the artist. See Doherty, "Berlin," 93-4.
[68] Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, 41-2.
[69] For further information on these so-called "Klebedamen," see Brigid Doherty, "Berlin Dada: Montage and the embodiment of modernity, 1916-1920" (PhD diss, University of California, Berkeley, 1996), 10-12, ProQuest(304245163).

lithograph and works exclusively with photographs. Moreover, while his inspiration emphasizes the personal memory of the subject, albeit through interaction with a mass-produced source, Hausmann's technique uses the press and film, setting the question of personal experience to the side. The account thus transposes a personal work that through manual intervention mediates between mass production and individual memory into the depersonalized medial landscape of the daily press and film. Here, the photograph as an artifact of the press and print distribution becomes the central element on montage.

This account, which has gained some degree of authority due to Höch's corroboration,[70] is difficult to reconstruct. While Hausmann may have first developed the idea for photomontage during this summer trip with Höch, there are no extant photomontages from either Höch or Hausmann that can be dated to 1918. Moreover, Hausmann's earlier accounts of the invention or discovery of photomontage contradict this story. In a letter to Jan Tschichold, dated April 2, 1930, Hausmann claims that it was Baader who as early as March 1918 produced the first Dadaist *Klebebilder* [collages], and his own first experiments followed in the next few months.[71] Baader corroborates Hausmann's story in a letter to Tschichold, dated June 14, 1930. Here, Baader asserts that the "ersten 'montierten' Stücke waren meiner Erinnerung nach 'Briefe'" [first 'montaged' pieces were, according to my memory, 'letters'] that he sent to Hausmann's wife, Elfriede Hausmann. As with a great deal of Baader's oeuvre, no such postcards

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[70] Brigid Doherty discusses Höch's statement on this story in relationship to Hausmann. See Doherty, "Berlin," 93. For Höch's statement itself, see Hannah Höch, "Erinnerungen an Dada," in *Hannah Höch 1889-1978: Ihr Werk, Ihr Leben, Ihre Freunde*, eds. Elisabeth Moortgat et al (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1989), 207-8.

[71] Raoul Hausmann, *Scharfrichter der bürgerlichen Seele: Raoul Hausmann in Berlin 1900-1933: Unveröffentlichte Briefe Texte Dokumente aus den Künstler-Archiven der Berlinischen Galerie*, ed. Eva Züchner (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1998), 270-2.

survive, though a postcard dated November 1, 1919 to Hannah Höch provides a sense of what these documents may have looked like, discussed below.

Significantly, Baader distinguishes his notion of montage from that of the other early Dadaists. Baader emphasizes the designation "letters" marks a distinct focus of his works: namely, they are focused on a moment of communication:

> Während Grosz, Hausmann, [sic] und die anderen "URMONTEURE" zunächst nur Wert auf den chaotischen Rhytmus [sic] der reinen Form- und Farbelemente legten, habe ich ausserdem [sic] stets einen bestimmten Inhalt mit meinen Montagen verbunden. Es waren "Mitteilungen", die mit dem Werkzeug der ausserordentlich vielen und mannigfaltigen, durch die Montagetechnik gebotenen Assoziationsmöglichkeiten und Assoziationsreize, fähig waren, in kürzester, augenfälliger Form überaus reiche Inhalte zu vermitteln. Auch die nach Stimmung und Zeit verschieden gestaltete Individualsituation des Aufnehmenden, des Empfängers, des Lesers, des Beschauers, wurde dabei von vornherein mit in Rechnung gestellt.[72]
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> [While Grosz, Hausmann, and the other "URMONTEURS" only valued the chaotic rhythm of the pure elements of form and color, I additionally attached a particular content to my montages. These were "messages," that, through the tool of the very many and diverse possibilities and stimuli of association offered by montage, were capable of conveying extremely rich contents in the shortest, most eye-catching form. The individual situation of the recipient, addressee, reader, viewer, differing by mood and time, was also taken into account from the outset.]

While Baader makes no attempt to define the "content" his montages seek to convey, the fact that he emphasizes his works as moments of communication, occurring in specific moments of creation and reception is significant. For Baader, the individual elements used to compose the work, their formal characteristics and arrangements, is less important than their relationship, not only to one another—in terms of what meanings can be created through association—but also to their broader context, including their genre,

[72] Ibid, 297.

their communicative situation, and their discursive structure. Baader thus conceives of montage not as a particular genre or form of art, thus limiting it to a single medium, but rather as a tool that takes advantage of the means of signification and communication offered by the given medium.

A closer look at the surviving postcard Baader sent to Höch provides some details of how he envisioned this (Figure 3). The stock postcard has been covered with pasted elements that obscure the original text of the card. Significantly, a good deal of the pasted material is drawn from Baader and Hausmann's first issue of *Der Dada* (1919), which is discussed later in this chapter. The postcard thus introduces a new mode of circulation for the journal and reorders its static print elements.[73] The address side of the postcard features several expected elements of the form, including addressee and stamp. However, these elements no longer function as expected. This is not to say that they are devoid of meaning. Rather, Baader plays with the expectations of the genre in order to resignify the functional elements of the genre into aesthetic elements. Where the blank lines for the recipient's address are, Höch's name has been collaged. Her name and the accompanying preposition "an" [To] are composed of paper cutouts. The five letters "Hanna" do not appear as a unit, but rather have been capriciously cut out of one text in a square pattern so that "H", "ann", and "a" all form separate units. The otherwise disparate letters are connected by a small portion of paper cut out between the lines of the text. Her name is thus reduced to basic elements, which theoretically could be redispersed or recombined

[73] For a comprehensive overview of the postcard as a medium, see Anett Holzheid, *Das Medium Postkarte: Eine sprachwissenschaftliche und mediengeschichtliche Studie* (Berlin : Erich Schmidt, 2011).

with other elements on the page, such as the stray "an" [to] just above her name, or the "Ange", drawn from Tristan Tzara's poem "Ange" in *Der Dada* 1, that covers the "Post" in "Postkarte" at the top of the page. On top of the line that connects the "ann" to the "a" in Höch's name, Baader pastes "dada". The word thus appears as part of her name, but also further serves to estrange the elements of her name from each other. The name of the addressee threatens to disintegrate into its constituent parts, tenuously held together by mere strips of paper. Baader writes Höch's last name by hand in ink next to her collaged first name, as if to correct the illegibility of the distorted first name. While the entirety of a postcard is visible to the public eye, lacking the privacy of an envelope, the address line is the only line that actively communicates with the outside world. By reordering and distorting the name in the address line, Baader has made a postcard that cannot be sent, that can only circulate and recirculate material within a knowing group of insiders.

Figure 3: Johannes Baader and Raoul Hausmann, *Angekarte*, 1 November 1919, postcard with collages of papers and ink, back. Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur.

Likewise, Baader pastes a small portrait of Hausmann where the recipient would expect a stamp. This reinforces the postcard's function as a private communication device among knowing friends. The portrait, however, has been mislabeled. Below it, Baader pastes his own name. The front side of the postcard similarly features a cutout of Baader's head labeled with Hausmann's name. As Höch's name mixes with the other elements of the page and with the word "dada," the identities of Baader and Hausmann are fungible and interchangeable. Formally, this fungibility affects the role of the stamp. While a postcard's stamp may indeed have meaning, as a postcard writer may select a particularly valuable, rare, or meaningful stamp to please the recipient or to expand her collection, it conventionally would not relate to either the image on the postcard's front or the content, unless the writer made a special point to do so. In many cases, the sender

may just pick the nearest available stamp. Here, the stamp enters meaningful relationships in terms of both form and content to the other elements of the postcard.

The last significant way in which Baader's postcard collage works through the formal elements of the postcard is its treatment of the genre's formal divisions. In general, the postcard maintains a distinction between the front side, on which a stock image usually appears, and the reverse, on which there is room for the recipient's address and the sender's message. Baader transgresses both of these divisions in his collage. First, Baader pastes directly over the image on the front side, extending his message to the recipient beyond its confined space on the back. This collage on the front side, moreover, is deliberately designed to obscure almost completely the original design on the postcard. It includes, for example, a large piece of blank paper and the massive word "Zum" [to the], both of which have relatively little meaning but effectively supplant the stock image with his own creation. Snippets of text remain visible beneath, marking Baader's intervention. Below this, Baader pastes the title of an essay from *Der Dada* 1, "Legen Sie Ihr Geld in dada an" [Invest Your Money in Dada]. The clipping does not fit entirely on the front side of the postcard. In the middle of the first "a" in "dada", the clipping has been folded over so that it continues on the postcard's reverse. The clipping thus connects the two sides. Not only is the reader enticed to flip the postcard, following the visual line of the text from one side to the other, but also the line made by the strip of paper connects physically the two otherwise unrelated sides[74]. As I will discuss in chapter two of this study, flipping the page to show coherence between two seemingly unrelated sides is of

[74] Brigid Doherty emphasizes how the two folded elements meet at the "h" in "Ihr" [your], suggesting an incorporation of the addressee into the work. See Doherty, "Berlin," 96.

key importance to Schwitters' understanding of montage. For Baader, this gesture of connecting the two sides of the page seems not so much to show identity in difference, as it often does for Schwitters, but rather to question an arbitrary distinction between the two sides of the postcard. Both sides convey meaning, and both sides are sites for creative intervention with the formal conventions of the genre.

On the reverse, Baader likewise questions the distinction between the place for the message and the place for the address. Across the line that divides these two sections, Baader pastes the bottom section of a woodcut by Hausmann, featured in *Der Dada* 1. The woodcut features basic squares and triangles, connected by rectangular lines that resemble pipes. At the bottom, a triangle juts out to the right, resembling a megaphone or speaker. The entire construction vaguely resembles a machine, with a triangle in the upper right accepting input and the megaphone at the bottom producing output. Baader takes only the very bottom few pipes and the megaphone, whose elongated shape cuts diagonally across the entirety of the back of the postcard. The pipe is placed just below the stamp of Hausmann, and just to the left of the megaphone-like triangle are the letters "AI 1" (October 1st, 1919 in Baader's new calendar). While it would be difficult to decode the meaning of this here, if one assumes the shape still functions as a pipe with input and output, it seems to suggest a mediation between the two sides of the postcard. While the woodcut pipe does not directly interact with the front of the postcard, it indirectly stands in relationship to it through the presence of a long strip of paper posted over the dividing mark on the postcard's back. This dividing mark extends beyond the bottom edge of the page and is pasted back over the front side, bisecting the clipping from "Legen Sie Ihr Geld in dada an!" The line thus draws the reader back to the front of

the postcard, suggesting further continuity between the two sides. Yet this mediation occurs through a seemingly mechanical device. This tension underscores Baader's use of print. The static, machine-produced elements of the periodical are redeployed to overcome the arbitrary divisions of the print genre, yet this occurs through delicate, hand-pasted manipulation of these mechanical products. The work thus invokes several formal features of the genre and of printed matter, while also working through a means of transforming them from stale formal features into creative new use of print.

From this account of the birth(s) of montage, as told by Baader and Hausmann, it becomes clear that the origins of montage, as practiced by the Dadaists in Berlin, stem from several sources. On the one hand, the formal and aesthetic debt to Futurist and Cubist collage techniques clearly inform the theoretical basis for the use of found material in Dadaist art, as acknowledged by Hausmann in "Synthetisches Cino der Malerei." On the other hand, the specific focus of photomontage on the use of photography and print material seems much more inspired by popular culture and a specific interest in the press and mass media. Importantly, in both Hausmann's collage versions of "Synthetisches Cino der Malerei" and Baader's postcard, montage mediates a specific understanding of print. This understanding emphasizes the communicative role of print media and their ability to transmit ideas and relations not only through their content but also through the arrangement and presentation of that content. The problem of media for Hausmann and Baader stems from a rigorous understanding of the notion of culture. If the perception of reality is shaped through its representation in culture, then any attempt to transform culture will have to come to terms with how media and representation shape the subject's perception of reality. This is, for Hausmann and

Baader, the shortcoming of montage as mere political satire or parody, as one sees in the works of Heartfield and Grosz.[75] Mere satire or parody rearranges the elements of culture within its existing representation, but cannot claim either a position outside of culture from which to critique it effectively or effect a transformation of culture. An effective critique simultaneously necessitates transforming the modes of representation through which culture is transmitted. As Stephen Foster has argued of Baader, since he realized that culture was "typically experienced and perverted through the media, it was only through the reorganization of the media and the media's apparatus that they could be significantly reperceived."[76]

This overview of the origin stories of montage, as told by Baader and Hausmann, is not intended to serve as a comprehensive history of the origins of photomontage. Heartfield and Grosz laid competing claims to the discovery of photomontage,[77] and, given the ephemeral nature of montage products, none of these claims can effectively be verified through reference to surviving artifacts. Rather, I discuss these origin stories to

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[75] Baader and Hausmann differed from Grosz, Herzfelde, and Heartfield not only in terms of aesthetics but also in terms of politics. While Grosz, Heartfield, and Herzfelde politically aligned more with mainstream communism in post-World War I Germany, the political beliefs of Baader and Hausmann are philosophically and ideologically harder to categorize. For Stephen Foster, this difference in political beliefs leads to their difference in artistic strategies. See Foster, "Johannes Baader," 252. While Baader and Hausmann are usually considered the anarchistic wing of Berlin Dada, Riccardo Bavaj attempts to characterize more precisely the political alignment of Raoul Hausmann. While Bavaj still identifies Hausmann with the anarchist left, he sees him also as representative of a larger antibourgeois tendency on both the extreme left and right that emphasized the immediacy of experience against the perceived constraints of bourgeois society. See Riccardo Bavaj, "Gegen den Bürger, für das (Er-)Leben: Raoul Hausmann und der Berliner Dadaismus gegen die "Weimarische Lebensauffassung," *German Studies Review* 31, no. 3 (October, 2008): 513-536.

[76] Stephen Foster, "Johannes Baader," 268.

[77] For these claims, see Doherty, "Berlin," 93-95.

investigate the discursive strategies that surround the invention of photomontage and how these inform its medial positioning. These origin stories are confusing and contradictory, and the fact that the only narrative accounts of photomontage's origins emerge belatedly suggests a disconnect between the atmosphere of experimentation and transformation that surrounds montage production in 1919 and 1920 and the attempts to legitimize the unique position of photomontage in Berlin Dada later. As we see, early discussions of montage in Berlin Dada do not necessarily privilege photomontage, but seek a new mode of art that makes use of existing material, particularly material drawn from print artifacts. In the next section, I will examine the attempts Hausmann and Baader made to produce printed materials themselves, including typographic poems, newspaper articles, and their own journal. These attempts broadly engage with montage principles, using pre-made materials for new artistic purposes, and help move towards a theory of montage in print.

Montage in Literature: Early Experiments

The idea of applying principles of collage or montage to literature is strongly associated with Dadaism in general, not specifically with its Berlin camp. Famously, Tristan Tzara provided a formula for creating Dadaist poems based on the principle of collage, published in 1920 in the journal *Littérature*. Here, Tzara recommends picking an article at random from a newspaper, cutting out the individual words, placing them in a bag, and transcribing each word in the order as it comes out of the bag, in order to produce a poem out of the rearranged words.[78] Tzara's notion of a Dadaist poem severely limits the author's agency. The only decision for which the author has control is the

[78] *Littérature* 15 (July/August 1920): 18.

selection of a suitable article. The arrangement of words, the poem's length, and even the words chosen are all determined by the article itself and the process of rearrangement.

Importantly, while the source material determines the length and vocabulary of the final poem in Tzara's method, its medial character is otherwise effaced. Tzara directs the author: "Copiez consciencieusement."[79] While copying the words consciously will retain their order, it will transform their medial form. The words are no longer clippings, but freely written words from the hand of the author, presenting found material as a written product of the author's hand. While this notion of writing emphasizes an aleatory process of writing, it is not interested in the transformation of material forms in the same way as the montage production of Hausmann and Baader, as discussed above. Rather, it uses the press as a blank canvas from which to steal and then reconstructs it into a new object with little apparent relationship to the original.

Consequently, it should not surprise that the Berlin Dadaists choose a different way to engage with collage, montage, and found material in their literary works.[80] Hausmann's early sound poetry provides a good counterpoint. In a 1970 interview, when asked to name which "formale Neuerungen" [formal innovations] he considered himself

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Hanne Bergius emphasizes that Hausmann and his colleagues, in contrast to Tzara, foreground the medial situation of their source material and their products: "Charakteristisch für Dada Berlin war, daß das Zitat erkennbar und lesbar blieb. Auch wenn er zersetzt, deformiert, entstellt oder angeschnitten wurde, war der Bezugspunkt die real nachweisbare Gegebenheit. Der neue verfremdende Zusammenhang in den Erzeugnissen Dadas sollte die Erinnerung an das Zitat nicht auslöschen, sondern gerade seine alte Bedeutung hinter den neuen Bezügen aufscheinen lassen. Das Zitierte und Montierte von Schrift und Bild wurde in ein Netz von Anspielungen gezogen, die Denkanstöße gaben, in Frage stellten, Beurteilungen aktivierten, die Welt in Bewegung setzten und in politische Handlungsräume vorstießen." See Hanne Bergius, *Montage und Metamechanik*, 91.

responsible for, Hausmann named the "Buchstabengedicht" [letter poem] as the most significant. For Hausmann, the significance of this form lies in its reduction of language to the most simple relationship of writing to sound. This genre of poems is a genre "das keine anderen Sonoritäten mehr kennt außer der Sonorität der Buchstaben selbst" [that knows no sonority except for the sonority of the letters themselves].[81] Implicit in Hausmann's statement is a distinction between the sounds represented by letters and the sounds produced by the human voice and natural language. Unlike Hugo Ball's sound poems or Marinetti's *parole in libertà*, which work with syllabic constructs that suggest ready pronunciation and plausibly words, Hausmann's *Plakatgedichte* use a random selection of letters that has no relationship to pronounceable syllables in German or any other language.[82] Here Hausmann applies the principle of montage to literature through the use of letters as ready-made elements, able to be deployed at will.[83] One of the earliest of his poster poems, "f m s b w t ö z ä u", begins with a cluster of six consonants (Figure 4). With no vowels, a reader has no easy means for guessing at the desired aural effect. These sound poems are not primal sounds or cries, nor are they attempts to depict onomatopoetically some content. Rather, they begin with writing and proceed from

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[81] Bartsch and Koch (eds), *Raoul Hausmann* (Graz: Literaturverlag Droschl, 1996), 13.

[82] Hausmann describes Ball's poetry as operating with "mots inconnus," while his poems are "lettristes," working at the level of the letter, not the word or syllable. Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, 57. Arndt Niebisch contrasts the poetics of Zurich and Berlin Dada. For him, Zurich Dada, particularly in the works of Hugo Ball, is aimed at the formation of a new language with mystical resonances, the work of Berlin Dada, particularly under Hausmann, does away with meaning. See Arndt Niebisch, *Media Parasites in the Early Avant-Garde: On the Abuse of Technology and Communication* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 62.

[83] Hanne Bergius considers Hausmann's typographic poems his earliest engagement with montage principles. See Hanne Bergius, *Das Lachen Dadas: Die Berliner Dadaisten und ihre Aktionen* (Gießen: Anabas-Verlag, 1989), 117.

writing to sound. The unnatural selection of consonant clusters and the inclusion of symbols with no pronunciation—such as periods, dashes, question marks, and even a manicule in the poem "O F F E A H" (Figure 5)—informs these objects' status as written document first and oral performance second. Any performance will require considerable mediation of the random assortment of letters.

Figure 4: Raoul Hausmann, *f m s b w t ö z ä u* (1918). Typographic print on orange paper. Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou.

Figure 5: Raoul Hausmann, O F F E A H B D C (1918). Typographic print on orange paper. Berlinische Galerie.

In fact, Hausmann's process for writing these poems subjects the poem not only to the arbitrary values of the alphabet but also to the mechanism of the print shop. As Hausmann recalls, the work was printed by Robert Barthe using large pieces of type designed for posters. Like the role of the typesetter Paul Vogt in the creation of *Die Scheuche*, discussed in chapter two of this study, Robert Barthe's contribution to this work was significant. As Hausmann describes it, the poem was composed through the random choices of Barthe:

> Dank dem Verständnis des Setzers war die Verwirklichung leicht, aus dem Kasten der großen hölzernen Buchstaben für Plakate nach Laune und Zufall hingesetzt, was da so kam, und das war sichtbar gut. Ein kleines f zuerst, dann ein m, dann ein s, ein b, eh, was nun? Na ein w und ein f und

> so weiter und so weiter, eine große écriture automatique mit Fragezeichen, Ausrufezeichen und selbst einer Anzeigehand dazwischen! [84]
>
> [Thanks to the understanding of the compositor, the realization was easy, set from the box of big wooden letters for posters according to whimsy and chance, whatever came out and that was apparently good. First a little f, then an m, then an s, a b, huh, what now? Well, a w and an f and so on and so forth, a great écriture automatique with question marks, exclamation marks, and even a pointing hand in between!]

Hausmann subjects his poetic conception to the whims of the compositor, who actually carries out the task. The mechanical labor of the compositor, as well as any decisions he made while setting the text, thus forms a critical part of the work. It is not only the letters out of which Hausmann's poems are composed that constitute ready-made elements in Hausmann's process. Hausmann uses the entire apparatus of the printing process, including the labor of the compositor, as a ready-made tool for the composition of his work, combining the specific labor and disposition of the compositor Robert Barthe with other found elements in the print shop.

If one compares this to Tristan Tzara's instructions for writing a Dadaist poem, several key distinctions emerge. First, while Tzara emphasizes the complete submission of the artistic process to an arbitrary and random means of selection, Hausmann's method does not entirely embrace random selection. While Hausmann himself has no role in the selection of letters and characters, the compositor is free to choose whatever pleases him. Second, both Hausmann and Tzara advocate for engaging with print media, but emphasize their status differently. For Tzara, the newspaper provides the source material, but it is transformed into a qualitatively different product. Hausmann, on the other hand, works directly with the apparatus of print itself, producing a new print product by

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[84] Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, 43.

mobilizing arbitrarily, on the part of the artist Hausmann, various elements of the print shop.[85]

Like Hausmann's collage for "Synthetisches Cino der Malerei" or Baader's postcard to Höch, Hausmann's *Plakatgedichte* operate within an existing genre of printed matter. Notably, Hausmann instructed Barthe not to use standard sized pieces of type, as one would expect for literature, but oversized type for posters and advertisements. The large type, printed on brightly colored paper, emphasizes the primarily visual orientation of the work. As Hausmann, says of the genre, "Buchstabengedichte sind wohl auch zum Sehen da, aber auch zum ANsehen" [letter poems are there to be seen [Sehen], but also to be looked AT [ANsehen].[86] The distinction drawn here between two modes of looking, *Sehen* and *Ansehen*, distinguishes between mere seeing as a passive, uninterested activity and a type of active, attentive seeing. This latter type, as Hausmann describes it, describes both a property of the work as well as a behavior of the observer. While reading requires sight, except for books in braille or audio books, the letters themselves are usually not a source of active visual attention. In the case of Hausmann's *Plakatgedichte*, the arrangement of letters on the page demands active seeing of the viewer. One could consider here the cluster "qjy" in the poem "O F F E A H," where the juxtaposition of three letters with descenders next to a downwards pointing manicule seems motivated out of visual, not phonetic or aural, concerns.

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[85] While Hausmann's experiments with phonetic poetry predates Tzara's description of Dadaist poetics, Hausmann distances himself from Tzara's description. Hausmann claims both ignorance of Tzara's poetic works and also accuses Tzara of not following his own method. See Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, 64.
[86] Hausmann, *Am Anfang,* 43.

Hausmann's emphasis on the visuality of these sound poems is at odds with their status as pieces for performance. While he acknowledges their primarily visual quality, he also maintains their suitability to oral performance: "Konsonanten und Vokale, das krächzt und jodelt sehr gut! Natürlich, diese Buchstabenplakatgedichte müßten gesungen werden" [Consonants and vowels, that caws and yodels very well. of course, these letter poster poems would have to be sung].[87] Hausmann provides no explanation as to how his long cluster of consonants might be realized in song. His use of the subjunctive "müßten," however, suggests multiple potential realizations of the text. In particular, the second line of "f m s b w t," with the cluster of stops "p g g," caws more than it yodels, providing rhythm but no melody. Additionally, the use of commas, periods, a dash, a question mark, and even a manicule as stand-alone typographical elements, and not indicators of syntax or emphasis, challenges the pronounceability of these poems. How is one to pronounce two commas in a row? How is one to pronounce a question mark after two periods? The poem's equal treatment of all typographical elements creates a type of poetry in which typographical arrangement and the skill of the compositor take precedent over meaning or the sound associated with those pieces of type. In fact, Hausmann himself provides some justification for distinguishing between the original poster poems and their performed realizations. In his "bio-bibliographie" *Courrier Dada*, Hausmann admits to modifying the poems "[p]our des raisons de sonorité."[88] He writes that he replaced the "m ü" at the end of "f m s b w t" with the

[87] Ibid.
[88] Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, 63.

ending of "O F F E A H," "qu i i é."[89] Hausmann curiously transposes certain letters here. The original poem has "q j y E." Here, Hausmann replaces the "q" with a more pronounceable "qu" and converts the "j" and "y" into a related vowel. These transpositions, along with the presence of the French é, suggest a distinction between the poem as a spoken performance and the poem as a print object.

The disjunction between the written text as visual stimulus and the oral performance as produced sound seems at odds with Hausmann's well-documented interest in the complementarity of the senses, discussed above with regard to his photomontage version of "Synthetisches Cino der Malerei." Beginning as early as 1921, Hausmann began work towards a so-called "Optophone," a machine that would mechanically convert light stimulus into sound.[90] While Hausmann may have increasingly been interested in the convergence of the visual and the aural, it is important not to project his theory of optophonetics too far backwards into his early production. Here, the voice of the poet functions as a primitive optophone, converting letters into sounds, yet with significant difficulty and friction. In a later sound poem, "kp'erioum," also dating from 1918, Hausmann would use letters of different sizes and typefaces to indicate the realization of dynamics, stress, and length.[91] These earliest poster poems,

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[89] Ibid.

[90] For further information on the Optophone, see Marcella Lista, "Raoul Hausmann's Optophone: 'Universal Language' and the Intermedia," in *The Dada Seminars*, eds. Leah Dickerman and Matthew S. Witkovsky (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 84-101.

[91] Christian Scholz has documented Hausmann's significance in the development of sound poetry. For him, the text of sound poetry increasingly becomes more akin to a musical score, providing greater details about how the work should be realized. Hausmann's switch from the early poster poems, with no details about performance, to these later "optophonetic" poems marks an important step in this development. See

however, with their use of extraneous pieces of type and consonant clusters with no unambiguous realization, still resist a simple translation from the visual to the aural. The work's status as writing, and as print document, retains its primary significance.

Additionally, while these poems use the visible forms of type as their principal compositional element, it is difficult to make the case that the poem draws attention to the visuality of the typography as such. In comparison to a poem like "kp'erioum," which not only uses different typefaces and sizes to indicate different stress but also makes use of the white space on the page, the poster poems are printed plainly, in two rows occupying most of the page, and in a uniform style of type. The poems take up a provocative position offered by the advertising poster, but while the stance, form, and intention of the genre are present, it is difficult to discern any appreciable content. The use of individual letters and punctuation marks dismantles written language into its smallest constituent parts, but these constituent parts are not reassembled into meaningful words or sounds. Rather, they are presented as provocations, using the visual forms of advertising posters to announce new possibilities for writing and language construction.

In these sound poems, one sees Hausmann's early attempts at applying principles of montage to printed matter. He takes the ready-made elements of the printing house, including not only paper and type but also the labor of the typesetter, to produce a work of art that places typography and the work of print at the forefront. Notably, while the works make sophisticated use of the elements of an advertising poster, it is difficult to discern any meaning or pragmatic content. If the press has the power to shape discourse,

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Christian Scholz, "Relations Between Sound Poetry and Visual Poetry: The Path from the Optophonetic Poem to the Multimedia Text," *Visible Language* 35, no. 1 (2001): 92-103.

as Baader contends, these poems fall short of that goal. They do not apparently call for any change in the world or discourse, but merely advertise their own aesthetic principles. This, however, should not detract from the radical propositions of these works. Through the use of individual letters chosen randomly by the typesetter, they challenge not only the originality of the author but also the signifying capacity of language itself. In presenting a random assortment of letters and punctuation marks as an attention-grabbing poster, the poems promote an alternative to an instrumentalist view of language that sees language as propagating ideas and actions. Instead, the works disassemble language in order to reassemble it into an alternative mode of language. This mode highlights the arbitrariness of the written word, taking all possible elements of printed language as its basic part. By proceeding from writing to speech, the work undoes any assumption to the naturalness of written language and its relationship to speech. It supplants meaning with a celebration of the formal possibilities of language beyond signification.

The formal inventiveness of these poems and their use of montage principles mark an important step in the development of literary montage. Yet it is difficult to recognize in them critical capacities for resignification and recontextualization that will become key in the later discussion of literary montage in this study. In the next section, I will discuss Baader and Hausmann's attempt to start their own periodical. This periodical, *Der Dada*, serves not only as a mouthpiece of the movement in Berlin, but also continues their critical engagement with the press as a medium of discourse and historical fact. In fact, the journal arises specifically out of a period of intense engagement with the newspaper as an agent of cultural change. I will contextualize the work of the journal in light of several press hoaxes carried out by Baader and Hausmann.

The journal, which allows them to unite the political and historical concerns they address in their hoaxes and the poetic and aesthetic concerns that are developing in montage and typographic poetry, provides greater possibility for radical transformation of systems of representation and their relationship to the historical perception of reality.

***Der Dada*: Remediating the Discourse of the Newspaper**

In 1918 and 1919, Johannes Baader and Raoul Hausmann staged a series of hoaxes in the press. Most hoaxes were printed in *B.Z. am Mittag*, an early German tabloid, though numerous other publications also ran versions of the stories. Critically, these press hoaxes occur during a period of revolution, during which the terms of Germany's surrender in the First World War were being negotiated at the same time that the country was trying to find a new political organization. In this time of extreme chaos and uncertainty, Baader and Hausmann turn to the press as a means to present their own, fictive possibility for Germany's future. Adrian Sudhalter has provided a detailed account of the various hoaxes undertaken by Baader and Hausmann. These include a demand that Baader be awarded the Nobel Prize;[92] Baader's candidacy for the Reichstag;[93] the admittance of Philipp Scheidemann, the politician who announced the formation of the Weimar Republic, into Club Dada; the declaration of Baader as "Präsident des Erdballs" [president of the globe];[94] and finally the death of the Oberdada.[95] It is not my intention

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[92] Sudhalter 229-234. Baader demanded the Nobel Prize for his "Acht Weltsätze" [Eight World Sentences], which were printed along with the newspaper's derisive response to his demand. For the "Acht Weltsätze," see Johannes Baader, *Oberdada: Schriften, Manifeste, Flugblätter, Billets, Werke und Taten*, eds. Hanne Bergius, Norbert Miller, and Karl Riha (Lahn/Gießen: Anabas-Verlag, 1977), 43.
[93] Sudhalter 238.
[94] Ibid. 249-50.
[95] Ibid. 253-238.

here to provide a comprehensive account of these hoaxes, as to do so would merely reproduce Sudhalter's work. Rather, I discuss them briefly in order to frame a discussion of how *Der Dada* takes off where the hoaxes left off.

These hoaxes were accompanied by public campaigns, including Baader's most famous public action, his interruption of politician and theologian Ernst Dryander's sermon in the Berlin Cathedral on November 17, 1918. As a response to Dryander's rhetorical question, "Was ist uns Jesus Christus" [What is Jesus Christ to us], Baader exclaimed, "Jesus Christus ist uns Wurst… !" [Jesus Christ is nothing to us].[96] Baader was subsequently arrested for his performance, but released without charges on account of his legal insanity. Baader's interruption of the sermon, alongside his distribution of the broadside "Grüne Leiche" in the National Assembly at Weimar, has been seen as a focal point for understanding Baader's role in Berlin Dada. His brash, aggressive public acts are often read as an expression of his dissatisfaction with Wilhelmine bourgeois culture and the nascent Weimar Republic, which Baader already worried would continue the militant and regressive Prussian culture of Wilhelmine Germany by other means, and as anarchistic outbursts against the dominant culture and political system. Dryander, as a leading figure of the Lutheran church and representative of the state, was the target of Baader's ire as he embodied the union of false moralism and militarism that, for Baader and the other Dadaists, led directly to the First World War. Baader's exclamation that Christ is "Wurst" to the common man makes the religious and political establishment,

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[96] Qtd. in Karl Riha, "Der Oberdada im Urteil der Dadaisten," in Baader, *Oberdada*, 196. Riha provides a full account of the conflicting narratives on exactly what happened. It is impossible to reconstruct Baader's performance completely, but all accounts agree interrupted the speech, exclaimed some variant of "Jesus ist uns Wurst," and was subsequently arrested.

indeed, Christianity itself, culpable for the blatant disrespect of human life that characterized the First World War.

If one views Baader's agitatory public acts as the primary driver of the development of Hausmann and Baader's particular, anarchistically colored version of Dadaism, one might be inclined to see the movement as nothing more than a protest or social critique. Baader and Hausmann, however, understood that social change depends upon a transformation of culture, and such a transformation can only occur through active intervention in the means of cultural transmission. This is to say, it is not sufficient to parody the press to change culture. One would rather need to harness the performative function of the press to shape the public's perception of reality towards a new narrative or understanding of culture. All of Baader's public acts were thus accompanied by vigorous press campaigns that sought not only to legitimize the performative aspects of Dada but also to establish a basis in reality from which to perform transformative social critique. This press campaign culminates with the publication of the first issue of *Der Dada*, a periodical that served briefly as a mouthpiece for the movement in Berlin.[97]

In this context, I will briefly discuss a broadside that accompanied the press campaign around Baader's claim to the office of "Präsident des Erdballs" [President of

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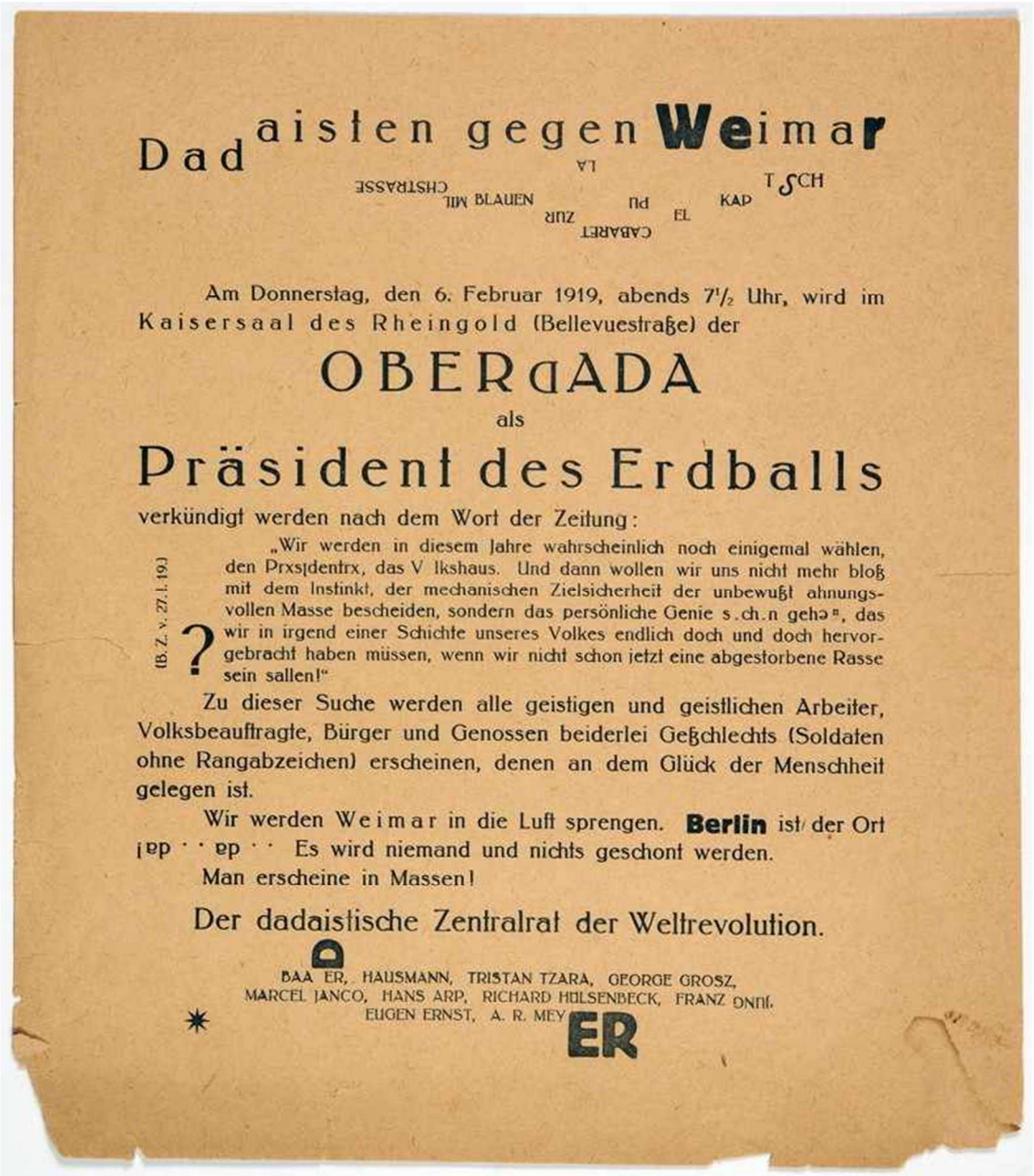
[97] In foregrounding the press campaign that accompanied Dada performance, I am indebted to the work of Adrian Sudhalter, who in her dissertation on Baader stresses the literary nature of Baader's performances and press campaigns, in contrast to the dominant trend in scholarship to see his press hoaxes as textual performances. By "literary," Sudhalter focuses on the construction of the Oberdada as a useful narrative fiction, establishing a representation which operates at a greater distance from current events than a textual performance. In particular, Sudhalter stresses how Baader uses these performances and hoaxes to construct the fiction of the "Oberdada," a construct that he uses to create his actions and his role in Berlin Dada. See Sudhalter, 240-1. Matthew Biro, on the other hand, stresses these media campaigns as an attempt to intervene directly into life and discourse. See Biro, *Dada Cyborg*, 58-64.

the Globe]. In this broadside, Baader attempts to intervene in the discourse of the newspaper and redirect it towards his own political narrative. The broadside, titled "Dadaisten gegen Weimar" [Dadaists Against Weimar] (Figure 6), serves as an advertisement for the public announcement of Baader's presidency on February 6, 1919 and can thus be safely dated to early February, 1919. It thus immediately follows the first elections for the newly formed Weimer Republic and presents Baader, and by association Dada, as a viable alternative to the new republican government. Indeed, the work promises to "Weimar in die Luft sprengen" [blast Weimar into the air],[98] encouraging the violent overthrow of the new government in favor of Baader. The work allegedly quotes from an article that appeared on January 27 1919 in the *B.Z. am Mittag*, presaging further elections and the appearance of "das persönliche Genie […] das wir in irgend einer Schichte [sic] unseres Volkes endlich doch und doch hervorgebracht haben müssen" [the genius in person, who we must have finally found in some level of our people].[99] The quoted newspaper text, which dangerously invokes nationalist and even nativist fears of the German people in danger, is presented with numerous obvious typographical errors and distortions. The word "Präsident" is misspelled as "Prxsidentrx," the "o" is missing from "Volkshaus," and at least one word is distorted beyond recognition. These errors stand in contrast to the playful typography of the remaining document. The title is printed using multiple different typefaces and at different levels. The first "D" in "OBERDADA" is reversed, and the "D" in Baader's name appears in a massive bold type above the other

[98] Baader, *Oberdada*, 48.
[99] Ibid.

letters. These playful distortions, however, do not impede reading, while the changes in the newspaper text fundamentally alter the word, even if the intention is still clear.



Dadaisten gegen Weimar

Am Donnerstag, den 6. Februar 1919, abends 7½ Uhr, wird im Kaisersaal des Rheingold (Bellevuestraße) der

OBERdADA

als

Präsident des Erdballs

verkündigt werden nach dem Wort der Zeitung:

„Wir werden in diesem Jahre wahrscheinlich noch einigemal wählen, den Prxsjdentrx, das V lkshaus. Und dann wollen wir uns nicht mehr bloß mit dem Instinkt, der mechanischen Zielsicherheit der unbewußt ahnungsvollen Masse bescheiden, sondern das persönliche Genie s.ch.n gehɔ", das wir in irgend einer Schichte unseres Volkes endlich doch und doch hervorgebracht haben müssen, wenn wir nicht schon jetzt eine abgestorbene Rasse sein sallen!"

?

(B. Z. v. 27. I. 19.)

Zu dieser Suche werden alle geistigen und geistlichen Arbeiter, Volksbeauftragte, Bürger und Genossen beiderlei Geßchlechts (Soldaten ohne Rangabzeichen) erscheinen, denen an dem Glück der Menschheit gelegen ist.

Wir werden Weimar in die Luft sprengen. **Berlin** ist der Ort ¡ɐp · · ɐp · · Es wird niemand und nichts geschont werden.

Man erscheine in Massen!

Der dadaistische Zentralrat der Weltrevolution.

BAA ER, HAUSMANN, TRISTAN TZARA, GEORGE GROSZ, MARCEL JANCO, HANS ARP, RICHARD HÜLSENBECK, FRANZ DNIIL, EUGEN ERNST, A. R. MEY ER

Figure 6: Johannes Baader, *Dadaisten gegen Weimar* (1919), broadside manifesto. Getty Research Institute.

The work thus draws a distinction between the newspaper source material and the accompanying promotion of Baader and Dadaism. While the text appears to be incorporated completely into the surrounding document, in fact it has been subject to a further level of distortion, not merely from its recontextualization but also from its shoddy reprinting. The text appears subject to the same playful typographic innovations found in the rest of the document, but the severity of the distortions reveals that they are in fact a distancing technique, drawing attention to the reprinted status of the work. This distances the signatories, who include Baader, Hausmann, Tzara, Arp, and Hülsenbeck, among others, from the politically extreme content of the text. This is significant, as it impedes the obvious function of the text here. As the text calls for repeated election and the appearance of "das persönliche Genie" who has the capacity to lead the nation, it would seem to legitimize Baader's presidency. Yet the rhetoric of the text and its new Dadaist context do not align. While the newspaper article derides the "mechanischen Zielsicherheit der unbewußt ahnungsvollen Masse" [mechanical purposefulness of the unconsciously apprehensive masses], the broadside implores that the readers "erscheine[n] in Massen!" [appear in masses].[100]

The work on the one hand demonstrates a successful intervention in news media. The rhetoric of the newspaper is at some level redirected towards the revolutionary goals of the Dadaists. The text, at a very superficial level, supports the ascendancy to power of

[100] Ibid.

some figure who could resemble Baader. On the other hand, the rhetoric of the text cannot be fully assimilated into the anarchist politics of Baader and Hausmann and thus betrays its difference, both through content and typographical presentation. The lower left side of the inserted text is framed with a question mark, further expressing ambivalence about the work. Yet the prose that frames it implies some attempt to assimilate it into the broadside. Baader's presidency will be "verkündigt nach dem Wort der Zeitung" [announced following the word of the newspaper], meaning the newspaper excerpt.[101] The attempt to redirect the discourse of the newspaper works only to some extent, with the original agenda still recognizable at some level. The work attempts to push back against competing narratives by incorporating them into its own narrative and typographic structure while still marking its difference.

As seen from this short discussion of Baader's presidency of the globe, these press hoaxes, as much as they sought to present alternatives to the discourse in the press on the unfolding of historical events, were by no means serious attempts at creating an alternative political reality. Rather, these are agitatory texts which unsettle the certainty afforded by the press. The increasing incredulity of their claims—culminating with Baader's leadership of the whole world, sudden death, and Christ-like resurrection in the pages of *Der Dada*—test the limits of how far they can push an alternative narrative. This is not to say their claims were accepted—several critics and commentators realized the fictive nature of the texts.[102] Indeed, reporting on Baader's antics was often spearheaded by critics, not reporters. The hoaxes created elaborate fictions that were confined to

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[101] Ibid.

[102] Leo Heller, for example, realized Baader's alleged death on April 1, 1919, was intended as an April Fool's joke. See Sudhalter 258.

cultural and artistic reporting. In order to present them as true political events, the Dadaists had to take to the press themselves, creating documents like the broadside "Dadaisten gegen Weimar."

In June of 1919, only two months after Baader's staged death, the first issue of *Der Dada* appeared. While the title claimed to speak for the whole movement of Dada in Berlin, Hausmann and Baader were primarily responsible for the first two issues. *Der Dada* was not the first periodical published by the Berlin Dadaists. Hausmann and Baader had both contributed to *Die freie Straße*, while John Heartfield, Wieland Herzfelde, and Georg Grosz published *Die Pleite* and *Jedermann sein eigener Fußball*.[103] However, *Der Dada*, particularly its first issue, deserves special consideration due to its clear temporal and thematic relationship to Baader's and Hausmann's interest in the press as a medium of discourse. It takes the developing Dadaist principle of montage and apply it to the format of the newspaper, juxtaposing texts in various styles with pseudo-advertisements for Dada, political commentary, works of art, and even a pseudo-obituary for the Oberdada. The first issue also features examples of typographic montage, both in poetry and the visual arts. These periodicals are not considered often enough as holistic products

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[103] For an overview of the periodicals of Berlin Dada, see Biro, *Dada Cyborg*, 32-50. For an overview of Dadaist periodicals that stresses the interpersonal relationships that inform them, see White, *Generation Dada*, 219-258. Sherwin Simmons discusses the origins of Dadaist periodicals in German humor magazines of the First World War. See Sherwin Simmons, "War, Revolution, and the Transformation of the German Humor Magazine, 1914-27," *Art Journal* 52, no. 1 (Spring, 1993): 46-54. Christian Weikop considers how Bachtin's notion of the "carnivalesque" can be used to explain the use of humor and parody in the little magazines of Berlin Dada. See Christian Weikop, "Berlin Dada and the Carnivalesque," in *Modernist Magazines: A Critical and Cultural History*, vol. 3, eds. Christian Weikop, Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 816-834.

that are informed by Dada's vigorous engagement with the press. The individual texts are frequently published separately in author-specific anthologies, and illustrations are often excerpted from their original context. Such editorial decisions obscure the collaborative structure of the work and the journal's relationship to the press. In addition, certain aspects of the journal may be overlooked through this piecemeal handling, as the work's montage structure both makes determining authorship of the various contributions difficult and also encourages a structural consideration of the complete work.

Such a potentially problematic work occurs already on the first page (Figure 7). The work picks up where the hoaxes of Hausmann and Baader left off. The lower right-hand corner of the first page of the journal features what might be considered an obituary for the Oberdada. The text announces, "Die neue Zeit beginnt mit dem Todesjahr des Oberdada" [The new time begins with the year of the *Oberdada's* death], followed by a date in Baader's newly invented time scheme. The date "Ad1," presented here in a striking typographical arrangement, converts in Gregorian time to April 1, 1919, which was the date on which Baader faked his own death, as discussed above. Immediately below, Baader is listed as one of the contributors to the journal. The first page thus acknowledges the death of the *Oberdada* while simultaneously declaring his continued life in and contribution to the movement. The use of a new mode of marking time recalls the invention of a new calendar under the French Revolution, suggesting the possibility of radical political and cultural change. And yet Baader's cryptic mode of marking time, known only to his intimate friends, relativizes the extent of this new time. This date, notably, is the only date on the front cover of the journal. While other typical elements of a periodical are represented, including a price, the date of Baader's death substitutes for

an actual publication date. Baader's death and rebirth in print opens the possibility for "[d]ie neue Zeit" [the new time], but it remains a mere possibility, known only to a select few.

At the same time as the journal's cover announces the resurrection of Baader, who was more than happy to play the Christ figure and the founder of a new age, the cover simultaneously announces the futility of hope for political change in the current political framework of Germany. Directly to the left of the Oberdada's obituary is a short article, titled "Jahr 1 des Weltfriedens." The text describes, in language that repeats itself *ad absurdum*, the pressure on Germany to sign the Treaty of Versailles, parodying contemporary reports in the press.[104] The text ridicules the uncertainty surrounding Germany's surrender to the Treaty of Versailles, a treaty which provided disastrous terms for Germany but which Germany was all but obligated to accept. The repetition of anxieties around Germany's acceptance of the terms is expressed through a series of ambiguous or paradoxical negations: "Wenn Deutschland nicht unterzeichnet, wird es wahrscheinlich unterzeichnen. […] Wenn aber Deutschland unterzeichnet, so ist es wahrscheinlich, dass es unterzeichnet um nicht zu unterzeichnen […] Deutschland müsse unterzeichnen, weil es nicht unterzeichnen nicht wird können." [If Germany doesn't sign,

[104] Kurt Beals has found a number of newspaper articles that seem to have directly inspired this work. See Kurt Beals, "Dada Futures: Inflation, Speculation, and Uncertainty in *Der Dada* No. 1," *Transit* 10, no. 2 (2016): 3.

Direktion r. hausmann
Steglitz zimmermann
strasse 34

DER dada

50 Pfg.

I O A D G D A T T S A e

16,305

dadadegie

hausmann - baader

3/ 3333/3333

5,0

13 : 7 = 1,8571428 5....
60
40
50
10
30
20
60
40

Ach

3,14159

5.9.2.1 8.3.4.7.10.11.6

Jahr 1 des Weltfriedens. Avis dada

Hirsch Kupfer schwächer. Wird Deutschland verhungern? Dann muß es unterzeichnen. Fesche junge Dame, zweiundvierziger Figur für Hermann Loeb. Wenn Deutschland nicht unterzeichnet, so wird es wahrscheinlich unterzeichnen. Am Markt der Einheitswerte überwiegen die Kursrückgänge. Wenn aber Deutschland unterzeichnet, so ist es wahrscheinlich, daß es unterzeichnet um nicht zu unterzeichnen. Amorsäle. Achtuhrabendblattmitbrausendeshimmels. Von Viktorhahn. Loyd George meint, daß es möglich wäre, daß Clémenceau der Ansicht ist, daß Wilson glaubt, Deutschland müsse unterzeichnen, weil es nicht unterzeichnen nicht wird können. Infolgedessen erklärt der club dada sich für die absolute Preßfreiheit, da die Presse das Kulturinstrument ist, ohne das man nie erfahren würde, daß Deutschland endgültig nicht unterzeichnet, blos um zu unterzeichnen. (Club dada, Abt. für Preßfreiheit, soweit die guten Sitten es erlauben.)

Die neue Zeit beginnt mit dem Todesjahr des Oberdada

Ad 1

Mitwirkende: Baader, Hausmann, Huelsenbeck, Tristan Tzara.

Figure 7: Raoul Hausmann (ed), *Der Dada* 1 (1919): n.p. University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Department.

it will probably sign… If, however, Germany signs, it is probable that it will sign in order not to sign… Germany has to sign because it will not be able not to sign].[105] The logic of cause and effect is completely discarded in these contradictory assertions. As Kurt Beals has argued, this text casts doubt on the knowability of possible futures and the ability of individual actors to influence or even hold opinions on the future.[106] The report lists various opinions of the world leaders, such as Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau, and "Loyd George" [sic], debating on whether Germany will agree to the treaty, each ending in paradoxical formulations equivocating whether Germany will sign or not. The agency of figures of authority is eroded in shaping possible futures.

In the face of this uncertainty, Dada raises one positive claim: "Infolgedessen erklärt club dada sich für die absolute Preßfreiheit, da die Presse das einzige Kulturinstrument ist, ohne das man nie erfahren würde, daß Deutschland endgültig nicht unterzeichnet, blos um zu unterzeichnen" [As a result, club dada declares its support for absolute freedom of the press, since the press is the only instrument of culture without which one would never learn that Germany once and for all doesn't sign, merely in order to sign].[107] It would seem that absolute freedom of the press would allow a means forward in light of the crippling indeterminacy of the future. It is the only "Kulturinstrument" [instrument of culture] capable of providing some clarity. Yet, the text ends with the tension unresolved, with no certainty on whether Germany signs or in what manner.

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[105] *Der Dada* 1, ed. Raoul Hausmann (Berlin: June 1919): n.p. Available online through the University of Iowa's Dada Digital Collection: https://dada.lib.uiowa.edu/items/show/61.
[106] Beals, "Dada Futures," 4.
[107] *Der Dada* 1, n.p.

The designation of the press as "das einzige Kulturinstrument" [the only instrument of culture] that communicates information about the passing of events underscores its privileged position for Berlin Dada. It is important to note that the German term "Kultur" encompasses a wider semantic field than English "culture" and can extend to most aspects of civilized society. By saying that the press is the only device by which the course of history can be known, Baader and Hausmann claim for the press sole documentary power of world events. And in their claim for absolute freedom of the press and their own use of the press as format, they stake a claim to providing their own, inconclusive account of those events.

The absolute freedom of the press claimed by Dadaism on the one hand is narrow: the contradictory nonsense that the text finally reports does not establish any fact or historical truth. On the other hand, the indeterminacy of historical fact promulgated in this text provides another type of freedom to the press. In place of cultural and political structures that have lost certainty and stable forms of reference, the Dadaists can use the press to assert their own semiotics and political structures.

Here, it is also useful to think of the relationship between print media and historical time. While print is static, finite, and resistant to change once printed—making a correction requires re-printing the page—, taken as an aggregate, the newspaper is a remarkably fluid document. Daily newspapers provide a rapid stream of constantly changing stories, with facts and narratives changing as new information becomes available. What was printed on one day may turn into a radically different story the next day, as new facts come to light. In this regard, the indeterminacy of the text collapses these two temporal relationships of the newspaper. It suggests the rapid change of

multiple reportings of the same story while assuming a fixed, singular printed form. The work seeks new ways of deploying existing aspects of print media.

Just as this short report radically rethinks the narrative logic of cause and effect that undergirds both literature and the press, the typographic poem "dadadegie," printed immediately above, challenges the significatory capacities of printed signs. The poem, co-authored by Baader and Hausmann and printed sideways so that the reader must rotate the journal ninety degrees to read it, consists primarily of a series of numbers printed in a diagonal line across the page. The interjection "Ach," printed in a large boldface, truncates the line of numbers. Immediately below the "Ach," the number pi is printed, but not in its exact symbolic representation (π), but rather truncated after the fifth decimal place. While pi would appear to continue the diagonal sequence of numbers, it appears almost directly below the "Ach," interrupting the diagonal sequence across the page. It is tempting to search for some numerological interpretation of this poem, and indeed, several aspects of the poem produce coherent meaning. The division of thirteen by seven at the top of the sequence is mathematically sound. Additionally, Kurt Beals has demonstrated that the seemingly random sequence of numbers printed along the right side of the page, when viewed without rotating the page, corresponds with the seemingly random sequence of letters at the top, producing the hidden message "DADA IST GOTT."[108] While it is certainly possible that other elements of the poem may be decoded, it seems more likely that the poem contains an excess of nonsense that occasionally results in meaning. Even the sequence of letters that produces "DADA IST GOTT"

[108] Beals, "Dada Futures," 7.

contains an additional "A" and "e" which are not accounted for in the numerical key, confounding the simple correspondence of numbers and letters.

At a more fundamental level, the poem juxtaposes competing systems of numerical and linguistic representation. For the division of thirteen by seven, the authors provide several decimal places and then use "…." to indicate that the decimal places continue. Pi, on the other hand, which also has infinite decimal places, is arbitrarily truncated after the fifth. The number five is written as "5,0," providing one decimal place although zero would be required. And the number three at the top appears in a form of division—"3/ 3333/3333"—which superficially would suggest an incorrect representation for one-third, but given the typographical disparities between the elements, actually produces no immediately apparent result. In a poem with so few elements, these competing representations of numbers are significant. They show the fundamental ambiguity of any numeric representation. Against the presumed certainty of the number, these varying modes of representation reveal the impossibility of a singular, unique, universal sign.

The remaining stray signs on the page also can be grouped together due to thematic similarity, but also produce no coherent message. The poem contains, around the margins, the seal for the *Österreichischer Hundezucht-Verein* [Austrian Society for Dog Breeding], the Hebrew word *kashér*, and a small illustration of a cow. While all three ostensibly relate to the keeping of animals, they are presented out of context, with insufficient information to deduce any relation. This possible thematic connection is furthermore obscured by their incompatible semiotic structures. Rather than suggesting some underlying, prelapsarian state of language, the poem highlights the contingency of

semiotic systems, their arbitrary forms, and the impossibility of achieving communication outside of existing structures of meaning.

Yet this typographic poem is not an isolated negation of meaning, but exists within the structure of the page. Occupying the position of lead story, the work presents Dadaist poetics instead of information. The pseudo-journalistic story of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which would seem more significant in a journalistic context, is relegated to a lesser position. The purpose of the newspaper, as a carrier of practical information about the world, is subverted, as nonsense poetics trump current events. Here, it is important to see the productive capacity of the work. Just as the journalistic texts of the cover suggest a chance to shape discourse as it happens, the typographic experiments of the "dadadegie" delight in the irreconcilable differences between different modes of representation and semiotic systems. While the poem may apparently lack meaning in the traditional sense, it nonetheless adheres to some formal structuring principles. The strong diagonal line of numbers structures the middle of the page, and the seemingly random sequences of numbers and letters frame the entire composition. The rigorous form of typography provides an alternative, non-communicative, non-informational form of text production that suggests possibilities for language and print beyond the constraints of facticity. In other words, the freedom afforded by not making sense and not telling the truth provides another means of realizing the "absolute Preßfreiheit" demanded in this journal.

The freedom of indeterminacy expressed in this poem, the freedom to attempt an escape from the rigid confines of signification and sense-making, also finds expression in the work's title. The title, 'dadadegie," would appear to be a portmanteau or compound,

like many other Dada neologisms, such as "Dadasoph" (dada + Philosoph) or "Oberdada." But no obvious compounds can be derived from the word. On the one hand, scholars suggest understanding "dadadegie" as a portmanteau of "dada" and "Elegie" [elegy].[109] Such a meaning would make sense given the journal's appearance immediately following the staged death of the Oberdada. The poem then becomes a type of mourning poem for Baader, giving literary form to the fiction of his death. However, had "Elegie" been the intended reference, Baader and Hausmann could have just as easily written "dadalegie," which would unambiguously suggest "Elegie." While "Elegie" remains the dominant point of reference in scholarship, others have proposed a compound of "dada" and "Regie" [direction].[110] The bureaucratic framing of the journal would make such a reading plausible. In such a reading, the poem encodes obscure bureaucratic formulae of the Dadaists, providing a cryptic overview of their management. The word "Regie" can also refer to direction in the cinematic or theatrical sense. Here, the title indicates a desire to activate ambiguity in the poem's signs to move beyond the static nature of the printed page. Again, though, Baader and Hausmann avoid "dadaregie," choosing instead the ambiguous, indeterminate "dadadegie." It seems to me more likely the title was chosen precisely because it conjures up multiple associations, but resists stable reference. The troublesome "d" at the word's suffix almost stutters the word along, interrupting stable reference. The title itself is an indeterminate sign, suggesting several possible meanings or fulfillments but refusing to embody any of them. Much as "seeing double" is often encouraged in Dadaist collage and photomontage, in

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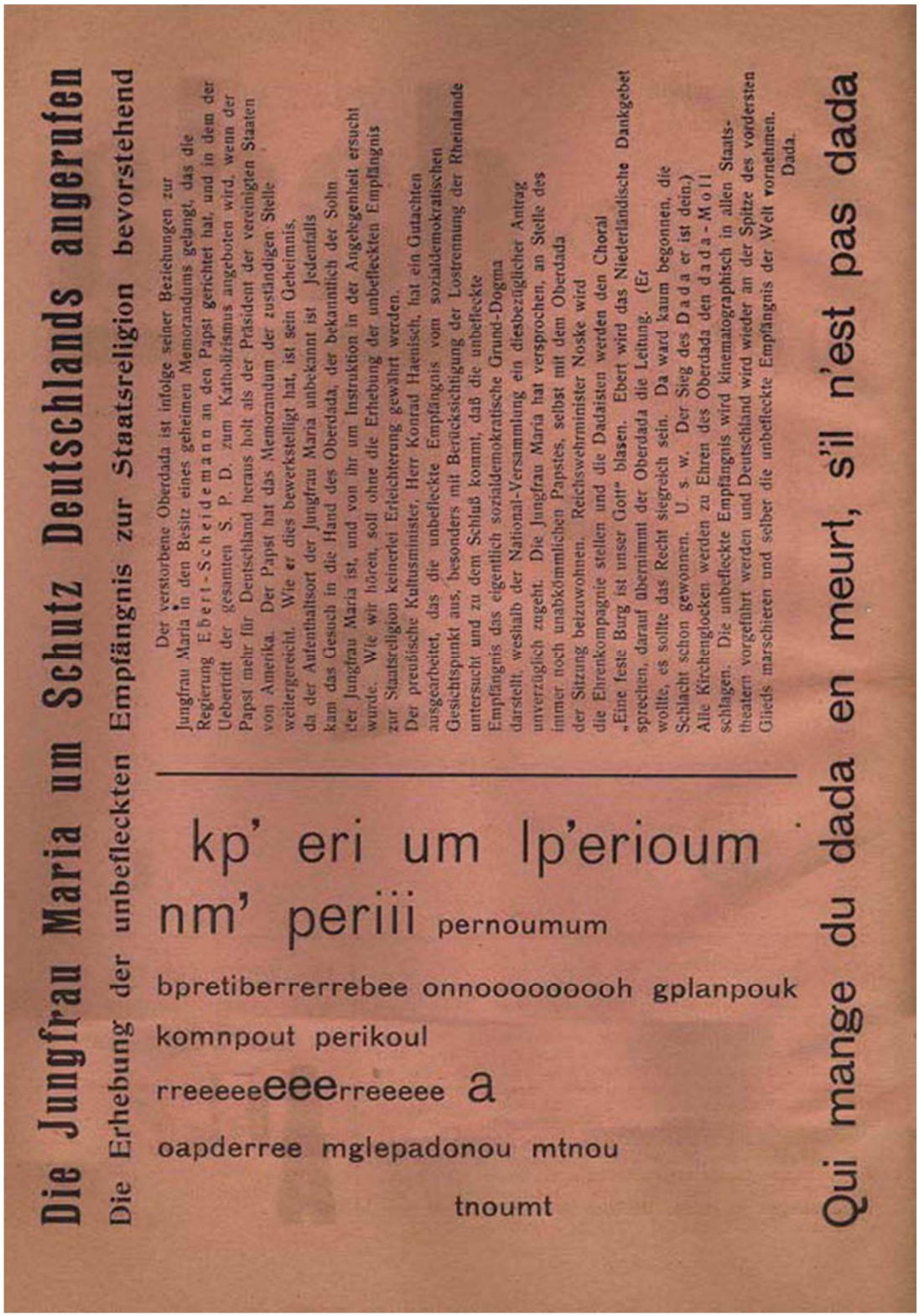
[109] White, *Generation Dada* 232.
[110] Kurt Beals, "From Dada to Digital: Experimental Poetry in the Media Age" (PhD diss, University of California, Berkeley), 34, ProQuest(1726027110).

which one image can simultaneously be read in two contexts,[111] the poem encourages a mode of "reading double," in which multiple realizations or modes of representation can be entertained without foreclosing the possibility of the others. In this way, the poem finds a representational complement for the logical indeterminacy found in the pseudo-journalistic text "Jahr 1 des Weltfriedens" [Year 1 of World Peace]. If "Jahr 1 des Weltfriedens" collapses two temporal aspects of print and thus evokes a plasticity to the medium otherwise unavailable, "dadadegie" achieves a similar fluidity through the suggestion of multiple, irreducible meanings to one sign.

The liberation of the means of the press for cultural change depends on a program that is both political and poetic. The next page continues this double-pronged program of the journal's cover (Figure 7). At the bottom of the page, Hausmann's typographic poem "kp' eri um" is printed in the normal alignment of the page. The top of the page is occupied by a pseudo-journalistic text calling for the "Erhebung der unbefleckten Empfängnis zur Staatsreligion" [elevation of the immaculate conception to a state religion], which is printed sideways, matching the orientation of the typographic poem "dadadegie" from the cover. The two genres of the front cover thus switch positions on the first page. If one were to read from one typographic poem to the next, it would require rotating the journal. The seemingly random orientation of texts within the journal questions normative assumptions about the hierarchy of information on a newspaper

[111] This idea of a double mode of reference is key to Patrizia McBride's understanding of Weimar-era montage. See the first chapter of Patrizia McBride, *The Chatter of the Visible: Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 14-40.



Die Jungfrau Maria um Schutz Deutschlands angerufen

Die Erhebung der unbefleckten Empfängnis zur Staatsreligion bevorstehend

Der verstorbene Oberdada ist infolge seiner Beziehungen zur Jungfrau Maria in den Besitz eines geheimen Memorandums gelangt, das die Regierung Ebert-Scheidemann an den Papst gerichtet hat, und in dem der Uebertritt der gesamten S. P. D. zum Katholizismus angeboten wird, wenn der Papst mehr für Deutschland heraus holt als der Präsident der vereinigten Staaten von Amerika. Der Papst hat das Memorandum der zuständigen Stelle weitergereicht. Wie er dies bewerkstelligt hat, ist sein Geheimnis, da der Aufenthaltsort der Jungfrau Maria unbekannt ist. Jedenfalls kam das Gesuch in die Hand des Oberdada, der bekanntlich der Sohn der Jungfrau Maria ist, und von ihr um Instruktion in der Angelegenheit ersucht wurde. Wie wir hören, soll ohne die Erhebung der unbefleckten Empfängnis zur Staatsreligion keinerlei Erleichterung gewährt werden.

Der preußische Kultusminister, Herr Konrad Haenisch, hat ein Gutachten ausgearbeitet, das die unbefleckte Empfängnis vom sozialdemokratischen Gesichtspunkt aus, besonders mit Berücksichtigung der Lostrennung der Rheinlande untersucht und zu dem Schluß kommt, daß die unbefleckte Empfängnis das eigentlich sozialdemokratische Grund-Dogma darstellt, weshalb der National-Versammlung ein diesbezüglicher Antrag unverzüglich zugeht. Die Jungfrau Maria hat versprochen, an Stelle des immer noch unabkömmlichen Papstes, selbst mit dem Oberdada der Sitzung beizuwohnen. Reichswehrminister Noske wird die Ehrenkompagnie stellen und die Dadaisten werden den Choral „Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott" blasen. Ebert wird das Niederländische Dankgebet sprechen, darauf übernimmt der Oberdada die Leitung. (Er wollte, es sollte das Recht siegreich sein. Da ward kaum begonnen, die Schlacht schon gewonnen. U. s. w. Der Sieg des Dada er ist dein.) Alle Kirchenglocken werden zu Ehren des Oberdada den dada-Moll schlagen. Die unbefleckte Empfängnis wird kinematographisch in allen Staatstheatern vorgeführt werden und Deutschland wird wieder an der Spitze des vordersten Glieds marschieren und selber die unbefleckte Empfängnis der Welt vornehmen.

Dada.

kp' eri um lp'erioum

nm' periii pernoumum

bpretiberrerrebee onnoooooooh gplanpouk

komnpout perikoul

rreeeeeeeerreeeee a

oapderree mglepadonou mtnou

tnoumt

Qui mange du dada en meurt, s'il n'est pas dada

Figure 8: Raoul Hausmann (ed.), *Der Dada* 1 (1919): n.p. University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Department.

page, requiring the user to rotate the page and thereby rendering the other texts illegible. By changing the orientation between poetic and pseudo-journalistic texts between the cover and the first page, any formal hierarchy established on the cover is undone, as continuing along the same stream will require rotating the journal again.

Though the two texts are separated by orientation and content, their presentation on the page nonetheless links them together. The title of the pseudo-journalistic text extends along the entire length of the page, covering completely the length of "kp' eri um." The left-hand margin of the page contains the horizontally printed pseudo-adage "Qui mange du dada en meurt, s'il n'est pas dada" [He who eats dada dies of it if he is not dada], serving as a footer for both texts. While the remainder of the journal contains only one more obviously poetic text—Tristan Tzara's French-language poem "Ange"—, it is important to interpret the pseudo-journalistic, pseudo-marketing material of the rest of the journal in light of the entanglement of poetics and politics, aesthetic form and informational discourse performed on the first two pages. The journal as a whole questions the arbitrary divisions of discursive genres and probes new modes of aesthetic experimentation.

This desire to reform journalistic and literary discourse becomes most explicit in Hausmann's text "Alitteral – Delitteral – Sublitteral" (Figure 8). Amounting to a manifesto for how to write following the First World War, the text occupies nearly the entirety of the third page of the journal. Broken up into three parts, the text mediates a role for literature between the bourgeoisie and the masses, the possibility of radical revolution and the reality of a conservative republic, and a regressive mode of "high"

literature, continuing the work of the canon, and a new, mechanical form of literature. The first section, "Alitteral," envisions an attack by the masses against the leading literary figures, while simultaneously distancing Dadaist poetics from mere mass action:

> Besitz und Geist ist Oekonomie des Abtritts. Wie anders wären die Geisttreber existent, als daß sie sich des Weltgeists versichern in ihrem Sinn. Jedes Schwein von Literat ist schon Unabhängiger, Kommunist. […] Die Masse zwingt diese Feiglinge, die schon früher Askese manipedikürten. Gewiß, die Masse ist ungeistig. Wir sind antigeistig. […] Der Masse ist Kunst oder Geist Wurscht. Uns auch. Aber ohne daß wir uns deshalb als kommunistische Transitgesellschaft auftun. […] Die Masse tut gut, zu zerstören (sich selbst instinkthaft und anderes). Wir reißen den geistigen Kramladen um. Wir fordern für diese Tribunen von Schillers Gnaden die Zwangsarbeit. Wir wollen weiter gehen, und die Vernichtung jedes Sinnes bis zum absoluten Blödsinns steigern. Wir fordern die Herstellung von Geist und Kunst in Fabriken.[112]
>
> Property and Intellect are the economy of the latrine. How else would the intellect-dregs exist but by assuring themselves of the world-intellect in their sense. Every swine of a writer is already independent, communist. […] The masses coerce these cowards, who were already manipedicuring asceticism. Without a doubt, the masses are unintellectual. We are anti-intellectual. […] The masses couldn't care less about art or intellect. Neither could we. But without aspiring to be a society in transition to communism. […] The masses do well to destroy (themselves instinctively and other things). We rip down the intellectual junk shop. We demand forced labour for these tribunes of Schiller's mercy. We want to go further, and raise the destruction of all sense to absolute nonsense. We demand the manufacture of intellect and art in factories.[113]

The short subsection receives the title "Alitterel," an ambiguous construction. No root "litterel" exists in German, though possible connections to "Literatur"[literature] are reasonable, perhaps by means of *Littérature*, the French Dadaist publication that first appeared shortly before *Der Dada* in March, 1919. The word would suppose an attitude

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[112] *Der Dada* 1, n.p.

[113] Raoul Hausmann, "Alitterel," trans. Kathryn Woodham and Timothy Adès, in *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Dawn Ades (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 84. Translation modified.

opposed to literature, a type of intentionally non-literary writing. The main salvo of the text is aimed at the literary status quo, both as the inheritors of the canon and as ineffectual, reactionary drivers of taste. While all authors already espouse radical politics—"Jedes Schwein von Literat ist schon Unabhängiger, Kommunist"—, they achieve no radical change. The dominant cultural norms, which here are associated with the toilet and waste, persist, resisting current authors' attempts at transformation. Here, the masses emerge as a possible alternative, as the masses, through their hostility towards intellectual cultural production—"die Masse ist ungeistig"—, seek to force the cultural elites in a different direction.

In the text, Dada aligns itself neither with the masses nor with the cultural elites of Expressionism. Dada takes its cues from the masses, destroying cultural institutions as the masses destroy shop facades in protest. However, Dada lacks the simple political convictions of the masses. To demand the revolution would not go far enough, as the fundamental role of artistic production would not be challenged. Hence, Dada is not "ungeistig," as the masses are, but "antigeistig," actively hostile to the cultural status quo. Hence, the manifesto calls for a transformation of the means of literary production. They envision here two contradictory moments. On the one hand, the dominant cultural elites are imagined in "Zwangsarbeit" [forced labor] as penance for their devotion to the canon and existing cultural norms. On the other hand, literary production ought to be mechanized and automated in factories. Note that this is not an attempt to create a form of art that would appeal to the masses. The masses are "ungeistig" and do not need art to save them. Rather, it is an attempt to find agency for art and political transformation in a

Alitterel

Zahnwurzeln sind durch Handgranaten zu entfernen. Besitz und Geist ist Oekonomie des Abtritts. Wie anders wären die Geisttreber existent, als daß sie sich des Weltgeistes versichern in ihrem Sinn. Jedes Schwein von Literat ist schon Unabhängiger, Kommunist. Kommunismus als Stiefelwichse, das Liter zehn Pfennig, damit stellt man sich gute Zeugnisse aus. Die Masse zwingt diese Feiglinge, die schon früher Askese manipedikürten. Gewiß, die Masse ist ungeistig. Wir sind antigeistig. Danke für Maden. Die Masse ist in Bewegung, der Geistige hat jeweils seit 10 000 Jahren denselben Buddho als Hintern. Der Masse ist Kunst oder Geist Wurscht. Uns auch. Aber ohne daß wir uns deshalb als kommunistische Transitgesellschaft auftun. Die Atmosphäre des Kuhhandels (deutsche Revolution) ist nicht die unsere. Die Masse tut gut, zu zerstören (sich selbst instinkthaft und anderes). Wir reißen den geistigen Kramladen um. Wir fordern für diese Tribunen von Schillers Gnaden die Zwangsarbeit. Wir wollen weiter gehen, und die Vernichtung jedes Sinnes bis zum absoluten Blödsinn steigern. Wir fordern die Herstellung von Geist und Kunst in Fabriken.

Delitterel

Mißtraut doch. Da wir Euch durchschauen. Eure zerfetzte Nichtigkeit haben wir schon vorgestern ausgekotzt, (Ich fordere dem deutschen Geist ein Organ. Es kann nur ein Nachttopf sein.) Die Aktionsdichtung ist schlimmer als Meuchelmord. Hat man noch nicht diesen Johannes Becher lebend zwischen Brettern zersägt? Er bespeit Menschen und Dinge aus seiner ekelhaften Dichterschnautze. Aber die Proletarier schweigen ja auch zur Tat. Und Herrn Pfemfert ist jedes Geschreibsel recht, wenn es nur blöde genug ist. Ich fordere die literarische Fabrik. Oder die deutschen Dichter von Schiller bis Werfel und von Goethe bis Hasenclever in den Abort getunkt.

Sublitterel

Wilhelm II war die Inkarnation des Friedensdeutschen. Ebert und Scheidemann sind das wahre Gesicht des deutschen Revolutionärs. Ein schläfriger Hintern mit Bartverbrämung. (Gewiß marschiert die Masse trotzdem. Aber wer sieht, kann es in dieser Stickluft nicht mehr aushalten.) Auch der Bürger ist bewaffnet, er ist zuletzt dem Dada über gewesen, also geben wir dem verfluchten Dada einen Fußtritt. (Er wird's Euch schon besorgen. Ihr habt nichts zu lachen.) Die Weltrevolution ist seit dem 2. August 1914. Wir brauchen keinen Standpunkt für oder gegen Versailles einnehmen. Dieser Friede ist die zweite Etappe des Unvermeidlichen. Aber die Menschen ziehen vor witterungslos in den Krieg, Frieden, Arbeit, Vergnügen, in alles hineinzuschlafen. Das kommt vom Beischlaf im Dunkeln. Hier wären Kerzen wichtiger als Gummiartikel. Dieser verfluchte Christus sagte: seht die Lilien auf dem Felde. Ich sage: seht die Hunde auf der Straße. Obzwar ihnen tragische Kultur fernliegt. (daimonidale Mynonanie ist schließlich das, was alle diese senilen Schwachköpfe als ethisches Gesetz mit dem gestirnerten Himmel verquicken). Aber zum Teufel, die Geistigen halten gerne die Hand hin, damit ihnen einer drauf spucke, und der Bürger sammelt dann Groschen. Wir werden Euch ein Ende bereiten. Den kommunistischen Elan gegen den Bürger, und den Geistigen in die Kunstfabrik für Geistesauflösung. Warum spricht das kommunistische Manifest nicht von dem Geistesbourgois, der mit seinen Ausscheidungen die Besitzperipherie sichert. So blieb die Welt eine Kloake der Feierlichkeit. Hier hilft nur Zwangsarbeit mit Peitschenhieben. Wir fordern Disziplin! Gegen die freie Kunst!! Gegen den freien Geist!!!

R. Hausmann.

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dada oordial

Der Club dada hat ein Bureau für Lostrennungsstaaten eingerichtet. Staatsgründungen in jedem Umfang laut Tarif. Hier und Dorten.

Figure 9: Raoul Hausmann, *Der Dada* 1 (1919): n.p. University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Department.

system in which both traditional modes of artistic production and political agitation have failed.

What constitutes literature produced in factories? First, the idea of a literature factory produces a very different form of art than that demanded by Hausmann's manifesto "Synthetisches Cino der Malerei," discussed above. While that manifesto demanded a type of broken, fragmented expression that reflected the broken, fragmented self, here, it seems the self, at least insofar as it constitutes *Geist* [mind/spirit], has been removed from the equation. Those authors who still understand their production as an outpouring of their subjectivity will be condemned to forced labor to allow for the "Herstellung" [construction] of literature, not its writing or composition. The common understanding of the Dadaist's use of the term "montage" in distinction to "collage" emphasizes the origins of the term "montieren" in construction and engineering.[114] Here, we see this aspect of the term begin to take shape, although in reference to literature in particular. While the antidote for Expressionist painting is sought in the use of found materials, the antidote for Expressionist literature is sought in the complete removal of subjectivity from the creative process. Between the contours of these two essays, the idea of montage, both in literature and the visual arts, begins to take shape.

Literature thus would be the product of industry and mass production—an assembled work. But the idea of how such a literature factory would work still remains murky in the text. The rest of the text provides additional details about its motivation, but not its method. In the second paragraph, entitled "Delitterel," the work of the "literarische Fabrik" [literary factory] is opposed to the canon: "Ich fordere die literarische Fabrik.

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[114] See McBride, "Chatter of the Visible," 14-5.

Oder die deutschen Dichter von Schiller bis Werfel und von Goethe bis Hasenclever in den Abort getunkt" ["I demand the literature factory. Or German poets from Schiller to Werfel and from Goethe to Hasenclever to be dunked in the latrine"].[115] Here, mechanizing literary production is presented as an equally agreeable alternative to the desecration of the whole canon, with Expressionism (Werfel and Hasenclever) representing the most recent stage of the bourgeois literary tradition. To move literature to the factory is as good as doing away with all of tradition, a complete rupture and revolution. Just as the communist revolution by the masses would do away with the bourgeoisie, the Dadaist literature factory would do away with bourgeois art: "Den kommunistischen Elan gegen den Bürger, und den Geistigen in die Kunstfabrik für Geistesauflösung" ["Communist vitality against the bourgeois, and intellectuals into the art factory for intellectual break-up"].[116]

The "literarische Fabrik" describes an attitude towards the canon and the literary status quo, but prescribes no method as such. The text's three sections, tracked by their headings "Alitterel," "Delitterel," and "Sublitterel" describe a dismantling of literature as a desired outcome of the mechanization of literature. "Alitterel" first describes a general hostility toward literature and calls for the move from composition of literature to construction of literature. "Delitterel" raises the stakes by equating the mechanization of literature with a rejection of the literary canon. And by "Sublitterel," literature as such ceases to exist, having been broken up like a corporate monopoly.

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[115] *Der Dada* 1, n.p. Hausmann, "Alitterel," 85.
[116] *Der Dada* 1, n.p. Hausmann, "Alitterel," 85.

It is possible to recognize a type of mechanized literature in some of the works discussed in this chapter. For Raoul Hausmann's *Plakatgedichte*, the term adequately describes the removal of the artist's subjectivity to the work and the subjugation of the work to a mechanical process. The work of the typesetter, as a manipulator of an apparatus, is foregrounded and supplants the artist's creativity. Baader's collage and assemblage experiments, the pseudo-journalistic texts of *Der Dada*, or the hoaxes carried out jointly by Baader and Hausmann less easily fit the rubric of literature produced in a factory.

Nonetheless, the focus in the first issue of *Der Dada* on the formal elements of the printed page suggest a new form of writing literature, one that emphasizes its location in a larger print environment. *Der Dada*, in its first issue, attempts to combine narrative reporting with typographical experiments and aesthetic proclamations on the future of art and literature. Its works foreground the difficulty of meaning-making and attempt both to subvert inherited genres of writing, such as the newspaper story, and create new modes of representation, such as typographic poetry. In doing so, it calls attention to how the formal elements of print create meaning, while simultaneously showing the impossibility of stable representation. One sees that while Hausmann calls for a mechanical literature, it is in fact the extent to which Hausmann and Baader are capable of manipulating print, as a mechanized process of mass-producing literature, that constitutes this new form of literature. Through their subtle commentary on the circulation of press or the presumed unambiguity of numeric representation, their playful manipulation of ready-made typographic elements and stock stories from the newspaper refashion literature as a deeply individual and human reflection of the mass-produced mediascape. The call for a

mechanized form of literature sits very poorly with the actual experimental and playful typographical experiments the Dadaists produced. Requiring a collective approach to writing and a knowledge of the mechanical craft of print and of the typesetter's workshop, they relativize any claims for a mechanized, factory-produced understanding of montage. Though montage may assume the position of the laborer or the factory worker as a means of distinguishing avant-garde works from "high art" literature produced by the author alone at his desk, its actual practice reveals a notion of "factory" that emphasizes craft and creativity as much as mechanization.

In the following chapters of this study, I will investigate the legacies of the Dadaist "invention" of montage. This term remains problematic throughout the study, as it does in this chapter. Here, Dadaist experiments with print and typography attempt to find a way forward with the printed page. If Expressionist literature, through its turn inward to express the author's inner spirit, carries on a bourgeois legacy of literature with no possibility of radical change, Hausmann's emphasis on experimentation in literature in all possible forms seeks to refashion literature and linguistic signification fundamentally. Its attack on the stable reference of the letter, the word, and the sign opens the possibility for a radical refashioning of literature and culture, even if such a change remains unrealized. Through harnessing ambiguity and nonsense in the material sign, the early montage experiments of Berlin Dada in literature pave the way for Schwitters' efforts to expand infinitely the meaning of individual signs, discussed in chapter two, and Benjamin's visions for a new form of verbal representation, discussed in chapter three, and Döblin's struggles against the static representation of print, discussed in chapter four.

Turning the Page: The *Merzdichtung* of Kurt Schwitters and the Work of Print

At the climax of Kurt Schwitters' short story "Punch von Nobel" (1925), the author appears to have written himself into a corner. As irreconcilable differences between the various characters of the story lead them to beat themselves bloody, the author himself appears in order to solve the crisis. Unable to resolve the conflict between the characters, he finds another way out of his problem. Namely, he realizes that all "Figuren nämlich, die ein echter Dichter selbst schafft, sind aus Pappe. Aber alle Pappe hat 2 Seiten. Daher dreht der Dichter seine Figuren einfach um, sobald es ihm gefällt" [characters namely, that a true poet has made himself, are made of board. But board always has 2 sides. Thus the poet simply turns his characters around the second he wants to]. [117] The realization that the story's characters are mere two-dimensional representations allows the plot to continue. Each character is turned around and assumes a new identity, changing personalities, physical appearances, and often genders. The story is thus able to move forward successfully with characters freely flipping between their two sides, until the author realizes he himself is made of cardboard and turns himself around. His other side, identified as Kurt Schwitters, has no interest in continuing the story, and the story abruptly ends (KS II:203).

This short description of "Punch von Nobel" highlights the centrality of materiality in Schwitters' literary works. For indeed, what is a literary construction such as a character other than a paper product, like cardboard? And if the material of literature

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[117] Kurt Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, ed. Friedhelm Lach (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1973-81), II:182. Hereafter cited parenthetically as "KS."

remains nothing other than collected sheets of paper, what assures that both sides of the sheet have any relationship? The act of turning the page becomes in this story a way of asserting identity in difference, condensing two different figures onto a single, two-faced material form. Moreover, if the elements of a story are nothing but material paper artifacts, then larger literary constructs, such as narratives, are nothing but the recombination and rearrangement of these material artifacts. That is to say, signification or meaning-making is not a product of the absolute will of the author, but the constraints of the material itself she chooses to employ. Yet by employing the material in an unconventional way, such as turning it around, the potential meanings inherent in the material object can be expanded.

Here, the story's conceit depends upon the collapsing of the level of representation with the material basis of literature. The figures are made of paper products, as is the story, but the character's status as paper product at the level of narration is of a different order than the status of literature as paper. Though Schwitters maintained an awareness of the physicality of literature throughout his career, the focus on the two sides of the pages, as a means to expand its capacities for representation, stands out in his work from the mid-1920s. If one compares this to an earlier work, one finds a more contained mode of representation. Among Schwitters' radical experiments in literature, his "Gesetztes Bildgedicht" [Typographical Picture Poem] (1922) stands out for its formal presentation of typographical and print material (Figure 10). The title already points to the formal principle of construction, namely moveable type. This visual poem arranges capital letters and bars of type in an abstract construction. A limited

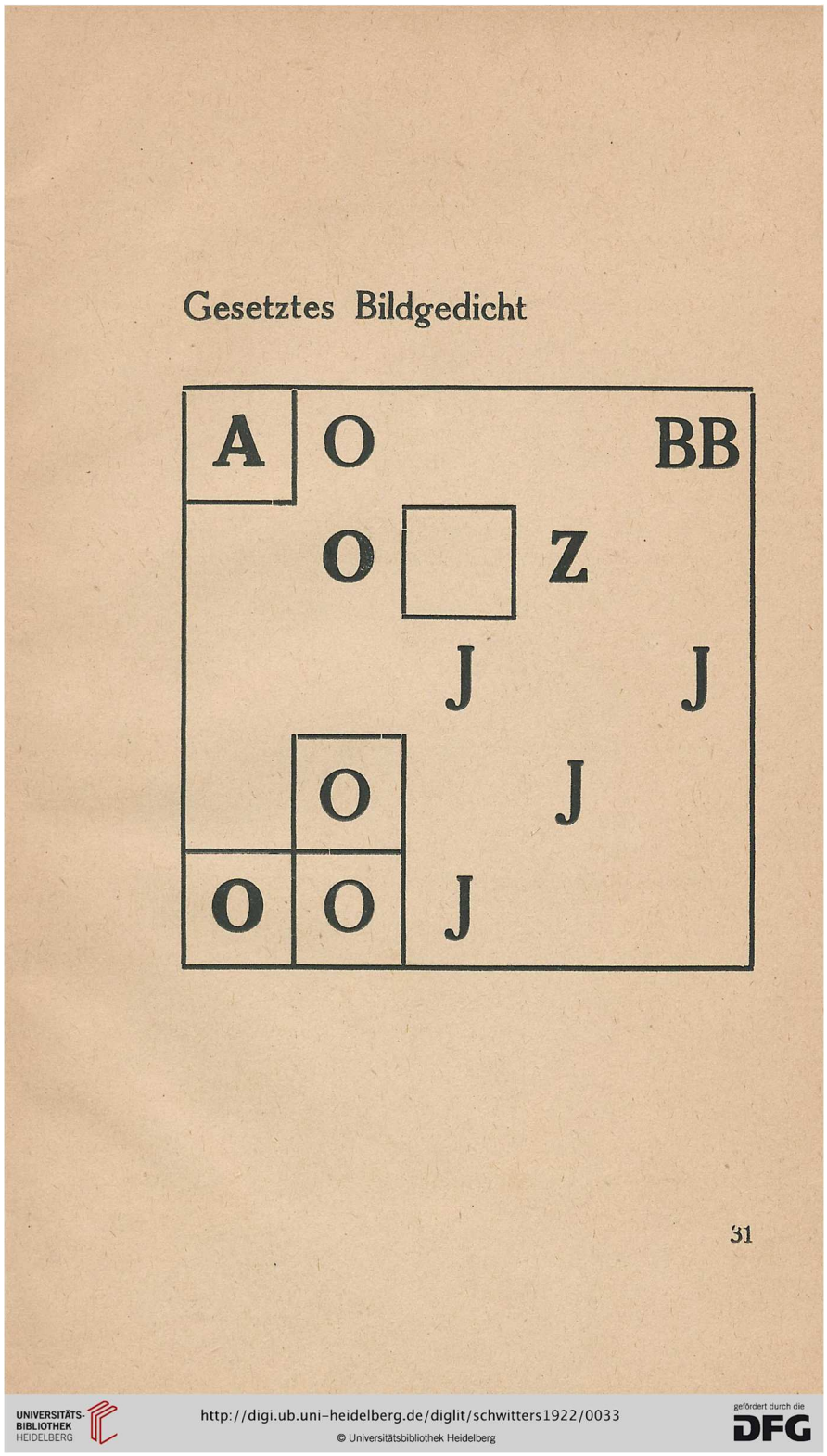

Figure 10: Kurt Schwitters, "Gesetztes Bildgedicht," in *Die Blume Anna: die neue Anna Blume ; eine Gedichtsammlung aus den Jahren 1918 – 1922* (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1922), 31. Bibliothek des Germanistischen Seminars, Heidelberg.

inventory of capital letters populates a large square. Some letters are framed with bars of type, encasing them within a contained frame. Though no words or figurative images emerge from the poem, all letters remain in their conventional orientation, as if other letters forming some coherent text were merely removed from the galley. Even the framing of some letters with bars of type recalls individual pieces of type. The work thus comes to resemble a page printed during the incomplete process of typesetting. It is a work that is at once a finished product while also constantly pointing back to the moment and circumstance of its creation. But the framing of the work, which is already framed by the constraints of the page, contains its ability for transformation. Here there is no page to turn, no new sign to reveal. Nonetheless, its formal resemblance to the scene of its creation demonstrates Schwitters' longstanding interest in the materiality of the page.

That Schwitters demonstrates such fine attention for the material basis of literature should not be surprising. Schwitters, after all, is far better known as a collage artist, whose collages and assemblages, known respectively as *Merzzeichnungen* and *Merzbilder*, made use of not only paint and canvas, not only pasted paper, but also nearly every conceivable material, including netting, metal sheets, wooden objects, and waste products. Though Schwitters considered his work in literature and the visual arts both part of his larger collage practice, his literary work has received far less attention. In the following chapter, I will work towards a theory of collage and montage in Schwitters' literary work. After a brief survey of scholarship on his literary production, I will turn towards his theoretical writings on collage and montage in order to establish the theoretical basis in his work for literary montage. In particular, I examine how the specific constraints of literature's materiality inform the types of montage practices

Schwitters favors in literature, and how his familiarity with the material basis of literature, particularly the work of the print shop, informs his idea with montage. It is important to understand the historical contingency of this theory. Schwitters provides frustratingly few statements on his literary practices as such, and thus it must be reconstructed from clues left in the works themselves as well as his programmatic statements on his work in collage and assemblage. I attempt as much as possible to historicize these statements within his oeuvre; however, it is not always possible to track fully the temporal development of his thinking on literature. I conclude with a close reading of two experimental montage fairy tales, coauthored with Kate Steinitz and Theo van Doesburg, in which I argue that Schwitters uses montage techniques in order to draw attention to the material form of print in an attempt to resignify language on the basis of its inherent materiality.

Merzdichtung and Literary Montage

Before I turn fully to Schwitters' literary works, some historiographical context on Schwitters' artistic production is necessary. For while Schwitters was prolific across many fields, the limited and sporadic reception of his literary work informs both the frameworks with which one approaches it as well as the editorial decisions that accompanied the publication of his texts. While Schwitters' work in the visual arts has long been recognized as central in the development of modernist art and collage,[118] his

[118] Werner Schmalenbach's groundbreaking monograph on Schwitters, which is often credited with reintroducing the artist to the post-war artistic community, extensively treats all of Schwitters' works, including the literary works; however, his analysis of the literary works plays a subordinate role in his discussion and rarely extends beyond a descriptive presentation of his literary oeuvre. See Werner Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters* (Munich: Prestel, [1967] 1984), 203-250. John Elderfield's monograph on

work in other fields has received less attention. Schwitters produced not only his famous collages, but also significant works in sculpture, literature, architecture, and graphic design. In addition, his frequent performances of his literary works helped him gain recognition as an artist.[119] Scholarship has occasionally described Schwitters' as a *Gesamtkünstler*, an artist who aspired to unify the arts in monumental projects such as his

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Schwitters, which helped introduce his work to the Anglophone world, also considers Schwitters' literary work mainly in service of Schwitters' larger ambitions in the visual arts. See "Poetry, Performance, and the Total Work of Art" in John Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985): 94-119. Dorothea Dietriech's monograph on Schwitters' work in collage devotes one chapter to his poetry. Dietrich recognizes the close relationship between Schwitters' literary work and collage during the early period and considers both a form of *Merz.* For her, *Merz* poetry consists in "the making of a composite text" and therefore emphasizes the process—i.e. collage—over the content or form. Such a reading improves upon Schmalenbach and Werner in that the literature is largely considered on its own terms. See Dorothea Dietrich, "The Invention of a New Language," in *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters: Tradition and Innovation* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 70-83. Both Schmalenbach and Elderfield rely heavily on Schwitters' biography to explain his oeuvre, and they portray Schwitters as a late Romantic with a somewhat provincial, bourgeois taste whose work never quite leaves the Expressionist framework, in contrast to the iconoclastic and forward-facing Dadaists. Schmalenbach in particular equates Schwitters' values with the allegedly bourgeois values of the "Provinzstadt" Hanover: "Solidität und Bescheidenheit, Ordnungssinn und Moralität, Sachlichkeit und merkantiles Streben, die Neigung, am Bestehenden festzuhalten, und Mißtrauen gegenüber allem, was das Hergebrachte bedroht und das mittlere Maß überschreitet" [solidity and modesty, a sense for order and morality, practicality and mercantile striving, the tendency to cling to what already is, and distrust of everything that threatens the conventional and transgresses the moderate]. See Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters*, 11. While Elderfield largely agrees with Schmalenbach's portrayal of Schwitters as a child of Expressionism and bourgeois taste, he stresses the aesthetic motivation and consequence of his preferences; namely, Elderfield stresses the primacy of the autonomy of the work of art and order in all forms, including artistic and literary forms, in Schwitters' thought and development, which prevents a whole-hearted embrace of Dadaist, antiart aesthetics. See especially the last chapter of Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, 224-240. Megan Luke's more recent monograph on Schwitters, which focuses primarily on his work in sculpture, provides a corrective to these readings. See Megan Luke, *Kurt Schwitters: Space, Image, Exile* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[119] For a discussion of Schwitters' literary performances, see Gerhard Schaub, *Hugo Ball – Kurt Schwitters: Studien zur literarischen Moderne* (Würzberg: Ergon-Verlag, 2012), 245-265.

dream of a *Merzbühne* [Merz stage] or his *Merzbau*.[120] While Schwitters does describe some projects in terms of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, he also understands art in terms of individual media that do not necessarily fuse into a cohesive whole. As he writes as early as 1920, his goal is "nicht Spezialist einer Kunstart, sondern Künstler zu sein [not to be a specialist of a type of art, but to be an artist]." (KS V:79). Being an artist as such requires for Schwitters mastery over multiple of the individual arts, but does not necessarily imply their union. Schwitters recognized that each media requires a specific approach given its particular material and means of representation. The collages still stand in the tradition of painting, the assemblages in the tradition of sculpture, and his linguistic experiments in the literary tradition. While I necessarily focus on literature in order to establish the contours of Schwitters' understanding of *Merz* in literature, I draw comparisons to his other artistic practices when possible to begin work towards a truly integrative approach to his vast artistic and literary work.

The literary works of Kurt Schwitters remain a growing area of scholarship. While Schwitters gained a great deal of notoriety during his lifetime for his literary works, particularly the parodic love poem "An Anna Blume," scholarship largely ignored his literary writings until the 1970s, when a contemporary turn towards experimental literature sparked renewed interest in Schwitters' work. Friedhelm Lach's monograph *Der Merz Künstler Kurt Schwitters* marks one of the earliest attempts to provide a systematic approach to Schwitters' poetic oeuvre.[121] Lach attempts to provide a

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[120] See, for example, Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, 94-118. For the Merzbühne, see KS V:39-42.

[121] Friedhelm Lach, *Der Merz Künstler Kurt Schwitters* (Cologne: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1971).

comprehensive overview of Schwitters' development across three major literary genres: poetry, prose, and drama. Lach's interest in discussing each genre is establishing points of resonance between Schwitters' work and the larger poetic tradition, including his immediate contemporaries and his predecessors after World War II. Consequently, Lach also problematically imposes certain genres upon Schwitters' work, such as concrete poetry, a genre that first developed rigorously after the war.[122] As Lach was also responsible for the only complete edition to date of Schwitters' literary work, these generic categorizations remain a constraint for approaching Schwitters' literature.

Bernd Scheffer and Ralph Homayr also produced early significant monographs on Schwitters' literary works. Scheffer, like Lach, is interested in Schwitters' relationship to contemporary experimental poetics;[123] however, Scheffer identifies the experimental nature of Schwitters' work within the confines of the work itself. Thus, Scheffer focuses on the combination of pre-existing material in Schwitters' work,[124] an approach that paves the way for Homayr's work, which is the first book-length study, to my knowledge, to conceive of Schwitters' work explicitly in terms of montage. Homayr defines montage in Schwitters' work as "die Hereinnahme vorgefertigter Elemente ins Werk" [the taking up of prefabricated elements into the work],[125] a process which he sees, following Adorno and Peter Bürger, in opposition to the traditional notion of the work of art as cohesive, organic, and unitary. This oppositional character is quickly

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[122] Ibid., 112-115.
[123] Bernd Scheffer, *Anfänge experimenteller Literatur: Das literarische Werk von Kurt Schwitters* (Bonn: Bouvier: 1978).
[124] For Scheffer's discussion of material in Schwitters' literary work, see ibid, 33-53.
[125] Ralph Homayr, *Montage als Kunstform: Zum literarische Werk von Kurt Schwitters* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991), 9.

generalized, such that Homayr can define montage as "Infragestellung der erschlichenen organischen Einheit des traditionellen Werks" [questioning of the surreptitious organic unity of the traditional work].[126] In doing so, Homayr seeks to challenge a notion of the avant-garde based on negation, in which montage negates, nullifies, or otherwise overturns completely the traditional aesthetic regimes and understanding of the work of art. For Homayr, such an approach falls short because, in requiring formal negation of tradition, the aesthetic framework for evaluating montage in terms of its aesthetic innovation no longer remains. Rather, Homayr proposes an understanding of montage based on its continuity with and difference from tradition, in which montage does not negate formal unity of the traditional work but rather reveals its insufficiency and incompleteness.[127] In his analysis of Schwitters' works, Homayr thus focuses on those moments and techniques that show critical capacity for engagement with the perceived autonomy of the traditional work of art, such as irony, satire, and humor.

Since Homayr's monograph, there has been only sporadic scholarly treatment of Schwitters' texts, and no monograph-length studies, to my knowledge, focused exclusively on Schwitters' literary work. Of note, however, is Patrizia McBride's 2016 monograph, *Chatter of the Visible: Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany*, which considers Schwitters' literary works alongside montage theorists and practitioners such as Walter Benjamin, László Moholy-Nagy, Hannah Höch, and Albert Renger-Patzsch. McBride's account of Weimar-era montage provides a corrective to accounts that emphasize montage as shock and disruption, such as that of Peter Bürger, by emphasizing

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[126] Ibid, 19.
[127] Ibid, 68-70.

the process of narrativization that accompanies understanding of montage. For McBride, the work of montage "compel[s] viewers to forge a path through the seemingly incongruent composition, indeed, to restore a measure of congruence to it by ascribing meaning to the fragments encountered along this path in an allegorical procedure," thus reintegrating the material of the composition into narrative.[128] While the majority of Constructivist montage practitioners engage with montage as a means of restoring coherence and narrative sense, for McBride, Schwitters provides a counterpoint. Schwitters' literary works contain narrative structures, but through a performative enactment of those very structures, "separat[es] ordinary sense-making from the linguistic structures that enable it" in order to transform these structures in such a way so as to expand the reach and meaning of everyday language.[129] McBride's focus on the formal deployment of narrative modes such as parody and irony conceives of literary forms as ready-made objects that can be repurposed and rearranged, much like the ready-made cutouts of visual montage. This helpfully furthers the work of Homayr, who also focused primarily on the formal construction of the literary work, while also integrating Schwitters's literary work into the larger discourse and practice of montage during Weimar Germany.

McBride's monograph helpfully points the way forward for future accounts of Schwitters, as her account points to the heavy debt Schwitters' literary work pays both to contemporary discourses on montage in the visual arts as well as to the formal limitations that literary form imposes on the possibilities for montage in literature. Indeed, though

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[128] Patrizia McBride, *Chatter of the Visible: Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 3.
[129] McBride, *Chatter of the Visible*, 149.

Schwitters independently developed his idea of collage and montage in each medium, he made no formal terminological distinction between montage in various media. Schwitters described his idiosyncratic practice of montage and collage with the term *Merz*.[130] A contradictory term much discussed in Schwitters scholarship, *Merz* still merits discussion here due to the difficulties of applying the term to literature. For while Schwitters insisted that all of his artistic production, not only his collages but also his work in sculpture, literature, drama, and performance, were expressions of *Merz*, his literary work does not always obviously make use of montage practices. Like Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, discussed in chapter four, Schwitters' montage texts are often printed in a uniform typographic style that does not reveal the diversity of material used in their composition. Unlike for Döblin, however, manuscript source material for Schwitters' published work before his exile in Norway and England has largely not survived. Schwitters' insistence on the collage character of his work therefore cannot always be described or verified through reference to the material sources.[131]

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[130] While earlier scholarship tended to confine *Merz* to the earliest period of Schwitters' production, more recent scholarship sees *Merz* as a continual process evolving throughout Schwitters' career, though with significant changes and ruptures. Schmalenbach, for example, confines *Merz* to the early Dadaist portion of Schwitters' work and sees it as fundamentally different from his later Constructivist work. See Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters*, 145. Friedhelm Lach weakly maintains this distinction in his discussion of Schwitters' literary works. Lach maintains a distinction between experimental, abstract literature, which he calls qualifies with "*Merz*" and the remaining work, which is related to, but not explicitly part of, *Merz*. See Friedhelm Lach, *Der Merz Künstler*. Elderfield, on the other hand, sees Schwitters' Constructivist work as a refinement and continuation of his *Merz* idea. See Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, 121.

[131] A new critical edition is currently being prepared in order to reveal more fully the diversity of Schwitters' literary endeavors. The new edition will emphasize the material sources of his work, drawing upon archival materials when necessary, so that the deep connections between his literary works and his artistic works can be more readily understood. For the rational behind the new edition, see Isabel Schulz, "Warum

The term *Merz* is derived from the now lost *Merzbild*, which prominently featured the four letters *MERZ* pasted in the center of the canvas. However, the term's meaning is derived not only from its use in this specific collage, but also from programmatic definitions in sporadic critical writings and manifestos through the 1920s. His use of the four letters *MERZ*, derived from an advertisement for the Kommerz- und Privatbank, provide a model for Schwitters' treatment of his source material. Ripped from its original context, the letters *MERZ* are no longer immediately recognizable in their intended significatory context. This allows them to acquire new meanings, based both on inherent qualities of the words—phonologically, *Merz* suggests *Schmerz* and *ausmerzen*, suggesting the destructive qualities of collage-making, as well as the French *merde*, emphasizing the objects' status as refuse—,[132] and also on the context into which it enters. This describes part of the difficulty in providing a definition of Schwitters' collage practice. As the term is applied to more and more contexts, its meaning grows. To advocate for a stable definition of *Merz* would foreclose the possibility of the future accumulation of new valences, and would misunderstand the radical openness of *Merz*. Writing in 1920, Schwitters sees the word as one of constant evolution:

> Das Wort "Merz" hatte keine Bedeutung als ich es formte. Jetzt hat es die Bedeutung, die ich ihm beigelegt habe. Die Bedeutung des Begriffs

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Schwitters neu edieren? Voraussetzungen und Ziele der neuen Ausgabe der Texte von Kurt Schwitters," in *Transgression und Intermedialität: Die Texte von Kurt Schwitters*, eds. Walter Delabar, Ursula Kocher, and Isabel Schulz, 229-244 (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2016). Volume 2, which covers much of the material discussed in this chapter, appeared during the writing of this dissertation, but it could not be consulted before submission due to the ongoing outbreak. of the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

[132] Leah Dickerman, "Merz and Memory: On Kurt Schwitters," in *The Dada Seminars*, eds. Leah Dickerman and Matthew Witkovsky (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Study in Visual Arts, 2005), 105-106.

> "Merz" ändert sich mit der Änderung der Erkenntnis derjenigen, die im Sinne des Begriffs weiterarbeiten (KS V:77).
>
> [The word "Merz" had no meaning when I formed it. Now it has the meaning which I gave it. The meaning of the concept "Merz" changes with the change in the insight of those who continue to work with it.][133]

Schwitters' idea of *Merz* thus resists a stable universal definition and only allows contingent definitions tied to the contexts in which it has appeared thus far.

While *Merz* may infinitely accrue meanings, its actual translation into practice depends on the specific depends on the specific material, methods, and means of arrangement available to a given medium. Schwitters provides no individual statements on his practice of literature, but instead describes it always in reference to his practice in the visual arts.[134] His various, sometimes contradictory statements give insight into how he envisioned the relationship between visual and verbal collage. Schwitters conceives of both painting and poetry as abstract[135] arrangements of given parts:

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[133] Kurt Schwitters, "Merz", trans. Ralph Manheim, in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 55-65; here, 59.

[134] Hubert van den Berg has questioned the applicability of Schwitters' programmatic statements to his literary practice and suggests instead an affinity with the contemporary theories of Russian formalists. See Hubert van den Berg, "'Worte gegen Worte': 'Entformeln' als formale Methode? Kurt Schwitters' Poetik und die formalistische Schule" in *Transgression und Intermedialität*, 93-117.

[135] I follow Patrizia McBride's usage of the word "abstract" in reference to Schwitters' work. For McBride, "abstraction" refers to the double status of the work of art in Schwitters as at once self-referential but also not devoid of meaning: "While the artwork does not point beyond itself to an outside referent, it is not an utterly blind monad, for it presupposes recipients who are able to grasp its relational pattern at a nondiscursive, perceptual level. This blend of perceptual perspicuousness and semantic/conceptual blankness is what Schwitters calls abstraction." McBride, *Chatter of the Visible*, 152. Schwitters used the word "abstract" as early as 1910 in reference to his works, though it cannot be assumed it maintains a stable meaning. See KS V:26, The exact lineage of Schwitters' use of the term could not be determined at the time of submission of this dissertation due to the ongoing crisis caused by the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

> Die Merzdichtung ist abstrakt. Sie verwendet analog der Merzmalerei als gegebene Teile fertige Sätze aus Zeitungen, Plakaten, Katalogen, Gesprächen, usw., mit und ohne Abänderungen. (Das ist furchtbar). Diese Teile brauchen nicht zum Sinn zu passen, denn es gibt keinen Sinn mehr. (Das ist auch furchtbar.) Es gibt auch keinen Elefanten mehr, es gibt nur noch Teile des Gedichts. (Das ist schrecklich.) Und Ihr? (Zeichnet Kriegsanleihe!) Bestimmt es selbst, was Gedicht und was Rahmen ist (KS V:38).
>
> [Merz poetry is abstract. It uses, analogous to Merz painting, finished sentences from newspapers, placards, catalogs, conversations, etc. as given parts, with and without changes. (That is terrible). These parts don't have to go with the meaning, since there no longer is any meaning. (That is also terrible). There is also no longer any elephant, there are just parts of the poem. (That is horrible). And you? (Buy war bonds!) Determine for yourselves, what is poem and what is framing.]

Schwitters' statements on his work, like the quotation above, are often rhetorically dense documents, containing contradictory statements and even performative examples of his artistic methods. As *Merz* painting makes use of ready-made materials, so too shall *Merz* literature.[136] While Schwitters emphasizes the use of ready-made materials, he does not specify that they necessarily appear in their material form. Rather, they may be modified, not to contribute to a coherent meaning of the text, but rather as required by a poetic or literary structure.[137] The manifesto itself provides a performative demonstration of what

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[136] Early scholarship on Schwitters' *Merz* poetry focused on the status of the linguistic fragment as ready-made. For a theoretical treatment of the subject, see Helgard Bruhns, "Zur Funktion des Realitätsfragment in der Dichtung Kurt Schwitters'," *Text + Kritik* 35/36 (1972): 33-39.

[137] Structure and form have emerged as central categories in scholarship on Schwitters' literature. As Patrizia McBride has noted, Schwitters' literary process "hinges on separating ordinary sense-making from the linguistic structures that enable it." For McBride, Schwitters highlights narrative form at the expense of meaning in order to reveal the contingencies that enable the production of meaning in literature. See McBride, *Chatter of the Visible*, 149. Antje Wulff has argued that the apparent nonsense of Schwitters' text arises from his use of meaning as a literary form. See Antje Wulff, "'Ein zartes Gewebe von Fäden': Sinn als Form bei Schwitters," in *Transgression und Intermedialität*, 153-168.

such insertions might look like with parenthetical remarks. The first three—"Das ist furchtbar" [That is terrible], "Das ist auch furchtbar" [That is also terrible], and "Das ist schrecklich" [That is horrible]—are so generic that it is seems unlikely they are drawn from a textual source. Rather, they mimic common phrases of conversation that ironize and relativize Schwitters' programmatic statements on *Merz*. They recall the disapproving voices of the critic which were the target of much of Schwitters' early *Merz* writings.[138] The final apparent insertion—"Zeichnet Kriegsanleihe!" [Buy war bonds!]—is again frustratingly generic. While clearly drawn from fundraising propaganda from the First World War, it could be drawn from any number of advertisements or posters promoting the sale of war bonds. The statement thus continues the military metaphor of the avant-garde, imploring the reader to invest aesthetically in the convictions of *Merz*, while also contradicting the previous ironizing insertions. For if the changes *Merz* demands of the work of art are "furchtbar" [horrible] and "schrecklich" [terrible], why do they merit promotion?

I discuss this seemingly simple definition of *Merz* in literature at length to show that Schwitters' attention to the form and construction of his programmatic texts places limits on the extent to which his statements can be read as straightforward descriptions of praxis. Schwitters himself shows the limits of his own definition. *Merz* takes finished sentences, but it is not interested in their original context, or even if they have a specific original context. It furthermore ignores whether they contribute to meaning in terms of a

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[138] For a discussion of Schwitters' responses to his critics, the so-called "Tran-Texte" [fish oil texts], see Petra Kunzelmann, "Text und Rhythmus: Zur rhythmischen Gestaltung und 'musikalischen Durchtränkung' in Kurt Schwitters' 'Tran'-Texten," in *Transgression und Intermedialität*, 207-226.

coherent, recognizable narrative. Nonetheless, they are not mere nonsense, despite Schwitters' insistence that "es gibt keinen Sinn mehr" [there is no longer any meaning], for while some of the statements may not immediately make sense in terms of logical or narrative coherence, an aesthetic or poetic function can still be inferred. In this sense, the abstraction of *Merz* can be understood as a process through which literature moves away from a strictly denotative mode of representation in which words unproblematically relate to the ideas they represent to one in which aesthetic and poetic forms are retained but the elements of the text no longer need to cohere into a logically coherent or "realistic" narrative. Abstraction is thus a repudiation not necessarily of mimesis, for many of his stories still plausibly depict actions, but of the Aristotelian notion of *eikos*, the demand that literature conform to what is probable and necessary.

While this definition of *Merz* focuses on the use of premade elements, it would be misleading to assume this constitutes Schwitters' only view of *Merz* literature. For while Schwitters consistently emphasizes that the material of literature forms the basis of *Merz* and that material should be taken as-is as a ready-made form, he differs on what that material is. The above-discussed statement emphasizes ready-made phrases and sentences. A later statement on *Merz* reveals a broader understanding of the material of literature and is worth quoting at length:

> Elemente der Dichtkunst sind Buchstaben, Silben, Worte, Sätze. Durch Werten der Elemente gegeneinander entsteht die Poesie. Der Sinn ist nur wesentlich, wenn er auch als Faktor gewertet wird. Ich werte Sinn gegen Unsinn. Den Unsinn bevorzuge ich, aber das ist eine rein persönliche Angelegenheit. Mir tut der Unsinn leid, daß er bislang so selten künstlerisch geformt wurde, deshalb liebe ich den Unsinn (KS V:77).
>
> [Elements of poetry are letters, syllables, words, sentences. Poetry arises from the interaction of these elements. Meaning is important only if it is

> employed as one such factor. I play off sense against nonsense. I prefer nonsense but that is a purely personal matter. I feel bad for nonsense, because up to now it has been so seldom artistically molded, that is why I love nonsense.][139]

Here, Schwitters suggests poetry is an evaluative process of combining the various elements of language. These elements can be broken down into increasingly granular parts, from the complete sentence down to the singular letter. As Schwitters says elsewhere, "[d]ie abstrakte Dichtung wertet Werte gegen Werte. Man kann auch 'Worte gegen Worte' sagen" (KS V:38) [abstract poetry evaluates values [Werte] against values. One can also say 'words [Worte] against words']. Whatever is taken as the most fundamental element of poetry, be it the letter, the syllable, the word, or the sentence, the act of combining such elements depends on the ability to compare them, one against the other. *Merz* poetry is thus not a matter of producing representations or narratives, but of exploring the formal possibilities of language. Thus meaning, as one formal category of literature among many others, may or may not be considered essential to the poem, depending on whether the current evaluative process considers meaning a primary element of poetry.

Schwitters' insistence on abstraction as a key motivating factor for the emancipation of language in his literary practice becomes less relevant towards the mid-1920s. In his programmatic essay "Dada in Holland," published in 1923 as part of his journal *Merz*, Schwitters moves towards an understanding of *Merz* that focuses not only on formal combinations of elements, but also on the transformations they undergo due as

[139] Schwitters, "Merz," 60.

a result of their combination. As he argues there, if poetry is the mere arrangement of various parts, its meaning will emerge from their relations:

> Ihre [the parts'] Beziehung untereinander ist nicht die übliche der Umgangssprache, die ja einen anderen Zweck hat: etwas auszudrücken. In der Dichtung werden die Worte aus ihrem alten Zusammenhang gerissen, entformelt und in einen neuen, künstlerischen Zusammenhang gebracht, sie werden Form-Teile der Dichtung, weiter nichts (KS V:134).[140]
>
> [Their {the parts'} relation to each other is not the usual one of colloquial speech, which has a different purpose: to express something. In poetry, words are torn out of their old context, emptied of formulas {entformelt} and brought into a new, artistic context, they become form-parts of the poetry, nothing further.][141]

Words when used in *Merz* poetry no longer have their profane meanings and no longer serve the communication of meaning. And unlike other accounts of montage, Schwitters here does not seem interested in the accrual of new meanings through the poetic juxtaposition of parts. It is not so much that words are given new resonances through unexpected combinations, as in Benjamin's discussion of trash discussed in chapter three of this study, but rather that they are deprived entirely of their mundane meanings and assume significance, but not necessarily meaning, through their use in poetic and narrative forms. As Schwitters often claims of his works in the visual arts, the process of deforming—"entformeln"—by which *Merz* operates robs everyday objects of their

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[140] This quotation comes from the first issue of *Merz*, which begins with a long, multipartite essay on Dada, de Stijl, and Merz. While the first sections of the essay are presented in Lach's critical edition as one unit without a recognizable title, he relegates the last section to its own essay, "Die Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt." See Schwitters, *Das literarische* Werk, V:128-135. Digital copies of *Merz* are available through the University of Iowa's Digital Library: http://sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/collection.html.

[141] Kurt Schwitters, "Dadaism in Holland," trans. Michael Kane, in *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Dawn Ades (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 289-296; here, 295.

Eigengift, their unique poison they carry as a mark their everyday usage, thus rendering them useable for art.[142] For Schwitters, this process would mean removing completely the traces of the object's original meaning and context, thus purifying the object for use as a mere formal feature of the work of art.

Two questions present themselves at this point: The first concerns the possibility of *Merz* poetry as Schwitters has formulated it in theory. Is it even possible to write literature in which words are completely derived of their conventional meaning? The second questions the special status of *Merz* poetry. If *Merz* poetry is nothing more than the combination of words or other linguistic pieces into a cohesive whole that elevates the words from a profane usage to a poetic usage, could it not be argued that all poetry is at some level *Merz*? A preliminary answer to both may come from the context in which Schwitters published this statement. This explication of *Merz* occurred in the first issue of his journal *MERZ* as mentioned above. This journal was published sporadically between 1923 and 1932. The first issue, devoted to "Holland Dada," followed several Dada performances in the Netherlands organized by Theo van Doesburg, who also collaborated with Schwitters in this issue. A multilingual endeavor, the journal often featured

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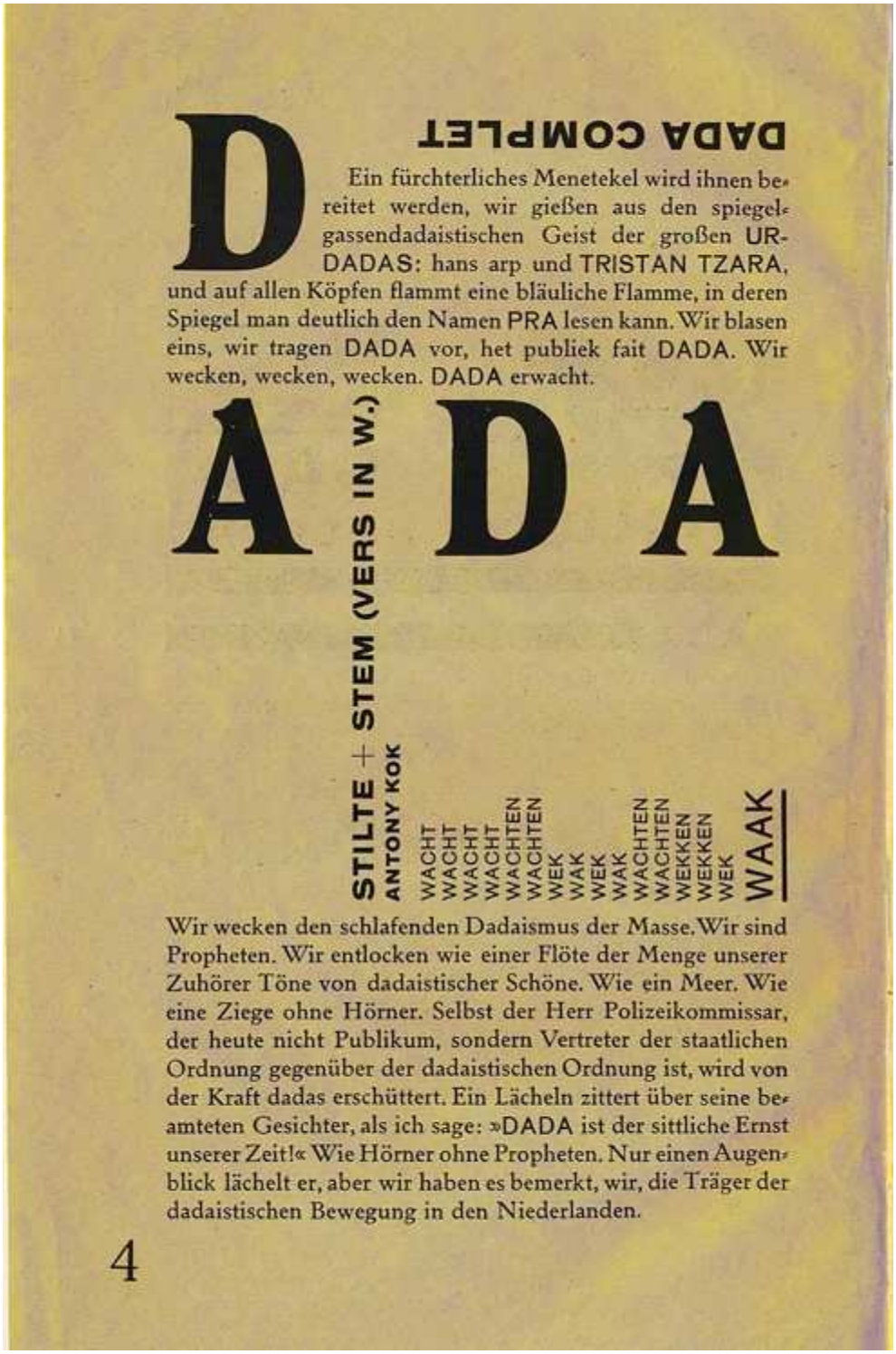
[142] The terms "entformeln" and "Eigengift" have received significant scholarly attention in the visual arts. John Elderfield reads these ideas in terms of purgation, purification, and "transubstantiation." For Elderfield, the "Entformung" of an object purges it of its *Eigengift* and thus cleanses it of its commercial or everyday character; it thus becomes an aesthetic object and reinscribes the autonomy of the work of art. See John Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, 273. Megan Luke agrees that objects are wrested of their original context for the purposes of the autonomy of the work of art, but rejects the spiritualist, romantic connotations of Elderfield's reading. For Megan Luke, Schwitters' principle of "Entformeln" or "Entformung" does not describe a destructive process as a translation such as "deform" might suggest, but instead attests to Schwitters' interest in the "mutability of form;" "Entformeln" is thus a matter or reforming, recontextualizing, and recombining. For Luke's larger discussion of "Entformeln" in the context of Schwitters' idea of *Merz*, see the introduction of Megan Luke, *Kurt Schwitters*, 1-33; here, 17.

contributions in Dutch and French alongside German. The first issue in particular contains several Dutch contributions, including Theo van Doesburg's translation of "An Anna Blume" [To Eve Blossom].[143] Schwitters saw this journal as a mouthpiece for *Merz* and includes a call for "[a]lle Manuskripte und Klischees, die vom Geiste der Merzidee getragen sind" [all manuscripts and stereotypes motivated by the spirit of the *Merz* idea] (KS V:125). Thus, the texts it contains, regardless of their authorship, all provide examples of possible realizations of *Merz*.

The explication of Merz currently under consideration is interrupted on two occasions by examples of *Merz* poetry. While this is not the place to provide a complete reading of these poems, Schwitters' appropriation of them provides an interesting example of what qualifies as *Merz* poetry. Additionally, the inclusion of the poems within the larger framework of Schwitters' essay arguably provides an example of *Merz* at one degree of removal, in which not letters or words but whole texts become the basic unit of combination (Figure 11). The first, "Stilte + Stem (Vers in W.)" by Antony Kok, an artist associated with De Stijl, provides an example of a text in which the letter is taken as the basic unit of composition. The poem interrupts Schwitters' essay at the moment he calls for the awakening of Dada. It is printed sideways so that the reader must physically turn the journal sideways to read it as intended. However, the long title of the poem extends far above the rest of the text, encroaching upon the preceding paragraph. That paragraph is framed with the letters DADA, and the title of the poem separates the first A from the second D. The text thus simultaneously marks its difference from Schwitters' essay

[143] For a discussion of Schwitters and translation, see Michael White, "What's Merz in English? The Task of Translating Kurt Schwitters," in *Transgression und Intermedialität*, 245-258.

through the change in orientation, while also insisting upon its link to Schwitters' essay through the title's intrusion into the rest of the essay. The deceptively simple poem marks a series of transformations between the words "Wacht" and "Waak." While "wacht" has its own meaning in Dutch, meaning "wait" in the imperative form, in the context of the essay, the poem seems to mark the transformation from the German imperative "Wacht," or "wake up," to its Dutch equivalent. That is to say, the inclusion of the poem in a German language essay turns a simple exercise of sound substitutions into a game of translation, in which equivalency between the first term of the poem and its last term are established. The poem thus, although it makes no sense in terms of syntax or narrative, nonetheless has a readily identifiable meaning. Schwitters takes advantage of the similarity between Dutch and German both to alter the meaning of the poem and allow the reader to infer sense in order in what otherwise appears to be a simple formulaic sense of transformations. In other words, Schwitters takes a poem composed solely on formal principles and allows the reader to ascertain meaning in it. To claim that Schwitters' *Merz* poetry does away completely with sense or meaning would thus misunderstand his radical redefinition of the relationship between a poem's form and its meaning. Schwitters prioritizes poetic form over meaning such that semantic and syntactic coherence are no longer considered necessary features of poetic language.



DADA COMPLET

D

Ein fürchterliches Menetekel wird ihnen bereitet werden, wir gießen aus den spiegelgassendadaistischen Geist der großen UR-DADAS: hans arp und TRISTAN TZARA, und auf allen Köpfen flammt eine bläuliche Flamme, in deren Spiegel man deutlich den Namen PRA lesen kann. Wir blasen eins, wir tragen DADA vor, het publiek fait DADA. Wir wecken, wecken, wecken. DADA erwacht.

A D A

STILTE + STEM (VERS IN W.)

ANTONY KOK

WACHT
WACHT
WACHT
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WEK
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WAAK

Wir wecken den schlafenden Dadaismus der Masse. Wir sind Propheten. Wir entlocken wie einer Flöte der Menge unserer Zuhörer Töne von dadaistischer Schöne. Wie ein Meer. Wie eine Ziege ohne Hörner. Selbst der Herr Polizeikommissar, der heute nicht Publikum, sondern Vertreter der staatlichen Ordnung gegenüber der dadaistischen Ordnung ist, wird von der Kraft dadas erschüttert. Ein Lächeln zittert über seine beamteten Gesichter, als ich sage: »DADA ist der sittliche Ernst unserer Zeit!« Wie Hörner ohne Propheten. Nur einen Augenblick lächelt er, aber wir haben es bemerkt, wir, die Träger der dadaistischen Bewegung in den Niederlanden.

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Figure 11: Kurt Schwitters, *Merz* 1 (1923): 4. University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Department.

The other poetic interruption provides an alternative model of *Merz* poetry that does not make "sense" as clearly (Figure 12). Again, a full consideration of the poem lies outside the goals of this study, but a brief discussion of its use in the journal is illuminating. The poem, written by Theo van Doesburg and published under his alter ego I. K. Bonset,[144] belongs to van Doesburg's collection of so-called *Letterklankbeelden*, sound poems consisting of an arrangement of elementary letters for which van Doesburg had devised a strict method of pronunciation.[145] Inspired by Schwitters' early poetic experiments, the poems were published in van Doesburg's journal *De Stijl*, often alongside poems by Schwitters. Its inclusion in *Merz* thus marks the networks of Schwitters' literary production while also retroactively claiming the work, produced under the influences of Dada and de Stijl, for Schwitters' own pseudo-movement *Merz*. Divorced from the interpretive framework imposed by van Doesburg, the work is no longer recognizable as a strictly ordered guide for pronunciation but rather presents itself as an abstract organization of letters. Though Schwitters weakly directs the reader via citation to the source material and invites the reader to read about the background there—"Dort kann man sich über die Arbeit und den Erfolg der Stijlkünstler überzeugen" [There one can be persuaded of the work and the success of the Stijl artists]—, the poem itself is

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[144] van Doesburg's use of the pseudonym I. K. Bonset corresponds to his interest in Dadaism. The use of the name is conventionally understood as an attempt to hide his Dadaist experiments from Piet Mondrian, who likely would have disapproved of such production. For an overview of van Doesburg's writing and the literature of De Stijl, see Craig Eliason, "'All the serious men are sick': van Doesburg, Mondrian, and Dada," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 34, no. 1 (2009/2010): 50-55.

[145] Sascha Bru and Tom Willaert, "A Centrifugal Reading of *De Stijl*'s Constructivist Poetics: On the Literature of Blaise Cendrars, Georges Vantongerloo, Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg and László Moholy-Nagy," *Journal of Dutch Literature* 7, no. 1(2016): 43-58; here, 52-53.

presented without commentary: "Ich drucke hier aus dem Stijl ein Gedicht von J. K. Bonset" [I print here a poem by J. K. Bonset: from *De Stijl*] (KS V:132).[146] Although one can assume a readership familiar with various trends and theories in the avant-garde, Schwitters' presentation of the poem outside its home territory encourages a reading of the poem without reference to van Doesburg's intended mode of reading.

While Kok's poem presented readily identifiable words, van Doesburg's poem operates with individual letters that, in general, do not form recognizable semantic units, either at the level of the word or at the level of the morpheme. Unlike the broader genre of sound poetry, in which Schwitters also participated, van Doesburg's decision to provide a unique system of documenting sounds in his poems means that the poem is not readily pronounceable, in contrast to Dadaist sound poetry which is usually recognizably in a certain language's phonetics. Thus, while the poem operates at the level of the letter, the untrained reader cannot recognize the letters as notations of sounds. The sound aspect of the poem becomes secondary and the visual arrangement of the letters becomes primary.[147] The most striking aspect of the poem for the reader unfamiliar with van Doesburg's theory of sound poetry is its visual arrangement, with two parallel columns of letters. Each column is composed of two letters per line, and each letter is followed by either a horizontal dash or a small superscript vertical line. Twice, van Doesburg places

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[146] Kurt Schwitters, "Dadaism in Holland," 293-4.

[147] As Bru and Willaert contend, the visual arrangement of letters was a crucial aspect of van Doesburg's poetry. Not only were the poems designed to present the visual materiality of the letters themselves, the visual arrangement also had an effect on pronunciation. See Bru and Willaert, "A Centrifugal Reading of *De Stijl*'s Constructivist Poetics," 52-53.

Bühne (het toneel) kamen Würmer gekrochen. Ein Mann mit Zylinderhut und Gehrock verlas ein Manifest. Ein gewaltiger alter Lorbeerkranz vom Friedhofe, verrostet und verwittert, wurde für dada gespendet. Eine ganze Groentenhandlung etablierte sich op het toneel. Wir konnten uns eine Zigarette anzünden und zusehen, wie unser Publikum statt unser arbeitete. Es war ein erhabener Augenblick. Unser Beweis war komplett.

In absehbarer Zeit hoffen wir, daß unsere aufklärende Tätigkeit über die enorme Stillosigkeit in unserer Kultur einen starken Willen und eine große Sehnsucht nach Stil wachrufen wird. Dann beginnt für uns die wichtigste Tätigkeit. Wir wenden uns gegen dada und kämpfen nun nur noch für den Stil. Unsere Tätigkeit in dieser Hinsicht hat schon längst begonnen, schon bevor wir dada und seine Bedeutung erkannten. Auf verschiedene Weise versuchen wir das Ziel zu erreichen. Stil ist das Resultat kollektiver Arbeit. Gibt es das? Seit 7 Jahren besteht die Zeitschrift »De stijl« unter Leitung von Th. v. Doesburg. Dort kann man sich über die Arbeit und den Erfolg der Stijlkünstler überzeugen.

Ich drucke hier aus dem Stijl ein Gedicht von J. K. Bonset:

LETTERKLANKBEELDEN (1921)

IV (in dissonanten)

U' J— m' n'
U J— m' n'
V— F— K' Q'
F' V— Q' K'
X' Q' V' W'
X' Q' W V
U' J— m— n—
g'
A— O— P' B'
A— O— P' B'
D— T— O' E—
d t o e
O' E'
B' D'
Z' C S B P D
j

Nun komme ich zu meinem Thema, zu der Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt. Wenn Sie anderer Ansicht sind, so ist das für Merz gleichgültig, aber MERZ, und nur Merz ist befähigt, einmal, in einer noch unabschätzbaren Zukunft die ganze Welt zu einem gewaltigen Kunstwerk umzugestalten. Sie fragen: »Wieso?« Kijk eens, MERZ rechnet mit

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Figure 12: Kurt Schwitters, *Merz* 1 (1923): 8. University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Department.

letters on their own lines between the columns, both interrupting their downward progression and filling the empty space between them. The poem ends with a single line in each column, each line underlined with a gently curved line, and then a single lower-case j on the line below between the two columns. Without reference to van Doesburg's instructions for reading, the choice of letters seems largely arbitrary, although occasionally similar letters, such as "m" and "n" or "P" and "B" appear together. The poem draws attention to these small differences, such as the extra bump in the letters "m" or "B" as compared to the letters "n" or "P", or the additional line in the letter "U" as compared to the letter "J," and encourages a mode of reading in which letters are appreciated for their visual form more so than any denotative content. Here, unlike in the Kok poem, no meaning emerges from a reading of the poem. The poem thus is much closer to Schwitters' beloved "nonsense," although it can still be meaningfully read, even if such a reading produces only abstract considerations and no concrete meaning.

And despite this, the poem is so demonstratively abstract that it can also be read as an instance of intentional nonmeaning. That is to say, the poem is so overt in its refusal to be read through conventional means that it can also be read as mere nonsense, as a mere babbling insertion that does not detract from the overall legibility of the text. That is not to say that the poem's abstract form does not contribute to the overall essay or that it can merely be skipped over. Rather, it is to say that the poem illustrates how nonsense can be introduced into literature while still retaining some communicative function. The text can have a coherent, meaningful form while at the same time abandoning the merely denotative function of language. After all, Schwitters' interest in expanding visual arts and literature past a representational or probabilistic mode of expression towards

abstraction is motivated in part by a desire to increase the possible domains to which art can lay claim and the possible meanings that can be expressed in art:

> Merz rechnet sogar mit Materialien und Komplexen im Kunstwerk, die es selbst nicht übersehen und beurteilen kann. Wenn wir aber je einmal die ganze Welt als Kunstwerk gestalten wollen, so müssen wir damit rechnen, daß gewaltige Komplexe in der Welt bestehen, die uns unbekannt sind, oder die wir nicht beherrschen, weil sie nicht im Bereich unserer Kraft liegen. Vom Standpunkt **MERZ** aus ist das aber gleichgültig. Es ist im Kunstwerk nur wichtig, daß sich die Teile aufeinander beziehen, gegeneinander gewertet sind. Und werten lassen sich auch unbekannte Größen (KS V:133).
>
> [Merz even reckons with materials and complexes in the work of art that it is itself not capable of fully asserting and judging. However, if we ever want to turn the whole world into a work of art, we must be prepared for the fact that there are powerful complexes in the world that are unknown to us, or that we do not control, because they do not lie within our power. But from the perspective of **MERZ** that is of no importance. What is important in the work of art is only that all the parts relate to each other, and are given a value in relation to each other. And even unknown quantities can be given a value.][148]

Merz is characterized by a radical openness to diverse materials, meanings, and forms. If *Merz* is to function successfully in all domains, it needs to accommodate not only materials, contexts, and contents that have already been the subject of art, but also concepts that have yet to be articulated or recognized. It is not necessary that such concepts be understood, but rather that its function in the work of art can be evaluated in comparison with the work's other concepts, forms, and ideas. The goal is thus not so much coherence or meaning, but a formal logic that allows the expression of relationality between dissimilar parts. As Schwitters writes in another context, "Kunst ist niemals Unsinn. Kunst ist Logik" [art is never nonsense. Art is logic] (KS V:94).

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[148] Kurt Schwitters, "Dadaism in Holland," 294.

Returning briefly to Schwitters' use of the poems by Kok and van Doesburg, one sees that Schwitters has appropriated two poems into his own writing and encouraged the reader to read a new meaning into the work based on the context Schwitters uses. In both cases, assuming ignorance of Dutch, any original meaning remains foreclosed to the reader. The texts thus lose the particularities of their original context and creation and become another, equal part of Schwitters' own text. That they nonetheless remain recognizable as foreign means they themselves act in some regard as "unbekannte Größen" [unknown quantities], as features that play an important formal role in the construction of the essay but nonetheless cannot be conventionally understood. Both poems also provide a useful example for Schwitters' desire to remove the *Eigengift* of the appropriated objects. Through their recontextualization, one no longer sees the poem in its original intention and can appreciate both its new use and also its formal, and especially material, features.

It is also significant that the poems both cannot be read conventionally as narratives from front to back. While the vast majority of Schwitters' narratives are prose works that are in syntactically coherent, if sometimes nonsensical sentences, his works are characterized by an abiding interest in alternative modes of reading otherwise readily recognizable signs. The clearest example of this process is Schwitters' so-called

a. Ich werde schießen.
b. Das haben Sie schon einmal gesagt.
a. Also bitte kommen Sie.
b. Sie können mich nicht verhaften.
a. Warum nicht?
b. Sie können mich höchstenfalls festnehmen.
a. Dann werde ich Sie also festnehmen.
b. Dann bitte.

b läßt sich von a festnehmen und abführen. Die Bühne verdunkelt sich. Das Publikum fühlt sich fälschlich veräppelt und johlt und pfeift. Der Chor schreit:

„Dof." „Dichter rrraus!" „Son Blödsinn!"

Alphabet von hinten

z y x
w v u
ts r q
po n m
lk i h
g f e
dc b a

Das i-Gedicht

(lies: „rauf, runter, rauf, Pünktchen drauf.")

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Figure 13: Kurt Schwitters, "Das i-Gedicht," in *Die Blume Anna: die neue Anna Blume ; eine Gedichtsammlung aus den Jahren 1918 – 1922* (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1922), 30. Bibliothek des Germanistischen Seminars, Heidelberg.

"i-Gedicht" (1922) (Figure 13).[149] The poem presents a single lowercase "i," printed in a large, cursive typeface. Below, in parentheses, are instructions for pronunciation: "Lies: rauf, runter, rauf, Pünktchen drauf!" [read: up, down, up, point on top!] (KS V:206). type of poetic ready-made, the poem appropriates a situation from the classroom, a common mode of teaching children to draw a lowercase "i," and transforms it into a poetic utterance. As Schwitters claims in a different context, poetry has a different value if used for reading or for performance. According to Schwitters, "[z]wischen Dichtung und Vortrag ist streng zu unterscheiden" [one must strictly distinguish between poetry and performance], because sound inheres only in the spoken, but not the written, word (KS V:191). Poetry may serve as the basis for performance, but performance is a separate matter with its own constraints and conditions. Poetry, on the other hand, as the discussion above has demonstrated, consists of words, letters, and sentences arranged logically on a page. And as the i-Gedicht shows, precisely because poetry is not constrained by the considerations of oral performance, it has the potential to suggest meanings that lie outside of the conventional constraints of the sign. This includes not only the designated concept, or the signified, but also what Saussure terms the sign's

[149] Schwitters' "i-Gedicht" should not be confused with his "i-Gedichte," a series of "ready-made" poems that Schwitters creatively truncates to create suggestive new meanings. In order to explain the i-Gedichte and i-Zeichungen, Kurt Schwitters develops the concept *i*, a subgenre of Merz characterized by the creative appropriation and delimitation of otherwise worthless works of art. For an overview of Schwitters' i-Gedichte and i-Zeichnungen, see Isabelle Ewig, "Kurt Schwitters, Meister von i," *Cahiers du Musée nationale d'art moderne* 88 (Summer 2004): 70-79.

sound-image or the representation of its material sign,[150] or the signifier. Here, the letter "i" is not taken as an abstract designation of a sound, but rather a haptic arrangement of lines that the reader can reproduce with help of the simple mnemonic. Importantly, the letter is not reduced to an image. While the new pronunciation draws attention to the visual form of the letter, and the stylized use of a typeface resembling Sütterlin emphasizes the shape of the image, the letter is still primarily a sign with a specific pronunciation. In other words, it still appears as a sign that can be read, as a representation of linguistic content, but in such a way so that it is not read in the conventional way and the act of reading forces the reader to take notice of the sign's visual qualities. The "i-Gedicht" appears more as an image with caption than a poem, and yet it draws all of its material solely from language.

Not only does the "i-Gedicht" draw attention to the visual qualities of the letter, it also draws attention to its mode of production. The correct reading of the poem will also provide the method for its reproduction. While a hand-drawn imitation of the poem will of course differ materially from the printed original, itself an imitation of a notional manuscript original, the poem points towards Schwitters' abiding interest in the technical aspects of the production of textual materials. In her biography of Schwitters, Kate Steinitz recalls his close relationships with local printers in Hannover. Steinitz attests that Schwitters would periodically visit the waste room at the publishing house A. Molling &

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[150] For Saussure, the signifier is not to be confused with the phonetic value of the sign or the material letters that make up the sign, but is rather the mental representation of those values and letters. I refer here to Saussure's system in some detail because Schwitters is trying to wrest apart the conflation of phonetic value and alphabetic representation contained in the concept of the sound-image. See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, eds. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye, and Albert Riedlinger, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), 66.

Comp. and gather as many loose sheets as he could.[151] These loose sheets, along with other print material that he collected, would form the basis for his collages.[152] *Merz* owes its existence as a viable form of artistic production to the workings of the modern print shop. In fact, Schwitters developed a subgenre of *Merzbilder*, the so-called "i-Zeichnungen," which consist of unaltered pages from the print shop that Schwitters cropped and declared works of art. These print ready-mades were as a rule misprints, most often pages that had been printed over multiple times by mistake. They thus produce interesting visual forms that make them viable as works of art. On the other hand, they are quite literally detritus, material that has no use at all. Unlike material from journals and newspapers, which can still ostensibly be read, these misprints are accidents of the printing shop, curiosities that have no use or value. Were it not for Schwitters' intervention, they would be destined for the trash heap. Schwitters' presentation of them as art thus draws attention to another aspect of textual production—namely, where it goes awry—while also providing the sheets with value they would not otherwise have. While one would search in vain for meaning in such images, marking a difference from his poetic and collage production where meaning often arises through the arrangement of material, they nonetheless show the close relationship between modes of production and resignification in Schwitters' work. That is to say, it is not just that Schwitters' appropriation of found material draws attention to alternative modes of reading and meaning production, but that this focus on resignification goes hand-in-hand with an

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[151] Kate Trauman Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters: A Portrait from Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 38-39.

[152] Already in Werner Schmalenbach's groundbreaking monograph on Schwitters, scholarship has acknowledged the strong influence of the work of the print shop in Schwitters' oeuvre. See Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters*, 131.

evaluation of the process through which the material was produced. Even in literature, Schwitters' work is just as much about process as it is product.

Merz extends beyond the typical constraints of collage and montage. While it shares montage's use of ready-made materials, it more radically seeks to resignify these materials. Whereas Dadaist montage often depends on recognizing the original context and seeing additional meanings as well, as I discuss in the first chapter of this study, my reading of *Merz* has emphasized the extent to which Schwitters attempts to supplant any original meaning with a new meaning, often one inherent to the material signifiers themselves. Schwitters' *Merz* poetics thus draws attention to the materiality of language and the materiality of print. While such resignification in small works such as Kok's sound poem or the "i-Gedicht" is easy to identify, the interplay of resignification and mode of production becomes more difficult to sustain in larger works. While sense and coherence are not Schwitters' goals, his prose works are still organized in readily understandable narratives that can be read from beginning to end. This is to say, while the examples covered here wrest apart nearly every single sign they contain, one cannot expect the same from a longer narrative. In the next section of the present chapter, I discuss two fairy tales, one coauthored with Kate Steinitz, and one coauthored with Kate Steinitz, Theo van Doesburg, and compositor Paul Vogt. Through a close reading of a series of transformations in these stories' illustrations, I will explore how Schwitters adapts his models of resignification to a longer work. In particular, the traces of the collaborative construction of these works inside the printing house show how the production process and the materiality of literature constitute meaning within the stories.

The expansion of possible meanings of the material signifier is only possible in these works through engagement with its physical production.

Schwitters' *Märchen*

Schwitters' experiments with the fairy tale cover a brief period of collaborative work in 1924 and 1925. He produced three fairy tales featuring typographical illustrations collaboratively with other avant-garde artists: *Der Hahnepeter* [Peter the Rooster] (1924), *Die Märchen vom Paradies* [The Fairy Tales of Paradise] (1924), of which a freshly illustrated version of *Der Hahnepeter* constitutes the first part, and *Die Scheuche* [The Scarecrow] (1925). His lifelong friend Kate Steinitz, a close neighbor of Schwitters, records the inspiration for these stories in her biographical study of Schwitters.[153] There, she recalls the composition of the first story, *Der Hahnepeter* [Peter the Rooster], occurring in a blur of artistic performance. During a visit by Sophie Küppers, an art historian and wife to El Lissitzky, Schwitters was inspired to compose the story when Küppers pointed out an Easter egg Schwitters' son Ernst had placed upon a tin can behind the stove in Schwitters' crowded studio. Steinitz recounts: "Kurt dictated the story in one wind, clean copy, into my typewriter, interrupted by exclamations from the children to whom he wanted to tell the story anyhow."[154] In this account, the stories are born of a sudden group inspiration from a quotidian curiosity. The story miraculously

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[153] While Steinitz today may mostly be remembered for her biography of Schwitters, she was also an artist in her own right whose work remains largely ignored. For an overview on her work, see *Kate Steinitz. Eine Dokumentation. 3.10 – 5.11.1989, Sprengel-Museum Hannover*, ed. Dietmar Elger (Hannover: Sprengel-Museum, 1989).
[154] Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters*, 31.

goes from Schwitters' mouth into Steinitz' typewriter, with no mistakes and with affirmation from the audience of children.

This story of poetic inspiration is difficult to recognize in the finished product, which is characterized by its typographical innovations and its proliferation of material states. The final story, as we know it, has been transmitted in two self-published versions and a version in *Der Sturm,* all published in 1924. The version in *Der Sturm* lacks Steinitz' illustrations and the typographical features of the self-published versions. The *Sturm* version also fails to acknowledge Steinitz' co-authorship. The journal edition, which would have reached a much larger audience, thus perhaps comes closest to the miraculous account of the story's creation, presenting a seemingly transparent textual version of Schwitters' children stories. The avant-garde journal, while directed at an adult readership readership, comes closest to the story of inspiration, presenting a single male author breathlessly entertaining his audience.

Steinitz' illustrations are similarly described as a type of automatic production. At the children's request, Steinitz produced wild illustrations for the story. Claiming to lack formal artistic training,[155] Steinitz reports she just "let my pen go as it pleased," producing drawings with imperfect lines and that were in a jumble of styles.[156] As Steinitz' typing was necessary to produce the text of Schwitters' story, so too was Schwitters' intervention necessary for the production of the illustrations. As Steinitz

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[155] Steinitz' claim must be regarded with some degree of suspicion. Starting in 1908, she trained at under Käthe Kollwitz, Hans Baluschek, Anny Loewenstein, and Lovis Corinth in Berlin while also attending art historical lectures from Heinrich Wölfflin, but gave up her formal education and professional carrier following her marriage in 1913. See Elger (ed.), *Kate Steinitz*, 10.
[156] Ibid, 32.

recounts, Schwitters "came with his big scissors" and pasted the drawings onto black paper to render them usable for the story.[157] His intervention had an ambivalent effect on the drawings: "His pruning shears made my contour lines still more fine and sensitive—sometimes not," in the case that his scissors tore apart her sensitive, improvisatory lines.[158] In Steinitz' account, written many years after the story's publication and therefore likely subject to at least some degree of fanciful reconstruction, the story's text and illustrations emerge in a reciprocal manner, with author completing illustration and illustrator completing text. The roles of two blend, as the one gives material form to the intellectual work of the other.

Evidence of this collaborative work exists in Steinitz' guest book, a document of visitors to the Steinitz household between 1921 and 1960.[159] The book contains numerous entries from Schwitters, as well as entries, drawings, and collages by important figures of the avant-garde, including Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, El Lissitzky, and Theo van Doesburg. Below a list of several names on 13 February 1922, someone, presumably Schwitters, pasted an illustration of a cow in a wild, Expressionistic manner. This illustration, found also in *Die Märchen vom Paradies* [The Fairy Tales of Paradise] (KS II:130), an expanded version of *Der Hahnepeter*, provides some information about the collaborative process. Steinitz' original drawing, which features mainly thin, gently curved lines in dark ink as well as some splotchy ink marks which substitute for finer shading, has been cut right along the edge of the external outline and then pasted upon a

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[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] A black and white facsimile of the book has been printed as Carl Buchheister, ed, *Das Gästebuch von Kate T. Steinitz* (Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1977).

small square of glossy black paper. In reproduction, such as the one used for the printing of the story, the drawing's outline and the black framing become indistinguishable, and Steinitz' drawing appears to emerge from the black paper.

Schwitters' reframing of Steinitz' drawing corresponds with what he terms a special case of *Merz*, the principle of *i*. In a special issue of *Merz* devoted to *i*, Schwitters describes the practice of *i* through a creative explication of a quotation from Pierre Reverdy: "assis sur l'horizon, les autres vont chanter":

> es ist für mich **i**, zu erkennen, daß die anderen autres, indem sie assis sur l'horizon, also in einer Entfernung, in der ich sie und sie mich nicht mehr sehen können, ein Werk schaffen, das ich als Kunstwerk, als chanter, empfinde. […] Wichtig für **i** ist, daß es nicht auch für mich etwas ist, sondern, daß es **durch** mich etwas ist, obgleich es die Anderen **g**emacht **h**aben, durch mein Erkennen, dadurch, daß **ich** es zum Kunstwerk gestempelt habe, durch **mein** Erkennen. (KS V:137, emphasis original).
>
> [for me, **i** is to recognize, that the other autres, by being assis sur l'horizon, meaning at a certain distance, at which I can no longer see them and they can no longer see me, create a work that I feel is a work of art, a chanter. {…} The important thing for **i** is that it is not something for me, but that it is something **through** me, even though the others made it, through my recognition, through the fact that **I** mark it as a work of art, through **my** recognition.]

i is the process through which the artist takes another object, regardless of its status or its author's intentions, and recognizes it as art. Through the artist's declaration, the status of the object is transformed. Through the act of pasting her drawings on black paper, Schwitters has taken Steinitz' otherwise hasty, imperfect drawings and turned them into *Merz* artworks. This is not to deny her agency to produce art on her own terms. Rather, it is to acknowledge the specific transformation that Schwitters' act of pasting performs on the artwork. As Megan Luke has described in her discussion of Schwitters' theory of art, *i* is an act of cutting and reframing the original found object. For *i*, the act of composition

is "a cut that would yield a given fragment, limiting composition to the act of framing alone, creating works that were, in essence, analogues to photographs."[160] The appropriation of the drawing both asserts its identity with Steinitz' sketch, while also announcing a change. Steinitz' fine lines blend with the glossy background, flipping the balance between positive and negative space. This is particularly pronounced in the use of the image in the print version of the story, in which a complementary relationship between Steinitz' drawings and the work's typography exists. The white image emerges from the black background, producing an inversion of the black letters of print emerging from the white page.

The proliferation of multiple versions of the image and the story it accompanies suggests the iterability of print media, while also refusing the exact duplication of print. The private pasting in Steinitz' guest book reflects the collaborative yet domestic environment of the story's supposed origins. The print version published in *Der Sturm*, on the other hand, makes no attempt to betray the origins of the story. Printed in a uniform typographic style and without Steinitz' illustrations, the work turns into pure textuality, undifferentiated from any other literary production. The two print versions published by Schwitters and Steinitz present a hybrid case. They are no longer unambiguously collaborative, hand-crafted endeavors. While *Der Hahnepeter* features hand-colored images, suggesting a partial undoing of the mechanical work of print, the avant-garde typography of the work, in the grotesque style of typeface Schwitters preferred, makes no attempt to imitate handwriting or other non-machine forms. As Schwitters explains in his theses on typography, the effective typeface for modernist

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[160] For Luke's broader discussion of *i*, see Luke, *Kurt Schwitters*, 24-31; here, 25.

typography is characterized by "Klarheit, eindeutige, zweckentsprechende Form, Verzicht auf allen entbehrlichen Ballast, wie Schnörkel und alle für den notwendigen Kern der Type entbehrlichen Formen" [clarity, distinct, adequate form, forgoing all dispensable ballast, like curlicues and all forms that are unnecessary for the essential core of the letter] (KS V:192).[161] For Schwitters, modernist typography reduces the letter to its essential form, which he compares to the difference between photography and drawing: "Die photographische Abbildung ist klarer und deshalb besser als die gezeichnete" [The photographic reproduction is clearer and therefore better than the drawn one] (KS V:192). The machine-produced photograph delivers a cleaner, more legible image than the drawing. The use of type thus suggests a work of art mediated through the machine, while Steinitz' drawings betray the hand-crafted origins of the work.

The history of these texts is complicated further through the existence of multiple versions of the story published in Schwitters' own printing house. Copies of all three fairy tales under consideration here exist under two different imprints. *Der Hahnepeter*

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[161] Schwitters' extensive work in graphic design informed his theory of typography. Schwitters' extensive work as a commercial artist included advertisements for numerous companies in Hannover and also oversaw the redesign of all official forms for the city of Hannover. He was additionally involved with the *ring neuer werbegestalter*, a consortium of avant-garde artists that advocated for modernist design in typography and advertising. See Maud Lavin, "Advertising Utopia: Schwitters as Commercial Designer," *Art in America* (October 1985): 134-139; see also Werner Heine, "'Futura' without a Future: Kurt Schwitters' Typography for the Hanover Town Council, 1929-1934," *Journal of Design History* 7, no. 2 (1994): 127-40. While Schwitters' efforts in typography have been well recognized in graphic design, their potential influence on or resonances with his other artistic areas. For a discussion of the overlaps between his commercial work and his poetry, see D. A. Steel, "DADA – ADAD: Kurt Schwitters, poetry, collage, typography, and the advert," *Word & Image* 6, no. 2 (1990): 198-209. For Megan Luke's discussion of how Schwitters' theory of typography informs his concept of space and, consequentially, his work in sculpture, see the first chapter of Luke, *Kurt Schwitters*, 35-87.

was originally printed with the imprint *Merzverlag*, setting it in the same publishing house as his own journal, *Merz*. During the process of printing, however, Steinitz and Schwitters invented a new publishing house, "Aposs," an acronym standing for "aktiv, paradox, ohne falsche Sentimentalität, sensibel" [active, paradoxical, opposed to false sentimentality, sensitive]. Steinitz explains the new imprint as a marketing decision, an attempt to separate these works for children from the larger avant-garde project of *Merz*. As she explains, while children would see no fault in the activities of *Merz*, the stories' connection to Schwitters' avant-garde practices might predispose adults against the works, thus limiting their audience and radical potential.[162] The choice to sell the works for a low price, financing the printing of the works through Steinitz' husband, underscores the authors' desire to reach as broad an audience as possible. And yet, the works circulated in a small print run of hand-numbered editions, thus necessarily limiting their potential reach. The decision to create a separate publishing house for the book cannot merely be explained through the problem of audience alone.

To complicate matters, the stories were retroactively issued as part of the journal *Merz*, *Die Scheuche* was reissued as the double issue 16/17 and *Die Märchen vom Paradies* as 18/19. The stories, which were carefully carved out as a project separate from the journal *Merz*, belatedly become part of the project.[163] But the stories were not printed anew for this reissuing. Rather, Schwitters pasted the *Merzverlag* colophon over the information for Aposs. The status of publication itself thus becomes a product of

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[162] Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters*, 40.

[163] Leslie Atzmon contextualizes these collaborative fairy tales in the larger context of Schwitters' and van Doesburg's experiments in typography and avant-garde little magazines. See Leslie Atzmon, "The Scarecrow Fairytale: A Collaboration of Kurt Schwitters and Theo van Doesburg," *Design Issues* 12, no. 3 (1996): 14-34.

Merz, as Schwitters introduces the work into new medial and print contexts. The dual imprints are not mutually exclusive. Rather, their co-presence indicates the double goal of the works: on the one hand, to present stories that could plausibly entertain children, and on the other hand, to spread the ideas and aesthetic practices of *Merz*. While it is tempting to dismiss the invention of the Aposs-Verlag for these works as a mere rhetorical flourish, a half-hearted attempt at pretending the works differ in any regard from his other artistic production, it is important to note the use of the printed form itself to convey the aesthetic goals of the work. Unlike a false imprint, which seeks intentionally to deceive the reader about the work's origin, both the original "Aposs" imprint and the pasted "Merz" imprint reveal the engagement of *Merz* with the materiality of print and the work of the print-shop in order to further his aesthetic goals of medial recontextualization and resignification. The colophon, the mark of the print shop, becomes itself a *Merz* product, marking the state between the print shop and the work of the hand.

The publication history of these two stories can be understood as a series of repetitions that recontextualize the stories in terms of their audience and printed forms. The variety of printed forms the stories take seems to work against the repetition of print. While one expects that each copy of a printed book be a near-exact replica of the others, here Schwitters and Steinitz work against the dependable repeatability of print. In the case of *Die Märchen vom Paradies*, the various versions, with the exception of uniform printed version in *Der Sturm*, nearly guarantee some degree of uniqueness to each copy. The hand-numbered, often hand-colored single edition of "Der Hahnepeter" features the trace of the artists' hands on each copy, and the Aposs/Merz edition of *Die Märchen vom Paradies* carries traces of their intervention in the form of the pasted colophon.

The single edition of "Der Hahnepeter," the first of the three *Märchen vom Paradies*, also shows engagement with the tension between machine-produced objects and the work of the hand. The work tells the story of a young man, named Hahnemann, who finds the egg of a "richtigen Hahnepeter" [real Peter the Rooster].[164] After carefully attending to the egg, it hatches and lays thirteen eggs, one for each of the children in the story. The children then notice the rooster has a propeller. After turning it thirteen times, the rooster suddenly flies off and disappears. The story ends suddenly, with the promise that the thirteen eggs may produce additional roosters and additional stories. The story's illustrations portray the rooster as a hybrid of machine and the hand-crafted. After emerging from the egg, the rooster appears first in a silhouette, recalling the *Scherenschnitt* tradition and the work of scissors and paste. Yet, the rooster has a propeller for a tail and its single leg appears "wie ein Kreisel" [like a top],[165] extending down like a drill. The hand-cut appearance of the illustration belies the mechanical form of the rooster's leg.

As the children discover the propeller, the rooster appears as a technical drawing. The page is introduced through the proclamation, "Wenn wo ne Schraube ist, muss man auch dran drehen" [When there's a screw somewhere, you gotta turn it], presented in all capital letters and red and black font (Figure 14).[166] Immediately below is the word "So," printed inside a circular red arrow and a detailed illustration of the rooster's propeller. A partial rendering of its tail appears as a silhouette, again recalling the work of scissors and

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[164] Kurt Schwitters and Kate Steinitz, *Der Hahnepeter* (Hannover: Merzverlag, n.d. [1924]), 3. This edition of *Der Hahnepeter* is available digitally through the Yale University Library. See http://search.library.yale.edu/catalog/3286256.
[165] Ibid, 7.
[166] Ibid, 10.

paste. The blade of the propeller is portrayed simply in red, adding Constructivist flair to the simple silhouette of the tail. But at the end of the propeller, there is a turning mechanism that is rendered in the style of a technical drawing. The individual gears of the mechanism are carefully portrayed, and the image features careful shading giving the impression of depth. The realism and perspective of the gear stand in contrast both to the silhouette body of the rooster and Steinitz' simple sketches. It recalls technical sketches that provide the necessary detail to reproduce the mechanical device. Yet despite its use of the genre of the technical drawing, it remains a drawing, not a photograph or a pasting from an engineering journal, but a product, through some degree of print mediation, of the artist's hand. The giant "So" with the circular red arrow surrounding it also introduces a haptic element to the page. It suggests the possibility of turning the gear, of turning the proposition presented by the realistic technical drawing into something real. But the only turning possible here is the turning of the page. The reader is thus invited to interact directly and physically with the material of the book, but must substitute interaction with the gears with the touch of the page.

Figure 14: Kurt Schwitters and Kate Steinitz, *Der Hahnepeter* (Hannover: Merzverlag, n. d. [1924]), 10. Yale University Libraries, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library.

Yet as we have seen, for Schwitters the possibility of turning the page also carries with it the possibility of recontextualization and resignification. The next five pages present increasingly distorted images of the rooster and the curved red arrow. In Steinitz' simple illustrative style, the rooster spins out of control and eventually flies off the page. As the rooster flies higher and higher, its neck turns back further upon itself, as it literally incorporates the turn of the gear into its body. In the last image, the rooster breaks free from the gear and its drill-like leg, as it threatens to fly off the page. It appears as a simple drawing in red and black, with minimal detail and sketchy lines. It thus returns to the quick, childlike drawings of Steinitz' guestbook. A series of red drops, however, guide the eye down the page to the gear and the drill, which are again portrayed in the style of technical drawings (Figure 15). The hand crafted and the mechanical prove ultimately irreconcilable, yet the rooster's remarkable feat of flight and its return to a messy, hand-drawn style suggest the possibility of using the mechanical to reconfigure the work of the hand. One needs only to turn the gear and the page to see once more the work of the artist's hand in the machine.

This remarkable series of drawings is missing in the longer *Märchen vom Paradies* (KS II:115-7). Though the text remains the same, this set of six pages is reduced to a mere three. The first drawing, which combines the silhouette of the rooster's body and the technical drawing of the gear, is repeated, but the series of transformations of the rooster has been replaced by mere text. A fuller discussion of this story lies outside

Figure 15: Kurt Schwitters and Kate Steinitz, *Der Hahnepeter* (Hannover: Merzverlag, n. d. [1924]), 15. Yale University Libraries, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library.

the constraints of this chapter, but it seems the uniform technical clarity of modernist typography wins out over the work of the hand. And yet, Schwitters' other modernist fairy tale, *Die Scheuche*, suggests a means of reconciling the mechanical nature of print with the work of the hand. If the rough drawings included in *Die Märchen vom Paradies* still betray a connection to the work of the hand, the later story, *Die Scheuche*, seems to embrace fully the mechanical qualities of modernist typography. The work is illustrated solely with elements from the type case, using letters and other printers devices to represent the figures of the story. The tale, filled with repetitive phrases and onomatopoetic devices for oral performance, tells of a scarecrow that no longer performs its job. The scarecrow is dressed realistically as a bourgeois man, wearing a top hat, an overcoat, a fine scarf, and carrying a cane. A bold rooster approaches the scarecrow and pecks at its cane. When he realizes recognizes the scarecrow as a mere dummy, many chicks come and peck at the scarecrow. The farmer comes and is enraged at the scarecrow. He begins to attack it, yet the rooster and the chicks continue to peck. Suddenly, night falls. The spirits of the dead arise and retrieve their clothing from the scarecrow, and a young man comes and steals the scarecrow's cane from the farmer. It suddenly becomes day again and the story ends. As is typical of Dadaist nonsense literature, the events and setting of the tale are less significant than the linguistic and aesthetic means used to convey the plot, as well as the innovations in method and process used in its creation. This story has a curious creation story, involving at least four artists and one printer. There is insufficient documentation to definitively assign roles or

authorship to any one figure; however, I will reference individual contributions whenever possible.[167]

Produced collaboratively with Theo van Doesburg and Kate Steinitz, the tale's creation has been documented in Steinitz' guestbook. As Steinitz recalls in her biography, during a gathering at her house for coffee, while Nelly and Theo van Doesburg were visiting, Schwitters spontaneously recited the beginning of the tale, which existed already in some linguistic form. Theo van Doesburg then produced two drawings of scarecrows, "a terrifically naturalistic tailcoat and a very stylized one."[168] Schwitters then cut out these two drawings and pasted them directly into the guestbook.[169]

The two corresponding entries contain inscriptions, one dated 25 February 1925 and the other from 24 February 1925. A photograph of Nelly and Theo van Doesburg has also been pasted on the page, with the later date of 1931.[170] A precise dating of the collage elements is not possible, though it seems likely the participants revisited the page during their visit. The later photograph also suggests the mnemonic function of the guestbook, providing a record of both their artistic activity and their convivial evening together. The entries occupy a single spread in the guestbook, with the left side featuring

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[167] While the book lists the three authors together, a letter from Doesburg, sent after the book's publication, suggests that Schwitters was primarily responsible for the text, while Doesburg and Steinitz were primarily responsible for the typography. See Anke Dießelmeier and Gerhard Schaub, "Typo-ésie: 'Die Scheuche'. Ein typographisches Märchen von Theo van Doesburg, Kurt Schwitters und Käte Steinitz," in *Kurt Schwitters: "Bürger und Idiot". Beiträge zu Werk und Wirkung eines Gesamtkünstlers*, ed. Gerhard Schaub (Berlin, Fannei & Walz, 1993), 56-62; here, 59. Such a clear division of labor however is contradicted by Steinitz' description of the collaborative session in the print house. See Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters*, 44-5.
[168] Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters*, 42.
[169] Ibid.
[170] The collages are reproduced in Buchheister, *Das Gästebuch von Kate T. Steinitz*, n. p.

the naturalistic tailcoat and the right side the stylized one. The stylized coat has been cut directly along the drawing's outline and pasted in pieces into the notebook. It again bears the traces of collaboration, like Steinitz' cow, but here there is also the possibility that the image was modified in the pasting of the elements. The coat's left sleeve, in particular, drifts slightly away from the body of the coat, emphasizing the cut that separated it from the rest of van Doesburg's drawing. And the legs of the pants have been folded over the edge of the page and pasted onto the following page. The two legs, visually sundered from the rest of the image but still connected by edge of the page, resemble the open blade of a pair of scissors, rendering literal the cuts that created the image. But such a literal reading is only available on the reverse side. The turning of the page figures again as a primary mode of meaning-making, as the verso renders literal the acts of cutting that enabled the image on the recto. The image, more so than Steinitz' cow, suggests a hybrid character, at once an integral drawing of a suit, while simultaneously a composite pasting. The humorous textual entries are written both on the blank page as well as over part of the collaged tailcoat, integrating the drawing fully into the collaborative activities of the evening.

The naturalistic tailcoat, pasted on the left side of the spread, is part of a more elaborate collage. While Steinitz' cow and the stylized tailcoat both function as a kind of ready-made Schwitters denotes as *i*, a single found object cut, framed, and repasted, the other collage also features pasted elements from photographs and magazines as well as drawn elements. The tailcoat, which dominates the majority of the page, shows the back side of a man's formal tailcoat. It has been cut along the edges, like the other drawings discussed here, and stands upright on the left side of the page. Above it, there is a small

photograph of a man's head where the head should be. Below, there are two pairs of legs. An androgynous but probably female set of legs comes out of the tailcoat slightly askance, while the other, clearly feminine and likely drawn from the same source, hovers to the side, disconnected from the rest of the composition. Like the head, the legs are very small in comparison to the tailcoat. The coat dwarfs entirely whatever androgynous body is beneath, suggesting both the absence of corporeal integrity and the composite nature of the implied figure. The coat's right hand holds a coffee pot, which is also out of scale with the image's other elements. The coffee pot again recalls the festive occasion for the image's production, while also introducing further confusion into the element. The object's plain domesticity seems at odds with the formality of the elaborate tailcoat. Several wispy pen markings are immediately to the left of the coffeepot. While superficially resembling a puff of smoke, they emanate from the handle side of the pot rather than the spout side. Thus they could also be part of the tailcoat, perhaps meant to resemble feathers, fur, or some other type of fabric. While the other elements are all to some degree ready-made, from the magazine pastings to van Doesburg's drawing, these pen lines mark direct contact of the artist's hand with the page. Here, the artist's action through scissors and paste blurs momentarily with the manual strokes of the pen.

The two tailcoat collages, taken together, present composite images that draw attention to their own construction and status as product. The two images suggest a multiplicity and iterability of the form. With another cut of the scissors, one imagines a new tailcoat could appear, which would introduce new contradictions and modes of referentiality. If these two pastings were the inspiration behind *Die Scheuche*, it is curious that the final version, at least at first glance, reduces these images, drawn and pasted by

hand, to uniform pieces of type. *Die Scheuche*, following in the avant-garde tradition of children's books such as El Lissitzky's *Pro dva kvadrata* and *Dlia golasa*, is illustrated exclusively with abstract shapes. Here, and more radically than in the work of El Lissitzky, Schwitters, Steinitz, and van Doesburg use exclusively printers devices.[171] Oversized pieces of type thus come to stand in for the various characters of the story, with letters used both for the text itself and the illustrations. A large X, bisected vertically by a long beam, stands in for the scarecrow. A single capital F portrays the tailcoat. For the rooster, they choose an oversized O and represent the chicks with smaller, thinner versions of O. And a large letter B represents the farmer. Bars extend from the letter B for his legs and arms, and lowercase Bs become his feet. In the case of both the coat and the farmer, the symbols have both a figurative and phonetic relationship to their referent. The "F" for the tailcoat not only has arms but also forms the first letter of "Frack," just as B derives from "Bauer," while also resembling a human head and torso with its two bumps. The large O, however, has no phonetic relationship to the rooster, "Hahn" in German, and though the letter S would resemble the shape of a gently draped scarf, the scarf—*Spitzenschal*—worn by the scarecrow is illustrated by an elaborate, decorative printers device that assumes various shapes throughout the story. These images are not static, as the placement and number of bars for limbs changes, as well as the size and typeface chosen for a given illustration. I will discuss their variability in more detail below, but for now, it suffices to say such changes do not introduce the same degree of

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[171] For further information on Schwitters' possible inspiration by El Lissitzksy, see Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Avantgarde im Bilderbuch: *Die Scheuche* (1925) von Kurt Schwitters, Käte Steinitz und Theo van Doesburg," in *Transgression und Intermedialität: Die Texte von Kurt Schwitters*, eds. Walter Delabar, .Ursula Kocher, and Isabel Schulz (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2016), 307-320.

variability as there is in the collage of van Doesburg and Schwitters. Throughout, the printers favor various sizes of grotesque type and consistently use the same pieces of type for the same figure or object. The text, thus replaces the multiple, nonidentical tailcoats of van Doesburg's collage with a different form of iterability, one in which the irregularities of drawings and hand-pasted elements are replaced with the uniformity of type.

Die Scheuche is thus a text that blurs the line between text and illustration.[172] Through the use of the same material for text and image, the work suggests a reciprocal relationship between the two semiotic systems in which the use of a sign in one could directly inform its use in the other. Despite the radical possibility the text presents, in practice image and text still occupy two separate spheres. It is always clear in the text whether a letter's function serves as part of the text or part of the illustration. While text and illustration still remain largely separate, the question posed by their proximity is what possibilities the book presents for their union. Does the use of letters as illustration encourage resignification and alternative readings in their more mundane use? Or does it

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[172] Anke Dießelmeier and Gerhard Schaub have proposed the term "Typo-ésie" to describe the combination of text and illustration in the work. In their estimation, the use of typographic elements as illustrations creates a continuity between text and illustration such that the work cannot be considered through the mere words alone. Rather, the work commands the reader's visual attention, creating a type of poetry that, following El Lissitzky's theses on typography, can not be "abgehört" [listened to] but only "abgesehen" [seen at]. See Anke Dießelmeier and Gerhard Schaub, "Typo-ésie: 'Die Scheuche'. Ein typographisches Märchen von Theo van Doesburg, Kurt Schwitters und Käte Steinitz," in *Kurt Schwitters: "Bürger und Idiot". Beiträge zu Werk und Wirkung eines Gesamtkünstlers*, ed. Gerhard Schaub (Berlin, Fannei & Walz, 1993), 56-62; here, 58. Likewise, Sébastian Conrad also sees the work providing a means to overcome the line between text and illustration, which he applies to the study of graphic novels. See Sébastian Conrad, "Lively letters and the graphic narrative. Revisiting comics theory on word and image through the lens of two avant-garde children's books," *Image & Narrative* 17, no. 2 (2016): 74-85.

suggest an alternative way of conceptualizing the relationship between text and illustration?

Before such questions can be answered, it makes sense to consider the work's production. For meaning is always contingent on the material process of production for Schwitters, as discussed above. Kate Steinitz again provides the details of the story's composition:

> Kurt knew the typesetter Paul Vogt. Vogt worked in a little printing establishment, and he fooled around happily with our new typographical ideas. We brought *The Scarecrow* to him. He let us manage everything, cut the especially large *O* that we needed for Monsieur le Coq, and didn't refuse us (as every ordinary typesetter would have) when we asked him to use the little *b* for the feet of the peasant or to set the big *B* slantwise for the feet of an angry man.[173]

The work is the result not only of the collaborative coffee party at the Steinitz' house, but also a collaborative session in the print house. Though Vogt is not credited with authorship, his typographical efforts are acknowledged on the back cover of the tale. Particularly important in Steinitz' account of the work's printing is the transgressions against usual printing decorum and practice that Vogt enables. Vogt is portrayed as both a rogue worker, using company resources in unorthodox and unauthorized ways, as well as a frictionless conduit for the artists' will. The work thus is simultaneously a countercultural artifact that owes its existence to a renegade print shop worker, while also presenting the possibility of a more harmonious relationship between printers and artists.

The printer's absent presence in the work's authorship complicates its status as *Merz* and collage. On the one hand, it is clearly composed of ready-made parts. The use of pieces of type and decorative elements stand available for the artist's creative

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[173] Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters*, 42-4.

appropriation. Moreover, the pieces of type constitute a foundational element or unit of print media that the artist can recombine and rearrange as he wishes. Whether they go towards the textual elements or illustrative elements makes no difference, as both conform to the internal logic of the illustrated book. On the other hand, the direct intervention of the artist's hand or subjectivity is present only indirectly. Unlike in Schwitters' *i* works or in his pastings of Steinitz' and van Doesburg's drawings, here the designs he devised with his collaborators have been dutifully appropriated by the typesetter. This conceit is important, for despite all appearances that the work is a quasi-self-published, renegade appropriation of the print shop, the work still owes its existence to some formal mechanisms of the printing business. Its intervention is small, and confined to the situation at the printing shop itself.

If van Doesburg's drawings show the infinite repeatability of the hand drawn and hand pasted, in which each new drawing produces a difference that cannot be reconciled with the previous one, the repetitions in the print version present a different notion of iterability. While each character in the story receives a set of letters and type to represent it, difference in arrangement, choice of letter size and quality, and the level of detail in additional elements of the illustration introduce elements of difference that destabilize the reliable iterability of print. Through a close reading of the relationship between repetition in the text and repetition in the illustrations, I will explore how these repetitions comment upon the iterability of print and the relationship between the work of the hand and that of the press.

Already between the book's cover and first page, important repetitions occur in word and image.[174] The title page gives the title as "Die Scheuche" [The Scarecrow], with information about publisher and authors. Beneath the title, an illustration of the scarecrow appears. The scarecrow's body is composed of a large X bisected vertically by a bar, underscoring the symmetrical presentation of the figure. Atop the scarecrow is an additional bar, and above that a top hat composed of several small bars. To the scarecrow's left is a cane, also represented by a bar. The X is particularly interesting, for it features small serifs at the four corners of the letter. Serifs and other decorative letters were the target of the avant-garde's ire, and grotesque typefaces, like the one used for this story, featured no serifs. While such bibliographic work is always speculative, the original printing features small lines between the various elements of the X, suggesting it was not a ready-made piece of type but rather assembled from other pieces of type. The intentionally antimodernist design of the X, with its ornamental serifs, stands in stark contrast to the other figures of the story, all designed with modernist grotesque type. This suggests a certain bourgeois taste in the design of the image, reinforced by the typical bourgeois attributes of top hat, overcoat and cane the figure carries.[175]

On the book's first page, the title has been repeated, but it appears more ambiguous than on the cover (Figure 16). The top of the page features the title printed in all capital letters in a larger type than the remaining text. Next to the title, a capital "X"

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[174] Due to considerations of space, I only provide select figures here. The work can be viewed in its entirety online via Yale University Libraries. See Kurt Schwitters, Theo van Doesburg, and Kate Steinitz, *Die Scheuche* (Hannover: Aposs Verlag, 1925). https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3520193.

[175] Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer proposes reading *Die Scheuche* as a critique of the bourgeoisie and bourgeois taste. See Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Avantgarde im Bilderbuch," 318.

has been printed in the same type. As Christian A. Bachmann has documented, some confusion exists over whether the "X" is part of the work's title; while most sources and editions give "Die Scheuche," conforming with the title as given on the cover, a minority of sources, all in languages other than German, provide "Die Scheuche X," taking the ambiguous "X" on the story's first page as an integral part of the title.[176] While the "X" is easily explained as an illustration of the scarecrow, Bachmann's documentation of these few cases of confusion indicates the indeterminate state of this particular illustration. Unlike the scarecrow on the title page, which stands apart typographically from the rest of this text, this X bears no special adornments and pivots between the text and the following illustrations. As the scarecrow appears unadorned, without any typographical innovations, it stands prepared to receive its attributes and assume form. It functions thus like plain type, ready to be deployed as needed.

[176] Christian A. Bachmann, "Ob die Scheuche einen Namen hat? Kurt Schwitters' Texte im Spannungsfeld von Schrift und Bild," in *Transgression und Intermedialität: Die Texte von Kurt Schwitters*, eds. Walter Delabar, Ursula Kocher, and Isabel Schulz (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2016), 321-336.

Figure 16: Kurt Schwitters, Theo van Doesburg, and Kate Steinitz, *Die Scheuche* (Hannover: Aposs Verlag, 1925). Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library.

Below this ambiguous repetition of the title, the work begins: "Es war einmal ne Vogelscheuche / die hatte einen Hut-Schapo / und einen Frack / und Stock / und einen ACH so schönen Spitzenschal" ["Once upon a time there was / a scarecrow that had a top hat/ a tux and/ a cane / and OH such a lovely lace scarf"] (KS II:156).[177] The text wavers between poetry and prose. Almost entirely lacking punctuation, it substitutes line

[177] For an English translation that attempts to preserve some of the typographical features, see Kurt Schwitters, "The Scarecrow," in *Lucky Hans and Other Merz Fairy Tales*, trans. Jack Zipes, typo. Barrie Tullett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 72-84; here, 73. Hereafter cited parenthetically as TS.

breaks for commas and other organizing features. Occasional borrowings from spoken language, such as the "ne" for "eine" or the insertion of "ach" in this example, are used to maintain an irregular iambic meter to the text. These quasi-poetical elements both take advantage of print's ability to use the organization of the page to direct reading, while also suggesting the breaks and mannerisms of spoken language. In particular, the capitalized "ACH" implies stress and vocal accent that do not have an analog in conventional typography.

Not only do the frequent line breaks place the text between poetry and prose, oral performance and print, they also provide space on the page for the illustrations. As each attribute of the scarecrow appears in the text, a stylized illustration accompanies it. The hat and the cane appear much as they did on the cover, with minor changes. But while the cane has only a single doubling, that of text and image, the coat and the hat are subject to two forms of doubling, one between word and image and one between word and word. The text refers to a "Hut-Schapo" ["top hat"], a repetition that suggests a form of linguistic translation in which the German word is juxtaposed with its French equivalent. But the process of translation is incomplete or imperfect, as the French term appears in an approximated German spelling, suggesting a bizarre union of the plain, unmarked German "Hut" and the French *chapeau*, which to a German ear might denote a more bourgeois or sophisticated idea of a hat. Compared with the rather rudimentary drawing of the top hat, the combination "Hut-Schapo" provides additional context for the image, which, though perfectly recognizable as a gentleman's top hat, provides no information as to its quality or condition. The illustration rather provides a mere iconic representation of a top hat, an image that connotes the idea of a top hat rather than any specific hat. But

as the context of the story makes clear, this is no fine hat, but one suited for use on a scarecrow. Old, perhaps weathered from use outside, and, as we learn at the story's end, taken from a dead man, this hat is no luxury object, but a hand-me-down that fails to give the scarecrow any semblance of authority. Here, the juxtaposition of an ordinary "Hut" next to a misspelled "chapeau" connotes ironic distance from the stuffy, formal top hat and qualifies the icon's status as representative image of the house. While generally it is the image that is considered to convey greater detail about the object than the mere word itself, here it is only through their repetition and combination that a complete view of the object emerges.

Returning to the doubling of the coat, a similar form of semiotic interaction occurs. Here, the illustration is not unambiguously an image, but rather the word itself that has been distorted into a strange intersemiotic hybrid. The coat or *Frack* in the German text, which is not obviously included in the cover illustration, takes the shape of a large F, with the remaining letters "rack" descending down from between the two horizontal bars of the letter. Unlike the hat and the cane, which both bear clear resemblance to the objects they portray, the tailcoat it is difficult to recognize any article of clothing in the stylized F. The top and side bar of the F perhaps represent the coat's arms, and the two bars surrounding the extra letters "rack" perhaps stand in for the coattails. A small dot affixed to the left side of the F could represent a button. In all, the image appears to have the coherent parts of a tailcoat, but the parts do not cohere into a recognizable image. Unlike the hat, which has the clear value of an icon without reference to the text, the coat only attains recognizability through the inclusion of the word's linguistic elements in the illustration. It is as if to suggest that the letters of the

word might be rearranged into a visual representation of the word. The *Frack* raises the possibility that just a few pieces of type need be rearranged to visualize the word. Again, under the limitations of using only material from the type case, Schwitters, Steinitz and van Doesburg find a creative solution to suggest qualities to the type beyond the written word or limited iconic illustration. Here, the word *Frack* momentarily appears to transform into a visual equivalent.

The last element on the page, the scarecrow's scarf, also has no clear equivalent on the title illustration. While the bar above the X could represent a scarf, later illustrations in the text show the fully assembled scarecrow with a few lacy decorative lines for the scarf. It seems, thus, the scarecrow assumes more complexity inside the story than on the cover illustration, which presents a basic form of the scarecrow for later permutations. This last attribute of the scarecrow is composed of several pieces of decorative type, used both to decorate the margins of the page and also to provide borders or line breaks in more conventionally printed books. The type comes in several small, angular pieces that can be shaped into a variety of shapes. The scarf thus becomes a variable element, varying greatly in size and form throughout the text. The highly ornamental type, made of lace-like curlicues and loops, contrasts starkly with the blocky, unornamented grotesque type used for the story. While impossible to determine from the available evidence at this time, it is possible the ornament was drawn from a different typeset. Like the "X" from the title page, its antimodernist design connotes the old-fashioned, and perhaps also the handmade. Stretched out, it almost resembles a blocky S, though later iterations of the scarf do not preserve this potential phonetic link. The scarf, then, like the hat, assumes an iconic character, but unlike the hat, which is so clearly

recognizable in its combination of square and horizontal line, the polymorphous scarf assumes this character not because of its instant recognizability as a scarf, but rather due to its stylistic difference from the other elements and its prominence in the story's many repetitions. Linguistically, the accompanying text is equally elaborate. The seven syllables used for the "ACH so schönen Spitzenschal" ["oh such a lovely lace scarf"] repeat with every mention of the scarf, giving it an outsized presence in the text. The space on the page that both the decorative printer's devices used for the scarf and the text command a great deal of space on the page. Both are thus characterized by a certain type of decorative excess, proclaiming visually and in the text their elaborate form and superlative quality.

Taken together, these elements provide a counterpart to the cohesive image of the book's cover. The title page presents a fully formed image of the scarecrow and clearly delimits the difference between text and illustration. The story's first page, on the other hand, presents a situation in which these demarcations are still being negotiated. The page presents a scarecrow broken down into its constituent parts, ready to be assembled and take part in the story. The second page thus renegotiates the completed image of the first page back into individual elements, revealing the process of its assembly and creation. The two pages thus mirror the process of the book's construction itself, taking constituent pieces of type and creatively reappropriating them into different iterations of the figure of the scarecrow. They self-reflexively reveal the *Merz* process of the recombination of preformed materials that the book employs and lay bare these materials for use in the remainder of the story.

The book's next spread introduces the rooster, a figure also doubled in text and image. The rooster receives both a doubled name and title, introduced as "Monsieur Mosjö le coq der Hahn" ["Monsieur le coq Cock-a-doodle-do"] (KS II:157 / TS 74). The repetition of the animal's name first in French then in German again suggests a form of translation like "Hut-Schapo" of the story's first page. The repetition of "Monsieur Mosjö" features the same German approximation of the French spelling as "Hut-Schapo," but, like "chapeau," the word likely needs no translation for a bourgeois audience. Moreover, the German equivalent "Herr" is missing, suggesting the doubling goes beyond a simple act of German-French translation. Here, Schwitters relishes in a multiplicity of significatory possibilities for expression, proliferating variant signifiers for the same signified. The page continues with this game of significatory proliferation, as the "Hick und Hack" ["pick peck"] of the rooster's beak transforms into "hic haec hoc" ["pick peck pock"] (KS II:159 / TS 76. This brief intrusion from the Latin grammar table, which recalls the grammatical permutations of "An Anna Blume," again provides an alternative spelling for the sound of the rooster's pecking. The Latin demonstrative pronouns, lacking in lexical information, do not meaningfully introduce new content or information into the story, and are easily appropriated as variant onomatopoetic devices. Unlike "Mosjö," which exists only as a phonetic approximation, "hic haec hoc" takes ready-made linguistic material, but purged of its *Eigengift* as material that bares little trace of its original meaning. It thus falsely appears equivalent to "Mosjö," which takes ready-made letters to find a phonetic approximation, while "hic haec hoc" takes ready-made words that already approximate the material phonetically. The Latin intrusion, however, not only shows an interest in an excess of significatory possibilities in the logic

of the text's construction. The inclusion of the neutral "hoc" alongside the masculine "hic" and feminine "haec" exceeds the necessary material to find a phonetic equivalent for "Hick und Hack." It suggests the possibility of further permutation, further iterations of new material forms for the same sounds and ideas.

The images on this spread, on the other hand, show less variation in their forms, though still gesture towards a type of repeatability with difference. The rooster is portrayed on both sides of the spread, each featuring the extra-large O Paul Vogt created for the printing. As mentioned earlier, the use of the O feels arbitrary in comparison to the "F" for "Frack" or "B" for "Bauer." Like the scarecrow, which receives the phonetically unrelated letter "X," the rooster's pictographic representation favors figurative, and not phonetic, similarity. Nonetheless, the use of "coq" and "Mosjö" on the same page, both of which employ the letter "O" as their only vowel, does suggest some plausible phonetic connection. Both roosters feature bars for legs and a neck. On the left side of the page, a question mark forms the rooster's head, while on the right hand side, the artists employ a round circle with a small bar. Both reasonably approximate the shape of a round head with a beak, which suggests that the artists are less interested in a stable iconographic relationship in which each item has a consistent set of attributes, than in forming creative images out of ready-made type. The variability of the rooster stands in contrast with the seeming fixity of the scarecrow's attributes. Whereas the scarecrow continually recombines the same elements in different ways, the rooster continually uses different elements to make the same shapes.

On the following spread, the rooster's various forms multiply. On the left side of the spread, the rooster again appears with the extra-large O. The question mark of the

head transforms into the tail, using a piece from a particularly thin and narrow type set. The head is represented by the letter P, which here forms the beginning of the word "Pfui" ["Phooey"] (KS II:159 / TS 76). It is unclear whether this interjection forms a unique linguistic unit or should be read entirely as a pictorial representation of the bird's head. The letter "f" has been printed sideways, resembling the sharp point of a beak. But the "ui" remains oddly unincorporated into the image. Visually, the two extra letters create a connection between the bird's beak and the scarecrow's cane, providing a pictorial complement to the "Hick und Hack" of the rooster. The use of "Pfui" as part of the illustration repeats its use in the text of the story, in which the rooster exclaims "Pfui Alter Mann" ["Phooey old man"] upon realizing the scarecrow is just a scarecrow (KS II:159 / TS 76). The image thus combines the moment of the exclamation with the incessant pecking of the rooster's beak, which is echoed in the immediate paratactic juxtaposition of these two moments in the text: "Pfui Alter Mann du bist ja eine Scheuche Hick Hack und hic haec hoc" ["Phooey old man you're a measly scarecrow Pick Peck and pick peck pock"] (KS II:159 / TS 76). The missing punctuation and the lack of any conjunctions suggests a rash succession of events, mirroring the condensation of these moments into a single image in the illustration.

While the rooster demonstrates a successful union of text and image, the scarecrow points towards a tension. The scarecrow here appears much as it did on the cover, a cohesive union of a large X with several bars and blocks to form the hat and the cane. The sole addition is the florid, decorative printing devices used for the scarf at the story's beginning. The image thus presents the first cohesive image of the scarecrow as a finished assemblage, a fusion of hat, cane, scarf, and tailcoat into a convincing surrogate

for the human form. The text, on the other hand, disassembles the scarecrow back into its constituent parts: "DA sprach MÖSJÖ LE COQ zu Hut und Stock und Rock und zu dem ACH so schönen Spitzenschal" [AND Monsieur LE COQ SAID to the Hat the tux and the cane and the OH such a lovely LACE SCARF"] (KS II:159 / TS 76). The tension between the complete image of the scarecrow and its linguistic dissolution underscores the tension inherent to the scarecrow as assemblage, as well as the tension inherent in all *Merz* products. If the text's first page stages the scarecrow's construction, revealing the conceit of *Merz* as assemblage, this page begins to enact its destruction, prefiguring the scarecrow's demise at the story's end.

The scarecrow, caught between the stable reference of the image and the dismantled reference of the text, recedes from the next page behind a mass of chicks. The chicks, who take their pictorial form from the rooster, appear with remarkable uniformity. At the top of the page, the artists present two rows of six chicks each, each composed of a large "O", two bars for legs, and either a "q" or a "p" for the head.[178] The mirror letters function interchangeably, flattening out any potential phonetic quality to the word. Below, another horde of chicks attacks the scarecrow's cane. The scarecrow as a cohesive figure recedes behind the mass of chicks, which have undergone yet another transformation. The qs and ps used for heads above have been replaced by solid circles. The two letters have been reduced to their essential form, which in fact reveals their identity. Here, the text reaches the height of the instrumentalization of linguistic means

[178] In his essay on *i*, Schwitters also exploits the mirror appearance of *p* and *q*, which for Megan Luke suggests "a rotation in space, one that has simply flipped the same figure, a gesture that mimics our own as we physically turn the page from one poem to the next." Megan Luke, *Kurt Schwitters*, 26.

for pictorial representation. While the various pieces of type used for the rooster's head still maintain their identity, the representation of the chicks erases such differences and presents "p" and "q" as two equally valid signs for the same thing.

If the rooster and the chicks increasingly point towards the overcoming of alterity and the stability of reference, the scarecrow increasingly shows the instability of this logic of combination. On the next page, the scarecrow takes up the majority of the page, stretched diagonally across it and interrupting the text. In contrast to the serif type used for the X in the preceding examples, here the artists choose a boldface X in a sans-serif typeface. The scarecrow threatens to fall apart as the scarf, here composed of many more pieces of type than on the first page, extends from one corner of the page to the other. While the text still aligns with the conventional plane of the page, conforming to the shared expectations of reader and printer that materials appear oriented according to the vertical and horizontal axes of the page, this illustration violates any such expectation. The scarecrow, placed slightly to the left of the center of the page, disrupts the symmetry and balance that characterize the traditional organization of the page, thus drawing a contrast to the earlier, symmetrical presentations of the scarecrow. This asymmetry, along with the use of an avant-garde typeface for the scarecrow itself, marks a turning point in the text. The synthesis of the various pieces of clothing into a unified scarecrow, a synthesis which the text consistently avoids through the naming of individual components, is also exposed in the image as untenable. The integrated, symmetrical, and ornamental style of the scarecrow yields momentarily to an unstable assemblage of differing styles, types, and orientations.

On the next page, the scarecrow also briefly changes appearance. This illustration features a different central "O." In contrast to Paul Vogt's custom-cut "O," this one appears drawn from an existing typeset. Unlike the grotesque typefaces favored in the book, which are uniformly thick and continuous throughout, this letter tapers towards a small gap at the top and bottom. The "O" thus also suggests a more ornamental form of type, like the serif X of the scarecrow. But here, the ornamental style serves a functional purpose: the artists have inserted bars into these gaps, forming the rooster's neck and legs. The legs are largely symmetrically oriented, with the exception of the feet which face in two different directions. The neck, however, runs askance of the otherwise symmetrically arranged body of the rooster. This is the new form in which the rooster will appear for the remainder of the story. Unlike the transformations of the scarecrow, which show clear tensions between part and whole, avant-garde and tradition, this transformation of the rooster suggests a shift in emphasis. At the smaller size and with recognizable lines interrupting the circular shape of the "O," the rooster assumes a pictogrammatical form. In contrast to the scarecrow, whose various transformations emphasize the fundamental instability of its representation, the reduction of the rooster to this concrete, recognizable form—essentially a large version of the chicks that accompany it—, solidifies and stabilizes the representation of the rooster. Printed along the diagonal axis of the page, the rooster's symmetrical arrangement emphasizes the break with the traditional axes of the page. It thus emphasizes the avant-garde innovations that go into the book. But, paradoxically, through its assumption of a stable representational form, the rooster ceases to be a productive driver of aesthetic and

narrative innovation in the story. It would seem the rooster is confined to an incessant, unchanging "Hick und Hack" that repeats identically in linguistic and material forms.

As the rooster ceases to be a productive aspect of the story, the farmer emerges to take over the role. Also characterized by a consistent mode of representation, the farmer is composed of a large "B" with two legs made out of two bars each. At the end of the bars, the artists use small "b's" to portray the farmer's feet. The farmer thus most closely corresponds to a phonological model of representation, echoing the first letter of German *Bauer*. The shape of the farmer remains largely the same throughout the text, with the positioning of the bars changing to mark differing positions of the farmer's legs. This page stages a conflict between the farmer and the newly stable rooster. The legs of the rooster point diagonally across the page towards the farmer while the large "B" is inclined as if staring up towards the rooster. Yet the figures do not align, the diagonal tilt corresponding to different axes. The text thus only establishes a weak antagonism between the rooster and the farmer.

A much stronger relationship exists between the farmer and the scarecrow. The next spread features two images, each dominated by the two figures appearing in nearly equal size. In the first, both appear upright, aligned with the vertical axis of the page. The symmetrical arrangement of the scarecrow has been restored. In place of the square for the hat, the artists have substituted a thin capital "H," again suggesting a phonological model. The "H" also provides a sense of balance to the hat, orienting it firmly upright and along the axes of the page. The scarf, however, remains unruly, curving along the side of the scarecrow. It conforms tightly to the outline of the scarecrow, coming in towards the

center of the X. The scarf runs counter to the stable symmetry of the scarecrow, but through its close adherence to the outline of the figure, its unruly disorder remains contained. This contained disorder is also reflected in the language. The farmer confronts the scarecrow, exclaiming, "Du bist ja keine Scheuche. Gleich mach ich dir zur Leiche" ["You're no scarecrow I'll Soon make a Corpse of you"] (KS II:163 / TS 80), with the imperfect rhyme "Scheuche/Leiche" marking a similar control of difference. The next page, however, which shows the consequences of the farmer's threat. The various parts of the scarecrow "forchte[n] sich" ["got scared"] (KS II:164) / TS 81), as both farmer and scarecrow are portrayed askance. Despite the sideways orientation of the farmer, he appears still in the same form, with legs bent out towards the scarecrow. The page's text radiates out from the farmer towards the scarecrow, intensifying the motion of the leg. The scarecrow, on the other hand, appears in a state of disorder. The body is composed of a simple sans serif "X" that suggests neither a classicist or avant-garde style. While the clean style of the figure underscores its symmetrical presentation, the hat, scarf, and cane all disrupt the figure's order. The hat, again composed of one bar and a hollow side, is tipped on its side, and the bar of the hat's brim does not align with the central bar of the scarecrow. And below, the scarf appears as a balled up mass. The elongated, elegant line that the scarf has maintained throughout the rest of the story has been disrupted, as the various pieces of type that make up the scarf no longer seem to logically follow from one another. Rather, pieces amass, one atop the other, and are not always connected at their endpoints. The entire page implies an unbalanced motion from the side of the farmer towards the side of the scarecrow, culminating in the clumped up mass of scarf. Interestingly, the tension and violence suggested by such an arrangement remain only a

potentiality in the page's text. It describes the fear of the various parts of the scarecrow, but any literal attack by the farmer on the scarecrow receives no mention in the text. The illustrations thus literalize a latent implication of the text.

If this image ends with the scarecrow being pummeled into the ground, the next image marks its disappearance from the text. As the rooster and chicks continue to peck away at the scarecrow, the farmer grabs its cane to shoo them away. The farmer appears once again as a massive "B," threatening the rooster. The rooster appears much as it did in the last illustration, as a tapered "O" with symmetrical feet and an off-center head and neck. It is surrounded by a circle of chicks, appearing again as small O's with an upside-down V for legs and a P for the head. The chicks and the rooster are relegated to the lower corner of the right side of the page, dwarfed visually by the large B which is slanted slightly above them. Above the farmer, however, is the scarecrow. The scarecrow also appears much smaller than the farmer. The central "X" is again in a bold sans-serif typeface, as before when it threatened to fall apart. Yet this version features a smaller version of the letter and it seems to lie on its side, stretching out horizontally rather than vertically. With the bars bisecting it centrally and its high position on the page, it resembles some mechanical flying device, much like the propeller on the tail of the Hahnepeter. Visually, the scarecrow thus appears to leave the story, two pages before its eventual dismemberment. The imposing figure of the farmer not only dislodges the scarecrow and the rooster from the page, it also interrupts the text. The page's text is divided into three small chunks. In the upper left corner, the page's text begins: "Jedoch Mr. le coq und seine Hühner machten weiter Hick und Hack und hic haec hoc" [But Monsieur le coq and his hens kept pecking and picking pick peck pock peck"] (KS II:165

/ TS 82). The final "hoc" is separated from the rest of the text, as the three letters separate into individual units descending downward towards the body of the farmer. As the "c" of the farmer follows a diagonal line down towards the farmer, it points towards the third unit of text, "seinen Stock" ["CANE"] (KS II:165 / TS 82), which however cannot be the continuation of this sentence. Rather, the sentence continues on the opposite side of the page: "DA nahm der Bauer von der Scheuche" ["THEN the farmer grabbed the scarecrow's"] (KS II:165 / TS 82), with the third unit, towards the middle of the page at the bottom, coming last. The page's illustrations thus interrupt the usual pattern of reading, making the page difficult to parse. The conflict between scarecrow, rooster, and farmer thus reaches its climax.

The next page marks a sudden cessation of the story's plot, as "mit einem Male ward es dustre Nacht" ["and suddenly it became so dismally dark"] (KS II:166 / TS 83).[179] The "Hick und Hack" of the rooster and the chicks stops suddenly and the various parts of the scarecrow "freute[n] sich" "w[ere] glad" (KS II:166 / TS 83). The page is remarkably simple, especially in comparison to the busy pages surrounding it. The introductory text descends diagonally across the page, before it is interrupted by a thick blue bar stretching across the whole page. In her account of the story's creation, Kate Steinitz describes the decision to print this blue bar for the night. In a moment of exhaustion and frustration, she suggested the large swath of blue ink, which enabled the continuation of work on the project.[180] The blue swath of ink marks not only a cessation in the plot, but also a cessation in the typographic innovations of the story. While the

[179] Ibid, 83.
[180] Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters*, 44.

choice to use a single blue bar for the sudden encroachment of night makes for a simple, elegant solution to a representational problem, it is impossible to recognize what pieces of type were used to make the swath. The typographical logic of the story meets its limit here. As the darkness of night brings the conflict of the story to a sudden, perplexing halt, the typographical diversity of the story's figures are covered up by a uniform block of ink, a singular mass that prevents the further proliferation of the typographic forms of the story's characters.

If the emergence of night marks a temporary break in the story's typographic innovations, the last page finds new ways to repurpose many of the story's elements (Figure 17). After the sudden nightfall, two spirits come and reclaim the hat and the scarf, which had previously belonged to them. A "frecher Bursch" ["bold lad"] comes and steals the cane from the farmer (KS II:167 / TS 84). The story ends suddenly, with the words "DA WARDS HELL" [THEN THE DAY TURNED VERY BRIGHT"] printed along the right margin of the page (KS II.167 / TS 84). Arranged diagonally from the lower left-hand corner of the page to the upper right-hand corner, the page features three illustrations. At the bottom, the farmer, still in the same large scale as before, wrestles for the cane with the boy. The boy is also represented as a "B," but while the two loops of the "B" form head and chest for the farmer, the boy has an additional circle above the "B" for a head. The two thus avoid identity, while maintaining resemblance and a phonological relation to their linguistic forms. Here, the phonological model meets its

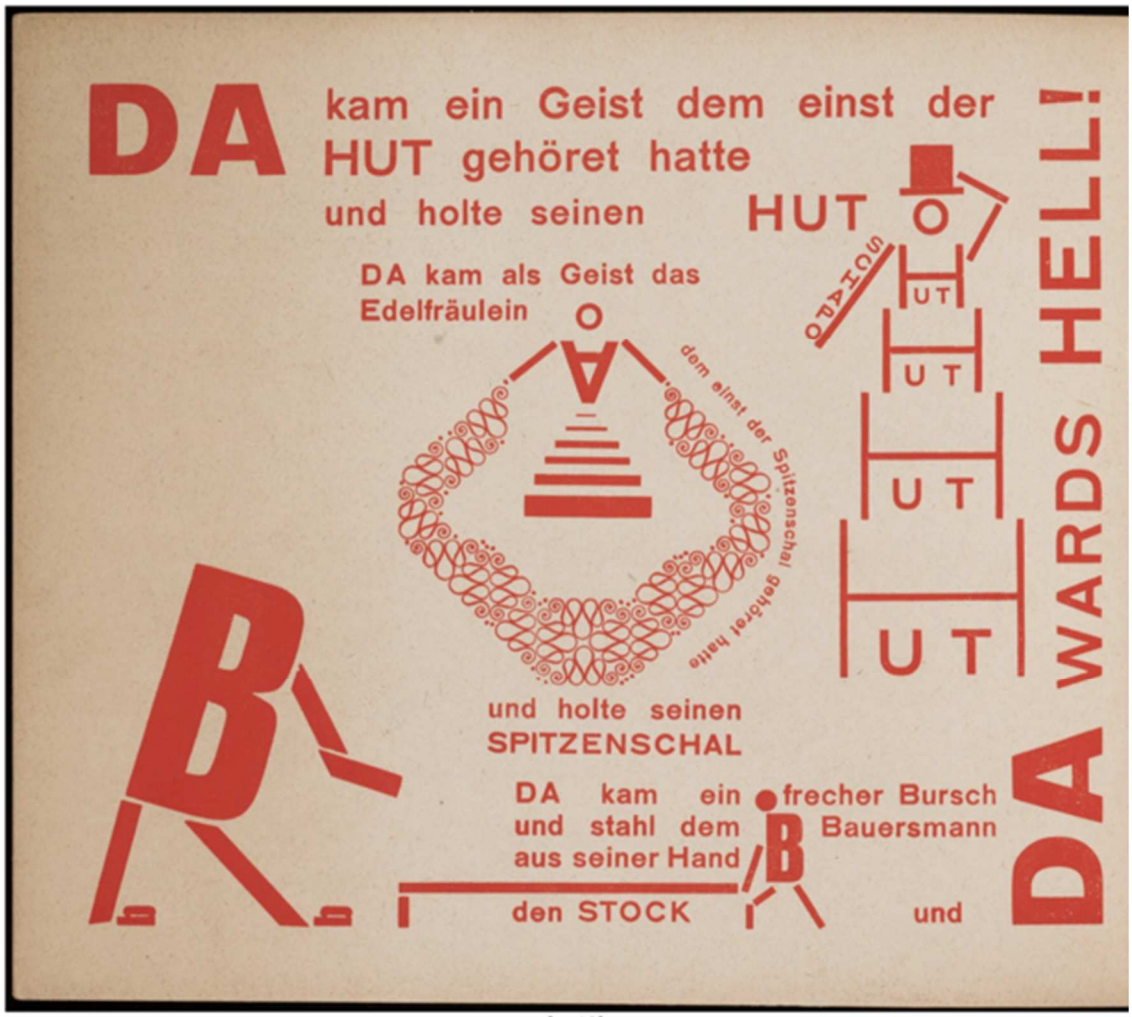


Figure 17: Kurt Schwitters, Theo van Doesburg, and Kate Steinitz, *Die Scheuche* (Hannover: Aposs Verlag, 1925). Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library.

logical endpoint, as "B" cannot simultaneously represent "Bauer" and "Bursch." A new, pictorial difference is required in order to differentiate the two. In absence of any phonological or figurative difference between the two human figures, an arbitrary one must be introduced. In the upper corner of the page stands the "Geist dem einst der HUT gehöret hatte" ["a ghost {…} who had owned the HAT"] (KS II:167/ TS 84). The artists use two bars to represent an arm, which reaches up to place the hat on its head,

represented with an open circle. The hat again consists of a horizontal bar placed directly beneath a solid square. The figure of the spirit, however, consists of the other main representational form of the hat in the story, namely, a capital "H." The figure thus condenses the two main forms of the hat into one image. And linguistically, the image also combines the story's two main linguistic forms for hat. Beneath each of the four "H's" that make up the figure's body are the letters "ut," forming together the word "Hut." And "Schapo" is printed upon a bar that represents the figure's other hand, thus combining all of the representations for the story into one, cohesive figure. Here, however, the substitutional logic of the story breaks down. Though the figure is completely made up of signifiers for "hat," these signifiers come to stand in for other aspects of the figure. The word "Schapo" acts as an arm, and the various uses of "Hut" represent many different parts of the body. The figure is thus overtaken by the material signifiers for "Hut." Whatever spirit it might have been is supplanted by various versions of a hat. In contrast to the poetics of Schwitters' "i-Gedicht," which implies a resignification of the sign's meaning based upon its materiality, here, the accumulation of different ways of saying "hat" nearly overtakes the ability of the figure to be recognized as anything but a hat. As the spirit's sole narrative purpose is to retrieve the hat from the scarecrow, the proliferation and condensation of the various signifiers for "hat" in this story onto a single figure that becomes nothing but hat underscores this narrative function. Despite the spectacular complexity of the figure's appearance, it serves to reinforce the simple role the spirit plays in the story.

The scarf, too, is reclaimed by its rightful owner. In the middle of the page, an "Edelfräulein" ["lady"] who comes "als Geist" ["a ghost as well"] to retake the scarf (KS

II:167 / TS 84), is portrayed surrounded by the scarf. Her body is composed of an upside-down "A" with a triangle formed of parallel bars beneath for her skirt. Her head, like the hat spirit, consists of a hollow circle. The scarf, which in earlier pages of the story challenges the symmetry of the scarecrow, assumes a neat symmetrical form here. The pieces of type are uniformly thick on both sides of the figure, descending towards a slightly thicker point at the bottom, at which four sets of curls meet in a symmetrical, interlocking pattern. The unruly scarf, which in the earlier images often threatens the structural integrity of the scarecrow, finally assumes a stable, harmonious form. And yet, the massive size of the scarf, like the extraordinary proliferation of signifiers for "hat," occupies a significant portion of the page. Marginal elements of the scarecrow, mere accessories, dominate the last page, as the "X" of the scarecrow is nowhere to be found. While the symmetrical presentation of the scarf may thus suggest order, it is a complete reversal of the earlier, orderly presentation of the scarecrow. The scarecrow has dissolved into constituent parts, and these parts take on their own lives as signifiers and figures in the story.

Yet despite the establishment of a new order, one in which the assemblage of the scarecrow no longer obtains and the constituent parts gain their own representation and independence, the organization of the page does not suggest the stability or harmony of this order. While the symmetrical scarf at the page's center may provide the structural unity of the page, the page is by no means symmetrical. The previously mentioned diagonal arrangement of figures from the lower left-hand corner to the upper right-hand corner seems to decenter the florid scarf arrangement. While the head of the hat spirit stands at a diagonal above the head of the lady, its base begins just barely above the

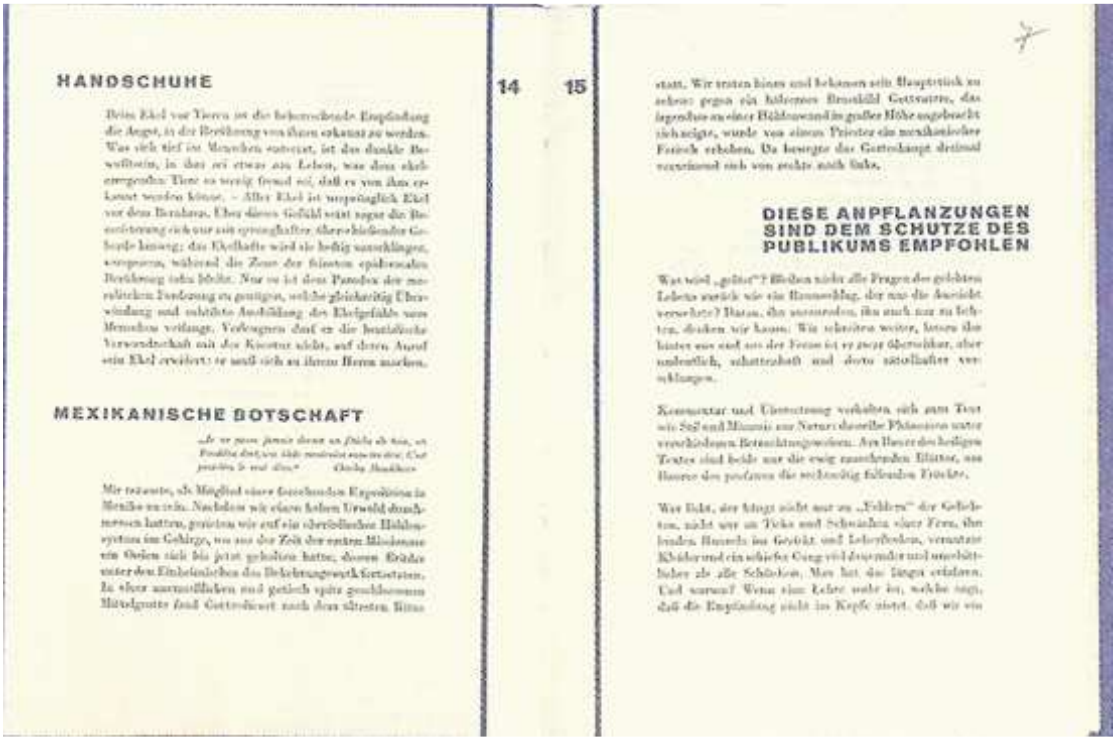
bottom of the scarf. The diagonal axis of the page thus appears interrupted, as the hat spirit only partially aligns with its expected arrangement. Along the other diagonal, one finds the word "DA" printed in both the upper left hand and lower right hand corners. At the top, the introductory "DA" is printed upright, in the normal arrangement. But at the bottom, it is printed sideways, suggesting a rotation of the page. The two Das of Dada thus frame the page, but their framings interrupt the expected ordering of the page. The last page, then, while heralding a change in order, proposes an order at risk of yet another turning, or another revolution. The text thus reintroduces the possibility of another combination of elements, a new meaning and function for a piece of type, a further expansion of the possible meanings of a sign.

As Schwitters invites the reader to turn the page, recombine the elements of the work, and continuously expand the sign, the signs become increasingly unruly, increasingly disorienting, and increasingly mobile. Schwitters animates the elements of the page in a quest for an infinite expansion of meaning, both taking advantage of the iterable qualities of print while also seeking to expand the signs of print beyond their conventional meaning. The mobility Schwitters attempts to give to the page connects him to Walter Benjamin, the subject of the next study of this chapter. Though the two authors are motivated by very different concerns, both seize upon montage's capacity to resignify existing linguistic elements and open new possibilities for poetic and critical writing.

Mobile Scripts: Literary Montage in Walter Benjamin's *One-Way Street*

In 1928, a curious book hit the market. Written by German-Jewish philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin, the book was titled *One-Way Street*. Composed of 60 snapshots of urban life, the book features short aphorisms with titles lifted directly from the city street: "Tankstelle [Filling Station]," "Zum Planetarium [To the Planetarium,]" "Mexikanische Botschaft [Mexican Embassy]," "Wegen Umbau geschlossen [Closed for Alterations]." In the original 1928 printing, these purloined signs came to stand quite literally for the houses and buildings of a city street: two thick, dark lines were printed on both sides of the gutters, resembling the traffic lines painted on a city street (Figure 18). Aside from the linguistic street printed inside the book, the dust jacket also presented a montage of the city street (Figure 21). This photomontage, prepared by avant-garde photographer Sasha Stone, a friend and associate of Benjamin's, points to one of the central structural principles in the work: the attempt to adapt principles of montage to literature.

The year 1928 also marked the appearance of Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, what would have been his *Habilitationsschrift* had his academic career continued. The typographical and aesthetic allegiance of *One-Way Street* with the avant-garde marks Benjamin's turn from academic philosophy and formal criticism to the feuilletons and the contemporary literary scene. As such, it is a work deeply concerned not only with the role of literature and criticism in modernity, but also the forms in which they are most effective. I will argue in this chapter that Benjamin develops an idiosyncratic form of literary montage that seeks to revitalize existing literary and critical



HANDSCHUHE

MEXIKANISCHE BOTSCHAFT

14 15

DIESE ANPFLANZUNGEN SIND DEM SCHUTZE DES PUBLIKUMS EMPFOHLEN

Figure 18: Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße* (Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, 1928). Universitätsbibliothek, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin.

practices to confront a rapidly changing modernity. Benjamin is inspired by the principles of montage but does not literally recreate them in literature. Rather, he seeks to develop and appropriate existing literary and linguistic practices to adapt them to a changing world and media landscape. In particular, Benjamin questions the efficacy of the printed book and seeks new material forms for literature. Benjamin, however, expresses some skepticism about the role and function of popular art and literature as found in the newspaper and advertisement. Rather than incorporating them uncritically into his work, he seeks to activate dialectically their effects, while incorporating them into a fully literary framework.

To what extent is *One-Way Street* a montage? What does montage in literature look like for Benjamin? Benjamin's commentary on montage as a literary method is found in the *Arcades Project*. There, he writes the following:

> Methode dieser Arbeit: literarische Montage. Ich habe nichts zu sagen. Nur zu zeigen. Ich werde nichts Wertvolles entwenden und mir keine geistvollen Formulierungen aneignen. Aber die Lumpen, den Abfall: die will ich nicht inventarisieren sondern sie auf die einzig mögliche Weise zu ihrem Rechte kommen lassen: sie verwenden.[181]
>
> Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them.[182]

It is difficult to recognize anything like this practice in *One-Way Street*. Saying nothing, and only showing would imply a form of quotation, a mode of reusing preexisting writing to illuminate it in a new, revelatory way. This type of quotational practice makes sense in the context of the *Arcades Project*, an incomplete pile of notes consisting mainly of copied material.[183] *One-Way Street*, however, does not consist mainly of quotation. Each

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[181] Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagenwerk*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-89), 574.

[182] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 460.

[183] Adorno believed Benjamin planned to publish the *Arcades Project* as a pure collection of quotations with no writing of his own. Rolf Tiedemann, the main editor of the *Arcades Project*, finds this unlikely, given that all existing sketches for the work mix his own writing with quotation. See Rolf Tiedemann, "Dialectics at a Standstill: Approaches to the *Passagen-Werk*," in *The Arcades Project*, 931, n. 6. For an account of how quotation relates to Benjamin's conception of history, see James L. Rolleston, "The Politics of Quotation: Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project," *PMLA* 104, no. 1 (January 1989): 13-27. Brigid Doherty has attempted to define Benjamin's notion of literary montage in the context of the *Arcades Project*. She does not privilege photomontage as I do here. Rather, she sees the development of literary montage in transformations in 19th century interiors and painting. The effect of montage is one similar to the dream or the effects of hashish:

aphoristic text, by convention called a *Denkbild*,[184] consists of a title and excursive passage, which scholarship has compared to the baroque emblem.[185] Each title is taken directly from a sign or placard on the city street. Here, Benjamin seems to quote existing signs, but he could have also possibly invented titles that only resemble such signs. Moreover, these signs are present not in their materiality, but only as copies of their

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it creates a "gesteigerte Anschaulichkeit [heightened perceptibility]" which allows for the critical investigation of history he undertakes in the *Arcades Project*. See Brigid Doherty, "The Colportage Phenomenon of Space" and the Place of Montage in *The Arcades Project*," *Germanic Review* (Winter 2006): 37-64. Quotation has become established in scholarship as a practice of literary montage or collage. See Antoine Compagnon, *Le seconde main: ou, Le travail de la citation* (Paris: Édition Seuil, 1979).

[184] Scholarship has traditionally called these sections "Denkbilder," after a collection of short texts published under that name. However, more recent scholarship has questioned whether the term applies to *One-Way Street*, as Benjamin himself used the term "Aphorismus" at first to describe the book. Nonetheless, Benjamin, in a letter to Scholem, was reluctant to call the short texts aphorisms. Despite its problematic status, I retain use of the word "Denkbild." For an argument for the tradition of the *Denkbild*, see Gerhard Richter, *Thought-Images: Frankfurt School Writers' Reflections from Damaged Life* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2007), especially the introduction. For an argument against the use of the word *Denkbild*, see Detlev Schöttker, *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus - Form und Rezeption der Schriften Walter Benjamins* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), especially the section on *One-Way Street*, 181-190. Scholarship is divided over the status of the *Bild* or picture in the *Denkbild*. Rainer Nägele, for example, argues for the translation "thought figure" to distance Benjamin's notion of the *Bild* from painterly representation. See Rainer Nägele, "Thinking Images," in *Benjamin's Ghosts: Interventions in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*, ed. Gerhard Richter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 23-40. Dieter Sdun also argues for a rhetorical understanding of *Bild*. For him, the distance between *Bild* and *Abbild* demands a non-pictorial understanding of the *Bild*. See Dieter Sdun, *Benjamins Käfer: Untersuchungen zur bildlichen Sprache Walter Benjamins im Umkreis der "Einbahnstraße"* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994).

[185] See, for example, Karoline Kirst, "Walter Benjamin's 'Denkbild': Emblematic History of the Recent Past," *Monatshefte* 86, no. 4 (Winter, 1994): 514-524. More recently, Andreas Huyssen has emphasized the connection between the *Denkbild* and the baroque emblem. For Huyssen, the suppression of the pictorial element of the emblem is evidence of an attempt to assert the representational capacities of literature in a rapidly transforming media landscape. See Andreas Huyssen, *Miniature Metropolis: Literature in an Age of Photography and Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 140-153.

content. The excursive passages, on the other hand, are significant literary creations on Benjamin's part. The passages utilize a variety of styles, including travel descriptions, short narratives, and works resembling more traditional aphorisms. If Benjamin's goal was to "appropriate no ingenious formulations," he would seem to have fallen short.

Though Benjamin remarked that his Paris project, which eventually morphed into the *Arcades Project*, shared a methodological basis with *One-Way Street*,[186] the latter cannot be unproblematically applied to the former. Yet many of the most astute readers of *One-Way Street* have identified montage as its key structuring principle. As early as the year of the work's release, Ernst Bloch described the work as "eine Art Photomontage [a kind of photomontage]."[187] Bloch's description of the work anticipates not only later scholarship on the work, but also Benjamin's description of his method in the *Arcades Project*. For Bloch, Benjamin combines his own ideas with "den Abfällen, Trümmern der Zeit [the scraps, ruins of the time]," in order to discover meanings that emerge from their juxtaposition. Here, the city signs are those overlooked, unnoticed scraps of modernity that gain new, transformative meanings when read together with Benjamin's literary excurses.

Other scholars have largely followed in Bloch's footsteps, identifying the montage character of the work through its juxtaposition of the quotidian and the literary or philosophical. For Michael Jennings, the work takes its inspiration from Dadaist

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[186] In a letter to Scholem from 30 January 1928, Benjamin announces work on a project titled "Pariser Passagen: Eine dialektische Feerie [Paris Arcades: A Dialectical Fairy Play]," which would continue the trajectory started by *One-Way Street*. Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, vol. 3, ed. Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 322.

[187] Ernst Bloch, "Revueform in der Philosophie," in Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, ed. Detlev Schöttker and Steffen Haug (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 526.

photomontage and photocollage and attempts to provide a theorization of the ready-made elements of the city through the accompanying text; in imitating the same ephemeral forms that the Dadaists made prolific use of, such as the newspaper and the placard, Benjamin seeks to fashion a new type of literary language usable for revolutionary political purposes.[188] Gerhard Richter likewise compares the method of *One-Way Street* to the historiographical method of the *Arcades Project*: the combination of forgotten or overlooked objects, in a form of "pastiche or montage," work to reveal a radical and revolutionary image of history and modernity.[189]

This tradition of thought accurately describes the structure of *One-Way Street* but does not take into account the immediate aesthetic context of late 1920s Germany. Fundamental questions, such as Benjamin's exposure to avant-garde practices of montage or his immediate sources of information, remain unanswered in this account. The work of Detlev Schöttker has made considerable strides towards a more complete account of Benjamin's relationship to the avant-garde. In relationship to *One-Way Street* in particular, Schöttker emphasizes the role that Sasha Stone's photomontage plays in the conception of the work. It provides an immediate connection to Constructivist artistic principles and also, as the most prominent example of a street in the work, solidifies the work's central unifying metaphor.[190] Andreas Huyssen also draws attention to Stone's photomontage. If the work consists of a modernized form of baroque emblems that lack

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[188] Michael Jennings, "Trugbild der Stabilität: Weimarer Politik und Montage-Theorie in Benjamins 'Einbahnstraße'," in *Global Benjamin: Internationaler Walter-Benjamin-Kongress 1992*, eds. Klaus Garber and Ludger Rehm (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1999), 525-6.
[189] Richter, *Thought Images*, 48.
[190] Schöttker, *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus*, 182, 187.

picturae, Stone's image provides, for Huyssen, a pictorial complement to the work as a whole.[191] Both Huyssen and Schöttker stress the urban context for the book and its attempt to portray a street both in the visual photomontage and the text of the work, but neither sufficiently explains the structural similarities between the two. Furthermore, neither sufficiently discusses possible connections to contemporary montage practices.

These are large questions, and it is not possible to answer them fully while also providing an adequate reading of *One-Way Street*, a work whose enigmatic construction has stymied many critics. It is my hope that the larger context of this study will help illuminate some of the discourses on and practices of montage with which Benjamin engages. In this chapter, I concentrate on the immediate context around *One-Way Street*, including some of Stone's other urban photomontages and Benjamin's texts pertaining immediately to *One-Way Street*. Daniel Weidner has criticized Benjamin reception for an overreliance on suggestive quotations, repeated endlessly in a form of critical montage.[192] Such a recirculation fails in the task of interpreting Benjamin's work, and only repeats rallying cries understood by a select few. To this end, I take seriously the task of reading Benjamin, providing extended close readings of key passages. I attempt to take *One-Way Street* seriously as a cohesive, rhetorical statement that marks a moment in Benjamin's oeuvre and deserves explanation in its own terms. In doing so, I pay attention not only to the text of the work, but also its context and material forms.

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[191] Huyssen, *Miniature Metropolis*, 149-153.
[192] Daniel Weidner, "Thinking Beyond Secularization: Walter Benjamin, the 'Religious Turn,' and the Poetics of Theory," *New German Critique* 111 (Fall 2010): 131-148; here, 137.

Locating the Street in *One-Way Street*

Is *One-Way Street* an actual street? In place of a dedication, the work, Benjamin provides a name for the street: "Diese Strasse heisst Asja-Lacis-Strasse nach der die sie als Ingenieur im Autor durchgebrochen hat [This street is named Asja Lacis Street after her who as an engineer cut it through the author]."[193] This dedication to Latvian actress Asja Lacis, with whom Benjamin was romantically involved around the time of the work's composition, not only names the street but also suggests urban transformation. The figure of the engineer was a frequent hero in Weimar avant-garde circles,[194] and the act of "cut[ting] through" implies recent and significant change. The two dark lines printed along the central gutter of each spread (Figure 18) recall traffic lines painted on city streets. In this context, the *Denkbilder* become the houses along the street, with each title a sign inviting the reader to enter. But is it a one-way street? There seems to be no necessary logical form to their ordering, and it would not be hard to imagine them in a different order. The reader, like a flaneur,[195] can peruse the various texts of the book, stopping in at those that interest her and passing by those that do not. The term *One-Way Street* is strange in this context, for such traffic control signs apply only to automobiles. If the frequent comparison between the flaneur and the reader of *One-Way Street* holds, it

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[193] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 9. Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 2, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 444.

[194] See Frank Trommler, "The Avant-Garde and Technology: Toward Technological Fundamentalism in Turn-of-the-Century Europe," *Science in Context* 8, no. 2 (1995): 397-416.

[195] Anke Gleber has identified the gender bias inherent in the notion of *flânerie*. She argues that the flâneur is assumed male and that the idea of a flâneuse can only exist under certain conditions. For the sections relevant to Benjamin, see Anke Gleber, "Women on the Streets and Screens of Modernity: In Search of the Female Flaneur," in *The Art of Taking A Walk: Flanerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 171-189.

would seem the work envisions a street caught in a moment of change. On the one hand, the text has a set order, as a street has to set a direction for traffic. On the other hand, the reader is seemingly invited to transgress that order, as a flaneur can flaunt whatever order traffic signs force upon the street.

How did *One-Way Street* get its title and central metaphor? Benjamin did not begin the work with the goal of textual flânerie. In fact, the original plan for the book emphasized its medial status as a brochure. In a letter to Scholem from 22 December 1924, Benjamin describes his plans for a "Plakette für Freunde" [Pamphlet for Friends]:

> Ich bereite (als Privatdruck oder käufliche Erscheinung) vor: "Plakette für Freunde". (Plaquette ist in Frankreich ein schmales broschiertes Sonderheftchen mit Gedichten oder ähnlichem – ein terminus technicus der Buchhändler). In mehreren Kapiteln, die je als einzige Überschrift den Namen eines mir Nahestehenden tragen, will ich meine Aphorismen, Scherze, Träume versammeln.[196]
>
> [I am preparing (as a private publication or publication for purchase) a work: "Plaquette for Friends." (In France, plaquette is a slim, soft-bound special edition with poems or something similar – a bookseller's term of art). In several chapters, each carrying as their only title the name of someone close to me, I plan to collect my aphorisms, jokes, dreams.]

Benjamin's original plan for *One-Way Street* emphasizes the physical format and size of the book and would have structured the work according to his personal relationships. The content of what would become *One-Way Street* is largely recognizable from this description. It is indeed largely composed of aphorisms, short humorous pieces, and dream narratives. The book, however, bears little traces of his planned dedications. Only the work's dedication to Asja Lacis, and possibly the inclusion of Stone's name on the

[196] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, III:367.

dust jacket, betray this original plan, and even these can no longer be separated from the street metaphor.

Materially, however, Benjamin's original conception largely holds true. The first edition of the book, with just eighty-three small pages, is a small, portable book. Indeed, Eckhardt Köhn has questioned whether "book" is even an appropriate term for a work that so clearly imitates the pamphlet or brochure in its form.[197] The visual attention of the book's pages, with the dark lines along the gutters, suggests this is a book whose physical characteristics contribute to its argument as much as its text. As a well-known bibliophile, Benjamin would certainly have been attentive to the implications of the book's format. That he would go so far to use a book dealer's term of art to title is book highlights the fact that this is a book that, from its very conception, is concerned with the possibilities and limits offered by the material forms of print.

In a letter to Scholem dated 29 May 1926, Benjamin announces a new title for the work: "Straße gesperrt! [Street closed!]."[198] Benjamin admits this title is only the most recent of many, suggesting many undocumented changes in the project's scope. Less than a month later, in a letter dated 15 July 1926 to Siegfried Kracauer, Benjamin announces the final title of the work.[199] By 18 September, the work was finished.[200] This quick turn of events suggests that the street-like construction of the work emerged relatively late in the writing process. If Benjamin had indeed been working on the work

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[197] Eckhardt Köhn, "'Nichts gegen die Illustrierte!' Benjamin, der Berliner Konstruktivismus und das avantgardistische Objekt," in *Schrift Bilder Denken: Walter Benjamin und die Künste*, ed. Detlev Schöttker (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 48-69.
[198] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, III:161.
[199] Ibid, III:181.
[200] Ibid, III:197.

for a year and a half before coming to something resembling the final title, then the idea of the work as a street may have only informed the final stages of writing. Indeed, the earliest published excerpts from the work, "Dreizehn Thesen wider Snobisten [Thirteen Theses against Snobs]" and "Die Technik des Schriftstellers in dreizehn Thesen [The Critics's Technique in Thirteen Theses]" focus more on the technical aspect of making and reviewing books.[201] They describe the process of writing and criticism itself, with the use of the word "theses" in their title recalling Martin Luther's nailing of the ninety-five theses to the Wittenberg church door, a foundational myth of textual circulation.[202]

Here it is worth considering briefly the limitations of the work's central metaphor. Benjamin published a number of the work's texts in newspapers before and after the book publication. Clearly, the texts are not entirely dependent on the structural metaphors of the book, but can also be read independently. Moreover, Benjamin continued working on the project after its publication. In a letter to Kracauer, Benjamin mentions several "Anbauten zur 'Einbahnstraße' [annexes to *One-Way Street*],"[203] which are documented in a manuscript "Nachtragsliste zur Einbahnstraße [List of Additions to *One-Way Street*]."[204] While Benjamin published several works from this list during his lifetime, he

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[201] For Patrizia McBride, the technique of writing remains the central theme of the book; she reads *One-Way Street* as a guide to training the body for activist literature. See Patrizia McBride, "*Konstruktion als Bildung*: Refashioning the Human in German Constructivism," *The Germanic Review* 88 (2013): 233-247.
[202] Though the theses were likely printed and circulated in Wittenberg, as was customary for a disputation, the alleged hammering of the theses likely never happened. See, as a general overview, Daniel Jütte, "Schwang Luther 1517 tatsächlich den Hammer?" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 18, 2014.
[203] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, III:339.
[204] This list is reproduced in Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 264.

never republished the work with these additions. Additionally, several works in the list, such as "Der destruktive Charakter [The Destructive Character]," "Die Ferne und die Bilder [Distance and Images]," or "Vom Glauben an die Dinge, die man uns weissagt [On the Belief in Things That Are Predicted]," do not seem to be drawn from the urban street. It is possible these were working titles. It is additionally possible Benjamin planned some new conception of the work. Benjamin's *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert* [*Berlin Childhood around 1900*] famously underwent many numerous forms and orderings, so it is conceivable Benjamin also planned a reordering and refashioning of *One-Way Street*.

Nonetheless, this does not make it impossible to analyze the project as it took shape in 1928. Even if Benjamin planned an extension or reworking of the work, its structure influenced large parts of his oeuvre. Shortly after completion of *One-Way Street*, Benjamin mentions a project on "Pariser Straßen [Paris Streets]" that would have continued the principles inaugurated in *One-Way Street*, This work, which never came to be in that form, represents the earliest work on the *Passagenwerk* [Arcades Project], which many scholars consider a continuation of certain principles from *One-Way Street*.[205] Michael Jennings has even gone so far to argue that the *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert* is a second version of *One-Way Street*, repeating many of its structural peculiarities.[206] While I will not take up such conjectures here, the many different possible continuations of the work point to the resistance of Benjamin's writing to fixed,

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[205] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, III:322.
[206] Michael W Jennings, "Double Take: Palimpsestic Writing and Image-Character in Benjamin's Late Prose," *Benjamin Studien* 2 (2011): 33-44.

final forms. In fact, it would seem his continued work on the project and his publication of individual texts in newspapers contradicts any attempt to understand the work as a cohesive bibliographic project.

Such iterability and transformability is foreign to the book, but not necessarily to the brochure. A thin, soft-bound pamphlet like Benjamin describes to Scholem is not designed for weighty, eternal truths, but for contingent, timely interventions. Rather, it is a book of the moment, one that, due to its small size, can be reprinted, reworked, refashioned as needed. While *One-Way Street* was only printed once in Benjamin's life, the medial appeal of its material form suggests multiplicity and mobility, rather than singularity and fixity.

The material features of the book are clearly important, but leave unanswered the question of what is at stake in the equation of the book's pages with a city street. On the face of it, the book seems to have little to do with urban planning or life in the big city. Aside from the titles to the individual texts, the majority of the texts do not seem immediately informed by the work's central metaphor. Rather, they deal with an expansive range of topics including the dream, childhood, techniques of writing, hyperinflation, and nineteenth century interiors. Are these texts informed significantly by their structural framing?

Before answering this question, it may help to consider whether contemporary reviewers were able to make sense of the work. While the book's construction as a street may inform its material status and organization, the significance of this was not always obvious to its first readers. Otto Stoessl, in a review published on 12 November 1928 in the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, praised *One-Way Street* for "die angenehmste Klarheit,

die anmutigste Bildlichkeit und Bedeutsamkeit von Wort und Gedanken, eine wahrhaft musikalische Führung von Satz und Sinn [the most pleasant clarity, the most graceful imagery and significance of word and thought, a truly musical command of sentence and meaning]" in the work's prose.[207] Nonetheless, Stoessl took exception both to Stone's photomontage and to the street metaphor, denigrating the use of the photomontage's street imagery, with "Betonsäulen[,] elektrischen Lampen, Firmentafeln [concrete columns, electric lights, signs for companies]" denigrated as a mere attempt to appear "modern."[208] Stoessl could not reconcile the text's polished language and philosophical content with the appeal to technological modernity made by the street metaphor. On the other hand, an anonymous reviewer in the *Neue Badische Landeszeitung* from 23 July 1928 seems to praise the concept of the book while attacking its prose style. The reviewer expresses some ambivalence, but possibly mild enthusiasm or interest, about the concept: "Benjamin […] geht durch eine Einbahnstraße in einer großen Stadt – es müßte nicht gerade eine Einbahnstraße sein, aber der Titel klingt gut! [Benjamin walks down a one-way street in a large city – it doesn't necessarily have to be a one-way street, but the title sounds good!].[209] However, the reviewer has difficulty with the difficult language and style of the book, which would be better "in verständliches Deutsch übersetzt [translated into comprehensible German]."[210] Both reviewers here struggle to find coherence in the work, failing to relate form and content.

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[207] Otto Stoessl, "Zwei Bücher von Walter Benjamin. 'Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels' und 'Einbahnstraße', beide bei Ernst Rowohlt, Berlin," in *Einbahnstraße*, 534-537; here, 537.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Hbg., "Einbahnstraße," in *Einbahnstraße*, 524-525; here, 524.
[210] Ibid, 525.

Other reviewers, however, picked up on the significance of both the street metaphor and the dust jacket. A reviewer, J. N., in *Die Welt am Abend* from 9 February 1928 recognizes the necessity of the work's form: "Die Plakate, Firmenschilder und Richtungstafeln der Großstadt sind dem Verfasser die geometrischen Gerüste, an denen sich die Kristalle seiner Gedanken bilden [the placards, business signboards, and direction signs of the metropolis are for the author the geometric scaffolding on which the crystals of his thoughts develop."[211] For this reviewer, the philosophical content of the book uses its urban setting and form as a necessary condition for its development. Yet, J. N.'s claim that the book is a "Scheinwerfer […] mit blendendem Lichte revolutionärer Einsicht [spotlight with blinding light of revolutionary insight] and will find its readers "in proletarischen Kreisen [in proletarian circles]" leads one to question how much of the admittedly difficult book the reviewer read.[212]

Some of Benjamin's closer friends and associates also reviewed the book and came much closer to an understanding of its structure. For example, Franz Hessel writes the following in his review:

> Aus seinen [Benjamins] Worten spricht dauernde Einladung, mitzutun, mitzudenken. All die starren Schilder, die Überzeugungen, müssen herhalten zu neuer zerschlagender Deutung. Seine Revanche an der Banalität der Affiche ist grausam, aber dem echten Denker müssen alle Schilder zum Besten dienen. Er liest seine Politeia vom Feuermelder, weissagt aus einem Kaiserpanorama die Inflation, liefert Marseille, Stadt und Hafen, als "Stückgut" auf einen Speicher. Wir lernen Weltgeschichte an Briefmarken, Geographie im Frachtdampfer, bei der Kartenschlägerin Ethik, Ethnologie in der Kinderstube.[213]

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[211] J. N., "Walter Benjamin: Einbahnstraße," in *Einbahnstraße*, 507.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Franz Hessel, "Walter Benjamin: Einbahnstraße" in *Einbahnstraße*, 511-513; here, 512.

> [The constant invitation to participate, think actively, finds its voice in Benjamin's words. All these rigid signs, convictions must submit to new, destructive interpretation. His revenge against the banality of the posters is gruesome, but all signs have to serve the true thinker as best as they can. He reads his politeia from the fire alarm, divines inflation from an imperial panorama, delivers Marseille, both the city and the port, as "cargo" in a storehouse. We learn world history on stamps, geography in the cargo steamer, ethics from the card reader, ethnology in the nursery.]

For Hessel, Benjamin's book transforms the banal objects of urban modernity into philosophical and historical reflections. These everyday items provide the impetus for the book's discourse, but they are also fundamentally changed in the process. They become not mere objects of use, but speak for larger social and historical contingencies. Importantly, the book not only presents this form of philosophical illumination, but also models its use and implementation. The reader who participates and thinks alongside Benjamin will learn a new method of interpretation that promises to make sense of the confusing phenomena of modernity.

For Hessel, the work's construction as a street in language is significant: it models a mode of approaching things—"an die Dinge herangehen"[214]—and interacting with the physical world as a basis for philosophy. Here, Hessel also considers the role of Stone's dust jacket: "*Sascha* [sic] *Stone*, unser bester Techniker der Photomontage, hat den Einband gemacht: Anschauungsbilder zu einem Lehrbuch, das uns Lust macht, in die Sexta des Lebens zu gehn [*Sasha Stone*, our best technician of photomontage, made the cover: illustrative figures for a textbook that entices us to enter the fifth grade of life]."[215] If the book teaches the reader a new philosophical method, the dust jacket serves as an illustration or visualization of that method.

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[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid, 513.

Hessel finds the same illustrative illumination of quotidian modernity in Stone's photomontage as he finds in Benjamin's text. Stone's cover would be a demonstration or visualization of the principles at work in the text. But what greater philosophical or historical insight does Stone wish to draw out of the street signs that appear on the dust jacket? It is not immediately obvious from Hessel's review how far this comparison reaches. Before the relationship between the dust jacket and the text can be more fully considered, I first will take up Hessel's contention that the work approaching and coming to terms with the surface phenomena of modernity.

Gas Stations, One-Way Streets, and New Urban Phenomena

One-Way Street confronts the reader immediately with several unmistakable signs of the urban city street. After Stone's photomontage and the christening of the book as "Asja-Lacis-Straße," the first *Denkbild* confronts the reader with the title "Tankstelle [Filling Station]." The title immediately underscores the historical contingency of the work as a response to immediate changes and developments. Like a one-way street, a type of road only necessary after the mass introduction of the automobile, gas stations would have been a relatively new phenomenon in Weimar Germany, with the first gas stations appearing towards the end of 1924.[216] The work, in its dust jacket, title, dedication, and first text, confronts the changing face of modernity right from its onset, presenting the reader not with unchanging facets of the city but with its newest developments and changes.

[216] Schöttker, *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus*, 187.

Importantly, these new phenomena are not taken as given, but rather require interpretation and contextualization. This is not to say that the individual texts provide this interpretation. Rather, they operate at a level of abstraction, bringing the newest objects of modernity into dialogue with historical, philosophical, and critical discourses. The text of "Tankstelle" is illuminating:

> Die Konstruktion des Lebens liegt im Augenblick weit mehr in der Gewalt von Fakten als von Überzeugungen. Und zwar von solchen Fakten, wie sie zur Grundlage von Überzeugungen fast nie noch und nirgend geworden sind. Unter diesen Umständen kann wahre literarische Aktivität nicht beanspruchen, in literarischem Rahmen sich abzuspielen – vielmehr ist das der übliche Ausdruck ihrer Unfruchtbarkeit. Die bedeutende literarische Wirksamkeit kann nur in strengem Wechsel von Tun und Schreiben zustande kommen; sie muß die unscheinbaren Formen, die ihrem Einfluß in tätigen Gemeinschaften besser entsprechen als die anspruchsvolle universale Geste des Buches in Flugblättern, Broschüren, Zeitschriftartikeln und Plakaten ausbilden. Nur diese prompte Sprache zeigt sich dem Augenblick wirkend gewachsen. Meinungen sind für den Riesenapparat des gesellschaftlichen Lebens, was Öl für Maschinen: man stellt sich nicht vor eine Turbine und übergießt sie mit Maschinenöl. Man spritzt ein wenig davon in verborgene Nieten und Fugen, die man kennen muß.[217]
>
> [The construction of life is at the present in the power far more of facts than of convictions, and of such facts as have scarcely ever become the basis of convictions. Under these circumstances, true literary activity cannot aspire to take place within a literary framework; this is, rather, the habitual expression of its sterility. Significant literary effectiveness can come into being only in a strict alternation between acting and writing; it must nurture the inconspicuous forms that fit its influence in active communities better than does the pretentious, universal gesture of the book—in leaflets, brochures, articles, and placards. Only this prompt language shows itself actively equal to the moment. Opinions are to the vast apparatus of social existence what oil is to machines: one does not go up to a turbine and pour machine oil over it; one applies a little to hidden spindles and joints that one has to know.][218]

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[217] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 11.
[218] Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 444.

The reader expecting a description of something resembling a gas station will be disappointed here. Only at the end of the text does Benjamin bring up anything related to an automobile, but he does not mention fuel or even a car specifically, but oil and machines generally. If the reader expects to learn the art of criticism at the gas pump, as Hessel might suggest, the text does not provide an easy guide for us, yet a careful reading of the text provides some coherence between the frame, the individual text, and the work's material form.

The passage begins with reference to "Konstruktion," a term drawn from the architectonic urban changes that inform the work's central metaphor. As Patrizia McBride has argued, *Konstruktion* during the Weimar Republic signaled an allegiance between art and technology, "a fully exteriorized notion of poiesis, that is, a kind of making that conceived of experience as a surface endlessly inscribed by the interaction of technology and perception."[219] It is important to note this notion of *Konstruktion* was promoted directly by leading figures of Constructivism such as Jan Tschichold, whose typographic principles influenced the final design of *One-Way Street*.[220] Benjamin's use of construction here however is simultaneously a statement of aesthetic commitments as well as a claim about the limits of knowledge and discourse in social society. Specifically, Benjamin refers to the "Konstruktion des Lebens [construction of life]",

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[219] Patrizia McBride, "*Konstruktion als Bildung*," 236.

[220] Jan Tschichold's full statement on Constructivist typographical principles is found in Jan Tschichold, *Die neue Typographie. Ein Handbuch für zeitgemäß Schaffende* (Berlin: Verlag des Bildungsverbandes der Deutschen Buchdrucker, 1928). For an overview of Tschichold's typographical principles and their relationship to modernity, see Peter Storkerson, "Jan Tschichold and the Language of Modernism," *Visible Language* 30, no. 3 (1996): 314-39.

implying life and society are subject to the same principles of composition as technology and art. That is to say, experience and discourse emerge not as organic developments but as constructs developing not from universal principles ("Überzeugungen [convictions]"), but from contingent, isolated points of experience ("Fakten [facts]").

Here, the main thrust of the text comes into focus. If literature as such, understood here as the bourgeois tradition of the realist and later naturalist novel, makes meaning through the expression of grand ideas and exemplary narratives, it has no capacity to assert any transformative power in a fractured society informed not so much by presumed universal ideals but by the reports of the daily newspaper. In such a context, literature must fundamentally change if it hopes to retain a meaningful role in society. To this end, Benjamin recommends it adopt mobile forms better suited to the activity and speed of modernity. These ephemeral forms, in contrast to the weighty immobility of the book, are better suited to intervene critically in contemporary discourse. If a gas station serves to help maintain a car, providing fuel and necessary mechanical intervention, these ephemeral critical interventions provide a similar jump-start to discourse.

This first text thus juxtaposes the work's two essential structural features. On the one hand, it transforms a ready-made item from the city street into a critical reflection on the present state of literature. In using a gas station, an urban phenomenon that is only beginning to become a prominent feature of the street, it highlights the changing surface appearance of modernity; that this new phenomenon appears as a source of critical discourse suggests the urgent need to adopt a mode of writing that also suggests mobility, alterability, and iterability. Quick forms that can be deployed and redeployed at will are

necessary to respond to an active, quickly moving modernity. The linking of adaptable forms of print and the newest technological achievements of urban, capitalist society provides a means for producing criticism that can keep pace with the latest developments. Changes are not inscrutable and incomprehensible, nor are they mere surface phenomena. Rather, they are active interstices for critical reflection on a changing society. The book's form, suggesting a brochure rather than a heavy tome, presents Benjamin's text itself as a timely critical intervention.

A standard account of a prompt, fluid criticism capable of keeping pace with modernity is often provided via the aphorism "Diese Flächen sind zu vermieten [This Space for Rent]." I briefly recount the major points of this text and its vision for criticism, despite this wealth of critical commentary, in order to emphasize the extent to which Benjamin's reformulation of criticism goes hand-in-hand with a reconsideration of the role of print and the book in modernity. The text begins with a diagnosis of the imminent end of criticism:

> Narren, die den Verfall der Kritik beklagen. Denn deren Stunde ist längst abgelaufen. Kritik ist eine Sache des rechten Abstands. Sie ist in einer Welt zu Hause, wo es auf Perspektiven und Prospekte ankommt und einen Standpunkt einzunehmen noch möglich war. Die Dinge sind indessen viel zu brennend der menschlichen Gesellschaft auf den Leib gerückt. Die 'Unbefangenheit' der 'freie Blick' sind Lüge, wenn nicht der ganz naive Ausdruck planer Unzuständigkeit geworden.[221]
>
> [Fools lament the decay of criticism. For its day is long past. Criticism is a matter of correct distancing. It was at home in a world where perspectives and prospects counted and where it was still possible to adopt a standpoint. Now things press to urgently on human society. Impartiality, the unclouded eye has become a lie, if not the quite naïve expression of planar incompetence.][222]

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[221] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 59.
[222] Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 476, translation modified.

The text begins by consigning criticism to an irrecoverable past. For Benjamin, this historical mode of criticism requires the ability to distance oneself from one's object of study and adopt an analytical—here, geometrical—point of view. In the new conditions of modernity, however, such distance is impossible, a point that comes across much more strongly in Benjamin's original German. For modern objects of criticism press "viel zu brennend der menschlichen Gesellschaft auf den Leib," literally "far too blazingly on the body of human society." Modernity collapses distance, forcing objects upon the observer. Benjamin employs several geometric metaphors—"Perspektiven [perspectives]," "Prospekte [prospects]," "plane[.] Unzuständigkeit [planar incompetence]"—which further emphasize the necessary change in approach: if the book is premised on a view of knowledge in which objects can be discretely observed, measured, and studied in calm reflection, modernity, which forecloses such a point of view, requires a fundamental reconceptualization of what the production of knowledge is.

If traditional forms of knowledge production and criticism are no longer productive, what alternative does Benjamin propose? Benjamin turns towards the advertisement for inspiration:

> Der heute wesenhafteste, der merkantile Blick ins Herz der Dinge heißt Reklame. Sie reißt den freien Spielraum der Betrachtung nieder und rückt die Dinge so gefährlich nah uns vor die Stirn, wie aus dem Kinorahmen ein Auto, riesig anwachsend, auf uns zu zittert. Und wie das Kino Möbel und Fassaden nicht in vollendeten Figuren einer kritischen Betrachtung vorführt, sondern allein ihre sture, sprunghafte Nähe sensationell ist, so kurbelt echte Reklame die Dinge heran und hat ein Tempo, das dem guten Film entspricht.[223]

[223] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 59-60.

> [Today, the most real, mercantile gaze into the heart of things is called advertisement. It tears down the free play of contemplation and, and all but hits us between the eyes with things as a car, growing to gigantic proportions, careens at us out of a film screen. And just as the film does not present furniture and façades in completed form for critical inspection, their insistent, jerky nearness alone being sensational, the genuine advertisement hurls things at us with the tempo of a good film.][224]

If the objects of modernity collapse distance between themselves and the observer, pressing themselves upon society's metaphorical body, advertisement goes further, penetrating "ins Herz der Dinge [into the heart of things]." It is easy to read Benjamin's take on advertisement and film as wholly negative. In many ways, the rupture of critical facility that occurs in film and advertisement anticipates the criticism of the *Kulturindustrie* performed by Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[225] There are reasons, however, to believe Benjamin's view is much more ambivalent. For one, Constructivist artists with whom Benjamin collaborated, including Stone, frequently worked as commercial artists. Kurt Schwitters, whose literary montage practices are discussed in chapter two of this study, saw a significant connection between his works in typography and commercial graphic design.[226] Likewise, Stone used many of the same

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[224] Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 476, translation modified.
[225] Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94-136.
[226] For a full account of Schwitters' typographical works, both commercial and otherwise, see ed. Volker Rattemeyer, Dietrich Helms, and Konrad Matschke, *Kurt Schwitters: Typographie und Werbegestaltung*, vol. 1, *"Typographie kann unter Umständen Kunst sein"* (Wiesbaden: Museum Wiesbaden, 1990). For an account that considers his commercial works specifically in the context of the New Typography, see Maud Lavin, "Advertising Utopia: Schwitters as Commercial Designer," *Art in America* 73, no. 10 (1985): 134-139.

principles and compositional techniques in both of his artistic and commercial oeuvres.[227] To argue that the principles of advertisement were only a negative misses the critical possibilities for formal and stylistic innovation.

Indeed, the entire work of *One-Way Street*, at some level, bears traces of commercial art and graphic design. The brochure or pamphlet is well suited not only for the quick distribution of information, but also for advertisements. While Benjamin refers to the format as a "plaquette," a term that primarily governs the size of the work, the typographical arrangement of the book suggests the visual strategies of commercial brochures. Additionally, the choice of Stone's photomontage for the dust jacket underscores a certain affinity with the works of commercial art. Not only does a dust jacket serve primarily as a marketing tool for the book, the typographical innovations used in the dust jacket were also used in Stone's commercial work. The material forms of the work engage with key features of contemporary advertisement.

But while advertisement may have potentially positive uses, Benjamin also emphasizes its clear negatives. Advertisement, too, collapses the distance between observer and object of study, tearing down "den freien Spielraum der Betrachtung [the free play of imagination]," a phrase which recalls Kant's "freie[s] Spiel[.]" [free play] of the faculties of imagination and understanding necessary for any aesthetic judgment.[228] The very possibilities for criticism and philosophical thought as they have existed since

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[227] For an overview of Stone's commercial works, see Birgit Hammers, "*Sasha Stone sieht noch mehr": Ein Fotograf zwischen Kunst und Kommerz* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2014), 34-43.

[228] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, in Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Akademieausgabe, 1911), 217.

the Enlightenment are no longer possible. The redemptive use of advertisement therefore lies in its alternative use:

> Was macht zuletzt Reklame der Kritik so überlegen? Nicht was die rote elektrische Laufschrift sagt – die Feuerlache, die auf dem Asphalt sie spiegelt.[229]
>
> [What, in the end, makes advertisement so superior to criticism? Not what the moving red neon sign says – the fiery pool reflecting it in the asphalt.][230]

Advertisement is only useful for criticism to the extent that it can be estranged in some way from its context. Benjamin juxtaposes the conventional and critical uses of advertisement without the use of a conjunction, placing merely a dash between the two ideas. In this paratactic construction, the reader must supply the missing logical connection. Superficially, this bears resemblance to montage practices, in which the juxtaposition of two unlike objects requires critical engagement on the part of the viewer.[231] Importantly, though, Benjamin's idea goes beyond mere juxtaposition. In reflecting the sign, the puddle on the street takes on some of its characteristics. It appears fiery, illuminated by the red of the sign. This transformation mirrors the interaction of literature with advertisement. Their juxtaposition reveals, dialectically, another side to the advertisement that can be made useful for criticism. I will return later in this chapter to the question of whether montage implies a semiotic transformation for Benjamin, as the example of the puddle seems to suggest. For now, it suffices to say advertisement can

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[229] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 60.
[230] Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 476.
[231] For an example of an attempt to read *One-Way Street* in terms of Benjamin's theory of allegory, see Stefan Bub, *Sinnenlust des Beschreibens: Mimetische und allegorische Gestaltung in der Prosa Walter Benjamins* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1993).

reengage critical facilities and the task of criticism insofar as it moves to a new context and provides this new context with some of its essential features.

One can compare the opposition between traditional criticism and this new form of criticism to the opposition of book and brochure in "Pumping Station:" if ephemeral forms are favored because they allow for small but timely interventions, the book fails because its organic structure, in which universal principles unfold into grand narratives or philosophical treatises—what Benjamin terms the "universale Geste des Buches [universal gesture of the book]"[232]—cannot adequately respond to the uncertain conditions of modernity. If the book has failed literature, the philosophical treatise, which takes its time to lay out universal principles and ideas in quiet, measured reflection of phenomena, has failed philosophy and criticism. While it is easy to read "This Space for Rent" as a mere call for a new form of writing—a manifesto of the *Denkbild*—, it also carries implications for the medium and format of writing. If advertisement is superior to criticism, it is superior not only because of the immediacy at which it conveys ideas, but also due to its medial and formal features. Notably, emphasizes it is not "was die […] Laufschrift *sagt* [what the {…} neon sign *says*]," but rather the visual effects it produces in reflection. Its content is in that regard insignificant, and its presentation of ideas, and the ways in which that presentation can be altered through different contexts, is what matters. The reflection of the advertisement in the puddle reveals its critical potential for use in a new mode of criticism, a dialectical reverse that can be used for literature.[233]

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[232] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 11.

[233] Gerhard Richter reads this passage in much the same way, focusing on the dialectical *Revers* revealed through the juxtaposition of the everyday and the philosophical in *One-Way Street*. Note that my argument differs from him through its emphasis on this

If this change in context is all that Benjamin means by montage, then it would seem he had not learned much from the avant-garde circles in which he moved. In the next section, I will consider whether *One-Way Street* contains a theory of montage and the extent to which this theory corresponds to his writing practice.

Theories of Montage in *One-Way Street*

In the appropriation of the means of advertisement for critical purposes, one again returns to the question of the role of montage in the work. One has seen that the surprising juxtaposition of ideas within a *Denkbild* resembles montage. Such an appropriation of the effects of montage, but not its formal elements, would not seem to explain the full extent to which the principle of montage informs this work. As discussed above, the work does involve the use of ready-made signs and posters from the street, but present only in their linguistic, not material, form. The reuse of this material goes beyond the mere effects of montage, also imitating some of its practices.

The description of montage in the *Arcades Project*, discussed above, defines literary montage as finding use for "die Lumpen, den Abfall [the rags, the detritus]."[234] Benjamin provides an early form of this method for the alternative use of waste products in the aphorism "Baustelle [Construction Site]." The text describes the difficulties of producing toys for children. Again, a critique of attempts "[s]eit der Aufklärung [since the Enlightenment]"[235] to provide a rational account of the world, Benjamin argues any attempt to provide tools that aid childhood development will fail due to a failure to

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dialectical *Revers* not only as a philosophical condition, but also as a formal and material property of literature. See Gerhard Richter, *Thought-Images*, 45-52.

[234] Benjamin, *Passagenwerk*, 574.

[235] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 19.

recognize the unique relationship of children to the world. Benjamin, following in a tradition since Romanticism, envisions childhood not only as a stage of life, but also as a philosophical category describing a particular disposition to the world.

Benjamin describes children's particular form of play as follows:

> Kinder nämlich sind auf besondere Weise geneigt, jedwede Arbeitsstätte aufzusuchen, wo sichtbar die Betätigung an Dingen vor sich geht. Sie fühlen sich unwiderstehlich vom Abfall angezogen, der beim Bauen, bei Garten- oder Hausarbeiten, beim Schneidern oder Tischlern entsteht. In Abfallprodukten erkennen sie das Gesicht, das die Dingwelt gerade ihnen, ihnen allein, zukehrt. In ihnen bilden sie die Werke der Erwachsenen weniger nach, als daß sie Stoffe sehr verschiedener Art durch das, was sie im Spiel daraus verfertigen, in eine neue, sprunghafte Beziehung zueinander setzen. Kinder bilden sich damit ihre Dingwelt, eine kleine in der großen, selbst.[236]
>
> [For children are particularly fond of haunting any site where things are visibly being worked on. They are irresistibly drawn by the detritus generated by building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry. In waste products they recognize the face that the world of things turns directly and solely to them. In using these things, they do not so much imitate the works of adults as bring together, in the artifact produced in play, materials of widely differing kinds in a new, capricious relationship. Children thus produce their own small world of things within the greater one.][237]

In rejecting finished objects, children adopt a technician's or craftsperson's approach to the world. They are less interested in finished products, as representations or transformations of things, and more in the manipulation of things as physical objects—here, "die Betätigung an Dingen"—as such. Here, waste products are of greater interest than finished products precisely because waste products signify nothing other than the process itself. This is to say, while a finished product goes on to serve another purpose, a

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[236] Ibid.
[237] Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 449-50, translation modified.

waste product, generally, is assigned no other function. It remains only as a trace of the process which produced it and thus carries a far greater connection to that process than the finished product. When considering a finished product, one may only occasionally ask how it was made. A waste product, on the other hand, is physical evidence of that process.

Like Döblin, discussed in the next chapter of this study, Benjamin's understanding of montage highlights the conditions under which it was created. Through emphasizing waste, it requires, at least conceptually, a return to the moment of composition or the scene of creation. The many texts in *One-Way Street* that discuss the craft of writing attest to the significance of process for this text and Benjamin's notion of montage more generally. However, while for Döblin, the juxtaposition of different texts makes the reader aware of the cut-and-paste process by which the work was created, the reader has difficulty imagining any special process by which Benjamin composed *One-Way Street*. Moreover, unlike the works of the Dadaists or Kurt Schwitters, discussed in chapters one and two, where the use of unusual features of print highlight the circumstances of the work's production, the central metaphors of this text return us neither to the print shop nor to the writer's desk. Rather, it uses the idea of process not literally, as the other authors in this work do, but rather to reflect upon the representational conditions that inform the production and reception of literature.

Children's interest in detritus allows them not only to view the technical and mechanical processes of work directly, they also allow for a new mode of

representation.[238] In playing with detritus, children do not imitate the work of adults directly. They do not attempt to recreate or represent the work of adults or the resulting products. Rather, they use these products to create their own "Dingwelt [world of things]," which is not a mere copy or representation of the larger world of things, but something altogether different. They accomplish this through principles that again recall the work of montage, taking these waste objects and putting them "in eine neue, sprunghafte Beziehung [in a new, capricious relationship]." The word *sprunghaft* is operative here. Deriving from "Sprung," which can refer both to the activity of jumping but also to a fissure or rip, the word implies a suddenness or abruptness to the relationship.[239] It recalls the sudden juxtaposition of two disparate elements in montage, but also points to the odd juxtaposition of titles and texts for the various *Denkbilder* in *One-Way Street*.

For the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin will use this form of montage to shine light upon those unusual, marginal sources and create a new image of history. As Gerhard Richter argues, Benjamin, the "ragpicker and garbage collector of history," uses a "strategic poetic montage, in which the neglected debris of history is placed into a new grammatical constellation" so that "a revolutionary image [of history] emerges."[240] *One-Way Street*, however, is not yet the *Arcades Project*, and it seems less concerned with the

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[238] For Michael Jennings, this mode of alternative use also has implications for political representation; he reads it as a commentary on the failed political revolution of the Weimar Republic which merely recirculated elements of the German Empire without altering their conditions of use. See Jennings, "Trugbild der Stabilität," 527.
[239] For Gerhard Richter, *Sprunghaftigkeit* is a fundamental characteristic of the dialectical image, the counterpart to the *Denkbild* Benjamin develops for the *Arcades Project*. See Richter, *Thought-Images*, 62-3.
[240] Ibid, 47.

problem of writing history and more concerned with finding a mode of analysis suited to a shifting, ever-changing modernity. It is a work that concerns the realization that the methods of knowledge production that seem to have served Western society since the Enlightenment provide no means for coming to terms with the contradictions of modernity and that a new way forward is required.

I will return to the problems of representation that the close readings of these thought images have opened at the conclusion of this chapter. The aphorisms of *One-Way Street* seek a means of confronting modernity on its own terms. They seek a new mode of criticism that can keep pace with the latest developments of modern industry and capital. This mode of criticism would use these objects to illuminate literary, philosophical, and historical contingencies that inform the task of knowledge production in modernity. As I have argued throughout, there is a strong formal and medial aspect to this argument. Not only do the objects of modernity require a new mode of writing and philosophizing, they require physical forms adequate to the conditions of modernity. Here, I turn to these forms directly, investigating the dust jacket prepared by Sasha Stone for the book.

Sasha Stone's Urban Montages

Sasha Stone's photomontage dust jacket has a curious status in the work *One-Way Street*. In general, cover illustrations exist quite literally on the margins of the work. They inform the initial impression with which a reader approaches the work, but they may also have little to do with the work. The author may have no or little say over the cover illustration. Nonetheless, in the case of *One-Way Street*, the only obvious street one finds in the work is in Stone's photomontage. Given Stone's friendship with Benjamin and the close thematic relationship between the dust jacket and the text it envelops, Stone's

montaged one-way street does not seem an arbitrary or random choice, but rather a cohesive, integrated part of the work as a whole.

There is unfortunately little documentation on the production of the dust jacket. No correspondence between Stone and Benjamin exists, and the archives of the Rowohlt Verlag, which could have contained details about the book's production, were destroyed in the Second World War.[241] Nonetheless, Benjamin mentions the dust jacket at least twice while discussing the conception of the book. For example, in the Moskauer Tagebuch, written in 1926, he gives Asja Lacis a copy of the book, including "den Umschlag zum Buch, den Stone gemacht hat [the cover for the book made by Stone]."[242] If the work was finished by September 1926, as discussed above, then the dust jacket must have been prepared either simultaneously or shortly after. Then, in a letter to Scholem from 1927, Benjamin comments upon the technical construction of the book. He writes: "Gestern habe ich den Deckel zu *Einbahnstraße* und den ersten Bogen vom Umbruch gesehen. Der Umschlag ist einer der wirkungsvollsten, die es je gab. Stone hat ihn gemacht. Das Buch wird technisch vorzüglich ausfallen [Yesterday I saw the cover for *One-Way Street* and the first galley proofs. The cover is one of the most effective there's ever been. Stone made it. The book will turn out technically exquisite]."[243] The technical excellence of the book is, according to this quotation, due in part to the dust jacket. Benjamin also mentions the galley proofs, which would have reflected the typographical experimentations of the book. This implies a degree of continuity between the typographical principles of the book's inside and the formal-artistic principles of the

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[241] Schöttker, *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus*, 183.
[242] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VI:294.
[243] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, III: 302-3,

book's outside. The montaged street on the work's exterior continues as a linguistic street in the work's interior.

The life and oeuvre of Sasha Stone remains a growing area of research. Stone, born as Aleksander Serge Steinsapir, was born on 16 December 1895 in St. Petersburg and died 6 August 1940 near the French-Spanish border, while attempting to flee Europe for the United States. His life dates and death overlap closely with Benjamin's; however, the two seem to have had no contact after both left Berlin in the early 1930s. Birgit Hammers, who has written the most comprehensive study of Stone's work, describes Stone as a "Weltenbummler [globe trotter]."[244] He lived not only in his native Russia, but also in Warsaw, New York, Paris, Berlin, and Brussels. By 1921, he had settled in Berlin and became a regular participant in artistic life. He was involved with the Constructivist journal *G. Material zur elementaren Gestaltung*, a journal to which Benjamin also contributed.[245] Through *G*, Stone would have known numerous important leaders in the Berlin avant-garde, including Hans Richter, Raoul Hausmann, and Theo van Doesburg.[246] Stone worked primarily for commissions, producing covers for books by Alfred Döblin and Richard Lewinsohn, promotional material for Walter Ruttmann's film *Berlin – Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*, and works for numerous illustrated journals, including *Uhu*, *Die Dame*, *Der Querschnitt*, and the *Berliner Illustrierten Zeitung*.[247] That Stone primarily

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[244] Birgit Hammers, "*Sasha Stone sieht noch mehr": Ein Fotograf zwischen Kunst und Kommerz* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2014). 16.
[245] Hammers, *Sasha Stone*, 22. On Benjamin's work for *G*, see Köhn, "'Nichts gegen die Illustrierte!'". See also Schöttker, *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus*, 156-165.
[246] Hammers, *Sasha Stone*, 24.
[247] For an overview of Stone's commercial works, see ibid., 34-43.

produced commercial works may explain part of the reason his oeuvre has yet to garner significant scholarly attention.

While there are few concrete details on the friendship between Stone and Benjamin, it is clear their friendship lasted over a number of years in the late 1920s. Hansi Schoen, the wife of Ernst Schoen, a composer and friend of Benjamin's since childhood, recalls meeting Stone at a New Years party at Benjamin's house in 1925,[248] meaning the two likely had at least some frequency of social contact during these years. Additionally, Scholem attests to the fact that Stone and Benjamin spent a good deal of time together in the years before Benjamin's departure for Paris. It seems likely, then, that Stone and Benjamin would have had at least some chance to collaborate on the work, even if Benjamin could not have been directly responsible for the final composition of the photomontage.

The photomontage of *One-Way Street* was not the only urban scene in Stone's oeuvre. Stone collaborated with Adolf Behne on the photo album *Berlin in Bildern*.[249] In addition, and more germane to the discussion at hand, Stone produced a series of photomontages under the title *Wenn Berlin*…. The individual photomontages of this series present composite images of Berlin with another city, such as Biarritz, New York, or Venice. These images provide useful context for Stone's approach to representing urban scenes, as he creatively sutures together different elements into a cohesive, imaginary city. The works, which Birgit Hammers conjectures were produced between

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[248] Hammers, *Sasha Stone*, 23.
[249] For a reading of this work, which in some ways contradicts the view of Stone as technician pursued here, see An Paenhuysen, "Berlin in Pictures: Weimar City and the Loss of Landscape," *New German Critique* 109 (Winter 2010): 1-25.

1926 and 1929,[250] fall into the same period as the dust jacket and also share motivic and formal similarities it.

Wenn Berlin Biarritz wäre [If Berlin were Biarritz] presents an odd mix of industrial urbanity and beach leisure (Figure 19). A large viaduct and train station dominates extends horizontally across the whole image. To the left of the station, the beach extends into the distance, separated from the train station by a crowded sidewalk, filled with darkly clothed people. Through the arches of the viaduct, one can see additional people, as well as an automobile and the trunk of a tree. Peaking out from behind the train station are the top fronds of a palm tree. The image combines elements of the metropolis and the resort-town Biarritz. The viaduct and the beach represent the two different cities at tension in the work, with the viaduct clearly identifiable as the "Zoologischer Garten" train station in Berlin. Though the image is clearly impossible, upon the first glance it seems surprisingly believable. The viaduct seems to continue out over the water as if it were going over a river. Only after extensive viewing does the viewer come to realize that the viaduct would have to extend over the Atlantic Ocean.

[250] Hammers, *Sasha Stone*, 80.

Figure 19: Sasha Stone, *Wenn Berlin Biarritz wäre* (before 1929). Photomontage, silver gelatin. Essen, Museum Folkwang, Fotografische Sammlung.

Despite the apparent harmony of the image, its sheer incongruity invites the viewer to discover its fault lines and fractures. Birgit Hammers has been able to identify at least one source for this work.[251] The original image for the train station and viaduct includes the majority of the people in the middleground of the image, but not those in the foreground or the masses of people in the background, visible immediately to the left of the viaduct and also behind it on the right. It would seem, then, these people belong to the Biarritz portion of the image. However, their dark clothing and the presence of umbrellas would perhaps be more at home in the colder, wetter climate of Berlin. As Birgit Hammers remarks, the central pole in front of the viaduct marks the division between the

[251] Ibid, 82.

two images. To the right, the majority of the image's elements is taken from Berlin. To the left, the majority comes from Biarritz. But this clear framing of the images elements is not wholly satisfactory. Although the pavement can be identified as belonging to Biarritz, its smooth asphalt and throngs of people might seem more at home in the metropolis. Likewise, the sign "Massary," seen hanging from the viaduct, would at first suggest something exotic and foreign, but in fact was a popular cigarette brand in Germany at the time.[252] While after intense observation, the individual elements of the photomontage can be assigned to one city or the other, the image is remarkably successful at blending and confusing the two. The viewer begins to doubt herself, asking whether she sees an umbrella in rainy Berlin or a parasol in the south of France.

If *Wenn Berlin Biarritz wäre* creates a near seamless blending of the two cities, it is even harder to find the difference in *Wenn Berlin New York wäre* (Figure 20). In the 1920s, Berlin was already regarded as a particularly "American" city in Germany, so it comes as no surprise that Stone is able to so neatly blend the two. Again, a large pole divides the image in two. To the left, there is a complex of buildings that, through the presence of German-language signs, can be identified as part of Berlin. Towards the center, one sees Café Josty, a well known meeting place for artists and writers on Potsdamer Platz. As Birgit Hammers as documented, Potsdamer Platz was the site of a massive renovation project that sought to place the square on equal footing with other leading metropolitan centers. Café Josty would be forced to leave as part of this, which for Hammers shows Stone's interest in the documentary function of photography.[253]

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[252] Ibid, 81.
[253] Hammers, 85.

Figure 20: Sasha Stone, *Wenn Berlin New York wäre* (before 1929). Photomontage, silver gelatin. Essen, Museum Folkwang, Fotografische Sammlung.

The photomontage *Wenn Berlin New York wäre* is remarkable for its integration of the two cities. While the left portion of the image is clearly recognizable as Berlin's Potsdamer Platz, betrayed by the language of the signs and the famous Café Josty, the tall buildings on the right betray no sign of their New York origins. Though clearly American, and though the tallest building would almost certainly be out of place in 1920s Berlin, they are not the tallest, most modern, or most iconic buildings from New York. Stone here successfully portrays the potentiality of Berlin's future transformation into a

city such as New York. While it is true that the image documents circumstances that are about to change, seeing this photomontage as a mere historical document misses some of the imaginative possibilities the combination of New York and Berlin suggest. The spot upon which the New York buildings are located was massively transformed around the time this montage was made. In 1928, the Grand-Hotel Bellevue, originally located directly across the street, was torn down to make room for Erich Mendelssohn's Columbushaus. Hammers contends the original photograph used to make the photomontage was taken before the complete demolition of this block;[254] however, from the perspective of the finished work, the image seems to freeze the square in time. One cannot readily discern how far demolition and construction have progressed.

However, I would argue the work does not so much freeze the square in time as suggest a more radical transformation. In place of the construction that was taking place, Stone substitutes an arguably greater change. Though the tallest building does not reach as high as some of the most modern buildings in New York, it is certainly taller than either the Grand-Hotel Bellevue or the Columbushaus. If Potsdamer Platz was to be renovated to compete with other great urban squares, the insertion of these buildings from New York immediately suggests an international, modern character. As it is uncertain at what the site looked like when the photograph was taken, it remains conjecture what Stone knew about the future of the site and whether these architecturally unremarkable buildings intend to substitute for Erich Mendelssohn's Columbushaus. Nonetheless, the insertion of these tall buildings from New York point towards a transformation of the site, a move towards a more modern and international city.

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[254] Ibid.

The relative cohesion of the image matches the impression created by *Wenn Berlin Biarritz wäre*. Birgit Hammers has pointed out a critical incongruity in this image that has relevance for *One-Way Street*. On the right side of the pole, in front of the New York buildings, there is a small tower in the middle of a traffic circle. This tower is the first traffic light in Germany, built on Potsdamer Platz in 1924 as Hammers has revealed.[255] By the 1920s, traffic lights were fairly well established in New York, yet remained less common in Germany. That the traffic light is located on the New York side of the image thus betrays its origins, but also suggests the increasing Americanization of Germany. If it is not difficult to imagine these buildings arising behind Potsdamer Platz, this is because the square has already begun to become more like New York. This montage thus provides a means for contextualizing the latest technological developments: it sees in them the signs of more changes to come and the possible futures they suggest.

And yet, this reading must be immediately relativized: though the traffic light has a prominent place in the logic of the image, few cars are visible. Likewise, several rail lines ran through Potsdamer Platz, and many historical photographs of the square are thick with streetcars. The tracks are still visible in the lower left-hand corner of the photomontage, yet the chaos and traffic that necessitated building the traffic light is not evident in the image. Here, it would seem the traffic light serves primarily as a mediator between the two main tensions in the image, the old Potsdamer Platz and its imminent modernization and transformation. Due to the suppression of its primary meaning, however—as a means of controlling traffic—, its technological significance is more difficult to discern. As Benjamin uses the pumping station as a starting point to reflect

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[255] Ibid.

upon the transformation of literature, Stone uses the traffic light to reflect upon the possible futures of the city, not only in traffic control but also in architecture.

I discuss these two photomontages at some length because they provide valuable evidence of the treatment of urban spaces in Stone's broader oeuvre. Both pursue an integrative approach to combining the two cities, as do the other three photomontages in the series. While certain incongruities in the images reveal the imaginative combination to be a fiction, this does not detract from the technical precision in the photomontages that seamlessly integrates two disparate urban spaces. This integrative approach stands in contrast to most accounts of Benjamin's literary appropriation of montage, which, as discussed above, emphasize rupture and discontinuity. Here, Stone creates the illusion of continuity through careful matching of scale between the montaged elements of the work. Though the images are in fact discontinuous—Berlin is not on the ocean, but far removed—, the impression of continuity stands in contrast to the common understanding of montage in this period. This is, of course, not to say that Stone and Benjamin shared the same conception of montage, or that Stone's montage practice did not allow for breaks, gaps, and sudden changes. However, it does provide important context both for Stone's approach to creating montages of urban spaces and, therefore, the cover image for *One-Way Street*. The extent to which the montage practice used in Stone's oeuvre overall and this work specifically aligns with Benjamin's own practice and understanding remains an ongoing area of discussion.

In comparison to the smooth integration of elements of in the *Wenn Berlin…* series, the composition of dust jacket for *One-Way Street* is busy and disorienting (Figure 21). Though the streets of the front and back covers seem to blend, there is no illusion.

The image is spread out across the front and the back sides of the book. The casual observer would only see one half of the image at a time. The image, though, has no division these two halves. Four large street signs, framed in red and with the book's title "Einbahnstraße" in their center, dominate the image when laid flat. Only one sign is contained completely within the front side, the other three all transgressing the central fold of the book to some degree. Behind these four signs, the viewer can discern at least two street scenes. The back cover features a street photographed from above and slightly at an angle, progressing horizontally along the cover. This image continues onto the front cover, where it is ambiguously replaced by another street image, which is photographed head-on. The observer views the street as if she were standing on it, as it recedes into the distance in front of her. Like in *Wenn Berlin Biarritz wäre* and *Wenn Berlin New York wäre*, the poles of the four signs roughly mark the transition point. The dividing line between the first and second level of the house on the back cover corresponds closely with the roofline of another house that recedes into the distance on the front cover, creating some illusion of continuity. Despite such attempts at integration, including the

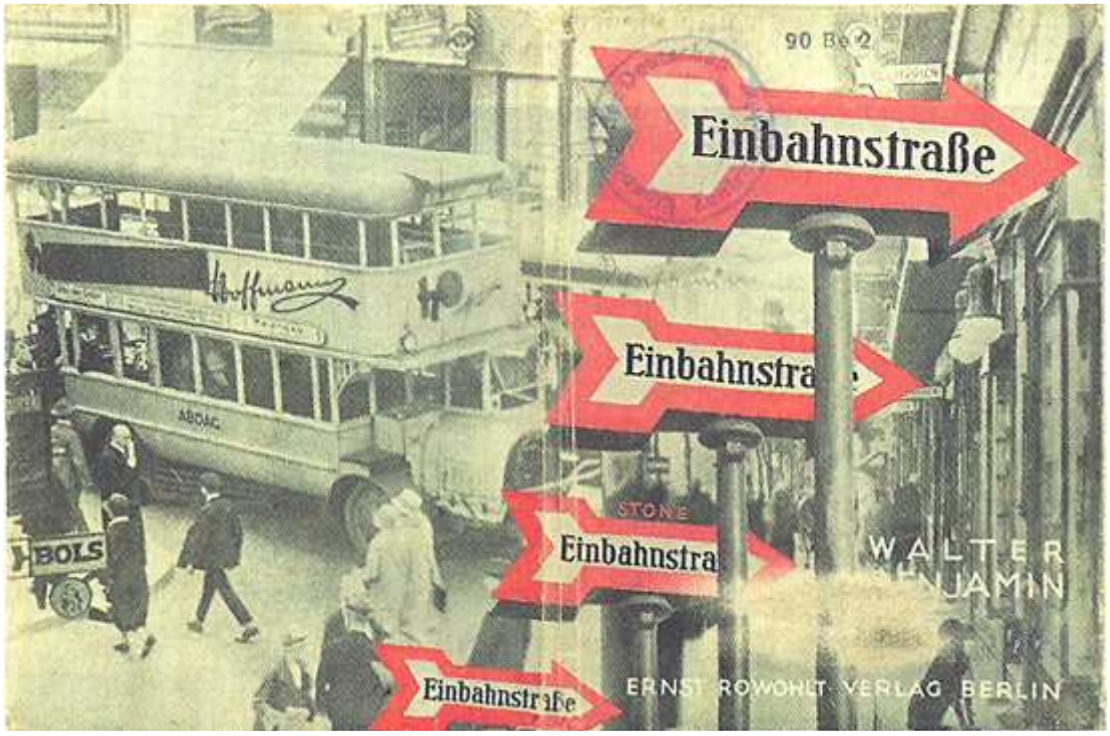

Figure 21: Sasha Stone, dust jacket for Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße* (Berlin: Rowohlt Verlag, 1928). Photomontage. Universitätsbibliothek, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin.

consistent scaling of people in the two sides of the image, it fails to create a successful illusion. The discrepancy in directions between the two streets would perhaps suggest an intersection. However, this contradicts the work's title, and there is insufficient room for the bus on the back cover on the subsection of the street portrayed on its front.

Not only do the two streets not match in alignment, the four signs superimposed above them, while all matching in alignment, point in neither direction. On the back cover, the bus is actually facing the opposite direction, and the signs only point askance into the street on the front cover. If a one-way street implies unidirectionality, there is none to be found here. As discussed above, the *Denkbilder* that make up the work seem to be in random order. If the reader is a *flaneur* walking along the street, she might choose to read one text and not the other, just as a pedestrian only goes into those stores

that interest her. Moreover, there's nothing to say one cannot turn around and go back to a store entered previously. The idea of a one-way street, of course, applies only to automobiles, with pedestrians free to move as they please. The title of the work marks a moment of tension or transformation in urban life: the transformation of the street from a mixed space for people, horses, and the occasional vehicle to a primary channel for vehicles. Stone's photomontage evokes this tension through its multiple perspectives. The assortment of vehicles, people, and even a dog on the street shows the street as an intersection of conflicting interests, uses, and historical resonances that require explanation beyond what the title *One-Way Street* can provide. It shows the contradictions inherent in the term and provides a means for coming to terms, both artistically and cognitively, with the seemingly sudden transformations of modernity.

Image Scripts

Having seen how Stone also uses the work's street metaphor in his photomontage, it is possible to return to the question of what is at stake in describing the work as a street. In a letter to Scholem dated 18 September 1926, Benjamin describes his collection as a literal street: "Es ist eine merkwürdige Organisation oder Konstruktion aus meinen 'Aphorismen' geworden, eine Straße [A curious organization or construction has become of my aphorisms: a street.]"[256] Benjamin use of metaphor, and not simile, requires closer examination. What means of representation does this entail? How can a collection of short texts come to represent—or perhaps be—a street? The rest of Benjamin's statement only adds to the confusion. He continues: "eine Straße, die einen Prospekt von so jäher Tiefe—das Wort nicht metaphorisch zu verstehen—erschließen soll, wie etwa in

[256] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, III:197.

Vincenza das berühmte Bühnenbilds Palladios: Die Straße [a street that should open a prospect of such abrupt depth—the word cannot be taken metaphorically—kind of like Palladio's famous stage design in Vincenza, The Street."[257] This often quoted explanation of *One-Way Street*'s structure for me raises more questions than it answers. Palladio's stage set for the Teatro Olimpico creates the illusion of a far greater depth than it actually encompasses. Does this mean the non-metaphorical depth of the book is illusory? What is non-metaphorical depth in a small brochure?

The depth created by the Teatro Olimpico is also a product of the technical knowledge and mastery of its time. The work creates the illusion of a long street receding in the distance. While the actual distance is only a few meters, the street appears to extend much farther. Both the use of perspective and the architectural innovations of the theatre combine to create a tromp-l'oeil effect.[258] Significantly, these are innovations in the realm of the visual arts that demand interpretation in Benjamin's language. That is to say, there is an implicit "as-if" that one might insert into Benjamin's invocation of the Teatro Olimpico, and the task of the interpreter is to determine in which way the image is invoked. If the Teatro Olimpico thus operates at the intersection of the visual and technical mastery, photomontage again provides an apt modern equivalent. For illusion and the question of depth are central the construction of Stone's photomontage as well.

Andreas Huyssen has read the cover montage in conjunction with Benjamin's invocation of the Teatro Olimpico. He points to the four signs, which stand perpendicular to the receding street, emphasizing the depth of the street. For him, these four signs point

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[257] Ibid.

[258] For an overview of Palladio's Teatro Olimpico, see J. Thomas Oosting, *Andrea Palladio's Teatro Olimpico* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981).

towards the inside of the book. He claims "the prospect of steeply plunging depth is […] not what we see on the cover, but the street of the textual miniatures that make up the book itself."[259] I do not contest that the photomontage itself elides the point of depth, but I caution against the reinscription of a division between the book's verbal and pictorial elements. Moreover, there is a great deal of ambiguity in these four signs. First, the signs function both as indications within the photomontage of a one-way street, while also providing the title for the book. Second, some of the signs cross over the spine of the book, and thus act both as the traditional front page title as well as the title printed on the spine. They do not point neatly to the inside, but also fulfill conventional cataloging functions. Moreover, the bend in the spine distorts the neat, unidirectionality that the signs would seem to represent. Third, can we assume that the signs are invitations to turn down the street presented in the book's interior? It would seem, rather, that each sign represents the chance to turn down an individual one-way street. If this is the case, then we actually do have an image of depth comparable to the Teatro Olimpico. For the illusion of depth is not created by the receding street alone, but also by the streets that cross it.

Perhaps it is not that the signs invite the reader to turn the page and open the book, but rather that they attempt to recede into the text itself and create a continuity between the montaged image and the montaged text. The word "Einbahnstraße" conforms to the pattern of montage used in the text. For Benjamin does not take quotations or images and paste them into the text. The titles for his short texts comprise

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[259] Andreas Huyssen, "The Urban Miniature and the Feuilleton in Benjamin and Kracauer," in *Literatur inter- und transmedial: Inter- and Transmedial Literature*, ed. David Bathrick and Heinz-Peter Preußer, 173-188 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 186

the element of reality or documentation that he lifts from the urban landscape—it is the sign titles, those pieces of language visible on a city street. The cover image thus reproduces the structure of the aphorisms or *Denkbilder*. But at the same time, it reproduces the structure of the book as a whole, the photographic equivalent of the book's linguistic street.

There is a potential reading of the text that would bridge the gap between the image of the cover and the words of the text. It entails overcoming the difference between these two representational structures. In theories of intermediality, scholars often refer to the oxymoronic or "as-if" character of intermedial products. That is, when a reader encounters a visual aspect of a text—say an ekphrastic passage—, she will entertain the possibility that the text could be adequate to the image while knowing full well the text remains a product of language.[260] I am not convinced that this is Benjamin's intent. In the section "Vereidigter Bücherrevisor," Benjamin diagnoses the current challenges facing print and suggests a potential future.

> Die Schrift, die im gedruckten Buche ein Asyl gefunden hatte, wo sie ihr autonomes Dasein führte, wird unerbittlich von Reklamen auf die Straße hinausgezerrt und den brutalen Heteronomien des wirtschaftlichen Chaos unterstellt. Das ist der strenge Schulgang ihrer neuen Form. Wenn vor Jahrhunderten sie allmählich sich niederzulegen begann, von der aufrechten Inschrift zur schräg auf Pulten ruhenden Handschrift ward, um endlich sich im Buchdruck zu betten, beginnt sie nun ebenso langsam sich wieder vom Boden zu heben. Bereits die Zeitung wird mehr in der Senkrechten als in der Horizontale gelesen, Film und Reklame drängen die Schrift vollends in die diktatorische Vertikale. Und ehe der Zeitgenosse

[260] Consider, for example, Liliane Louvel's definition of the iconotext as "the attempt to merge text and image in a pluriform fusion, as in an oxymoron." See Liliane Louvel, *Poetics of the Iconotext*, trans. Laurence Petit (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 15. Irina Rajewsky also refers to the "as-if" character of intermedial products. See Irina Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality," *Intermédialités* 6 (Autumn 2005), 43-64; here, 54-64.

> dazu kommt, ein Buch aufzuschlagen, ist über seine Augen ein so dichtes Gestöber von wandelbaren, farbigen streitenden Lettern niedergegangen, daß die Chancen seines Eindringens in die archaische Stille des Buches gering geworden sind.[261]
>
> [Script—having found, in the book, a refuge in which it can lead an autonomous existence—is pitilessly dragged out onto the street by advertisements and subjected to the brutal heteronomies of economic chaos. This is the hard schooling of its new form. If centuries ago it began gradually to lie down, passing from the upright inscription to the manuscript resting on lectern before finally taking itself to bed in the printed book, it now begins just as slowly to rise again from the ground. The newspaper is read more in the vertical than the horizontal plane, while film and advertisement force the printed word entirely into the dictatorial perpendicular. And before a contemporary finds his way clear to opening a book, his eyes have been exposed to such a blizzard of changing, colorful, conflicting letters that the chance of penetrating the archaic stillness of the book are slight.][262]

Like the text "Tankstelle," this *Denkbild* takes the urban transformations that motivate the works central metaphor and uses them as the basis for its philosophical reflections. Here, Benjamin charts a history of script, ending with its new place of prominence in the modern city street. While script began as a public form, appearing on monuments in public spaces and moving to lecterns designed for public reading, the printed book marks the retreat of script from the public eye. The privacy and tranquility provided by the printed book are a pre-condition for the book's autonomy, and for the autonomy of any discourses it protects. If correct distancing is a precondition for philosophizing and criticism in the world of the Enlightenment, this type of philosophy also depends on the book form as it provides a separate, distanced sphere in which thought can take place.

The transition from script from the vertical orientation of the book to the horizontal orientation of the printed book is now coming undone. Newspapers, the large

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[261] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 30.
[262] Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 456.

size of which demands they be held upright, are already a public form of reading, provided in cafés for the masses who did not personally subscribe.[263] Advertisement and film foreclose the possibility of a private form of reading. They bring script onto the street, or a representation thereof in the case of film, and threaten to undo the serenity and stability of the printed letter. Letters in advertisement are "wandelbar[.]", a word implying not only the ability to change but also, through its proximity to "wandeln," meaning not only "to change" but also "to stroll or promenade," a lack of fixity. Writing has lost its stable home and now wanders the street alongside us.

If these "Heuschreckenschwärme von Schrift [locust swarms of print]" overwhelm the modern thinker and crowd out measured, contemplative writing, the contemporary author needs a new tool to counter them. Benjamin prophesizes a new form of script that responds to the new graphic realities of advertisement and film:

> Aber es ist ganz außer Zweifel, daß die Entwicklung der Schrift nicht ins Unabsehbare an die Machtansprüche eines chaotischen Betriebes in Wissenschaft und Wirtschaft gebunden bleibt, vielmehr der Augenblick kommt, da Quantität in Qualität umschlägt und die Schrift, die immer tiefer in das graphische Bereich ihrer neuen exzentrischen Bildlichkeit vorstößt, mit einem Male ihrer adäquaten Sachgehalte habhaft wird. An dieser Bilderschrift werden Poeten, die dann wie in Urzeiten vorerst und vor allem Schriftkundige sein werden, nur mitarbeiten können, wenn sie sich die Gebiete erschließen, in denen (ohne viel Aufhebens von sich zu machen) deren Konstruktion sich vollzieht: die des statistischen und technischen Diagramms.[264]
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> [But it is quite beyond doubt that the development of writing will not indefinitely be bound by the claims to power of a chaotic academic and commercial activity; rather, quantity is approaching the moment of a qualitative leap when writing, advancing ever more deeply into the

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[263] Benjamin discusses this phenomenon in his writings on Paris. See Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, I:528-9.
[264] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 30-1.

> graphic regions of its new eccentric pictoriality, will suddenly take possession of an adequate material content. In this image script, poets, who will now as in earliest times be first and foremost experts in writing, will be able to participate only by mastering the fields in which (quite unobtrusively) it is being constructed: statistical and technical diagrams.][265]

Benjamin envisions a future in which writing gains mastery over the graphic and pictorial elements that are currently transforming it. Rather than passively react to changes in the economy and circumstances of knowledge production, this new "internationale[.] Wandelschrift [international moving script]" will allow authors to reestablish a position of authority and once again contribute effectively to discourse.[266] Benjamin suggests a form of from of writing schooled on technical and statistical diagrams, examples of which one can find in avant-garde and particularly Constructivist experiments in graphic design. Here, one could consider Schwitters' fairy tale *Das Märchen vom Paradies*, discussed in chapter two of this study, which incorporates technical drawings of propellers and gears.[267]

So what is the new form of writing Benjamin prophesizes? How would it be adequate to the pictoriality that language acquires in modernity? From the printed forms of *One-Way Street*, it is clear the book aspires to some degree of visual writing. The imitation of the street on the printed page means that the individual aphorisms quite literally fill the same visual space that houses on a street will. However, the book's dust jacket provides an additional potential reading of the future visuality of writing. As discussed earlier, both the street of the front cover and the four signs placed on top of it

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[265] Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 456-7.
[266] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 31. Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 457/
[267] Kurt Schwitters and Kate Steinitz, *Der Hahnepeter* (Hannover: Merzverlag, n.d. [1924]).

create an illusion of depth. They both seem to recede into the text itself, not only inviting the reader to turn the page and begin reading but also to travel down the street and mythically cross the barrier between cover and body, image and text. The dust jacket thus sets up a continuity between the multiple streets displayed in the image and the internal multiplicity of the textual street.

But Benjamin's proclamations in "Attested Auditor of Books" allow yet another dimension to the relationship between text and image. If the reader is to confront language as a visual form, and to read language not only for its apparent meaning but for an additional meaning that is a consequence of the material form itself, the cover montage presents one possible realization of such a reading of the text. I have already implied that Stone's montage recedes into the book. But Benjamin's attention to the visuality of language and the possibility of seeing the visual in language—in what sense visual means here set aside for the moment—provide also a reading where the image is projected out of the text. Stone's montage is of course just one possible realization of this mode of representation and of abstraction. One could imagine any other numbers of diagnoses or representations of modernity arising out of the text. But given the significance of Stone's montage in Benjamin's own statements on the conception of the book, I think it is worth giving it its due in the structure of Benjamin's text.

This prominence of visuality, however, sits poorly with other aspects of the text. To see the reciprocity between the cover montage and the interior of the book implies an endorsement of Constructivist aesthetic principles and typography. While more recent scholarship tends to stress the continuities between Dadaism and Constructivism in

Germany,[268] Benjamin eschews Dadaist experiments in graphical forms of writing. For Benjamin, their activity "ging zwar nicht vom Konstruktiven, sondern den exakt reagierenden Nerven der Literaten aus [stemmed, it is true, not from constructive principles but from the precise nervous reactions of these literati]" and therefore is less likely to produce a lasting change.[269] Rather, Benjamin elevates Mallarmé, who "im 'Coup de dés' die graphischen Spannungen der Reklame ins Schriftbild verarbeitet [was in the *Coup de dés* the first to incorporate the graphic tensions of the advertisement in the printed page]."[270] Mallarmé's typographical poem *Un Coup de dés* combines typefaces of differing styles and shapes to create a poem whose form depends not only on its linguistic aspects but also its arrangement on the page.[271] For Benjamin, this typographical experiment reworks the letters of language into a "Schriftbild," an image made of script.[272]

That Mallarmé emerges as Benjamin's hero, who combined advertisement with literature, is perhaps surprising. Mallarmé's distaste for advertisement and the newspaper

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[268] See John Elderfield, "On the Dada-Constructivist Axis," *Dada/Surrealism* 13, no. 1 (1985): 5-16.
[269] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 31. Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 456.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Stephane Mallarmé, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard, poème* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1914).
[272] Scholarship has not always considered contemporary aesthetic concerns as a motivating factor for Benjamin's turn to Mallarmé. For Bernd Witte, Mallarmé provides for Benjamin a link towards Jewish traditions of exegesis, which theorize the importance of white space for commentary in the book. Witte argues that "[d]as wahrhaft aktuelle Schreiben […] isoliert die im öffentlichen Raum inflationär auftretende Schrift, fragmentiert sie und eröffnet dadurch die Möglichkeit eines Kommentars, der die Wahrheit der profanen Schrift ans Licht bringt." See Bernd Witte, "Walter Benjamins *Einbahnstraße.* Zwischen *Passage de l'Opéra* und *Berlin Alexanderplatz,*" in *Walter Benjamin 1892-1940 zum 100. Geburtstag*, ed. Uwe Steiner (Bern: Peter Lang, 1992), 270.

is well known, and the typographical innovations of *Un Coup de dés* were at some level motivated to work against new popular and commercial forms of literature.[273] Benjamin's own reception of Mallarmé may have taken a different path: Scholem reports that Benjamin had a copy of *Un Coup de dés* as early as 1919, while he was still living in Bern and had contact to Hugo Ball, one of the leading members of Zurich Dada.[274] While it is possible Ball's Dadaist poetics influenced Benjamin's reading of the work, Ball's Dadaist poetics differed from the poetics of Berlin Dada. In Berlin Dada, discussed in chapter one of this study, experiment with the materiality of written language itself became paramount, a concern that had not yet developed in Zurich. By the time Ball's "Karawane" was printed in experimental typography by Richard Huelsenbeck as part of the *Dada Almanach*, Ball had long since left the movement.[275]

Benjamin is not trying to turn Mallarmé into a radical hero. Rather, it is precisely his literary conservatism that points the way forward. Unlike the Dadaists, who are reactionary, Mallarmé, who in his "kristallinischen Konstruktion [crystalline construction]" develops a new form of literature "aus dem Inneren seines Stils [out of the inner nature of his style],"[276] transforms literature not through an impassioned but ultimately futile protest against tradition, but through further development of existing literary conventions, such that they achieve radical new forms that can stand on their own in a rapidly changing media landscape. This is to say, the problem with the Dadaists, for

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[273] See Christine Poggi, "Mallarmé, Picasso, and the Newspaper as Commodity," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 1, no. 1 (1987): 133-151
[274] Schöttker, 184.
[275] Arndt Niebisch, *Media Parasites in the Early Avant-Garde: On the Abuse of Technology and Communication* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 62.
[276] Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, 31. Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 456.

Benjamin, is that they appropriate the representational means of mass media and thereby destroy literature as we know it. Mallarmé, on the other hand, emphasizes the confrontation of the past with the present, the attempt to adapt literary modes of representation to new, poorly understood phenomena. The dialectical relationship between high literature and commercial advertisement is important here: if literature is to assert itself in an increasingly dense media landscape, in which traditional venues of publication have failed, the solution is not blind imitation of popular forms. Rather, it is to develop a dialectical counterpart to them, out of the tradition of literature itself. This is the significance of Mallarmé, who, in his disdain for the newspaper as the opposite of autonomous art, developed an adequate means to respond to it. The decidedly poetic style of *One-Way Street*, which left many contemporary readers confused, as discussed above, fits the model of Mallarmé better than that of the Dadaists.

The elevated style of *One-Way Street* finds strange bedfellows in the language of the city street and Stone's photomontage. The repeated use of the word "Konstruktion" in Benjamin's discussion of Mallarmé once more suggests contemporary aesthetic concerns and attempt to unify these Mallarmé's poetic anachronism and the avant-garde. If *Konstruktion*, as Patrizia McBride argued, was a "fully exteriorized notion of poiesis" during the Weimar Republic,[277] it would contradict Benjamin's argument for an internal development and refinement of style. The use of literary montage to expose a revolutionary, dialectical image of history in the *Arcades Project* concretely centers on the structural relationship between history and the present. In *One-Way Street*, it is more difficult to locate the historical in *One-Way Street*, a work so concerned with the newest

[277] McBride, "*Konstruktion als Bildung*," 236.

phenomena of modernity. Rather than banning literature and criticism to the trash heap of history, *One-Way Street* seeks their renewal, but in a new form, one adequate to the moment at hand. The short, enigmatic structure of the aphorism captures the attention of the reader with the same intensity as the advertisement or film, carving out a moment for critical reflection and action. Though the work may imagine a future synthesis of graphical and literary energies, this synthesis is not the only possible transformation of literature in the work. The *Bild* in the *Denkbild* does not have to be read literally.

Yet what I have emphasized in this chapter is how the work, on a structural level, makes room for this possibility. Even though the text makes space for this possibility, Benjamin is not Schwitters or Hausmann. Though he, like the other authors discussed in this study, uses the idea of literary montage towards a revitalization of the printed work in an era of rapid medial transformation, he, like Döblin, does not question fundamentally the separate ontologies of text and image. The work hints at a possible graphic transformation of language, but emphasizes overall transformation through the adaptation of criticism and literature to new contexts. The work develops a montage-like structure, but not merely through imitation of contemporary examples of montage, but also through the attempt to develop a notion of montage out of existing literary conventions. The use of short, yet highly rhetorical aphoristic texts, juxtaposed with elements of the modern city street, allows a form of writing to develop that straddles the urban and the philosophical, the quotidian and the literary. These prompt interventions create a space, however small and ephemeral, for the continued efficacy of literature and criticism.

Döblin's Paper City: Dematerializing Montages in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*

In the political writings of Alfred Döblin, published in 1921 under the pseudonym "Linke Poot," Döblin recounts his viewing of some unnamed paintings by an unnamed artist:

> Ich war ergriffen, das waren große und kleine, nicht Bilder, sondern Leinwandvierecke in Rahmen. Auf die Leinwand war gelegt etwa schräg von oben eine breite Latte, sie war mit einigen Farben überzogen, die von der Leinwand herüberkamen. Dann war noch unten eine kleine kaputte Kindereisenbahn drauf: also das Blech einer solchen Eisenbahn breitgezogen und aufgeklebt. Ein Bild war zum Teil aus Bindfäden eines Netzes, eines zerrissenes Fischernetzes, einer Markttasche hergestellt; unten klebten Spielkarten, Zettelchen mit Namen. Es gab einige Bilder, die bestanden aus Fragmenten von Rändern, Drähten, Bahnbilletten, Zeitungsauschnitte.[278]
>
> [I was struck by emotion, these were large and small, not paintings, but rectangles of canvas in frames. On the canvas, the artist had laid a wide slat aslant from above, it was covered with some paint coming over from the canvas. Below, there was a small broken toy train for a child: I mean, the metal sheet from such a train was stretched out and pasted there. One picture was made in part from strings of a net, a torn up fishing net, a market bag; below playing cards, small pieces of paper with names were glued. There were some pictures that consisted of fragments of frames, wires, train tickets, newspaper clippings.]

These images, which have been identified as various *Merzbilder* by Kurt Schwitters,[279] impress Döblin for the rawness of its material. Döblin's description takes great pains to

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[278] Alfred Döblin, "Himmlisches und irdisches Theater," in *Der deutsche Maskenball von Linke Poot, Wissen und Verändern* (Olten/Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag, 1960), 55-65; here, 63.

[279] Little has been written on Döblin's relation to Kurt Schwitters. Ralf Kotschka speculates that Döblin viewed these images at the first exhibition of Schwitters' *Merzbilder* at the 'Galerie Der Sturm' in 1919, at which Schwitters himself was likely in attendance. Kotschka further speculates that while the works of art greatly impressed Döblin, he reacted coldly to Schwitters' performance art and literature. See Ralf Kotschka, "'Ich war ergriffen.': Alfred Döblin und Kurt Schwitters," in Gerhard Schaub,

identify the materials used, noting their composition, but not the final images or representations that might occur. In these collages of Schwitters, Döblin claims to find a mode of representation that lets nature and reality enjoy their fullest expression. He finds that "[s]o innig habe ich noch keinen Maler die Natur anbeten sehen, [I have never seen a painter so intimately worship nature]"[280] despite the fact that the image contains nothing but discarded and barely modified raw materials. And in fact, the images are all the more impressive for the restraint the artist has shown in modifying or processing these materials. The small amounts of paint on the slat and the reduction of the sheet from the train, which has been bisected and stuck down,[281] to a minimal form show that the artist "hat nichts an ihnen zu tun unternommen als sie für Kurzsichtige beleuchten."[282] In this account, the presentation of mere objects, mere everyday material, is a more apt expression for modernity than all Expressionist attempts at painting.[283]

Döblin's interest in the power of the raw materiality of things for art and literature stretches back at least to his 1913 manifesto "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker" [To Novelists and Their Critics], which calls for the author's "*Depersonation*" [removal of

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ed., *Kurt Schwitters: 'Bürger und Idiot': Beiträge zu Werk und Wirkung eines Gesamtkünstlers* (Berlin: Fannei & Walz, 1993), 100-6.

[280] Alfred Döblin, "Himmlisches und irdisches Theater," 63.

[281] The presence of the toy train allows the work to be identified as *Merzbild 10A: Konstruktion für edle Frauen* [*Merzpicture 10A; Construction for Noble Ladies*]. See Kotschka, "Ich war ergriffen", 101, note 11.

[282] Alfred Döblin, "Himmlisches und irdisches Theater," 64.

[283] Though Döblin moved in Expressionist circles, his relationship to Expressionist painters remains poorly understood. For an attempt to reconstruct his relationship to Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, see Werner Stauffacher, "Umrisse einer Begegnung: Alfred Döblin und Ernst Ludwig Kirchner," in *Internationales Alfred-Döblin-Kolloquium 2001*, eds. Hartmut Eggert and Gabriele Prauß (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001), 41-50.

self] and for a "Tatsachenphantasie" [fantasy of fact] in the novel.[284] Döblin imagines a mode of writing in which authors substitute themselves for the objects of representation, thus creating an unmediated experience of the world in literature: "ich bin nicht ich, sondern die Straße, die Laternen, dies und dies Ereignis, weiter nichts [I am not I, but rather the street, the lanterns, this or that event, nothing more]."[285] Despite his early plea for presentation over representation, for raw materials over cultural products, it would not be until his 1929 novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* that he finally realized the usefulness of collage and montage for these goals.

Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, whose earliest reviewers already recognized the central role montage plays in the novel, is Döblin's answer to film and the collages of avant-garde artists like Schwitters. Its manuscript, housed today at the Deutsche Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar, features literal collage techniques with numerous pastings from newspapers, advertisements, magazines, and other print materials. These pastings, however, exist only as a ghostly presence in the final novel. In the print version of the novel, pastings and quotations are not marked in any way, and the impression of montage is only created through abrupt changes in style and content. As weather reports collide with stories from the newspaper and medical reports, the wide variety of print material used to weave together the novel becomes apparent.

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[284] Alfred Döblin, "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker," in *Schriften zu Ästhetik, Poetik und Literatur*, ed. Erich Kleinschmidt (Olten and Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag, 1989), 123. For a discussion of Döblin's engagement with the avant-garde in this essay, see Judith Ryan, "From Futurism to 'Döblinism'," *The German Quarterly* 54/4 (1981): 415-26.

[285] Döblin, "An Romanautoren," 122.

Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf [*Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf*] is known as Döblin's most commercially successful work. The double title points towards the bifurcated focus of the novel's plot. On the one hand, the novel tells the story of Franz Biberkopf, a murderer who has just been released from prison. The novel tells of his repeated attempts to lead an upright life and escape his criminal past. Yet, fate and the city Berlin squash his efforts repeatedly as he falls back into criminality. On the other hand, the novel attempts to portray the city of Berlin, especially the area around *Alexanderplatz*, in all of its diversity and dynamism. It is this part of the novel that makes fullest use of Döblin's montage techniques, as various anecdotes, reports, advertising materials, and popular songs are liberally sprinkled into the text, often with no apparent relationship to the main narrative of Biberkopf's struggle against the city. The use of montage techniques is not equally spread across the novel, with the first four books containing the vast majority of insertions and clippings. The last five books focus more directly on the story of Franz Biberkopf and his failed attempts at rehabilitation. Nonetheless, these sudden insertions and breaks in style have become a primary point of interest in the scholarly discussion of this novel.

Though the term *montage* has been the subject of numerous scholarly examinations, discussed in detail below, the full contours of Döblin's appropriation of techniques from the visual arts have not yet been fully delimited. For textuality cannot present raw materials, raw impressions in the same way that a visual collage can. If Döblin finds montage the most appropriate visual means for expressing reality in itself, how must such a method be modified for literature, where ready-made components may

already carry the biases of their original authors and the constraints of their material forms?

This chapter will provide an account of Döblin's attempts to make montage techniques usable for literature. After a brief review of the literature on montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, I will sketch out the contours of Döblin's involvement with the visual arts, particularly his relationship to photography. Through a close reading of Döblin's aesthetic text "Der Bau des epischen Werks [The Construction of the Epic Work]," I work towards a theory of montage in Döblin's work. Döblin seeks to revitalize the epic for the modern day, but sees numerous problems in Realist and Naturalist literature that impede the further development of narrative literature. Namely, epic stands today in competition with the newspaper. Both epic and the newspaper report stories and events that concern the common interest of a people, but the newspaper has the advantage due to the fact that it alone still maintains an embedded relationship with society and its readership. Döblin seeks an appropriation of the documentary qualities of the newspaper that would help reestablish some of literature's claims to its ability to represent society accurately, but Döblin is also deeply skeptical of producing just a bad copy of reportage and of reality. Rather, he seeks a mode of literature that overcomes the inherent problems he sees in all documentary media, including the newspaper and narrative fiction. Montage provides Döblin with a means of using documentary media while also transforming their materiality. It allows for literature to approximate the raw impression of materiality that Döblin admires in Schwitters' collages. As Döblin names photography as another key documentary medium, I turn to Döblin's comments and remarks about photography in order elucidate some of his concern about the shortcomings of documentary media, such

as the photograph or the newspaper report, and the necessity of montage as a means to augment these media. Finally, I will turn to the novel and its manuscript and investigate how Döblin places these principles derived from the visual arts into practice. I argue that the mediation present in the print material Döblin uses as for his montage becomes an impediment to creating the immediacy he finds in the visual arts. Rather, Döblin's montage is characterized by a dematerializing impulse that calls into question the medial nature of the various materials he uses.

History and State of the Manuscript

Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was published in book format in 1929 after sections had previously been published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. This first printing featured a uniform typographic style in *Fraktur*. It was not until after Döblin's death in 1957 that the collage techniques pioneered in the work's composition became well known. The pasting techniques he employed are only obvious in his manuscripts, which survived the war in storage at the Sorbonne and the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris.[286] In 1961, his heirs deposited his papers at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv, thus making the manuscript publicly accessible for the first time. In 1969, a second batch of papers was discovered in storage in Zurich. This discovery greatly expanded the novel's manuscript, and includes many pasted elements that did not end up in the final print novel. The manuscript has become one of the archive's most prized acquisitions and has been

[286] For an overview of the provenance of Döblin's estate, see Ulrich Ott, "Alfred Döblins Nachlaß," in *Der literarische Nachlaß von Alfred Döblin* (Berlin: KulturStiftung der Länder, 2000), 6-9

prominently featured in several exhibitions in the archive's *Literaturmuseum der Moderne* [Museum of Modern Literature].[287]

Döblin freely alternates between handwritten prose, detailing the plot, and clippings from newspapers, journals and other print objects. Of the found objects used in the novel, most are drawn from contemporary newspapers and journals. Occasionally, Döblin makes use of a postcard or illustration. These images often are difficult to place in the final novel – sometimes they are replaced with a description, as is the case of a postcard of a world-traveling disabled man,[288] while others, such as a postcard of Alexanderplatz and one of Berlin's Rosenthaler Platz, seem to have only served as inspiration. Additionally, several found texts are not pasted into the final novel, but copied by hand. These include song texts and oral material, as well as advertisements, excerpts from medical journals or textbooks and myriad other contemporary material. Scholarship has not always been able to identify a source for the insertions. It is possible certain texts are not at all found objects, but merely imitate a notional source in style and content.[289]

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[287] For a critique of the use of the novel's manuscript in this exhibition, see Thomas Thiemeyer, "The literary exhibition as epistemic method: how the Museum of Modern Literature in Marbach reinterprets literary archives," *Word & Image* 33, no. 4 (2017): 362-375.

[288] For the relevant passage in the final print version, see Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf* (Zürich/Düsseldorf: Walter-Verlag, 1996), 246. In English translation, see Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf*, trans. Eugene Jolas (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983), 334-5.

[289] For a close reading of the montage elements in the first chapter that documents some of these source issues, see Gabriele Sander, "Alfred Döblins *Berlin Alexanderplatz* – ein multimediales Schreibprojekt," in *Text – Material – Medium: Zur Relevanz editorischer Dokmentationen für die literaturwissenschaftliche Interpretation*, ed. Wolfgang Lukas, Rüdiger Nutt-Kofoth and Madleen Podewski, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 123-33.

The manuscript reflects an early stage of the novel's composition. Many details do not correspond to the final print version. Certain sections that are present in the manuscript are missing in the print version, and vice-versa. Any typescript that the publisher may have used as a source for the final novel is also missing, thus making a complete reconstruction of the novel's composition impossible. Several found objects in the manuscript were not used in the final novel at all. The manuscript is thus a frustrating object for the literary scholar. On the one hand, it does not reflect the author's final intentions and could be dismissed as a mere source for the history of the work's composition. On the other hand, the manuscript provides direct insight into Döblin's understanding of collage and montage, which necessarily helps contextualize the status and reception of the novel as montage. The manuscript can thus simultaneously be understood as a draft or study, an intermediate stage in composition that provides information about the history of the work's production, as well as a document of Döblin's interest in and understanding of collage and montage. The manuscript reveals not only details about the decisions that informed the final work, but also provides direct evidence for Döblin's translation of collage's work of scissors and paste into a cohesive literary object.

The Contested Status of Montage

As Stefanie Harris remarks in her investigation of the medial character of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, "*montage* is a term that seems to appear in almost every reading of

Berlin Alexanderplatz."[290] Despite the near universal recognition of montage's central role in the novel, the word is apparently absent from Döblin's own writings on the novel. In a talk he gave in 1932 on the work, for example, neither "montage" nor any related terms—*Schnitt* [cut], references to realia, filmic discourse—appear.[291] Rather, Döblin emphasizes the content of the novel, that is, its treatment of criminals,[292] a longstanding interest of Döblin the psychiatrist, and its locality, his longtime home. His only mention of the novel's style is a repudiation of the suggestion that he borrowed it from Joyce. While by the mid-thirties, Joyce's style was clearly equated with montage, one cannot assume at this earlier moment that Joyce stands in for montage.[293] To find any possible

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[290] Stefanie Harris, *Mediating Modernity: German Literature and the "New" Media, 1895-1930* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2009), 102, emphasis original.

[291] Alfred Döblin, "Mein Buch 'Berlin Alexanderplatz,'" in *Schriften zu Leben und Werk*, ed. Erich Kleinschmidt (Olten: Walter-Verlag, 1986), 215-217.

[292] Döblin's interest in crime has been a frequent subject of scholarly investigation. Maria Tatar pursues a reading of the novel that foregrounds the extreme acts of violence against women, arguing against readings that see Franz as a victim of circumstance. See the sixth chapter of Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Violence in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 132-152. More recently, Arne Höcker considers the role of *Lustmord* in the larger construction of criminality in early twentieth-century Germany. He argues for the central role of literature in the construction of criminality and considers Döblin's role in this development. See Arne Höcker, *Epistemologie des Extremen: Lustmord in Kriminologie und Literatur um 1900* (Munich: Fink, 2012), esp. 159-188.

[293] Significant literature has been devoted to the relationship between *Berlin* Alexanderplatz and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Breon Mitchell argues based on archival evidence that the influence Joyce's novel had on Döblin was more significant than Döblin's own statements would suggest and that the publication of *Ulysses* in German translation coincides with the introduction of montage as a stylistic principle in the novel. See Breon Mitchell, "Joyce and Döblin: At the Crossroads of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*," *Contemporary Literature*, 12, no. 2 (Spring 1971): 173-187. Mario Slugan, on the other hand, has demonstrated that while contemporary reviews of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* make frequent reference to montage, the word is completely absent from contemporary accounts of *Ulysses*, translated into German in 1927. The word only begins to appear later, which for Slugan indicates the emergence of a more generalized understanding of

connection to montage, one would have to return to Döblin's early response to Marinetti, "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker," from 1913, in which he announces a coming *Kinostil* [cinema style], discussed more fully below. Even here, explicit references to his process of cutting and pasting are absent.

That Döblin makes no reference to montage does not mean the term's use is illegitimate, especially in the context of this investigation. As Mario Slugan has compellingly argued, contemporary reviewers of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* overwhelmingly identified montage as the primary aesthetic principle of the novel. According to Slugan, the novel's use of easily-identifiable ready-mades and its frequent stylistic disruptions allowed audiences to compare the book to contemporary photomontages and the use of montage in avant-garde Soviet films.[294] While Slugan's account emphasizes the perceptual experience of montage, other accounts emphasize the materiality of the novel's manuscript. Jürgen Stenzel's "Mit Kleister und Schere: Zur Materialität von 'Berlin Alexanderplatz'" marks one of the earliest scholarly attempts to categorize the use of montage in the novel. Stenzel differentiates between what he terms the collage

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montage. See Mario Slugan, *Montage as Perceptual Experience: Berlin Alexanderplatz from Döblin to Fassbinder* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2017), esp. 81-88.

[294] Slugan's intervention is an important contribution to ongoing attempts to reframe the intermedial notion of montage proposed by Peter Bürger, following Adorno's comments on montage, which have influenced many other accounts of montage under consideration here, including Zmegac and Möbius, as discussed in the introduction to the present study. While Slugan endorses Bürger's understanding of montage as intermedial, he contends that his definition, which focuses on montage's disruptive, shock-like effect and its appropriation of real material, does not provide sufficient medial specificity to describe sufficiently the ways in which literary montage draws upon the formal technique of montage as developed in Dadaism and Film. See Slugan, *Montage as Perceptual Experience*, 1-20. For Bürger's comments on montage, see Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 73-82.

practice of the manuscript and the montage practice of the print novel; in the manuscript, individual paper insertions are visible as foreign material and announce their difference immediately, while in the printed novel the differences are only evident through the stylistic disruptions caused by diverse material.[295] The collage manuscript thus resembles collage in the visual arts, in which the materiality of each pasted element can theoretically be identified, whereas the print novel more resembles photomontage, in which the rephotographing of the material obscures the material origin of each element.[296] Stenzel's account of montage agrees with Slugan's emphasis on the role of the reader in perceiving montage as a disruption. Moreover, by grounding his account in the materiality of Döblin's writing, Stenzel provides an effective means of bridging the perceptual effects of montage discussed by Slugan with the novel's materiality, an aspect Slugan does not discuss.

Stenzel's article, despite its age, remains a useful touchstone in the scholarship on montage in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. For it is one of the few attempts to discuss the materiality of the book explicitly in terms of collage and montage. Numerous other accounts discuss montage without detailed reference to the material forms of the novel,[297]

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[295] Jürgen Stenzel, "Mit Kleister und Schere: Zur Handschrift von *Berlin Alexanderplatz*," *Text + Kritik* 13/14 (1972): 41-44; here, 42.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Often, such accounts are motivated by different, equally valid concerns. For example, Stijn De Cauwer reads the shock-effect of montage in terms of war neuroses following World War I. See Stijn De Cauwer, "Beyond the Stimulus Shield: War Neurosis, Shock and Montage in Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*," *Neophilologicus* 99 (2015): 97-112. Michael Jennings likewise provides a reading of montage in the novel, focusing also on shock as a means of coming to terms with modernity, but also as a non-recuperative reading of the marginal detritus of modernity: "Döblin uses montage to focus in a concentrated way on the debris of the city in its singularity. There is no systematic will behind the individual evocations other than the effort to replicate mimetically the chaos

or discuss the state of the manuscript without explicit discussion of the theory of montage. Among the latter, the work of Gabriele Sander merits consideration for its detailed work with the novel's manuscript. Not only has Sander provided a thorough classification of the various means by which Döblin inserted realia into the manuscript—copying, pasting into the text, placing next to the passage on a separate sheet, among others—,[298] she also emphasizes the variety of material Döblin uses: not only newspapers, but also images, song texts, and advertisements he would have seen on city streets.[299] While only a small number of these materials is actually a pasted insertion into the novel—many more were copied by hand or, in the case of images, were on loose pieces of paper—, all represent the inclusion of foreign material in the novel's manuscript. For Sander, these fragments contribute less to a montage effect in Döblin's finished novel and more function as "'Vehikel seiner Phantasie, als 'Beförderungsmittel, Anregungsmittel [vehicle of his imagination, as a means of transport, means to stimulate his mind].'"[300] Nonetheless, Sander acknowledges the intermedial and multimedial goals of the novel. The inclusion of images and especially song texts in the manuscript represent Döblin's attempt to enliven the book beyond the capacities of the written word

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and shock-character of the individual impressions in their cumulative effect." See Michael Jennings, "Of Weimar's First and Last Things: Montage, Revolution, and Fascism in Alfred Döblin's *November 1918* and *Berlin Alexanderplatz*," in *Politics in German Literature*, eds. Beth Bjorklund and Mark E. Cory (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1998), 138.

[298] Gabriele Sander, "Alfred Döblins *Berlin Alexanderplatz*," 127-28. For a classification based not on the means of pasting but the material used, see Nikolaus Miller, *Prolegomena zu einer Poetik der Dokumentarliteratur* (Munich: Fink, 1982), 184-206.

[299] Sander, "Alfred Döblins *Berlin Alexanderplatz*," 131.

[300] Ibid., 124.

alone.[301] Moreover, Döblin's involvement in film and radio play adaptations of the novel signal for Sander his desire to create a multimedial project that transitioned seamlessly between novel, film, and radio.[302]

While Sander does not frame her discussion of the novel's material in terms of the theory of montage, the intermedial aspirations of the novel she describes are relevant to the present discussion. Slugan also seeks to regain an intermedial notion of montage "that is sensitive enough in both formal and perceptual terms to distinguish between montage and other modernist and avant-garde techniques."[303] While Sander is primarily interested in the evocation of other medial effects in the novel, Slugan wants to ground these effects in contemporary theories of film montage.[304] Both of these accounts serve as a corrective to the overreliance on film in the discussion of the novel's montage technique. However nearly all the discussions of intermediality in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* lack reference to the copious theoretical literature on intermediality.[305]

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[301] Ibid., 133. Sander draws here on Alexander Honold, "Der singende Text: Klanglichkeit als literarische Performanzqualität," in *Literatur intermedial: Paradigmenbildung zwischen 1918 und 1968* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 187-208.
[302] Sander, "Alfred Döblins *Berlin Alexanderplatz*," 132.
[303] Slugan, *Montage as Perceptual Experience*, 7.
[304] Slugan makes frequent reference to photomontage, but a full discussion of its theoretical and practical influence on the book is lacking in his discussion.

[305] Ellen Strittmatter is a notable exception, who in her discussion of Döblin's use of images invokes Peter Wagner's explanation of Alain Mondanton's notion of the iconotext. See Ellen Strittmatter, "Bildpoetik und Bildpolitik: Alfred Döblin und das Medium Fotografie," *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 60 (2016): 141-185; here, 143. The iconotext is a much discussed term in intermedial theory. For Wagner, the iconotext achieves fusion of the two media. Liliane Louvel has countered this interpretation of the iconotext with a definition that maintains the oxymoronic or hypothetical character of the fusion of image and text. See Peter Wagner, "Ekphrasis, Iconotexts, and Intermediality—the State(s) of the Art(s)," in *Icons — Texts – Iconotexts: Essays on Intermediality*, ed. Peter Wagner (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), 15-17, and

If as Slugan argues the novel's status as literary montage owes more to its contemporary reception of the novel than any statement by Döblin himself, a brief look at perhaps the most famous review would not be out of place. This review was penned by none other than Walter Benjamin, who praises montage for providing a tool to transform the novel.[306] For Benjamin, the novel as developed in the nineteenth century—Benjamin names Flaubert as an example—has become divorced from the collective experience of society.[307] The novel, in contrast to every other form of prose, has no connection to oral tradition; for Benjamin, and for Döblin,[308] the solution to the current "crisis" of the novel is to be found in developing a modern equivalent to epic, a form of storytelling grounded in oral tradition and the collective experience of a people.

While Döblin does not solve this crisis for Benjamin, the introduction of montage into the novel shows the path forward. The relevant passage is worth quoting at length:

> Stilprinzip dieses Buches ist die Montage. Kleinbürgerliche Drucksachen, Skandalgeschichten, Unglücksfälle, Sensationen von 28, Volkslieder, Inserate schneien in diesen Text. Die Montage sprengt den "Roman", sprengt ihn im Aufbau wie auch stilistisch, und eröffnet neue, sehr epische Möglichkeiten. Im Formalen vor allem. Das Material der Montage ist ja durchaus kein beliebiges. Echte Montage ruht auf dem Dokument. Der Dadaismus hat in seinem fanatischen Kampf gegen das Kunstwerk durch

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Liliane Louvel, *The Poetics of the Iconotext*, trans. Laurence Petit (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 15.

[306] Ulf Zimmermann argues for the centrality of this review in Benjamin's own evolving thought on urban modernity; in particular, Zimmermann stresses the similarity of his reading of Döblin's epic to his considerations of Brecht's epic theatre. See Ulf Zimmermann, "Benjamin and *Berlin Alexanderplatz*: Some Notes Towards a View of Literature and the City," *Colloquia Germanica* 12, no. 3 (1979): 256-272.

[307] For Benjamin, the novel is born from the "Individuum in seiner Einsamkeit" and is divorced from the "Volk." See Walter Benjamin, "Krisis des Romans: Zu Döblins 'Berlin Alexanderplatz'," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Hella Tiedemann-Bartels, vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 230.

[308] Benjamin draws upon Döblin's essay "Der Bau des epischen Werks," which also takes up the issue of orality, discussed below.

> sie das tägliche Leben zum Bundesgenossen gemacht. Er hat zuerst, wenn auch unsicher, die Alleinherrschaft des Authentischen proklamiert. Der Film in seinen besten Augenblicken machte Miene, uns an sie zu gewöhnen. Hier ist sie zum ersten Male für die Epik nutzbar geworden. Die Bibelverse, Statistiken, Schlagertexte sind es, kraft deren Döblin dem epischen Vorgang Autorität verleiht. Sie entsprechen den formelhaften Versen der alten Epik.[309]
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> [The stylistic principle governing this book is that of montage. Petty-bourgeois printed matter, scandalmongering, stories of accidents, the sensational incidents of 1928, folk songs, and advertisements snow down in this text. The montage explodes the framework of the novel, bursts its limits both stylistically and structurally, and clears the way for new, epic possibilities. Formally, above all. The material of the montage is anything but arbitrary. Authentic montage is based on the document. In its fanatical struggle with the work of art, Dadaism used montage to turn daily life into its ally. It was the first to proclaim, somewhat uncertainly, the autocracy of the authentic. […] Here, for the first time, it has been placed at the service of narrative. Biblical verses, statistics, and texts from hit songs are what Döblin uses to confer authenticity on the narrative. They correspond to the formulaic verse forms of the traditional epic.[310]

Benjamin's definition of montage focuses on the insertion of foreign material in the text, much like later accounts such as Stenzel's influential discussion of collage and montage in the manuscript. That Benjamin was able to identify this composite character as montage without reference to the manuscript confirms Slugan's claim that montage was identified primarily as a particular perceptual effect of disruption.[311] Nonetheless, Benjamin asserts the centrality of these insertions' materiality to their effect. While he does name some presumably oral forms, such as songs, he insists that montage is based in its use of "Dokument," a decidedly print-based category. Indeed, even the oral songs are

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[309] Benjamin, "Krisis des Romans," 232-33.
[310] Walter Benjamin, 'The Crisis of the Novel,' in Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, eds, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, tr. Rodney Livingstone, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 301. Translation modified.
[311] Slugan discusses several other reviews of the novel that come to parallel conclusions. See Slugan, *Montage as Perceptual Experience*, 77-81.

turned into written documents through reference to *Schlagertexte*. The choice of the verb "schneien" evokes tiny shreds of paper littering the text of the novel, and the explosion of the novel—"sprengt den 'Roman'"—suggests a similar paper storm.

But what purpose do these stray scraps of paper use? Why are documents central to the novel's use of montage? Benjamin here, perhaps somewhat naively, asserts the insertions proclaim the "Alleinherrschaft des Authentischen [autocracy of the authentic]." Citing Dadaist montage as his authority, Benjamin interprets the montage elements as assurances of the quotidian plausibility of the novel's content. And this plausibility reveals itself through language. For Benjamin, the narrating voice of the author disappears beneath montage and the city itself becomes his means of representation. "Berlin ist sein Megaphon [Berlin is his megaphone]."[312]

At this point, Benjamin's intention in framing the novel's use of montage in terms of authenticity is clear. Authenticity in this context is not an assurance of the accuracy of the novel's portrayal of Berlin, that is, in its attempt to reproduce faithfully the city. As will be discussed further below and in the following chapter, neither Benjamin nor Döblin believe that such a perfect reproduction is possible. Rather, it is a question of what aspects need to be reproduced in order to portray adequately something as complex as the modern metropolis and what modes of representation would be up to the task. Benjamin suggests a form of montage in which the voice of the author and narrator recedes behind a delightful cacophony of textual attestation of the city's various

[312] Benjamin, "Krisis des Romans," 233.

elements.[313] Literary montage in this reading thus celebrates the plurality of material sources and forms.

Again, in all of these various considerations of montage, the voice of Döblin himself has been largely quiet. While he made no explicit comments on montage, he did comment on the materiality of print, and these comments suggest a different appraisal of montage. In his essay "Der Bau des epischen Werks [The Construction of the Epic Work]," cited by Benjamin in his review, Döblin provides a framework for the revitalization of epic. In it, he diagnoses a crisis of form thrust upon the novel by an adherence to a naturalist mode of representation. Namely, the contemporary novel primarily makes use of "Bericht" or recounting as its means of conveying information.[314] But the recount is not exclusive to epic, nor is epic the best representative of recounting. The newspaper also employs the *Bericht*, and has the advantage of being "ein wirklicher Bericht [a true recount]," while the novel only "einen Bericht imitiert [imitates a recount]."[315] In the competition of print media, the novel reveals itself as a poor imitation of the newspaper, which has the advantage of being factual.

Döblin, however, is not interested in dismissing literature as a mere imitation of an imitation, like Plato's well-known condemnation of mimesis. The problem is again

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[313] One of Slugan's main interests in discussing montage elements in the novel is the extent to which they suggest the possibility of a mode of storytelling without a narrator. See Slugan, 102-107.

[314] I have chosen to translate *Bericht* as recounting, for Döblin identifies it as a characteristic of epic in contrast to the dialog of drama. In the course of his argument, it becomes clear *Bericht* for Döblin refers to the relaying of information and would include both narration and description. See Döblin, "Der Bau des epischen Werks," in *Schriften zu Ästhetik, Poetik und Literatur*, ed. Erich Kleinschmidt (Olten/Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag, 1989), 215.

[315] Ibid., 216.

one of representation. The novel author "imitiert, ohne in die Realität einzudringen oder gar zu durchstoßen, einige Oberflächen der Realität [imitates some surface features of reality without penetrating into or even breaking through reality]," while the author of epic "muß zwei Schritte tun: er muß ganz nahe an die Realität heran, an ihre Sachlichkeit, ihr Blut, ihren Geruch, und dann hat er die Sache zu durchstoßen, das ist ja seine spezifische Realität [must take two steps: he must get really close to reality, to its objectiveness, its blood, its smell, and then he has to break through the thing, that is his specific reality]."[316] To merely present the phenomena of the external world with no transformation is not enough. Rather, the author must be a careful student of reality, and then must be able to draw something more from that reality. At this point, it is too soon to assume a montage practice from the violence of Döblin's language—the use of the verb "durchstoßen" in particular suggests a cutting and refiguring akin to montage. Yet to equate this with montage would miss Döblin's larger critique of a merely realistic form of representation. Döblin calls for a new epic form, and while Benjamin clearly identifies this with montage, Döblin is reluctant to give it a name.

The medial indeterminancy of this new mode of epic is worth noting, as it points towards a general dissatisfaction with strict medial boundaries in Döblin's work. However, other aspects of the text do indeed confirm a specific medial understanding of this practice. For Döblin criticizes the practice of authors to steal facts from newspapers and other nonfiction sources and use these as the basis for their work. For Döblin, this method falls short in that it ignores the most significant reality of the work's creation, namely the author himself. If audiences demand more and more facts, authors cannot

[316] Ibid., 219.

overlook that "[*d*]*er wirkliche Dichter war zu allen Zeiten selbst ein Faktum* [*the true poet was throughout the ages a fact himself*]."[317] Only through the mediation of factual material through the author do reports and documents become material for literature. Döblin compares the unmediated presentation of documents and facts to photography:

> Die Autoren haben keine Fakta aus den Zeitungen zu stehlen und in ihre Werke einzurühren, das genügt nicht. Nachlaufen und Photographie genügt nicht. Selber Faktum sein und sich Raum schaffen, das macht den guten Autor.[318]
>
> [Authors have no need to steal facts from the newspapers and stir them into their works, that is not enough. Imitation and photography is not enough. To be a fact oneself and create room for oneself, that makes the good author.]

Döblin's conception of photography will be discussed more fully below, but for now it suffices to say that he does not consider the medium capable of providing a sufficient transformation of reality. Rather, it is comparable to an author who feels compelled, "ganze Akten abzuschreiben [to write down whole files]" and to provide no further mediation,[319] a feeling to which Döblin himself frequently succumbed in his novels, including *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Mere copying is thus mere photography, a mere presentation of surface phenomena.

This would imply that Döblin in fact does not see montage as Benjamin sketched it above as the endpoint of his work. For Döblin argues not that the author disappears behind documents and authentic voices but that only through the author's intervention do they receive significance and earn the descriptor "epic." Why, then, does he present documentary material in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in such a seemingly unmediated way?

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[317] Ibid., 227, emphasis original.
[318] Ibid., 227-8.
[319] Ibid., 226.

After all, contemporary reviewers were all able to easily identify the insertion of foreign material as one of the key elements of the novel's construction. Before an answer can be attempted, something must be said of the materiality of these elements. As discussed above, Benjamin emphasizes the accumulation of diverse textual material as the basis for Döblin's montage. But in "Der Bau des epischen Werks," Döblin seems skeptical of textuality. He laments the end of oral poetry, destroyed by modernity, when the poet stood in the middle of his audience and could develop an immediate connection with the listeners.[320] The contemporary poet, who is victim to the conditions of modernity and capitalism, has no voice: "wir haben plötzlich gar keine Stimme, man nimmt uns die Stimme und gibt uns dafür traurige Drucktypen [we suddenly have no voice at all, they take away our voice and give us in its place sad pieces of type]."[321] And not only does movable type rob authors of their voice, it also condemns them to the book, which provides no guarantee of reaching the audience. Whereas an audience might provide a clue to the end of its attention span, the book gives no such clue, and the author has "erst aufzuhören, wenn alle Papiervorräte erschöpft sind [to stop only when all reserves of paper are depleted]."[322] Book writing is just the endless filling of paper, and its only natural endpoint is the exhaustion of paper. The materiality of the book is here in fact a hindrance, as it only produces more and more endless masses of paper. And once these masses are produced, there is no guarantee they will be read:

> Wohin die Bücher gehen, weiß er nicht; vielleicht bleiben sie in Leipzig auf dem Speicher des Verlegers, er spricht überhaupt für niemand, er

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[320] Ibid., 228.
[321] Ibid., 229.
[322] Ibid.

> spricht ins Leere, es ist kein allgemeines Volksdenken mehr da, die Maschine und die Wirtschaft hat alles zerrissen. Ein vollkommen katastrophaler Zustand.[323]
>
> [He has no idea where the books go: perhaps they remain in Leipzig in the publisher's warehouse, he speaks for nobody at all, he speaks into the void, there is no more communal thought of the people, the machine and the market has torn everything apart. A totally catastrophic state of affairs.]

Döblin's use of "zerrissen" here reveals his central preoccupation with the problem of literature's materiality. Industry and capitalism may have torn apart the once-harmonious relationship between author and audience, but they have also forced literature into a precarious form, a form in which the words of the author are constantly in danger of being torn to shreds, of crumbling. Here, one can perhaps venture a connection to montage. The sorry state of the novel's manuscript gives credence to Döblin's concern: the crumbling pieces of paper from which the story has been pasted together have barely survived nearly 90 years of intensive reception. Whereas the other authors highlighted in this study foreground the materiality and performativity of the sign, at this point it is clear Döblin takes a different approach. His implementation of montage practices seeks not so much to draw attention to the act of signification and its medial encoding, but to overcome the materiality of the various media he deploys. In this regard, his montage practice marks a departure from the other authors in this study, who seek to reactivate certain aspect's of print's materiality for productive and creative reinvigorations of language.

But the paradox persists: Döblin dreams of a form of writing that would aspire to nonmaterial forms, yet writes a novel that most readers, contemporary and later, see as a

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[323] Ibid.

collection of material writing practices. Why, then, does Döblin not hide more thoroughly the traces of other documents? The author's role in mediating the factual provides the lynchpin. In inserting himself into the material, by standing between the reader and the documentary basis for the story, the author, according to Döblin, can overcome the material constraints of the novel and recreate the originary communal relationship between author and audience:

> Jenes beobachtende Ich übernimmt in unserer Zeit die Rolle und Funktion des Volkes bei jenen alten Vaganten. *Das Ich wird Publikum, wird Zuhörer, und zwar mitarbeitender Zuhörer*. […] Es findet von diesem Augenblick eine Kooperative, ein Zusammenarbeiten zwischen dem Ich und der dichtenden Instanz statt. […] So ist beim epischen Autor keine Rede – und bestimmt gilt dies auch vom dramatischen Autor –, keine Rede von einem blinden fessellosen Trieb, einer Bewußtlosigkeit, die dichtet. Bewußtlos ist nur das Inkubationsstadium, in eigentümlicher Weise aber bewußt, gedankengetränkt, mit Werten des ganzen Milieus, des Standes, der Klasse, des Volksschicht, des Volkstums durchsetzt das zweite Stadium. Und all diese Dinge, Gedanken, Werte der genannten Umwelt formen nun in ringender Kollektivarbeit mit der dichtenden, sehr persönlichen Instanz das Werk.[324]
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> [In our times, that observing I takes over the role and function of the people as we know it from the old goliards. *The I becomes audience, becomes a listener, and a participating listener*. {…} From this moment on, there occurs a cooperative, a cooperation between the I and the poetic instance. {…} For the epic author, thus, there is no talk — and certainly this is also true of the dramatic author — no talk of a blind, unfettered drive, a loss of consciousness that writes. Only the incubation stage is without conscious, but in a curious way conscious, drenched with thoughts, with the values of the whole milieu, the whole rank, the whole class, the level of society, the people permeates the second stage. And all these things, thoughts, values of the named environment fashion the work in a wrestling collective work with the poetic, very personal instance.]

Döblin's take on poeisis, a repudiation of poetic inspiration in both its Romantic and psychoanalytic forms, supposes a recreation of community, an overcoming of the

[324] Döblin, "Der Bau des epischen Werks," 233.

alienation characteristic of modernity. But what is the point of recreating such a community if it exists only in the author? Indeed, Döblin argues that in successful epic the reader also experiences such an experience:

> *Der Leser macht also den Produktionsprozeß mit dem Autor mit*. Alle epischen Werke haben es mit dem Werden und Geschehen zu tun, und so, möchte ich sagen, ist es auch in der Ordnung, daß der epische Bericht nicht fertig vorgelegt wird und angeschwirrt kommt, aus der Pistole geschossen, sondern der Leser erlebt ihn in statu nascendi.[325]
>
> [*The reader participates in the production process with the author*. All epic authors deal with becoming and happening, and, in this way, I want to say, it is also alright, that the epic recounting is not placed before the reader as a finished product and comes flying as if shot out of a pistol, but rather the reader experiences it in statu nascendi.]

The successful novel reveals itself to the reader as a work-in-progress. It unfolds its own creation to the reader and the reader becomes a participant in the piecing-together of the work.[326] That documentary material is evident as such is thus not in contradiction with Döblin's aesthetic program. Rather, the masses of paper must first be recognized as such so that author and reader can experience a form of narrative more vivid and immediate than what the document and mere facts can provide. Döblin's overcoming of reportage depends thus not only on the reader being drawn into the production of the novel, but, as I will argue here, on the eventual dissolution of the specific mediality of the process of production.

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[325] Ibid., 235.

[326] Devin Fore has compellingly argued that *Berlin Alexanderplatz* successfully enacts the poetological agenda laid out in the work, that it is a work in which the author not only presents himself as present within the finished work but also destabilizes the subject positions between author, character, and reader by presenting a work that is constantly being written. See Devin Fore, "Döblin's Epic: Sense, Document, and the Verbal Word Picture," *New German Critique* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 171- 207.

Note that Döblin makes no mention of images in his discussion of epic, save for the lone comparison to photography. This does not mean images are irrelevant to the current discussion, for as discussed above the manuscript does include a limited number of images. Moreover, the frequent reference to filmic writing in the scholarship on montage in Berlin Alexanderplatz warrants a brief consideration of the applicability of Döblin's comments on epic to image-based material. Despite the ubiquity of references to filmic writing, scholarship is divided on its role in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. References to filmic writing are based largely on Döblin's early manifesto, "An Romantautoren und ihre Kritiker," a repudiation of psychologism in the novel and an explanation of his own peculiar "Döblinismus," his own brand of avant-garde aesthetics.[327] In explaining the form of representation proper to his "Döblinismus," Döblin coins the term *Kinostil*, or "movie style." While many acknowledge the centrality of the *Kinostil* in this manifesto, the stylistic traits of the *Kinostil* and its prevalence in his oeuvre are debated. Some scholars, such as Stefanie Harris, see continuity between Döblin's early work and later texts such as *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Harris identifies as key elements of this early *Kinostil* "the dissolution of the inner self or unified subject, the rejection of a linear plot in favor of a montage-like text, and the inclusion of actual documents or preexisting material within the text,"[328] all elements that are also found in Döblin's notion of epic sketched above. Harris' positive appraisal of the Kinostil, which like Slugan's account

[327] For an overview of Döblin's "Döblinismus" and it's relationship to his understanding of psychology and the avant-garde, see Judith Ryan, "From Futurism to Döblinism," *The German Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (November 1981): 415-426.
[328] Harris, *Mediating* Modernity, 112.

draws on Soviet montage theory from the 1920s,[329] is challenged by accounts such as Peter Jelavich. For Jelavich, who in his monograph on *Berlin Alexanderplatz* traces the adaptation of the book in the newspaper, radio, and film, Döblin's *Kinostil* is fundamentally grounded in an earlier moment in cinema, namely the nickelodeons that were just falling out of favor at the time of the manifesto's composition in 1913. Jelavich contends these early film practices, in which a variety of short films of radically different character, provide the basis for the *Kinostil* and the rapid change of style and material found in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.[330] And lastly, scholars such as Erich Kleinschmidt deny entirely the filmic qualities of the novel. While Kleinschmidt admits Döblin may have had certain representational qualities of film in mind, he disagrees with the idea that such writing seeks to imitate film. For Kleinschmidt, "Medien sind nicht übersetzbar. Ein Roman funktioniert nicht als Film [Media cannot be translated. A novel does not work as a film]."[331] Kleincshmidt's assertion may be contradicted by theories of intermediality, which account for the representational impression of one medium in another,[332] but it

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[329] For Slugan, Soviet montage is a precondition for the reception of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as montage: "More specifically, it was only with the reception of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* that the same principle was *perceived* to be in operation in Soviet cinema, early Dada photomontages, and Döblin's novel." See Slugan, *Montage as Perceptual Experience*, 28. While Slugan only postulates the influence of Soviet montage theory on the reception of the novel, Harris sees a connection between the description of shock and discontinuity in the theoretical writings of Eisenstein as well as Döblin. See Harris, *Mediating Modernity*, 109-111.

[330] Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film, and the Death of Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 14-15.

[331] Erich Kleinschmidt, "Zwischenwege: Döblin und die Medien Film, Rundfunk und Fotographie," in *Wirkendes Wort* 51, no. 1 (April 2001): 409.

[332] Louvel, for example, talks about intermediality in terms of concentration, from the lightest suggestion of another medium to a multimedial product that actually contains multiple media: "The reader may thus play at observing the impregnating effects of the image on the text, from the lightest 'drop,' as one says of a cocktail, to its most diluted

nevertheless provides an important qualification to the filmic qualities of Döblin's writing. In contrast to Harris and Jelavich, who both point to specific filmic practices that Döblin seeks to imitate, Kleinschmidt sees the films of 1913 as insufficiently developed to provide a convincing aesthetic program.[333] This suggests the operative question for Döblin's filmic writing is not what specific filmic techniques he seeks to imitate—that is, how to adopt montage or specific filmic practices, but rather what filmic effects he seeks to produce.

Now, a consideration for the larger context of Döblin's argument will help illuminate certain aspects of the *Kinostil* that are relevant to the current discussion. "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker" continues a line of inquiry first announced in another short piece of criticism by Döblin, "Futuristische Worttechnik [Futuristic Word Techniques]." As the title suggests, this text emerges as a response to Marinetti's attempt at writing a novel, and Döblin counters Marinetti's Futurism with his "Döblinismus." As Döblin's announcement of the *Kinostil* occurs in the context of his repudiation of Marinetti, it is worth revisiting the text of both manifestos to consider the exact medial contours of the *Kinostil*. After all, Furturist experiments in *parole in libertà* would have provided a concrete example of the translation of collage techniques into language.[334] That Döblin deliberately repudiates "futuristische Worttechnik" suggests his concern is not primarily the adaptation of collage techniques—or at least not in 1913, as he may

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emulsion, to the co-presence of irreducibly joined elements to be tasted and appreciated together." See Louvel, *Poetics of the Iconotext*, 70-71.

[333] Kleinschmidt, "Zwischenwege," 404.

[334] For a good overview of Futurist collage techniques, see the sixth chapter of Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 164-193.

have been unaware of such Futurist experiments—, but rather with the problem of representation. First, though, some context is helpful. Döblin closely tracked the development of Futurism. Marinetti's "Manifesto of Futurism" as well as other documents of Futurism were published in German translation in *Der Sturm*, a journal to which Döblin frequently contributed, and the journal's editor, Herwarth Walden, organized an exhibition of Futurist paintings in 1912, about which Döblin authored a review, also published in Der Sturm.[335] While Döblin enthusiastically praised the Futurist paintings of Boccioni, Russolo, and Severini,[336] he rejected Futurist attempts at literature.

While Döblin could see a plurality of meanings emerging from Futurist painting, he found Futurist literature nearly devoid of meaning. His response to Marinetti's novel *Mafarka* vehemently attacks the novel's representational strategies. Again, like in "Bau

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[335] This review has been reprinted as Alfred Döblin, "Die Bilder der Futuristen," in *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Anthony W. Riley, vol. 1 (Olten/Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag, 1985), 112-117. The decision to print this text with Döblin's short writings and not with his aesthetic writings obscures the development of his thought in his other engagements with Futurism, especially his repudiation of Marinetti, discussed below.

[336] In his review, Döblin explicitly mentions Boccioni's *La risata*, Russolo's *Revolution*, and Severini's *La Danse du pan-pan*. See Döblin, "Bilder der Futuristen," 114-116. In his postcard albums, housed at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach, Döblin kept several postcards from the Futurist exhibition, which he grouped together over two pages. Their inclusion is curious because the postcard albums otherwise document urban scenes, presenting works of art only when they are somehow connected to a location. Among the works included in the postcard album are again Boccioni's *La risata* as well as his *States of Mind: The Farewells*, Carlo Carrà's *Il Funerale dell'anarchico Galli* and *Jolts of a Cab*, Severini's *La Modiste* and two copies of *Restless Dancer*, and, anomalously, Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbild*. That Schwitters' work is the sole piece in his collection that utilizes collage techniques once again suggests that Döblin was not interested in Futurism for its collage and montage aspects. Schwitters' presence may however suggest that Döblin saw an affinity between Schwitters' montage practice and the paintings of the Futurists. It could also, more plainly, mean that Döblin confined modernist art to one section of his postcard albums. The latter interpretation is strengthened by the doubling of *Restless Dancer*, suggesting Döblin may have been more interested in filling space than cohesively grouping images. Interestingly, the Schwitters image belongs to a different series than the remaining images.

des epischen Werks," Döblin criticizes Marinetti's presentation of surface phenomena of reality: "Wir sollen einzig das Meckern, Paffen, Rattern, Heulen, Näseln der irdischen Dinge imitieren, das Tempo der Realität zu erreichen suchen, und dies sollte nicht Phonographie, sondern Kunst, und nicht nur Kunst, sondern Futurismus heißen? [we are told to imitate only the griping, whiffing, chattering, whining, twanging of earthly things, attempt to reach the tempo of reality, and this ought to be not a phonograph, but art, and not only art, but Futurism?]."[337] For Döblin, Marinetti's novel does nothing more than reproduce the material appearance of things, producing a mere recording—"Phonographie"—that serves as a poor surrogate for that reality. Marinetti's accumulation of noise is aimed at imitating one aspect of modernity, that is, its speed, at the expense of all others. In doing so, he creates what Döblin terms a "Telegrammstil [telegram style]"—a rapid sequence of semi-related impressions unconnected through standard syntactic elements.[338] Such a writing devoid of syntax fails for Döblin not because of its speed or its banality but because it ultimately shifts the task of constructing meaning from the author to the reader. While Döblin calls for a cooperative mode of meaning production in "Bau des epischen Werks," he accuses Marinetti's telegram style of placing the burden entirely on the reader. This means if the reader fails to make the same connection, the text will lose all meaning. Marinetti presents "Dinglichkeit [materiality, literally: thinglyness]" rather than reality, and in doing so loses sight of the meaning behind modernity's surface phenomena. "Ecce Müll [Ecce trash]," concludes

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[337] Alfred Döblin, "Futuristische Worttechnik: Offener Brief an F. T. Marinetti," in *Schriften zu Ästhetik, Poetik und Literatur*, ed. Erich Kleinschmidt (Olten/Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag, 1989), 113-119; here, 115.
[338] Ibid., 117.

Döblin. Apparently the reclamatory montage practices championed by Schwitters and Benjamin, through which garbage is recontextualized and given new meaning, are not of interest to Döblin as such.

Now, it is necessary to emphasize *Mafarka* predates the Futurist invention of *parole in libertà* and thus cannot be considered an example of collage techniques.[339] It remains a speculative question whether Döblin would have found an affinity between his own concerns and the Futurist practice which was specifically targeted against the book form.[340] Nonetheless, regardless of the relationship of *Mafarka* to montage, Döblin's critique both of merely reproductive modes of representation and of an accumulation of material, albeit in a slightly different sense of the word. It is this context, more so than with regard to montage as such, that informs his coinage of the *Kinostil* in "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker."[341] The Kinostil is thus a response to the *Dinglichkeit* of Marinetti's writing, to the garbage-heaping his poetics enact. It should therefore not be a surprise that the *Kinostil* deploys a similar dematerializing impulse as found in Döblin's montage practice:

> Die Darstellung erfordert bei der ungeheuren Menge des Geformten einen Kinostil. In höchster Gedrängtheit und Präzision hat 'die Fülle der Gesichte' vorbeizuziehen. Der Sprache das Äußerste der Plastik und

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[339] Specifically, Marinetti developed *parole in libertà* in 1912, which was intended to be a synthesis of visual and verbal material. For an overview of the development of the form, see the seventh chapter of Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting*, 195-227.
[340] *Parole in libertà* was invented specifically as an attack against book form. Ibid., 165.
[341] Döblin frames "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker" as an attack on psychologism in the novel and it is from this perspective that most scholars have approached this influential manifesto. For example, Judith Ryan reads the essay as endorsing a form of Naturalism in which observation is to be used to deduce psychological states, as the psychiatrist must infer the patient's condition from external observation. See Ryan, "From Futurism to 'Döblinism,'" 418-419.

> Lebendigkeit abzuringen. Der Erzählschlendrian hat im Roman keinen Platz; man erzählt nicht, sondern baut.[…] Rapide Abläufe, Durcheinander, in bloßen Stichworten; wie überhaupt an allen Stellen die höchste Exaktheit in suggestiven Wendungen zu erreichen gesucht werden muß. Das Ganze darf nicht erscheinen wie gesprochen sondern wie vorhanden.[342]
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> [Portrayal demands, in light of the monstrous mass of the formed, a cinema style. In the highest compactness and precision, the "fullness of visions" must past by. To wrest from language the extreme of plasticity and vividness. The old chap of a narrator has no place in the novel; one does not narrate, but rather builds. {…} Rapid sequences, confusion, in mere headwords; just as in all places achieving the highest exactness in suggestive phrases must be attempted. The whole thing cannot appear as if spoken, but rather as if present.]

As Kleinschmidt has compelling argued, Döblin's knowledge of film was too incomplete in 1913 and his interest too ambivalent to allow one to assume his endorsement of a mode of filmic writing.[343] Rather, it seeks an immediacy of impressions akin to the rapid succession of images in film. It seeks immediacy and presence—"wie vorhanden"—, not mediation—"wie gesprochen." As such, it is an attempt within language and within the medium of the novel to overcome the limitations of language.

Here, one might notice several fruitful connections with intermedial theory. For example, Lessing's *Laocoön*, an early and yet important treatise on medial boundaries, condemns literature that too faithfully imitates the visual arts, yet makes an exception for Homer's ekphrasis of Achilles' shield, which he even describes as the moment in which "Homer malet."[344] Lessing excludes Homer's ekphrastic writings due to the immediacy with which he accumulates impressions, allowing the arbitrary sign to become a natural

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[342] Döblin, "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker," 121-122.
[343] Kleinschmidt, "Zwischenwege," 408.
[344] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon*, in *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. Wilfred Barner, vol. 5/2 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990), 117.

sign. As David Wellbery has convincingly argued with regard to Lessing, "poetry coincides with painting – not in terms of specific contents nor even in terms of the type of imaginative concretization, but in terms of what might be called *the idea of painting*. The idea is intuitive immediacy. Only when such intuitive immediacy is attained does poetry reach the 'goal of illusion' which it shares with the plastic arts."[345] In a similar regard, Döblin wants to achieve the immediacy of film, but not necessarily to imitate directly the work of the camera. It is thus an equivalence of effects, not of means.

Likewise, Liliane Louvel's *Poetics of the Iconotext* provides a language for specifying varying degrees of medial interaction. Derived in part from Gérard Genette's classifications of transtextuality, Louvel's scheme supplies useful descriptors for pictorial effects in literature. Speaking in terms of "saturation," Louvel schematizes various modes of embedding references to the visual arts in text in terms of the vividness or explicitness of reference to the pictorial. Two of Louvel's categories resonate with Döblin's description of his writing style. Louvel's notion of mnemopictoriality describes the evocation of a pictorial scene without explicitly announcing its inspiration in the visual arts. Textual cues, such as the inclusion of specific topoi of a certain type of painting—for example, the distorted facial expressions of Cubism—lead the reader to describe the scene as painterly or otherwise evocative of the visual arts.[346] In Döblin's aesthetics, the sequential accumulation of targeted descriptive phrases creates an impression that recalls the speed and immediacy of film without directly imitating any formal devices of film.

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[345] David Wellbery, *Lessing's Laocoon: Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 183.
[346] Liliane Louvel, *The Poetics of the Iconotext*, trans. Laurence Petit (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 57-60.

Louvel's other category relevant to Döblin's poetics, archpictoriality, describes texts which are informed by a specific pictorial genre. Louvel is particularly interested in structural parallels between texts and images but cautions against "hasty linguistic parallels and aesthetic analogies" based on mere subjective impressions.[347] Louvel's concern about hasty impressionistic comparisons is a useful warning here, as the wide-ranging interpretations of montage in the novel suggest insufficient rigor in determining the nature of the novel's medial basis. Döblin himself, as discussed above, fails to make explicit the novel's connection to montage, and the frequent comparisons to montage made by contemporary critics and scholarship may be pure subjective judgments lacking a strong foundation in the text. It has thus been the goal of the preceding section to provide sufficient textual evidence for a principle of montage in Döblin's poetics. The following sections will seek to trace the translation into practice, and how this practice concretely mimics the structure of montage as Döblin understood it. As the previous section has shown that Döblin's turn towards montage arises from a frustration with documentary media such as reportage and photography, a brief survey of Döblin's photographic endeavors is in order.

Döblin and Photography

While Döblin's novels largely eschew visual material, other aspects of his oeuvre attest to his continuing interest in photography as a medium. Döblin authored two introductions to collections of photographs. The first, Mario von Bucovich's *Berlin*, provides the most immediate connection to *Berlin Alexanderplatz* due to the similarity in

[347] Ibid., 63.

subject matter.[348] Nonetheless, his introduction to August Sander's *Antlitz der Zeit* [*Face of the Time*] also demonstrates an ongoing interest in contemporary photography. In both, Döblin expresses a deep skepticism in the representational abilities of photography. While no comparable skepticism exists in Döblin's appraisal of language as such, this skepticism in the power of visual representation is a necessary condition for Döblin's evocation of the visual in language. That is to say, Döblin does not turn to the visual due to a deficiency in the verbal, but due to a deficiency in the visual.

Mario von Bucovich's *Berlin* presents two hundred fifty-six photographs of Berlin.[349] While a comprehensive account of Bucovich's work lies outside the goals of this study, some background on the photographer will help contextualize Döblin's involvement with photography. Despite the fact that Bucovich's work was reviewed favorably by important contemporaries, including Franz Hessel, Walter Benjamin, and

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[348] Gabriele Sander and Ellen Strittmatter both name Bucovich's photobook as a potential source or inspiration for *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, although neither goes so far to suggest concrete points of interaction. See Gabriele Sander, "Döblin's Berlin: The Story of Franz Biberkopf," trans. Brian Tucker, in *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin*, ed. Roland Dollinger, Wulf Koepke, and Heidi Thomann Tewarson, 141-160 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), 142; Ellen Strittmatter, "Bildpoetik und Bildpolitik," 176-77.

[349] The photobook as a genre is still an emerging area of scholarship. According to Hans-Michael Koetzle, writing as recently as 2011, it has only been in the last few decades that scholarship has turned from viewing photobooks as collections of individual images that can be used as documentary evidence to cohesive artistic statements; as such, the photobook must, for Koetzle, be read as *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a sequence of images and texts that only gain meaning in their cohesive presentation. See Hans-Michael Koetzle, *Eyes on Paris: Paris im Fotobuch 1890-2010* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2011), 12-14. The urban photobook in particular seems in need of greater scholarly appraisal. Martin Parr and Gerry Badger's three-volume history of the photobook, while providing a near comprehensive account of different varieties and uses of photobooks, does not devote significant space to the urban photobook as a unique genre. See Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *The Photobook: A History* (London: Phaidon, 2004-2014).

Kurt Tucholsky, his work remains relatively unknown today.[350] While relatively conventional in terms of its aesthetic presentation of the major sites of the city,[351] Bucovich's several photo books mark important contributions to the development of the genre. Though a thorough investigation of Bucovich's work lies outside the constraints of this study, some background is necessary due to his relative obscurity.

Little is known concretely about the life of Mario von Bucovich, and a major monograph devoted to his work remains a desideratum. Basic aspects of his biography, including nationality and religious affiliation, are still subject to debate. Nonetheless, his work was featured in numerous of Weimar's magazines, including *Querschnitt* and *Die*

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[350] Very little scholarly attention has been devoted to Bucovich. This lack in information is compounded by the fact that Bucovich left very few details about his life behind and major details of his biography must be reconstructed through public records and inference. The subtitle of one of the first significant attempts to recover details about his biography, "Wer war Mario von Bucovich?", already demonstrates the degree to which he has disappeared from cultural memory. See Eckhardt Köhn, "'Ich bin teuer:' Wer war Mario von Bucovich," *Fotogeschichte* 132 (2014). http://www.fotogeschichte.info/bisher-erschienen/hefte-ab-126/132/eckhardt-koehn-wer-war-mario-von-bucovich/. Todd Heidt and Michael Berkowitz provide the most complete survey of Bucovich's life to date. While acknowledging that it is not yet possible to determine with complete accuracy his citizenship or religious affiliation, they propose that Bucovich was an Austrian Jew who changed citizenship several times during his long exile starting in 1929. They also contend his reputation as a photographer was based primarily on his work in portraiture. See Todd Heidt and Michael Berkowitz, "The Life of Mario von Bucovich: Perils, Pleasures, and Pitfalls in the History of Photography," *Photography and Culture* 10, no. 3 (November 2017): 247-266.

[351] Sabine Hake has compared Bucovich's photobook with two contemporary photobooks focused on Berlin, Sasha Stone's *Berlin in Bildern*, with a foreword by Adolf Behne, and Laszlo Willinger's *100 x Berlin*. On the example of three photographs of the Mossehaus. Hake concludes that Bucovich's approach emphasizes the integration of new architectural innovations into the existing urban landscape, while Stone and Willinger emphasize the building's remarkable formal innovations. This reflects the differing audiences of the books: while Bucovich's book was most likely intended for a bourgeois audience, Stone and Willinger assumed audiences conversant in contemporary artistic discourses. See Sabine Hake, "Visualising the urban masses: modern architecture and architectural photography in Weimar Berlin," *The Journal of Architecture* 11, no. 5 (2006): 523-530.

Dame, suggesting his relative importance in the visual culture of the period. While Bucovich marketed his work primarily as commercial portraiture,[352] his photobooks, particularly the early *Paris* and *Berlin, Das Gesicht der Stadt*, have received more enthusiastic scholarly attention. These books, both published in 1928, mark Bucovich's most significant work during the period under consideration in this study. After leaving Germany in the early 1930s, Bucovich self-published three additional photo books devoted to New York, Washington D.C., and Mexico, suggesting not only his longstanding interest in photographic documentation of place but also his decreasing relevance during his North American exile.[353]

Photobooks documenting European cities experienced a good deal of popularity in the 1920s as several short-lived series devoted to different metropolises emerged.[354] While Paris had been the subject of photobooks since at least the nineteenth century,[355] the genre's extension to Berlin was a product of the city's remarkable growth in cultural

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[352] Köhn, "'Ich bin teuer,'" n. p.

[353] Why self-publication became Bucovich's preferred mode of publishing during his time in North America is a topic of speculation due to incomplete knowledge of his biography. Heidt and Berkowitz speculate that it afforded him greater artistic freedom and profit, while also acknowledging the difficulties he had establishing himself in New York. Heidt and Berkowitz, "Life of Mario von Bucovich," 257, 263.

[354] In particular, photobooks achieved a high level of aesthetic sophistication in the 1920s in the wake of Constructivist interest in the genre. Koetzle, *Eyes on Paris*, 13. For more information on Constructivist experiments with the photobook, see Hanne Bergius, "Die neue visuelle Realität: Das Fotobuch der 20er Jahre," in *Deutsche Fotografie: Macht eines Mediums 1870-1970*, 88-102 (Cologne: DuMont, 1997). See also the fifth chapter of Patrizia McBride, *Chatter of the Visible: Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 111-147. For a comprehensive overview of the modernist photobook from a multinational perspective, see Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, "Photo Eye: The Modernist Photobook," in *The Photobook: A History*, vol. 1 (London: Phaidon, 2004), 82-115.

[355] For a comprehensive overview of photobooks devoted to Paris, see Koetzle, *Eyes on Paris*.

and political significance in the 1920s.[356] Often featuring captions in multiple languages, the books were aimed at a cosmopolitan readership with some degree of familiarity with the cities in question. In that sense, the books were less an attempt to spur travel and more its replacement,[357] while also actively shaping the representation of a given place.[358] Thus, the burden of representation placed upon the photobook was high: the task of the photobook was to provide a comprehensive overview of the sites and primary characteristics of a city.

Bucovich's *Berlin* resists easy description. A consideration of its aesthetic qualities lies unfortunately outside of the constraints of this investigation, but Hans-Michael Koetzle's judgment of his Paris book can also largely be applied to *Berlin*: "Der Band ist kein Manifest der fotografischen Moderne [The volume is not a manifesto of photographic modernism]."[359] In terms of subject matter, the album covers a remarkable variety of material. The book begins with a head-on shot of the Brandenburg Gate and circularly returns with a close-up of the Quadriga atop it at the end. Bucovich thus frames his work with perhaps Berlin's most recognizable structure. From this framing, the work would seem to place emphasis on monumental, representative structures. And while

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[356] See Hans-Werner Klünner, Nachwort to *Berlin 1928: Das Gesicht der Stadt*, by Mario von Bucovich (Berlin: Nicolai, 1992), 117-18.
[357] Claudia Öhlschläger, "Das *punctum* der Moderne: Feuilletonistische und fotografische Städtebilder der späten 1920er und frühen 1930er Jahre: Benjamin, Kracauer, von Bucovich, Moï Ver," *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 22, no. 3 (2012): 540-557; here, 544-45. Cf. also Koetzle, *Eyes on Paris*, 17.
[358] For examples of the ways in which photobooks have been used actively to form the idea of a given place, see Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, "From There to Here: The Photobook and Place," in *The Photobook: A History*, vol. 3 (London: Phaidon, 2014), 146-183.
[359] Koetzle, *Eyes on Paris*, 81. Koetzle supports his judgment through the "statische Layout" and the reliance on a documentary form of photography.

indeed the book includes some images of such structures, including Andreas Schlüter's famous monument for Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg, curiously photographed from the side and rear and thus obscuring some of the magisterial qualities of the statue, the album also features more quotidian and more contemporary subjects. It features, for example, shots of Berlin's various modes of transportation, including one of the last remaining horse-drawn carriages on the Alexanderplatz, an overhead shot of construction of the U-Bahn on the Alexanderplatz, a shot of airplanes landing at the still expanding Tempelhof, and numerous shots of boats of varying degrees of technological sophistication. It also features photos of workers and businesses of all sorts. Indeed, it seems Bucovich's book seeks to document as many aspects of the city as possible, providing a total representation of the city's present state.

It is precisely with this question of the burden of representation that Döblin frames his foreword to Bucovich's *Berlin*. Already the title of his short text, "Berlin, die unsichtbare Stadt [Berlin, the invisible city]," calls into question the ability of photographic representation to capture the city. But this title is not intended to completely question the representational capacities of photography altogether. For indeed, the problem extends to the written word. Berlin is an "unpoetische Stadt [unpoetic city]" and one "kann von Berlin nicht sprechen in dem Stil und dem Tonfall, mit dem etwa einer Paris beschreibt [cannot speak of Berlin in the style and cadence a person describes Paris with]."[360] Döblin's invocation of Paris at this moment should not surprise, for Paris was

[360] Alfred Döblin, Geleitwort to *Berlin 1928*, 5. The text is also reprinted in the critical edition of Döblin's works, though without any of Bucovich's images. See Alfred Döblin, "[Berlin]," in *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Anthony Riley, vol. 3 (Zurich/Düsseldorf: Walter-Verlag, 1985) ,153-159.

the city to photograph *par excellence*. To view the sites of Berlin that one might photograph is to turn it into Paris : "Wenn die großen Autobusse mit den Fremden vom Zoologischen Garten, Potsdamer Platz, von den Linden abfahren, so können Sie sicher sein, […] sie werden die Wagen falsch fahren, nämlich durch – Paris, aber nicht durch Berlin [When the big autobuses depart with foreigners from the Zoological Garden, Potsdamer Platz, or the street "Unter den Linden," you can be certain, they will be driving the cars the wrong way, that is to say, through – Paris, but not through Berlin]."[361]

What would a positive representation of Berlin be? What is the city that turns to Paris in its most visible, photographable, and describable areas? Döblin provides no clear answer—he has, after all, established the city also escapes description in language. In fact, a whole picture would seem to require near encyclopedic knowledge of the demographic and ethnographic information of the city: "Um die volle Wahrheit der wachsenden, unsichtbaren Siedlung Berlin zu *zeichnen*, müßte ich Seite um Seite des statischen Jahrbuchs der Stadt *abschreiben*, ihre Geburten und Todesfälle hinsetzen, von den Gründungen, Liquidationen und Konkursen berichten, von den Krankenkassen… [In order to *draw* the full truth of the growing, invisible settlement Berlin, I would have to *copy* page after page of the statistical yearbook for the city, add to that its births its deaths, report of the new establishments, liquidations, and bankruptcies of the health funds…]. "[362] It bears repeating that in "Der Bau des epischen Werks," Döblin criticizes the author who feels compelled to write down whole files. Döblin thus does not advocate for producing a complete statistical copy of the city, but rather to use the act of copying

[361] Döblin, Geleitwort, 5.
[362] Ibid. 7. Emphasis added.

for his own representational goals. Here, I would emphasize Döblin's use of the verbs "zeichnen [draw]" and "abschreiben [copy, literally: write down]," as the primary mode of montage in the manuscript copy of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* consists not of pasting, but of copying, of reproducing reality not immediately through unmediated insertion of documentary material, but through its mediation through the author's hand. That such a description of Berlin is produced through drawing—"zeichnen"—, gives some sense of the type of image Döblin wishes to produce. Exact and complete, like a statistical account, yet not necessarily photorealistic.

The closest Döblin comes to an account of the city is an address to a fictional traveler at the piece's end, urging him

> sieh Dich um, atme, bewege Dich, hier geht etwas vor, es ist eine moderne, junge, zukunftsreiche Riesensiedlung! Plötzlich wird auch Dich die Monotonie ihrer Häuser erschüttern, und Du wirst die Energie, Lebendigkeit und Tapferkeit dieses Menschenschlages hier erkennen, die Vielgestaltigkeit seiner Typen, Du siehst, hier wohnen sie, hier arbeiten und bauen sie, hier lagert es, ganz ohne Unruhe, auf dem Sandboden, das große ernste Massenwesen Berlin.[363]
>
> [look around, breathe, move, here something is happening, it's a modern, young massive settlement with a promising future! suddenly, the monotony of its buildings will unsettle you as well, and you will recognize the energy, vitality, and fortitude of this group of people here, the complex shape of its people. You see, here is where they live, here where they work and build, here it lairs, quite without unease, upon the sandy ground, the big, serious mass being Berlin.]

The city cannot be experienced through the eye alone. It must be experienced, breathed and brought into the body,[364] and sensed beyond the mere visually available material. The

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[363] Ibid.

[364] In his philosophical treatise, *Das Ich über der Natur*, of which a critical edition is still lacking, Döblin calls the senses the "Ausgeweide" and compares the processing of

paradoxical description, "hier lagert es, ganz ohne Unruhe, auf dem Sandboden [here it lairs, quite without unease, upon the sandy ground, the big, serious mass being Berlin.]," suggests the crux of the problem. The city would appear to be still—"lagert"—and even appears at a state of rest, but only one that is achieved through the overcoming of unrest—"ohne Unruhe." And even this peaceful state is presently threatened, as it rests upon unstable sand. The city thus escapes not only the realm of the visible, but additionally any state of stasis that might allow for photographic representation or poetic description.

It is easy to assume at this point that the problem lies primarily with the referent, with what is portrayed rather than the means of portrayal. It is not that photography captures the wrong Berlin, but that Berlin lacks those qualities one would want to photograph. This would be in agreement with some of Döblin's explicit statements on photography, including his pronouncement in his introduction to August Sander's *Antlitz dieser Zeit* that he can "nicht finden, daß die photographische Linse anders sieht als das menschliche Auge [not detect that the photographic lens sees differently than the human eye]."[365] Apparently, the act of signification plays no role and Berlin simply cannot be seen, either by the eye or the camera.

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external sensory perceptions to the consumption and digestion of food. For Döblin, sensory perception always involves a degree of taking the foreign object into one self by means of the senses. See Alfred Döblin, *Das Ich über der Natur* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1927), 44. For a good overview of the treatise, see Carl Gelderloos, "Das Ich über der Natur (1927)" in *Döblin-Handbuch: Leben—Werk—Wirkung*, ed. Sabina Becker, 276-280 (Stuttgart: Metzler-Verlag, 2016).

[365] Alfred Döblin, "Von Gesichtern Bildern und ihrer Wahrheit," in August Sander, *Antlitz dieser Zeit* (Munich: Transmare Verlag, 1929), 12.

A more nuanced reading, however, reveals that a weak sense of medial determination undergirds his argument. As Ellen Strittmatter has argued, Döblin's foreword attempts "einen Text zu erzeugen, dessen Wirkung – Präzision sowie das optische Nebeneinander von Vorder- und Hintergrund auf einer Bildebene – die Fotografie zum Vorbild hat [create a text, whose effect—precision as well as optical juxtaposition of fore- and background on one picture plane—has photography as its model]."[366] For Strittmatter, this attempt to replicate photography in his prose style comes not only from descriptions that imitate formal elements of photography—Berlin "hat keine Farbe [has no color]"—, but also from the copious lists of statistics in the latter half of the text that overwhelm the reader with factual information about the city. Hence, Döblin's text becomes just as inscrutable as the photographs of the book which he denies the power to signify.

There is another aspect of photography which Döblin highlights in his foreword. He divides Berlin into two parts, the "Nachlaß einer Anzahl Verstorbener [legacy of a number of deceased people]" and "was die heutigen Leute tun [what the people of today do]."[367] Of these, Döblin claims only the first can be photographed. Here, Döblin underscores a key temporal aspect of urban modernity. For him, the majority of what is visible—buildings, grand boulevards, and monuments—constitutes merely "die einzelnen Stücke der Nachlaßgarderobe [the individual pieces of the legacy's wardrobe],"[368] mere exterior vestiges of previous generations. This is a key temporal problem of the visual and photography for Döblin. Today's Berlin may one day be visible as the city changes,

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[366] Strittmatter, "Bildpoetik und Bildpolitik," 173.
[367] Döblin, Geleitwort, 5.
[368] Ibid.

but at that point it will be outdated for the contemporary audience. Only the city of the dead presents itself to the eye.

This observation seems strange, especially given the content of Bucovich's photobook, which, as mentioned above, actively documents the changing city. As Döblin's foreword makes no explicit reference to Bucovich's photographs, it is possible either that Döblin ignored the photos or had no chance to see them before writing the introduction. In his preface to August Sander's *Antlitz dieser Zeit*, Döblin makes repeated reference to the contents, which makes the absence of any such reference here particularly notable. It may, however, be the case that Döblin's difficulty in identifying the Berlin of today in the realm of the visible stems not from the temporality of urban development as implied above, but rather from the temporality of photography.

Döblin's description of photographable material in Berlin reinscribes a key temporal aspect of photography. Photography has often been theorized as an elegiac art form, an art form that always retains a connection to death.[369] In Roland Barthes's seminal investigation of photography, *Camera Lucida*, he describes the essence or *noeme* of photography as "*That-has-been*." In viewing the photograph, the spectator becomes convinced of the object's existence, but also aware that this existence is relegated to a past that is no more. Thus, the photograph always signifies a death to come, and in the case of old photographs, a death to come that has already passed: "By giving me the

[369] For an overview of theoretical accounts of the relationship between photography and death, see the seventh chapter of Stephen Cheeke, *Writing for Art: The Aesthetics of Ekphrasis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 142-162.

absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me of death in the future. […] Whether or not the subject is dead, every photograph is a catastrophe."[370]

Döblin seems to take a similar position on photography. Try as he might to provide images of the changing city, of the people and fixtures that inhabit the city, the photograph only presents an image of the past, an image of what-has-been—Döblin's "Nachlaßgarderobe". This observation allows us to return to the question of medial determination in the photographing of Berlin. Although Döblin argues that a different side of Berlin presents itself to the camera than to the eye, transforming the metropolis from a vibrant, living city that escapes representation to a generic, lifeless Paris-lite, his argument relies upon so many tropes of photographic representation that it makes sense to question this line of reasoning. Rather, a close examination of the traces of photographic representation in Döblin's writing suggests that photography itself is not capable of producing the type of images Döblin would like of Berlin. The static lens of the camera stills the "moderne, junge, zukunftsreiche Riesensiedlung […] auf dem Sandboden [modern, young massive settlement with a rich future {…} on the sandy ground]."[371]

Much as literature suffers from the stagnant, immutable form of the printed page, photographic representation creates an image old before its time. It ends the vibrancy of the present moment and relegates the photographed material to an inaccessible past. Both media are confronted with the problem of taking documentary material, which is static and attached to a moment that is always already in the past, and enlivening it for a

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[370] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 96.
[371] Döblin, Geleitwort, 7.

contemporary audience. *Berlin Alexanderplatz* struggles with these same problems. The newspaper articles used as its source material, almost all of which date from late 1927 and early 1928, would have been historical events by its publication in 1929. The problem is not fully one of temporality and history. More significantly, it concerns problems of mediation and genre. The goals of the newspaper are not fully compatible with the goals of literature. While newspapers eventually constitute the historical record, providing a means reconstructing sequences of events, they primarily serve as sources of information and entertainment for a reading public. Here, one may recall Baader's contention that the First World War was created by the newspapers, discussed in chapter one of this study. As such, they are not neutral historical records, as one might presume the statistical records Döblin mentions to be, but are also evidence of the discursive regimes they advance. This is not to say literature is not equally a product of discourse, but rather that the newspaper is a highly problematic evidentiary object, akin more to literature than statistical records. Yet nonetheless, as Döblin mentions in "Bau des epischen Werks," discussed above, the newspaper has a claim to truth that literature simply does not. In the next section, I turn finally to the text of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* to see how Döblin handles the competing tensions sketched out above. While documentary material may provide a discursive truth that literature cannot, its value is contingent on its historicity and nothing more. In attempting both to incorporate this evidence materially and then disavow its material nature, Döblin models a mode of engagement with print media that seeks to conjure forward the historical moment with the same vividness as film, seeking a mode of language that overcomes the constraints of its material and semiotic constraints.

Montage in Berlin Alexanderplatz

In manuscript materials representing what would become the first chapter of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Döblin pastes an illustration of a soccer player in mid-kick onto an otherwise blank piece of paper. The inclusion of this image is puzzling as there is no mention of soccer, or any other sport for that matter, in the whole book. Gabriele Sander has suggested a possible connection to the film *Der König der Mittelstürmer*,[372] which is mentioned briefly in Book IV. While the image is not identifiable in any advertisements for the film I have found, the connection is worth considering. For the enigmatic mention of the film occurs in an example of what is referred to as Döblin's montage style:

> Er [Biberkopf] bemerkte zufrieden, daß alle Menschen ruhig die Straße entlangzogen, die Kutscher luden ab, die Behörden kümmerten sich um die Häuser, es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall, alsdann können auch wir hier gehen. Eine Plakatsäule an der Ecke, auf gelbem Papier stand mit schwarzen lateinischen Buchstaben: "Hast du gelebt am schönen Rhein", "Der König der Mittelstürmer".[373]
>
> He [Biberkopf] noticed with satisfaction that people were quietly walking along the street, the drivers were unloading, the authorities were inspecting the houses, there comes a call like thunder's peal, well then, we can walk here, too. A poster kiosk at the corner, on yellow paper there stood in black Roman letters: 'Have you lived on the beautiful Rhine.' 'The King of Football Centers.'[374]

The passage reveals a medial landscape far richer than what the material signs of language are capable of portraying as such. It begins firmly rooted in Biberkopf's subjectivity, assigning the described phenomena firmly to his perception: "Er bemerkte zufrieden…". At the mention of "es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall," the passage begins

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[372] Sander, "Tatsachenphantasie," 25.
[373] Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf* (Zürich/Düsseldorf: Walter-Verlag, 1996), 131
[374] Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf*, trans. Eugene Jolas (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983), 166.

to dissociate from the specific instance of narration. The line, a quotation from Max Schneckenburger's patriotic song "Die Wacht am Rhein," has by this point in the novel already become quite familiar to the reader, as it reappears as a leitmotif throughout the novel, beginning with Biberkopf's "kriegerisch fest und markig ['{m}artially hard and pithy']" performance [375] shortly after his release from prison.[376] The song quotation thus not only introduces a different medial element, thereby drawing attention away from the written page by invoking song, but also disrupts the narrative moment by calling away from the street scene. Its temporality is ambiguous, drawing a connection between the earlier use of the song in the novel as well as Franz' time in the military and prison. This is significant, as it relativizes the following insertion of print matter. Is Franz'

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[375] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 18. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 9.

[376] Copious scholarship has been devoted to the use of song in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. In one of the earliest attempts to characterize the style of the novel, Godfrey Ehrlich considers the use of song quotations essential for Döblin's so-called "kaleidoskopische[n] Stil" that oscillates between Expressionist, Naturalist, and Realist tendencies. See Godfrey Ehrlich, 'Der kaleidoskopische Stil von Döblins Berlin Alexanderplatz," *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht* 26, no. 8 (December 1934): 245-253. Gabriele Sander has argued the novel aspires to be sung or achieve a degree of audibility through the rhythmic use of song. See Sander, "Alfred Döblins *Berlin Alexanderplatz*," 133. She also points to this song in particular as a sign of Biberkopf's chauvinistic and patriotic tendencies. See Gabriele Sander, "Döblin's Berlin: The Story of Franz Biberkopf," in *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin*, eds. Rolf Dollenmayer, Wulf Koepke, and Heidi Thomann Tewarson (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), 151. James Reid has also commented on the use of "Die Wacht am Rhein" in the novel. For him, the song represents the militaristic desire to subjugate enemy powers that paves the way for the election of the Nazis to power. See James H. Reid, "*Berlin Alexanderplatz*—A Political Novel," *German Life and Letters* 21, no. 3 (April 1968): 214-223. Alexander Honold attempts to disentangle the various forms and functions of sound in the novel from an intermedial perspective. For him, Biberkopf's singing of "Die Wacht am Rhein" as a form of repetition compulsion that signals the incomplete working through of the trauma of the First World War. See Honold, "Der singende Text," 200-207.

recollection of the song inspired by the presence of "Behörden," reminding him of other authority figures? And to whom does the "wir" of the following line refer?

After this decentering of perspective, the appearance of a "Plakatsäule [poster kiosk]" ought to once more ground the text in a stable narrative instance. However, the absence of a reference to a spectator prevents a complete return to the previous narrative instance. Rather, the moment appears partially decentered, clearly in the earlier street scene but no longer stably attached to Franz' perspective. The description of the column draws attention to the materiality of the postings, giving information both about the quality of the paper—"auf gelbem Papier [on yellow paper]," suggesting its deterioration— and the printing—"mit schwarzen lateinischen Buchstaben [in black Roman letters]." The postings thus are presented as print objects, and print objects whose visual composition consists primarily in text. The reference to roman script draws attention to the postings as unique print objects separate from the text of the novel, the first edition of which was printed in *Fraktur*. The postings thus appear as representatives of the larger world of print outside of the novel and do not assimilate neatly into the novel. The two texts that follow, while presumably postings upon the column, are neither strictly identifiable as text. The first is again a song quotation, "Hast Du geliebt am schönen Rhein [Have you loved on the beautiful Rhine]," though the text has been changed, making a definitive identification of Döblin's intentions in quoting the song difficult. While the manuscript clearly has "geliebt [loved]," the first edition, and all subsequent editions, have "gelebt [lived]," a transposition that also occurs in Eugene

Jolas' English translation.[377] Whether this was a typographical error that Döblin or his publisher failed to catch or a conscious change at a later stage of revision cannot be definitively answered due to the lack of a fair copy or galley proofs among the manuscripts collected at Marbach. This may seem a lot of ink spilled over a simple missing letter. However, the fact that the text first draws attention to the black letters printed upon the page and then gives the reader reason to doubt the validity or accuracy of these letters furthers the distinction between print artifacts as realia and the text of the novel.

Moreover, it seems strange one would fine a placard with a song text posted in a public setting. Clearly, the song quotation is standing in for some other print object. Given its proximity to the film "Der König der Mittelstürmer," the song quotation likely refers to the 1927 film of the same title. If this is the case, one can assume the poster contains images and other advertising materials for which the simple text is a substitute. Nonetheless, one could imagine several other uses for this song text—perhaps advertising a vacation opportunity, a romantic situation, or, if the typographical error is correct, a patriotic command. The posting for "Der König der Mittelstürmer" is less ambiguous in its medial character, but we must again imagine such an advertisement included images as well, perhaps like those of the soccer player found in the manuscript. While the image does not match any advertisements for the film I have been able to identify, I bring these two moments together in order to highlight the differences between the use of collage and montage techniques in the novel and the manuscript. While insertions remain enigmatic

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[377] Werner Stauffacher, in the critical edition, suggests this is an accidental mistake, while not actually correcting it in the main body of the text. See Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte,* 131, note 1.

in both, insertions into the manuscript retain a clear medial character. In the final manuscript, this medial character is erased and replaced with a proliferation of potential medial contexts. While the final print version of the novel may gesture towards material forms of print and other media, it ultimately casts doubt upon this specificity by suggesting a multiplicity of potential medial contexts and forms.

If this explanation for the inclusion of an illustrated soccer player in the manuscript remains unsatisfying, it speaks to the confusing status of the manuscript. A consideration of the other images included around the soccer player is illuminating. Döblin also includes two postcards, one of the Alexanderplatz and one of Potsdamer Platz. The Potsdamer Platz receives only brief mention and the Alexanderplatz receives a full description only in Book IV, near the passage cited above. While this does strengthen the case that such images may refer to later sections of the book, it also suggests that Döblin is not interested in creating direct equivalencies between pasted elements and the final text, but in finding some shared signified between two disparate signifiers.[378] Any further attempt at reading these elements would become too speculative; however, their inclusion within the manuscript shows not only the fungibility of material forms between manuscript and print novel but also the diversity of print matter from which Döblin took inspiration.

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[378] A similar solution was proposed by the archive itself in the accompanying text used when this manuscript page was exhibited in the *Literaturmuseum der Moderne*, one of the two museums housed at the archive. The forward is portrayed "kicking his cross-shot into the text." Quoted in Thomas Thiemeyer, "The literary exhibition as epistemic method: how the Museum of Modern Literature in Marbach reinterprets literary archives," *Word & Image* 33, no. 4 (2017): 362-375; here, 369. Such an interpretation implies the attempt to enliven the text with the energy of a good sports match.

Importantly, these visual elements, which speculatively seem to refer to Book IV, occur towards the beginning of the notes for the work in its current order. While the earliest documents still largely contain clear pastings, the actual notes to Book IV itself remain much more indeterminate in their medial character. Much of Book IV concerns the Berlin slaughterhouses, which are described in great detail in text segments that contrast with Biberkopf's attempts to bring his life in order. Döblin provides great statistical detail: "Viehmarkt Auftrieb: 1399 Rinder, 2700 Kälber, 4654 Schafe, 18 864 Schweine [Supply at the cattle-market: 1399 steers, 2700 calves, 4654 sheep, 18,864 hogs]."[379] In the manuscript, these numbers are notated by hand on a small separate sheet of paper. Though such statistics appear taken from the printed world surrounding the book, the source does not appear physically in the manuscript.[380] By the time Döblin reached Book IV, it appears the materiality of his sources mattered far less to him. Copying by hand becomes the primary mode of relaying information, and, already in the process of copying, the materiality of his source material undergoes intentional distortions and transformations.

The draft material for Book II provides more evidence of precisely how Döblin might have attempted collage techniques himself. The manuscript of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is indeed a multimedial artifact, but the extent to which montage practices that are recognizably derived from the visual arts are employed remains subject to debate. While the previous discussion of visual insertions was inconclusive, these examples also

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[379] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 140. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 179.

[380] Werner Stauffacher names the "Berliner Tageblatt" as a possible source but notes that the numbers there do not agree with the numbers Döblin provides. See Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 140, note 2.

show a relatively unsophisticated form of collage techniques. The postcards are not pasted at all, merely loosely inserted between other sheets of paper, and the soccer player is the only element on its page. The majority of pastings are utilitarian in nature, interrupting the handwritten text in a straightforward way. However, one example merits further examination for its ambiguous use of newspaper elements.

In the second book of the novel, Franz runs out of the money he had saved from before his trip to prison and takes up a number of odd jobs to support himself. After a brief stint selling neckties, he begins selling newspapers. These newspapers are of particular interest here, for the newspapers Franz sells also feature prominently in the manuscript of the novel. Döblin pasted clippings from the newspapers directly into the novel, and most of these clippings are reproduced word-for-word, or with very slight modification, into the final novel. The content of the source material is thus materially reproduced on the level of the manuscript. Franz sells both newspapers about "sexuelle Aufklärung [sexual education],"[381] (*BA* 71), which, while described in the novel as salacious and pornographic,[382] are mostly targeted towards a gay and lesbian readership, as well as the *völkische Beobachter*, the primary propaganda machine of the NSDAP. [383]

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[381] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 71. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 81.

[382] Gabriele Sander has traced the various newspapers Döblin references in this section. While the passage mentions many journals, including *Figaro*, a journal for "hygienisches Sexualleben," *Die Ehe*, and *Die Idealehe*, Döblin only includes clippings from *Frauenliebe*, a journal directed towards a lesbian readership, and *Die Ehelosen*, a journal "für neue Sexualethik" that advocated for sexual reform. See Gabriele Sander, *Alfred Döblin: Berlin Alexanderplatz* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1998), 17. From this brief overview, the pornographic description of these journals can safely be dismissed as hyperbole.

[383] Döblin's political views in the late 1920s have been the subject of some scholarly investigation. Wulf Koepke has provided a comprehensive overview of Döblin's political writings. While acknowledging that additional scholarship is needed on the subject,

While the content of these newspapers is largely tangential to the argument pursued here, it is interesting to note the extremes of the press world represented in these few pages. Biberkopf is first thrust a "Stoß alter Zeitschriften [bunch of old papers]" that he is to sell to Berlin's gay population, but expresses his ambivalence at the prospect: "Leid können einem ja die Jungs tun, aber eigentlich gehen sie mir nichts an [A fellow might feel sorry for those boys, but they're none o' my business]."[384] The Nazi newspapers arouse more of Franz's sympathy: "Er hat nichts gegen die Juden, aber er ist für Ordnung, Denn Ordnung muß im Paradiese sein, das sieht ja wohl ein jeder ein [He is not

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Koepke places Döblin's political sympathies somewhere between anarchist and "humanistic, non-ideological socialism" (189). Interestingly, Koepke reports that Döblin did not consider the Nazis a serious threat, but rather a brief reaction to economic desperation. See Wulf Koepke, "Döblin's Political Writings During the Weimar Republic," in *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin*, eds. Roland Dollinger, Wulf Koepke, and Heidi Thomann Tewarson (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), 183-192. James H. Reid concurs that Döblin's political views are best described as anarchist, but also provides a more detailed account of Döblin's views of the Nazi party through an analysis of references to the Nazis in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. For him, Biberkopf's system of values, which supports "Ordnung" and "Anständigkeit," includes only values that are of secondary value, that is, values that concern behavior or outward appearances and must be applied to certain goals; Franz thus represents the type of character susceptible to Nazi propaganda which makes use of such values to support an extremist agenda. See James H. Reid, "*Berlin Alexanderplatz*." Peter Jelavich also discusses the political dimensions of the novel. In his study of the novel and its film and radio play adaptations, he contends that liberal, avant-garde Weimar culture ended already in 1930 with the NSDAP's first significant electoral wins. The novel thus retains significant political commentary that disappears in the film and radio play versions. For Jelavich, Biberkopf also represents the type of person easily duped by Nazi propaganda; however, Jelavich also stresses Biberkopf's abandonment of politics later in the novel, which for him suggests the novel's open question of a new mode of political engagement. See Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, especially 31-35.

[384] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 74. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 85.

against the Jews, but he is for law and order. For law and order must reign in Paradise; which everyone should recognize]."[385]

Franz's commentary on "Ordnung," in an ironizing rhyming verse, is one of several techniques employed in order to distance the narration from the ideological content of the newspapers. The manuscript, however, features a remarkable series of pastings that show engagement with the form of the newspaper as well. In the corresponding section of the manuscript, Döblin included five clippings from the *völkische Beobachter*. The five clippings are remarkable for their disruption both of the standard logical arrangement of clippings within the manuscript and of the newspaper form. Immediately following the manuscript writing, Döblin pastes two large clippings of text from the newspaper. While the right insertion immediately touches up against his handwriting, it is not immediately clear in what order the texts are to be read, as the standard logic of reading would demand the left text be read first. Moreover, both of these texts are above a text printed in much larger font, a headline taken from the newspaper. Below the headline, there are again two smaller clippings, though these are arranged vertically thus providing a clear hierarchy for reading purposes but also breaking with the conventions of newspaper printing.

The arrangement of clippings in the manuscript recontextualizes the clippings in a remediated form of the newspaper. The clipping in large font imitates a headline while the two parallel clippings recall the parallel columns of a daily newspaper. However, while the clippings recreate the newspaper form from which they are taken, they do not

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[385] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 82. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 97.

reproduce them in a meaningful way. Rather, the placement of headline below the main text and the two parallel columns that have no clear relationship or mode of reading merely mimics the newspaper form while also depriving it of meaning and function. It thus calls attention to the newspaper as a material form of literature, while also denying legibility to this form. In this regard, it recalls the Dadaist periodicals discussed in chapter one, although as an object never intended for circulation or outside readership, the significance of such a remediation is not immediately obvious.

If the manuscript version shows a clear engagement with the material forms of the newspaper, the print version of the novel confuses boundaries between different instantiations of media. While the manuscript shows a clear remediation of the newspaper form, the finished novel presents only the narrative frame. Clippings are set apart with quotation marks; however, the placement does not totally align with the boundaries of the clippings. Moreover, it is not clear what these quotation marks denote. Biberkopf is described selling the newspapers: "Er steht am Ausgang der Untergrundbahn Potsdamer Platz, in der Friedrichstraße an der Passage, unter dem Bahnhof Alexanderplatz [He stands by the subway exit, at Potsdamer Platz, in the Friedrichstrasse arcade, under the Alexanderplatz station]."[386] The presence of multiple locations contradicts the auratic presence of individual clippings in the original. It proliferates the statements, like the multiple distribution of daily papers. However, the description of Biberkopf at work makes it difficult to ascertain definitively the medial character of the insertions. While it seems obvious that the material comes from the far right papers given their disturbingly

[386] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 82. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 97.

propagandistic tone and content, they are presented in an unmediated, direct way that makes their origin in the text difficult to determine. No agent is presented who might be identified as the reading individual. So while the clippings could be a mere intrusive insertion from the clippings, to give the reader a sense of the papers Biberkopf is selling, it could also be Biberkopf reading aloud from the papers as a means of trying to sell them. And one clipping, which begins "Während diese Zeilen geschrieben werden [While these lines are being written'],"[387] points again to a different moment, namely the scene of composition. While the manuscript shows a clear medial character and even some creative reflection upon the medial context, the finished print novel calls into question the precise medial nature of the texts being used. While a clear diegetic reference to the newspaper as form problematizes the statements as sources drawn from a deeply problematic newspaper, their medial form is then made indeterminate through the evocation of orality and other medial presentations. Döblin's montage practice thus is characterized by a double motion: it first draws attention to the medial character of the insertion as sign, drawing a clear comparison to contemporary avant-garde practices. In the manuscript, these insertions are then remediated in order to present alternative contexts for the original clipping or source material. However, in the print version, the clarity of their mediality is questioned through breaks in narration and through the proliferation of potential medial references.

The novel's general tendency to flatten out medial differences in print material is complicated by the inclusion of several graphic icons at the beginning of chapter two.

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[387] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 82. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 98.

These ten icons, printed in the style of simple woodblocks, are paired with descriptive texts that describe major institutions of Berlin. The icons imitate the visual forms of the "Amtsblatt der Stadt Berlin."[388] Despite the existence of a visual model for the icons, such documentary material is not present in the manuscript. In his 1933 novel *Babylonische Wanderung*, Döblin made similar use of graphical icons. Here, the icons were crudely drawn by Döblin in the manuscript and then converted into cohesive images by Paul Urban for the final printing.[389] It is likely a similar process was used here. This would thus mean that the graphical icons are not a literal insertion of contemporary print media but rather an attempt to imitate or mimic print media in the stylized form of the novel. Regardless, unless the printers had access to the original printing tools used for the "Amtsblatt," the pictograms are a copy of the journal, not a literal insertion.[390]

This brief discussion of the printing process of these pictograms illuminates that Döblin's novel, even when it most closely reproduces the material forms of the original artifact, it still operates at some degree of abstraction. That is to say, Döblin's appropriations from material culture are not immediately recognizable as replicas of their originals, but rather assume a number of potential medial interpretations, drawing both from the original source and the immediate context of the narrative. While it is possible an ideal reader with knowledge of the source material may have been able to recognize the material's provenance—though it cannot be assumed that the reading public of 1929

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[388] See Werner Stauffacher's commentary in the critical edition, *BA* 489.
[389] For information on the pictograms in *Babylonischer Wandrung*, see Jochen Meyer, "Babylonische Wandrung und Schicksalsreise: Alfred Döblin im Exil," in *Der literarische Nachlaß von Alfred Döblin* (Berlin: Kulturstiftung der Länder, 2000), 17-19.
[390] Due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19, it was not possible to undertake the necessary travel to verify these pictograms against the *Amtsblatt* under the time constraints for this dissertation.

had the intimate knowledge required of Berlin and its print culture in all cases—, to the reader without access to original sources, the pictograms could just as easily come from the *Amtsblatt* as they could from a travel guide or a city map. Hence the identification of a specific source is here less important than considering what forms of materiality the pictograms seek to invoke.

The pictograms at the beginning of the second book are part of what scholarship has often considered a second beginning of the book; like the Bible, which begins with a more literary creation story and then the story of Adam and Eve, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* begins twice, first with the personal story of Franz' release and then with the formal, bureaucratic presentation of the city.[391] This official presentation of the city, though, does not neatly cohere with the surrounding narrative thread of the novel. Though the pictograms are introduced with the phrase "Franz Biberkopf betritt Berlin [Franz Biberkopf Enters Berlin]," [392] they introduce a long section of the novel in which Biberkopf does not appear at all and to which he has no discernible relationship. In this short section of the novel, the reader is presented with the story of Max Rüst, who is

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[391] While the dominant tendency in scholarship is to read the first book as a chaotic, unstructured introduction to the city and the second as an ordered, bureaucratic approach, Katrin Dennerlein has argued that the first book presents a relatively unambiguous narrative structure that centers on Franz' perspective, while the second book is more chaotic in that it is not always possible to take account of the various montage elements in terms of a stable narrative perspective. This approach thus agrees with the various other approaches in this chapter (cf. Slugan in particular) that the decentering of a stable narrative position is a defining feature of Döblin's montage technique. See Katrin Dennerlein, "Die erzählte Wahrnehmung der Großstadt im Kontext des modernen epischen Erzählens: Zum doppelten Beginn von Alfred Döblins *Berlin Alexanderplatz*," in *Cityscaping: Constructing and Modelling Images of the City*, eds. Therese Fuhrer, Felix Mundt, Jan Stenger (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 247-280.

[392] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 49. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 50.

replacing a bad iron he purchased for his boss and whose entire life is briefly recounted,[393] of a man who has just been fired and whose wife is now pregnant,[394] and of other figures who recount similar tales of life and misfortune among Berlin's lower classes. While these figures may be united with Franz in their social standing, they have no direct relationship to him and do not appear later in the novel. Rather, these are decontextualized anecdotes, uprooted from any context that might have provided coherence. Yet they imply a degree of abstract similarity that demands their juxtaposition.

The pictograms, then, can also be considered unmoored from any source context. Though Biberkopf may be textually present in this section—"Franz Biberkopf betritt Berlin"—, his presence cannot be assumed on the level of narrative. Thus it seems improbable that Biberkopf views the *Amtsblatt* and the reader sees what he sees. Rather, the pictograms assume a similar function here to their ordering function in the *Amtsblatt*, providing a rough outline of categories through which the city can be experienced. Nonetheless, the pictograms do not provide a satisfactory classification for the novel at hand. While some aspects—"Handel und Gewerbe [Trade and Commerce]," "Verkehr [Traffic]," and "Gesundheitswesen [Health Department]" come to mind (*BA* 49-50)—clearly cover important aspects of the novel, others—notably "Feuerlöschwesen [Fire Department]"—appear to cover marginal aspects of the novel, if any aspect.[395] The

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[393] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 54. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 56-7.
[394] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 55-6. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 57-8
[395] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte*, 49-50. Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story*, 50-1.

function of the pictograms and their captions as a text-ordering apparatus is thus not fulfilled either on the level of the source material or its place in the novel. The literal meaning suggested by "Franz Biberkopf betritt Berlin" provides yet another possible resonance for the pictograms. If Biberkopf is about to enter the city, then the pictograms provide textual and pictorial markers for the city he enters. If, as Döblin contends in the preface to Bucovich's photobook, it is impossible to capture a complete image of the city, these pictograms provide the surrogate, a means, when read alongside the weather reports, construction reports, obituaries, and other anecdotes, to overcome the various limitations provided by the situatedness of various medial contexts and suggest the complete dynamism provided by the city.

The pictograms, thus, while resembling the material form of their source, cannot be reduced to a mere attempt to replicate their source material. Like the soccer player, the postcards, or the extreme right newspaper clippings, they can be recognized in their material form, but the final print version of the novel casts doubt upon the stability of this form. The hierarchical role of the table of contents no longer functions as a means to provide order to the text but rather becomes yet another artifact in Döblin's city of paper, yet another attempt to produce an adequate representation of the modern metropolis.

If at first glance Döblin's novel seems to merely reflect other media and not engage directly with them, this chapter has argued for Döblin's active and sustained engagement with other media and even their presence in the novel, while also providing an explanation for their apparent absence. Reading the novel alongside the manuscript and Döblin's images of the city, the multiplicity of resonances each montage element assumes becomes a key aspect of Döblin's montage technique. While Döblin's pastings

and insertions may betray their medial sources, they simultaneously seek to obscure that source by suggesting a variety of different potential meanings, contexts, and medial forms. The novel's answer to the impossibility of any single media providing an adequate means of representation of modernity is to intensify and multiply the representational power of the written word through constant reference to other media. What cannot be supplied by the word alone is thus suggested by the momentary confusion introduced by the ambiguous mediality of the various montage insertions. In the vacillation between orality and print, image and text, postcard and urban scene, an idea of urbanity would be found.

Döblin's embrace of pure, undifferentiated textuality marks the end of the experimental typographical forms of montage inaugurated by the Dadaists. While Benjamin weakly participates in this tradition, as discussed in chapter 3, Döblin's work has no traces of it. It imitates the sudden changes typographical montage suggests, but subsumes everything under a higher textual uniformity. If for Hausmann, Baader, Schwitters, and Benjamin, the revitalization of language and print lies in an instrumentalization of the material innovations of ephemeral media for literary and critical purposes, Döblin views these popular media wholly with suspicion. He does not seek to appropriate their means of representation, but rather to make them subservient to his own, epic mode of representation. Yet Döblin, like the other authors of this study, remains committed to a revitalization of literature through the use of montage. He differs in his understanding of literature's materiality, seeing it not as a means to reanimate the dead letter of print but as a reinforcement of the written word's inefficacy. Though he may write a city of paper, he aspires for a mode of transparent representation in which its

vividness and complexity overcomes the documentary source material he uses. Döblin is thus still attached to a material understanding of montage, like the one the other authors of this study promote. Yet he also marks the end of this material understanding of literary montage, beginning a tendency towards montage as a style, syntax, or principle of composition. With Döblin, montage finds a stable home in literature, assuming a recognizable stylistic form that slowly moves further and further away from its inspiration in the visual arts. While literary montage as a practice may begin with Dada, as an institution it begins with Döblin.

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