The Chatter of the Visible

Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany

Patrizia C. McBride

The Chatter of the Visible

"*The Chatter of the Visible: Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany* has all the intellectual makings of becoming a major go-to and reference for Weimar culture studies written in English. It is one of the theoretically most accomplished studies in that field, which will simultaneously fulfill a complementary need for more historically oriented scholarly work in the area and era. This is the case for literary scholarship as well as for culture and visual studies, to all of which this book is of eminent importance."

—Rainer Rumold, Northwestern University

"Patrizia McBride's seminal study examines the relationship between montage and narrative in Weimar Germany. In its masterful analyses, the book provides a detailed presentation of the various facets of montage narratives as an interface of technology, perception, and materiality. In doing so, it develops a theory of narrative that spans different media and discourses and is thus pathbreaking for Literary Studies oriented toward the history of knowledge and media studies."

—Elisabeth Strowick, Johns Hopkins University

"Patrizia McBride's study impressively complexifies our understanding of montage. Without simply rejecting its modernist conceptualizations as a primarily antinarrative force of rupture, the readings presented show how in response to the contemporary crisis of narrative sensemaking, Weimar authors and artists profiled montage as an innovative, phenomenological means of narration."

—Claudia Breger, Indiana University

"Reconstructing the complex ecology of old genres and new media in the interwar years, McBride develops a striking vision of montage as a practice of storytelling native to the modern technological surround. Against one-sided interpretations of montage as a strategy of deconstruction and protest, *The Chatter of the Visible* reminds us that every montage cut also entails a suture, and that political interventions can be found not just in critique but in connection and correspondence as well."

—Devin Fore, Princeton University

"This is by far the best book written on the topic of montage and narrative in Weimar culture so far. It establishes historical and theoretical parameters one will have to work with in the future. McBride states that the aesthetic means of montage appeared as a most fitting correlate to the multiple traumas woven into the historical fabric of Weimar Germany."

—Paul Michael Lutzeler, Washington University

The Chatter of the Visible

Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany

Patrizia C. McBride

University of Michigan Press • Ann Arbor

Published in the United States of America by the
University of Michigan Press
Manufactured in the United States of America
♾ Printed on acid-free paper

2019 2018 2017 2016 4 3 2 1

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: McBride, Patrizia C., author.
Title: The chatter of the visible : montage and narrative in Weimar Germany / Patrizia C. McBride.
Description: Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, [2016] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2015031993| ISBN 9780472073030 (hardcover : acid-free paper) | ISBN 9780472053032 (pbk. :acid-free paper) | ISBN 9780472121700 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Photography—Germany—History—1918–1933.
Classification: LCC TR73 .M43 2016 | DDC 770.943—dc23
LC record available at http://lccn.loc.gov/2015031993

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Humboldt Foundation for a generous grant that allowed me to spend summer 2010 conducting research at various sites in Berlin. At the Free University I am especially indebted to Peter Sprengel, whose help and advice has been invaluable in completing this project. I owe a debt of gratitude to Ralf Burmeister and Christian Tagger at the Berlinische Galerie for their support in accessing the Galerie's holdings on Hannah Höch. I am also grateful to the staff at the Bauhaus Archiv and the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin for their help and assistance. This side of the ocean I would like to thank Tim Shipe, curator of the International Dada Archive at the University of Iowa Libraries, for his help and kindness over the years. Special thanks also go to the anonymous readers who reviewed the book for the University of Michigan Press. Their generous, incisive feedback was crucial in helping me sharpen central arguments in this study. Last but not least, I have tremendous gratitude for the colleagues and graduate students in the Department of German Studies at Cornell University. Their conversations and intellectual engagement have sustained my work in countless ways, not least by reminding me of how rewarding and fun it can be to work together on a common undertaking.

Two chapters of this book have appeared in earlier versions. A shorter incarnation of chapter 5 was published as "Narrative Resemblance: Weimar Germany's Photography and the Modernist Photobook of Hannah Höch," *New German Critique* 115, 39.1 (Winter 2012): 169–97. A version of chapter 6 appeared as "The Game of Meaning: Collage, Montage, and Parody in Kurt Schwitters' *Merz*," in *MODERNISM/Modernity* 14.2 (April 2007): 249–72. Parts of chapter 6 have also appeared in "Montage and Violence in Weimar Culture: Kurt Schwitters' Reassembled Individuals," in *Violence, Culture, Aesthetics: Germany, 1789–1938*, ed. Carl Niekerk and Stefani Engel-

stein (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011): 245–65. I thank the publishers for granting permission to include these materials.

Every effort has been made to find the copyright holders of the images reproduced in this book.

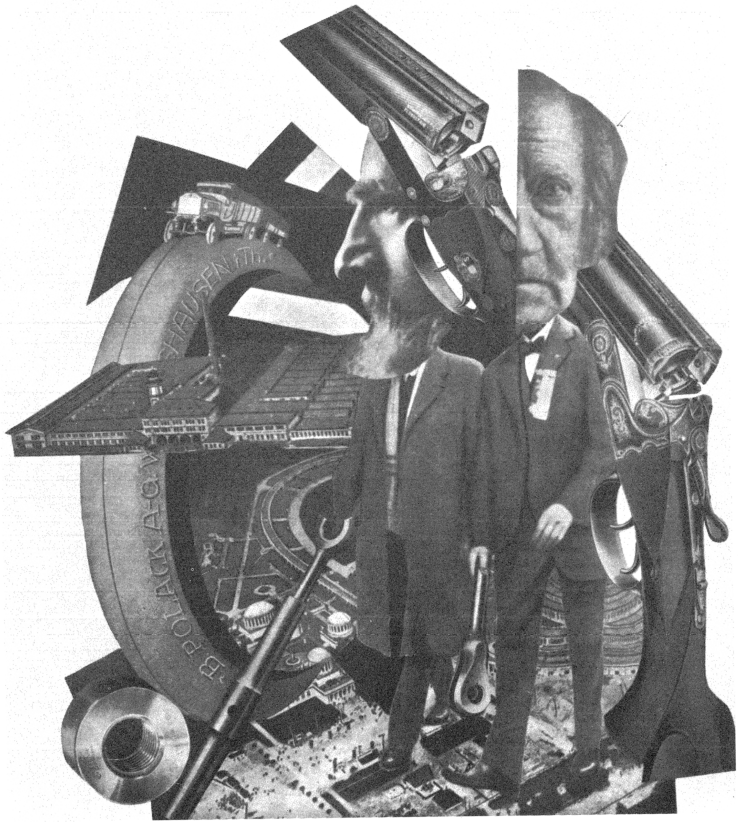
• I dedicate this book to Brent and Giovanni. *Amori miei, grazie*.

Contents

List of Illustrations

Introduction

One of the most striking pictures featured in László Moholy-Nagy's *Malerei Fotografie Film* (*Painting Photography Film*, 1925–27) is without a doubt Hannah Höch's *The Multi-Millionaire*, from 1923. Tucked in Moholy's extensive compendium of the new visual modes of expression made possible by photography and film in the first decades of the twentieth century, Höch's photomontage has an eye-popping quality that well documents her gift for laying bare the conventions of contemporary visual media and debunking gender and class stereotypes with compositions of uncommon virtuosity and mordant wit. At first sight the image evokes an unhinged world made of intersecting, jagged shapes and objects. The eye of a man staring out of the picture helps to anchor the viewer's wondering gaze. His truncated face—the image features only half of his frontal portrait—towers over an incongruously diminutive body clad in a formal suit. At his right-hand side another elegantly dressed man is also missing part of his head, his face appearing in an abridged profile. The men's silhouettes, which form the image's vertical axis, protrude out of a backdrop comprising incongruously scaled objects. A bird's-eye view of a factory compound, the image's horizontal axis, is placed against an oversized tire whose tread serves as a lane for a toy-proportioned truck. The men are striding atop the aerial shot of a fairground complex that also features monumental buildings and a stadium. Their heads are set against two gigantic double-barrel shotguns with open firing chambers. One of them holds a large metal tool, which visually echoes other mechanic objects scattered across the picture. Some elements—the men's heads, the barrel of one gun, the squat factory building—project out of the circle formed by the rounded shape of the composition, summoning a centrifugal movement that visually counteracts the picture's boundedness and endows it with tension. At the same time, the larger fragments function as visual signposts that an-



'The multi-millionaire' Photomontage: **HANNAH HÖCH**

The dual countenance of the ruler.

106

Hannah Höch, *The Multi-Millionaire*, in László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting Photography Film*, 1925, 1927, trans. Janet Seligman (London: Lund Humphreys, 1969).

chor and direct the gaze as it roams the picture plane. They provide spatial coordinates for connecting one point to the other and piecing together a story, thus turning the image into a puzzle of sorts whose fragments promise to make sense if properly matched.[1]

By presenting elements in close proximity within an anti-illusionistic space, the image compels the viewer to actively attribute meaning to objects that have been yanked out of their familiar environments. These objects function as bearers of a meaning that is foisted onto them. For instance, the metal rod dangling from the hand of the man on the right defies what would be a conventional reading of the object as a work tool. Its association with the elegantly dressed figure and the menacing guns rather makes it look like an improper weapon, conjuring the threat of violence. When read in conjunction with the verbal caption, the picture seems to take aim at the ruthlessness of industrial magnates who blithely tramp over the urban environment they exploit, their willingness to use violence symbolized by the outsized guns sticking out of their heads. The image tells this story by compelling 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 that treats each element as the component part of an emblem. In so doing Höch's allegorical composition challenges those contemporaries who celebrated the use of photography for its ability to represent experience in an objective fashion. As Bertolt Brecht once noted, photography's exact reproduction of the visible surface of things does not necessarily provide objective information about a given state of affairs, and Höch's allegorical manipulation of photographic fragments seems to make just this point.[2]

This reading of Höch's image well summarizes the ways in which the cutting and pasting of montage has been viewed within the broader horizon of Weimar Germany. The Dadaist iconoclasm that marked the onset of Germany's short-lived democracy made of montage a convenient umbrella term for practices of disarticulation and recomposition that defied established canons of representation and media boundaries while registering the transformative impact that photography and film exerted on the media landscape of the early 1920s. Especially the startling disfiguration of avant-garde photomontage thematized the lure of photography's evidentiary power while challenging the dubious claim to objectivity often associated with it. Practiced in this way photomontage embodied a new way of seeing, in Matthew Teitelbaum's words, one that actively reshuffled the orders of the real rather than passively registering its hierarchies.[3] More generally, montage practices upended the uninspected conventions of a traditional, print-based culture that

neatly separated visual from literary modes of communication, demanding instead that words be viewed like pictures and images decoded like signs. In so doing they also signaled the resurfacing of the physiognomic belief that the visible surface of reality speaks to us in a language of sorts, and that this chatter of the visible discloses insights into its essence or being. In harnessing the shock of antinaturalistic compositions, the aesthetics of montage further liquidated the demand that art conform to values of harmony, wholeness, reconciliation, and beauty as disclosed by the immersive, contemplative reception demanded by a late-idealistic aesthetics. The violation of montage appeared as a most fitting correlate to the multiple traumas woven into the historical fabric of Weimar Germany—its foundation out of the ashes of the Kaiserreich at the end of World War I, its struggles with democratic mass politics and the dislocations of socioeconomic modernization, its end at the hand of fascist illiberalism. As Ernst Bloch put it in his retrospective meditation on the Weimar years, montage could both embody traumatic forgetfulness in its heedless embrace of modern fragmentation *and* offer a critical tool for denouncing modernity's diremptions.[4]

The unhinged world evoked by Höch's image well supports Bloch's account of montage as a poetics of traumatic contemporaneity bent on seasoning its allegorical narratives with the jolt of disfigured experience. Yet the image's impact is not exhausted by the story it relays or the shock effect it produces. After piecing together a narrative about the iniquity of industrial capitalism, one continues to be struck by the strangeness of its intermingling forms. While the image's odd coupling of human and machinic parts could be interpreted as a token of the avant-garde's ambivalence toward a world transformed by technology and assembly-line production, such speculation about the composition's psychological motivation fails to explain how it works at a formal level. By imitating forms in various registers of interpenetration and juxtaposition the image conjures a nonillusionistic, yet plausible, perceptual space that is at once engrossing and unsettling. In breaking up the integrity of familiar forms and grotesquely manipulating scale, the human figures and the other objects of the composition are made to enter relations that open up unsuspected experiential realms. The image does so by engaging in physiognomic play, that is, by manipulating the trusted perception of forms and producing effects that are situated at a level separate from that of allegorical accounts. In very basic terms it asks how one is to draw physical boundaries in a space littered with animate and inanimate objects whose shapes can seemingly be modified at will through imitative engagement. Its power seems to rest on its ability to engage this formal level without letting the perceptual moment become completely absorbed in the allegorical ac-

count it serves to harness. It thus hinges on separating the moment of perception from that of meaning in order to enlist the former in an enthralling play of forms whose dynamic exceeds the sum total of the allegorical messages the image may conjure. Such physiognomic play gives a new spin to the traditional understanding of physiognomy as premised on the ability of outer appearances to grant insight into the essence of things or a person's character. Physiognomic play here rather captures the outwardly projected expressivity of the visible world. It is not about devising the proper hermeneutic procedure that will disclose the hidden truth of the visible because a distinction between surface and inner being, outside and inside can no longer be drawn. Physiognomy here is rather a set of practices bent on manipulating perception by enlisting the ability of new mechanical media to replicate visible forms. As technologies like photography and film make the visible world newly portable and manipulable, physiognomic play seeks to harness its nonconceptual expressivity, indeed, the peculiar chattering through which its forms trigger perception.[5]

This interlacing, yet also noncoincidence, of physiognomic and allegorical levels accounts for the distinctive effects produced by photomontages like Höch's. Moholy-Nagy described them as follows in the influential pedagogical treatise that features *The Multi-Millionaire*:

> They are pieced together from various photographs and are an experimental method of simultaneous representation; compressed interpenetration of visual and verbal wit; uncanny combinations of the most realistic, imitative means that cross over into an imaginary realm. They can, however, also be concrete, tell a story; more veristic "than life itself."[6]

Moholy's characterization of composite images sketches the general outlines of the multifarious practices that fell under the label of montage at this time, whose brash novelty resided in assembling artifacts out of the disparate materials found in everyday life. As Moholy suggests, their intermingling of disparate media and codes foregrounds the conceptual framework that drives these compositions, foiling any attempt at reading the artifacts in a referential, let alone illusionistic, mode. At the same time Moholy stresses the holistic quality of their perceptual gestalt, that is, their ability to evoke a paradoxical sense of coherence that hinges on the effect of simultaneity generated by their synthesis of disparate materials. In other words, these compositions are for him no simple aggregates of discrete elements; instead their fragments enter relations whose overall effect exceeds the mere sum of their component

parts. In spite of their perceptual compression, montage artifacts are not incompatible with the work of narrative. As Moholy insists in the closing sentence, these works can be "more veristic than life itself" in virtue of their blend of concreteness and narrative power. As one can extrapolate, their ability to trump the vividness of actual experience resides in their manipulation of the evidentiary force of perception. This does not involve producing hyperrealist compositions that would achieve their impact through the immediacy of represented reality. Instead perception is thematized as an independent factor, a source of evidence that is never completely subsumed under the images' representational content. Their narrative force thus lies in the possibility of having perception and signification converge while showcasing them as distinct moments.

• This study examines the paradoxical interweaving of perception and meaning that marks the montage aesthetics of artists associated with Dada, Constructivism, and the New Objectivity, outlining the unorthodox notion of narrative that at times authorizes it. The idea that montage at this time may have offered ways for rethinking narrative would have struck many contemporaries as counterintuitive. After all, montage artifacts like Höch's conspicuously lack the basic ingredients of traditional narrative: obvious causality or motivation, logical concatenation, or a stable perspective. Instead, they present a world splintered in a cacophony of ill-fitting fragments that are barely held together by makeshift connections. In this world the parts do not amount to a whole but rather engender a disorienting game of endless permutations, one that seems refractory to the ordering principles of narrative. Images like Höch's may well have been what led contemporaries like Siegfried Kracauer to associate montage with the collapse of both traditional forms of storytelling and belief in reality as a knowable whole. In an essay from 1923 Kracauer related what he saw as the contemporary atrophy of narrative imagination to the experiential degradation of the Great War, which made it impossible to construct stories that could be validated by some discernible order of the real. This explained for him the proliferation, in the early 1920s, of historical and biographical narratives authorized by the crude facticity of past events. Kracauer deemed these narratives an exercise in escapism, seeing them essentially as a tool for the educated bourgeoisie to engage, in the mode of disavowal, a modern condition experienced as an indifferent accumulation of objects and events. He found a testimonial to this condition in the gargantuan montage of photographic material that circu-

lated in the illustrated press of his day, which for him well dramatized a world splintered in a myriad of bits and pieces devoid of essential ties.[7]

Meanwhile the novel as the foremost narrative form of bourgeois modernity appeared to many doomed by what novelist Jakob Wassermann dubbed *Entfabelung*, that is, a weakening of the fable as the basic glue that made the disparate ingredients of storytelling grow together organically. In an essay from 1926 Wassermann bemoaned the sprawling structure and conspicuous lack of closure of prominent novels of his day, noting that their component parts—setting, characters, motifs, and plotlines—never came together into a rounded whole replete with evident meaning. Because this narrative cohesion was irremediably lost to the present, however, contemporary attempts at emulating it had to be dismissed as dishonest *Kolportage*, that is, as derivative narrative fare obtained by mechanically fitting together basic modules of storytelling in the uninspired and greedy ways of commercial entertainment.[8] Like many contemporaries, Wassermann thus saw in the formal splintering of contemporary novelistic writing the index of a modern malaise. His diagnosis, however, also pointed to the impasse in which contemporary narrative found itself, as torn between the postulates of organicity and closure that had informed traditional narrative genres and a modern experience that made these demands impossible to fulfill. A few years earlier Georg Lukács had described this very phenomenon by pointing to the novel's essential, yet also unfulfillable, disposition to totality, which he took to be a symptom for modernity's "transcendental homelessness," that is, its lack of ontological grounding and immanent meaning.[9]

Not everyone wrung his or her hands over this perceived crisis of novelistic writing. In his 1913 "Berlin Program" Alfred Döblin gleefully welcomed the demise of a realist paradigm predicated on narrative causality and psychological motivation, demanding with characteristic avant-garde brashness that such bland writerly routine be supplanted by a cinematic style bent on capturing the cacophony, speed, and disunity of contemporary experience. Döblin's plea for a new narrative practice did not simply invert the terms of Lukács's and Wassermann's diagnosis by embracing what they deemed problematic, namely, reality's irremediable disjointedness and lack of immanent meaning. Rather Döblin radically reframed the terms of the discourse by likening narrative to a concrete activity akin to building and making, which made it possible to wring out of language artifacts endowed with utmost plasticity and vividness.[10] In so doing he rejected the hermeneutic postulates that governed traditional discourse on narrative: that storytelling is primarily about endowing experience with meaning; that sense-making is premised

on ability to grasp reality as a totality; and that this totality is presented in narrative through a set of formal devices that conjure a semblance of organicity and closure. In its emphasis on rapid-fire juxtapositions, the treatment of language as found material, the suppression of psychology and authorial intention, and the abdication of anthropocentrism, Döblin's futurist-inflected poetics foreshadows Moholy's celebration of the disparateness, compression, and vividness of montage narratives. In Döblin as later in Moholy, the late-idealistic demand that experience be grasped as a totality through narrative—and thus therapeutically made whole by it—is replaced by a poetics of perceptual simultaneity. One should note that Moholy did not altogether reject Lukács's belief that modern narrative is tasked with conjuring a sense of totality. The sense of wholeness Moholy endorsed did not, however, have to do with a meaning to be disclosed by narrative but rather with a making that narrative both performs and engenders in stimulating the body's perceptual capabilities through a montage aesthetics.

• While it is customary to relate montage to strategies of interruption and disarticulation that challenge basic narrative criteria of consistency and continuity, an examination of the discourse and practice of montage in the 1920s and 1930s shows that its imitative strategies were often a means for rethinking narrative beyond the conceptual and experiential constraints imposed by the novel and other literary genres bound to the print media. What at first comes across as a disruption of narrative is instead a strategy for harnessing the evidentiary force of perception in an operation that enlists it in the service of signification without altogether subsuming it under it. This disjunction of perception and signification elicits shock effects that range from basic perceptual jolts to cognitive bewilderment. Especially after 1923 much of this aesthetics cannot be seen as a response to Weimar's traumatic horizons, whether understood in terms of the recent upheavals of the war or as symptomatic of larger dislocations of modernity. Rather shock was deployed in the context of distinctive narrative strategies that unconventionally mixed objects and media, straddling the line between the manipulation of things' expressivity and the allegorical operations of traditional narrative. If grasped this way, montage practices appear to exploit the perceptual and cognitive surplus engendered by interaction between the human sensory apparatus and new technologies of mechanical reproduction, granting new attention to the material features of the media that carry narrative. This emphasis on perception shifts the focus away from narrative sense-making understood as a key operation through which consciousness negotiates experience. Ac-

cordingly, narrative's fundamental objective is no longer to "represent" reality through artifacts that are endowed with meaningful semblances, but rather to produce experience altogether by shaping the encounter between individuals and the forms of the incarnated world. In downplaying the issues of representation and hermeneutics that bedeviled established narrative genres like the novel at this time, this phenomenological aesthetics allows for reconceptualizing narrative as an exploration of the limits and potential of embodiment unfolding as an exteriorized repetition and manipulation of objects and forms.

With the exception of Walter Benjamin and Alfred Döblin, none of the artists and thinkers examined here contributed directly to debates on the crisis of narrative or thought systematically about the issue. Their reflection and practice rather started from the question of how to seize on the potential of montage beyond the iconoclastic praxis associated with Dadaism in the early 1920s. *Erzählung*, that is, narrative or storytelling, is the term they often used in framing their inquiries. In following their terminological lead I have produced an account that for the most part does not draw on categories that may seem indispensable to a discussion of narrative, including emplotment and narrative causality, meaning and interpretation as cognitive and rhetorical practices, and mimesis as a principle of correspondence between narrative and experience. This makes for an admittedly idiosyncratic account of narrative, so much so that one may well ask whether it makes sense to use the term at all. In addressing this question it will be helpful to recall Marie-Laure Ryan's discussion of two basic ways for approaching narrative. The first aims for descriptions that answer the question "What does narrative *do* for human beings?" This type of inquiry is driven by pragmatic considerations that discourage absolutizing pronouncements and rather allow for different accounts to exist side by side. Narrative can thus be described as a discursive practice that enables humans to negotiate temporality; as a particular mode of thinking that productively relates the particular to the universal; or as a culturally specific form of cognition. The second mode of investigation, by contrast, takes a systemic approach, seeking to define narrative by identifying its essential features. Unlike descriptive accounts, definitional approaches tend to frame their questions in exclusionary terms that pit one account against the other, for instance by asking whether narrative is based in cognitive universals or in culturally specific practices.[11]

My study follows the descriptive route in raising the question of the narrative effects that contemporaries ascribed to montage practices in Weimar Germany. Within the discursive framework of montage narrative was conceived as a vital mode of behavior that manipulates experience not by engen-

dering stories whose meanings disclose different perspectives on it, but rather by producing objects that cause a direct realignment in reality's relational network. These objects can well assume the form of accounts that display features usually associated with narrative—for instance, emplotment as a strategy for forging causality through the manipulation of a temporal sequence, or specific modes of meaning production and decoding. If asked what narrative does for humans, however, the artists examined here would have first pointed to the distinctive type of experientiality they aimed for in deploying montage practices, and only secondarily, if at all, to specific strategies of sense-making or interpretation. I borrow the term *experientiality* from Monika Fludernik, who uses it to describe the effects of narrative beyond the strictures of plot-driven accounts. In her framework, narrative is not primarily about constructing stories that deliver a meaning based on the forward movement of plot, but is rather about the human ability to draw on the cognitive parameters of shared embodied existence in order to treat texts as stories. For Fludernik thus narrativity "centres on experientiality of an anthropomorphic nature" and rests on the ability to portray the operations of consciousness in engaging the incarnated world.[12] While I am interested in appropriating the category of experientiality for a notion of narrative that does not hinge primarily on the teleology of plot-driven structures, my own use of the term severs the nexus of embodiment, anthropomorphism, and consciousness that sustains Fludernik's account. In the depsychologized framework that informed montage practices in the 1920s and 1930s, the parameters that define experientiality are set by interaction among bodies, technologies, and the forms of the incarnated world. Narrativity is the ability to perceive the relational structures engendered through repetition of embodied forms as constitutive of communicable experience, and thus as laying the foundation for forms of intersubjectivity not primarily defined by consciousness and other psychological categories used to circumscribe the human. Some artists attached an inchoate utopian hope to the possibility of transcending the bounds of individual consciousness through this distinctive mimetic play, though they were also generally unwilling or unable to give specific conceptual contours to this utopian horizon.

• Any study of Weimar-era aesthetics has to contend with the fact that much of the artistic practice and theoretical reflection of the 1920s and 1930s relates in some measure to montage. Artists and critics alike have frequently relied on the term to describe phenomena as diverse as the early poetics of film, drama's shift to an aesthetics of performance and critical engagement,

and diverse endeavors to create new epic and lyric forms. Scholars have often focused their analysis on individual media and genres in order to cut a swath through this rich and sometimes confusing constellation. In treating montage as the discursive pivot for rethinking narrative at the intersection of technology and perception, my study is not bound by the aesthetics and poetics of specific media. At the same time, I do not aim to offer a synthetic account of the plethora of discourses and practices relating to montage in Weimar Germany. Instead, I follow the lead of those theorists and artists who drew on the montage principle to reconceptualize storytelling as a world-making activity that enlists diverse technologies and practices in order to engender bonds of reciprocity among individuals.

Chapter 1 outlines the anthropological vision that drives the montage practices examined in this study, and that relies on a distinctive interplay of perception, expression, and storytelling. It starts by unfolding the conceptual and aesthetic ties that link the antirepresentational and antinarrative strategies of Dadaism to the conspicuously structured, and at times openly figurative, compositions that prevailed in the mid-1920s in the aesthetics of Constructivism and the New Objectivity. This in turn provides a frame for describing the mechanisms of analogy and parody that undergird the imitative behavior presupposed by montage. At stake is an understanding of mimesis that moves beyond the conventional logic of representation, understood as a practice aimed at transposing content into a linguistic code or producing images that correspond to experience in an allegorical or functional way. The phenomenological materialism of montage jettisons the criterion of congruence that authorizes established representational modes, replacing them through strategies of recombination that emphasize the medium's physical ability to directly alter the orders of the real.

Chapters 2 and 3 sharpen the conceptual contours of the ties between montage and narrative profiled in chapter 1 by outlining Walter Benjamin's reflection on storytelling and montage against the backdrop of Weimar-era debates on the crisis of the novel and the rise of film as the new narrative medium of the masses. Benjamin's inquiry into the relation between storytelling, perception, and oral and print media owed a great deal to his engagement with Dadaism and Constructivism and is thus especially helpful in staking out the terrain for my investigation. Through readings of his essays "The Storyteller" (1936) and "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (1935–39) as well as several shorter texts, I show how his account of filmic montage unexpectedly reprised key elements of the waning mode of storytelling he mourned in "The Storyteller." This allows me to elaborate the central features of montage storytelling: its antihermeneutic qual-

ity and mnemonic properties grounded in the rhythms of the working body; its dependence on technology's ability to augment perception; its outward, noncontemplative orientation and propensity for forging bonds of reciprocity among individuals.

Chapter 4 turns to the reflection and practice of montage of László Moholy-Nagy, a leading representative of Constructivism whose work deeply influenced Walter Benjamin. The chapter focuses on the pedagogical program Moholy developed between 1923 and 1928 in his capacity as an instructor at the Bauhaus, Germany's pathbreaking school of applied arts. In analyzing Moholy's revolutionary concept of creative forming or *Gestaltung*, I outline the narrative contours of his agenda to revitalize communication in the print media and altogether reimagine the forms of everyday objects. This rested on a montage principle that aimed to augment perception by developing a noncontemplative "vision in motion." As I show, Moholy's vitalist understanding of perception and imitative behavior ultimately fell short of his ambition to revolutionize the experience of space and thus renew human existence. It nonetheless spurred an innovative notion of narrative as a practice devoted to remaking experience through enlivened perception rather than to representing it based on a principle of resemblance—an understanding that resonates directly with Benjamin's belief in a structural homology between experience and narrative.

Chapter 5 reprises key questions from chapter 4 concerning photography's exactness and narrative power, by focusing on the montage strategies that shaped the modernist photobook. In responding to the innovative use of photography in contemporary newspapers and illustrated magazines, theorists of the visual such as Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Franz Roh rejected the frequent association of photographic precision with truth and instead emphasized the rhetorical and narrative potential residing in the contemporary combination of photography with other visual and verbal devices. The latter part of the chapter draws on these debates to analyze two emblematic Weimar-era photobooks, Albert Renger-Patzsch's *The World Is Beautiful* (*Die Welt ist schön*, 1928) and Hannah Höch's *Album* (1933), showing how their montage narratives enlist straight photography in contrasting pedagogies of vision that exemplarily deploy visual analogy as a mode of storytelling.

Chapter 6 examines the work of Kurt Schwitters, a close associate of Höch's and Moholy-Nagy's, as emblematic of an influential strand of Weimar-era montage that was less concerned with the negotiation of photographic technology and more directly indebted to cubist and Dadaist collage and assemblage. While scholars have amply documented Schwitters's path-

breaking work in a variety of visual media, I especially focus on his literary practice, which imaginatively uses nonsensical language in order to display and estrange the mechanisms of everyday communication. Close readings of literary texts from the 1920s and 1930s allow me to appraise Schwitters's formalist understanding of intransitive literature, which engenders a narrative mode that scrutinizes everyday communication by mimicking its structures through parodic repetition.

The conclusion considers the role that montage played in burnishing the legacy of Weimar-era modernism during the so-called Expressionism debates of the 1930s. As it unfolded in the shadow of fascism, much of the discussion about montage espoused an understanding of artistic engagement that placed a premium on meaning and interpretation. This hermeneutic premise serves as a valuable foil in profiling the distinctive antipsychologism and phenomenological materialism of the montage practices at the center of this study.

1 • Weimar-Era Montage

Perception, Expression, Storytelling

The terms *montage* and *collage* have become synonymous with the radical experimentation that altered the status and physiognomy of art in early twentieth-century Europe. They encompass a wide array of practices premised on quoting, combining, and juxtaposing materials that straddle the bounds of old and new media—from literature and stage drama to painting, sculpture, photography, film, and radio. Common to these practices is the exuberant transgression of the canons of normative aesthetics, coupled with an often belligerent contempt for the institutions of academic art and an optimistic willingness to draw inspiration from the world of consumer culture, advertisement, and the mass media. *Montage*, the term that emerged in German as the overarching category encompassing diverse procedures of dissemblage and recomposition, marks the confluence of two distinct strands of experimentation. One was inspired by the turn to collage of cubism and the intermingling of verbal and visual expression within Italian futurism, as influenced by the experiments of artists like Apollinaire; this strand also includes the linguistic practice of the Expressionist *Wortkunst* circle around August Stramm and precursors to concrete poetry like Christian Morgenstern. After the mid-1920s crucial impulses came from the reception of Soviet film and photography, especially given the centrality ascribed to montage in the film poetics of pioneering experimental directors like Vertov, Pudovkin, Kuleshov, and Eisenstein. While in a German context the initial inspiration for experimentation with visual and verbal collage may well have come from cubism's "pasted-paper revolution," it is significant that terms like *Klebebilder* and *geklebte Bilder* (pasted images) were soon supplanted by the generic term *montage*. To the radical artists associated with 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.[1]

The iconoclasm and antiestablishment streak of interwar montage practices have long been associated with an all-out assault on traditional notions of representation and narrative. In undermining the integrity of the artistic object, montage challenges the idealist premises that governed aesthetic discourse in the nineteenth century, first and foremost the requirement that the artwork display a character of unity and organicity and thus allow for a hermeneutic mode of reception based on the congruence between the whole and its component parts. Montage hinges on yanking elements out of their trusted environments and inserting them into new contexts. It thus deploys them as signs that acquire new valences depending on the relations they enter with surrounding objects, while never completely suppressing their link to the contexts from which they were taken. The ensuing semantic interferences produce an undecidability that dramatizes the split nature of the sign and arbitrary mechanism of signification, calling into question the possibility of transparent meaning, stable reference, and trustworthy representation. Especially in the early practices of futurism and Dada, montage works ranging from visual collages to opto-phonetic compositions and sound poems demonstratively flouted the established conventions that framed narrative in verbal and visual media—the need for hierarchically ordering space and time, construing a stable point of view and motivated sequence of events, and establishing clear extratextual references that would aid in disambiguating meaning.[2] Yet by the mid-1920s the Dadaist assault on representation gave way to more structured compositions bent on manipulating perception by imitating forms in a variety of media and genres. These compositions aimed to elicit modes of interaction whose peculiar expressivity was at time associated with an unorthodox notion of narrative. At stake was a type of performance that no longer hinged on trading meanings extracted from stories through acts of interpretation but rather directly reshuffled the ties that existed among objects. In this chapter I will trace the general contours of this link between expression and narrative, describing the anthropological underpinnings of the imitative behavior it presupposes, the mechanism of analogy and parody that propels it in a montage aesthetics, and its distinctive phenomenological materialism.

• Berlin Dada makes for a useful point of departure in tracing the development of the nexus between expression and narrative that fueled the aesthetics of montage in the 1920s. Montage artifacts figured prominently at the

First International Dada Fair, the Dadaists' sardonic take on the contemporary art exhibition that opened in Berlin in June 1920. Wieland Herzfelde, the brother of John Heartfield and a prominent member of Berlin's Club Dada, penned the introduction to the exhibition's catalog, which is tasked with laying out Dada's response to contemporary art—including its reasons for worrying about art in the first place—without betraying the Dadaists' signature belligerence and self-undermining gesture. Dadaism emerges from Herzfelde's portrayal as an iconoclastic dilettantism that ditches conventional aesthetic standards and privileges mechanical media like photography. Especially the cut-and-paste art this medium makes possible poses a deliberate challenge to the contemporary art establishment:

> The Dadaists say: When in the past colossal quantities of time, love, and effort were directed toward the painting of a body, a flower, a hat, a heavy shadow, and so forth, now we need merely to take scissors and cut out all that we require from paintings and photographic representations of these things; when something on a smaller scale is involved, we do not need representations at all but take instead the objects themselves, for example, pocketknives, ashtrays, books, etc., all things that, in the museums of old art, have been painted very beautifully indeed, but have been, nonetheless, merely painted. . . . Any product that is manufactured uninfluenced and unencumbered by public authorities and concepts of value is in and of itself Dadaistic, as long as the means of presentation are anti-illusionistic and proceed from the requirement to further the disfiguration of the contemporary world, which already finds itself in a state of disintegration, of metamorphosis. . . . The Dadaists acknowledge as their sole program the obligation to make what is happening here and now—temporally as well as spatially—the content of their pictures.[3]

The passage well captures the benefits Herzfelde and his fellow Dadaists ascribed to montage. Its incorporation of unsublimated objects—"pocketknives, ashtrays, books"—appears as an authentic and efficient way for engaging experience, one that saves the artist the pesky labor of representation. Using scissors to mercilessly cut around reality's fabric is also a fitting response to the brutality and ethical bankruptcy of the newly established German republic, as telescoped by the commentaries placed at the end of the introduction and devoted to composite artifacts exhibited at the fair, which paint a bleak portrayal of an immediate postwar period marked by the dehumanizing treatment of war veterans, the moral and ideological decay of the

Hannah Höch, *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* (*Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany*) (1919). Photomontage and collage on paper.

(Photo: Jörg Anders. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Nationalgalerie, Berlin) / Art Resource, New York. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

ruling elite, and the cravenness of the middle class. This is a landscape that screams to be cut open by Dada's kitchen knife, to paraphrase the title of Hannah Höch's 1920 photomontage, a barbed cross section of life in Weimar Germany that was also on display at the fair, and montage's systematic defiling of putatively intact experience does just that. Indeed, its stroke of genius lies in rendering, at a basic structural level, the semblance of a world in shambles while avoiding depicting it in an illusionistic or naturalistic fashion. Montage thus turns the splintering and degradation of contemporary experience into an inexorable aesthetic principle, one that refuses to sublimate reality through embellishing representation and rather embraces it for what it is.

Herzfelde's text also comments on the radical streak of montage strategies, which are not just another style but rather promise to subvert representation altogether. In pondering what becomes of art's content if one bypasses representation and merely incorporates found objects, Herzfelde seems content to chuck all demands that art express a content at all. "The Dadaists acknowledge as their sole program the obligation to make what is happening here and now . . . the content of their pictures," he insists. That is to say, for the Dadaists experience in its unmediated form is its own content. This grants them license to bypass the mediating function of representation and allow the incorporated fragments to simply be, that is, to function in an indexical mode in order "to further the disfiguration of the contemporary world, which already finds itself in a state of disintegration, of metamorphosis." Thus for Herzfelde montage displays an awareness of the world as a semiotic tapestry in which objects double-task as signs. Its activist streak allows for unhinging them from the orders of the real that compel them to signify in specific ways and to exhibit them in their immediate materiality. This may well throw a wrench into reality's chain of signification and cause its fabric to unravel, hastening a process of decomposition that is presumably well under way.

In sum, montage appears in the text as a strategy that enables the Dadaists to construe allegorical compositions that denounce the status quo and simultaneously stage their own unraveling to undermine the residual representational structure in which they are embedded. This involves exploiting the demonstrative force of the montaged fragments, which, as Theodor W. Adorno recognized, insistently point outside the artifact to the context from which they were yanked, only to fold back onto themselves. Such indexical pull enables the objects to resist appropriation for a mimetic representational regime that would reduce them to signs split between an ideational signified and a material signifier.[4] It is a strategy that both thematizes and undermines the allegorical signification of montage artifacts, signaling that their meaning is makeshift and transient. Allegorical compositions are premised on es-

tablishing a conceptual link between material object and allegorical message that relates the object's physical appearance purposefully to its meaning. This tie is not intrinsically given but rather rests on social and cultural convention—of the type, for example, that turns a scale in the hands of a blindfolded woman into an emblem of justice in the iconographic tradition of the West. Montage exploits the fact that allegorical meaning and material signifier can come unglued in the absence of obvious guidelines for attributing meaning. In other words, images can easily become unintelligible if the right clues for semantic disambiguation are withheld, for instance, if recipients are unable to connect the dots in linking the signifier "woman with scale" with the signified "justice."

Let me return, by way of example, to the portrayal of upper-class heedlessness in *The Multi-Millionaire*, the 1923 photomontage by Hannah Höch discussed in the introduction. Here the depiction of the two financiers who walk atop fairgrounds with guns sticking out of their head and metal tools in their hands intimates associations with industrialist exploitation. This reading is supported by the clever double coding the image conjures for the metal tools, which evoke the world of industrial labor while also looking like improper weapons. One could, however, speculate further about the meaning of these rods. The disparate connections they entertain with other fragments do not exclude the possibility that a third meaning may be in play—for instance, that the rods may be stand-ins for walking sticks, an attribute of manly elegance one could well expect the men to have. This would potentially suggest a different reading of the men's function in the composition, one that complicates or even undercuts an understanding of the image as mounting a critique of capitalist violence. In the end the rods function like material relics that allow for multiple semantic connections without endorsing any of them, thus threatening the composition with unraveling in a heap of incongruous fragments.

It is easy to see how the theoretical reception of the 1970s and 1980s seized on pronouncements like Herzfelde's to make sense of the jarring works of Dada, often finding in montage the discursive pivot of a destructive aesthetics that subverts conventional models of representation and narrative by parodying them in eviscerating fashion. Especially the semiotically inflected readings of poststructuralism emphasized the attack on signification mounted by montage strategies, which were credited with mercilessly debunking the mechanisms of substitution that conceal the absence at the heart of language.[5] As incisive as these critical readings may be in undercutting the logocentric bias of Western philosophical thought, their understanding of the sign as a stand-in for an absent referent tends to underplay

the issue of how, specifically, the material qualities of the montage inserts impact communication. This blind spot is already present in Herzfelde's discourse on montage, which pursues the dream of disentangling objects from the signifying web that ensnares them in order to polemically display them in their obstinate materiality. It is a vision that implicitly pits materiality against language, understanding the former as a phantasmatic condition of matter suspended in a state of grace prior to inscription.

An examination of montage practices going back to cubism shows, however, that they rarely lend themselves to upholding a neat dichotomy that opposes language to materiality.[6] Instead, they often explicitly query the status of objects as complex signifying entities whose material qualities are inextricably bound up with linguistic dynamics. A case in point is the manufacturer's inscription on the tire in Höch's *Multi-Millionaire*, which challenges the viewer to solve the riddle posed by its presence in the composition by displaying fragments of its manufacturer's name. The writing assigns the tire a specific status as a commodity, and in so doing reminds the viewer that the linguistic marking is an intrinsic component of the object as commodity. The larger point here is that the inscription should be seen as part and parcel of the thing's thingness, and not simply as an effect of signifying strategies that superficially overlay the object. Conversely, in dramatizing how objects are made to function as signs, the montage procedure also calls attention to the material status of language as reliant on the physical properties of specific media and modes of inscription. One can conclude that montage practices may well dramatize the dynamics of language and communication. They do so, however, while conjuring a concept of materiality that, following Katherine Hayles, does not stand in antithesis to signification but is rather the result of a complex interplay between an object's (or medium's) physical qualities and available signifying modes.[7]

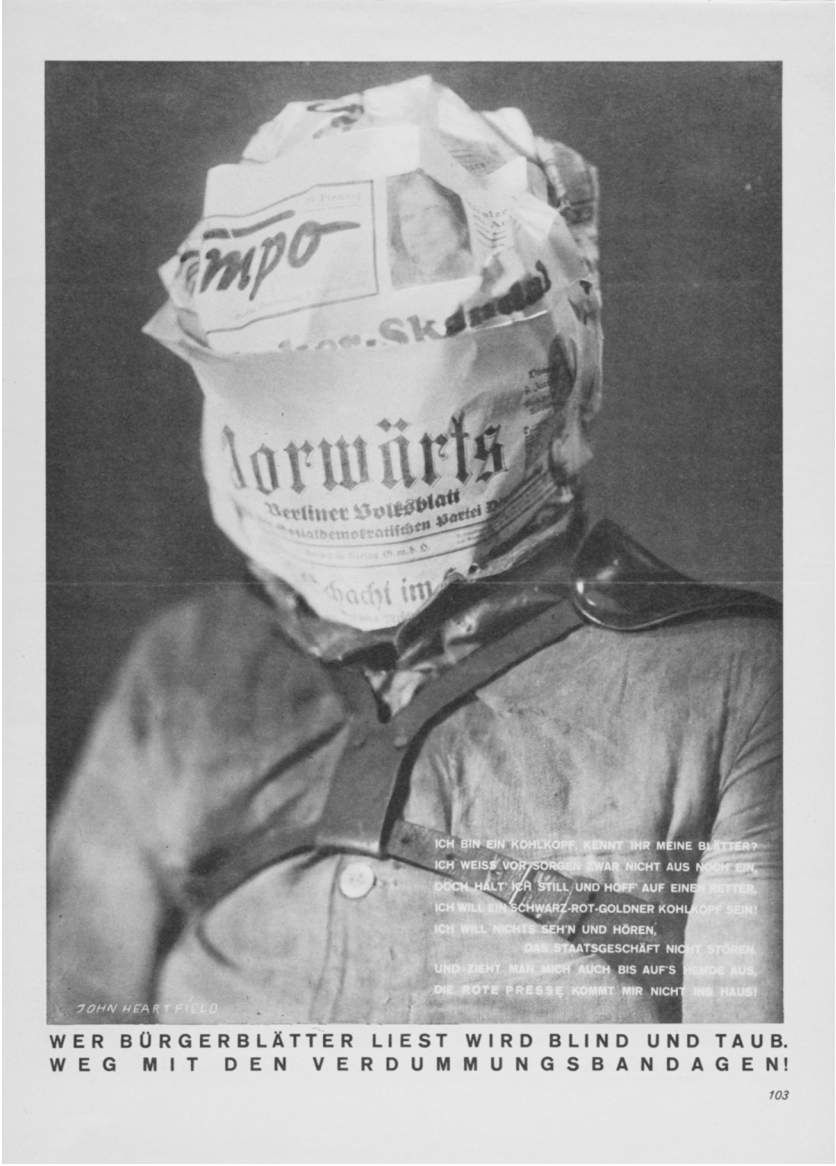
• Herzfelde's strategy to turn the physicality of found objects into a weapon against representation did not succeed in bringing down the academic art business that was a premier target of Dadaist vituperation. It did, however, chip away at the hegemony of a late-idealist aesthetics that treated artworks as self-enclosed totalities endowed with a quasi-religious meaning.[8] In so doing it also shone a new light on the disjuncture between allegorical message and artifact's physicality that was the hallmark of a montage aesthetics. In the course of the 1920s this disjuncture was explored in practices that abandoned the exuberant chaos of Dadaist montage for more structured, and often openly figurative, compositions, which opened the way for the

ubiquitous deployment of photography in advertisement and the print media. Enabled by the introduction of cost-effective halftone printing and rotogravure in the early decades of the twentieth century, the use of photographs in both the high-brow and the leisure press was a decisive factor in the phenomenal growth of journalistic media in the immediate postwar period. Hanno Hardt has described the many roles photography was called to play in a culture that placed a new premium on the value of documentary information and factual reporting, promising to deliver unbiased depictions of actual events that transcended cultural and linguistic barriers on account of the universality and immediacy of visual communication, while at the same time entering relations of both complementarity and competition with the printed word.[9] Especially photo-reportage lent itself to unfolding complex stories made up of photographic sequences supplemented by textual inserts. In the mainstream press these photo stories often propagated a self-congratulatory view of German culture that affirmed middle-class values while remaining largely unconcerned with the actual conditions of life in the Weimar Republic. By contrast the deployment of photography and reportage by the militant Left displayed a bitingly critical edge aimed at dismantling the fraudulent semblance of a wholesome world propagated by the bourgeois press and documenting the corruption of the political elites and the exploitation of the working class.[10] Especially the photomontages that John Heartfield produced for the leftist *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* (*AIZ*; *Workers' Illustrated Magazine*) elevated this dismantling to an unremitting formal principle by packing their scathing critique into carefully rephotographed compositions that were designed to be taken in as straight photographs at first sight. In so doing Heartfield's montages drove home the point that the contemporary world had all the integrity and harmony of a doctored photograph.

Significantly, it was the aesthetic experimentation of left-leaning enterprises like the *AIZ* and the Malik Verlag, the publishing house founded by Wieland Herzfelde in 1916, that nudged the change-averse mainstream press toward innovative uses of photography and graphic design during the 1920s.[11] This generally involved mixing different media—photography, verbal inserts, and abstract design elements—in narrative compositions that relinquished illusionism while incorporating some measure of figuration and even realistic representation.[12] Sally Stein has observed that the more structured compositions found in advertisements and the illustrated press hinged on balancing incongruous demands. On the one hand, they sought to titillate the reader's curiosity with the promise of surprising juxtapositions. On the other, they endeavored to contain the range of possible meanings so as to

steer reception toward specific accounts. At issue was the need for shaping the complex spatiotemporal processes of reading without undermining the valuable connotations of transgression and open-endedness associated with montage.[13] These concerns often congealed around the tricky concept of "simultaneity," which in this context does not simply denote a reader's ability to take in a sprawling medley of verbal and visual information at once—a dream of omniscience that was given the lie by experiments in the physiology and psychology of perception, which detailed the eminently serial quality of verbal and visual information-processing. Rather, simultaneity was a rhetorical strategy of composition that promised to yield boundless semantic permutations by allowing for multiple and crisscrossing paths of reception. This strategy could both confound readers and place them in an omniscient position of control, all the while downplaying the fact that the elements of the composition were visually and semantically calibrated to direct attention in calculated ways. This kind of manipulation dispenses a specific type of pleasure that hinges on enjoying both the thrilling anarchy of anti-illusionism and the comfort of successful navigation.[14]

Montage thus delivered artifacts that fused open-endedness and the satisfaction of meaning in a precarious balance tantalizingly threatened by the possibility that the tie between allegorical message and artifact's physical appearance might unravel. Nowhere is this disjuncture more cunningly exploited than in John Heartfield's *AIZ* photomontages, whose visibly fabricated illusionism both exemplified and mocked the return of naturalistic representation and visual narrative in contemporary advertisement and graphic design. A case in point is Heartfield's famous "cabbage head" montage, which appeared in the June 1930 issue of the *AIZ*. The image features the bust-level portrait of a man in working-class clothes, slightly slouching in his seat, his head covered in sheets of newspaper that bear the titles of two prominent dailies, *Vorwärts*, the official organ of the Socialist Party, and *Tempo*, a left-liberal newspaper. Lines of pedestrian verse in the image's bottom-right corner have the man declaring, in his own voice, his indoctrination by the mainstream press, which makes him blind to its complicity in the exploitation suffered by the working class in the Weimar Republic. This message is reinforced by the caption at the bottom of the image, which cautions that "those who read bourgeois newspapers becomes blind and deaf. Away with the stultifying bandages!"[15] By lumping the Socialist newspaper with the bourgeois press, the image weighs into the ideological war raging within the German Left in the latter years of the republic, which pitted the antiparliamentarian and collectivist line of the Communist Party against the liberal reformism of Social Democracy. In warning against the stultifying ef-



John Heartfield, "Wer Bürgerblätter liest wird blind und taub. Weg mit den Verdummungsbandagen!" ("Whoever Reads Bourgeois Newspapers Becomes Blind and Deaf: Away with These Stultifying Bandages!"). *A-I-Z* 9.6 (1930): 103. Copperplate photogravure.

fect of the bourgeois press, the photomontage implicitly presents the radical leftist content of the *AIZ* as an eye-opening tool for the working class.

In self-identifying as a "Kohlkopf" (cabbage head) proud of his own "Blätter," the man further highlights the pun that connects image and text.[16] The German word *Blatt* means both leaf and a sheet of paper, and in this latter meaning also functions as metonymic stand-in for "newspaper." The interplay of image and text thus suggests that the liberal press turns its readers into blind newspaper cabbage heads. Yet this portrait of a duped worker exceeds the visual pun of the cabbage head blinded by its own leaves. Much of the image's impact lies in its manipulation of the conventions of the eye-level portrait, which demand that the depicted person's eyes stare out of the picture so as to potentially lock in with the recipient's gaze.[17] In both conjuring and frustrating this expectation the image invokes an anthropomorphic naturalism that demands that the man's depiction be taken literally, suggesting that the newspapers hampering the man's vision function as an actual blindfold rather than as a metaphor for the immaterial veil of ideology. In this way the montage avoids portraying the rift within the Left as a clash between rivaling worldviews and instead presents it as a conflict grounding in material relations. The image's literalizing strategy further involves stretching the newspaper title *Vorwärts* ("Forward") across the head's lower portion as a mouth of sorts that double-tasks as an injunction to move forward in what appears as a striking conflation of utterance and organ of speech. The injunction is countermanded by the leather straps in which the man is dressed. They seem to bind the man to an invisible spot behind his back, making movement unlikely.

Such punning and literalizing strategy, which is typical for the photomontages Heartfield produced for the *AIZ* from the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s, harkens back to the Dadaist deployment of allegory in steering viewers' reception and providing conceptual paths for deciphering the riddle posed by the composition. The image's play with the conventions of portraiture and calibrated assemblage of visual and verbal material make it possible to overcome the first impression of an incongruous mélange of elements and ascribe meaning to the assembled fragments by prompting the viewer to choose from the multiple paradigmatic options available for each element so as to string them together in a meaningful syntagmatic sequence. This allegorical procedure was not new to the visual tradition of the West, though since the Renaissance it had been increasingly marginalized by the growing identification of realist representation with verisimilitude and illusionism, with whose effects it was seen as interfering. Neither is the thrill of allegorical compositions new, which hinges on the incongruous sense of empowerment

and frustration produced by the task of solving a complex riddle. What appears new is that montage compositions pointedly foregrounded the moment of incorporation; that is, the inserted materials were to be recognized as having been pasted. This entails that the moment of construction not only remains at some level perspicuous but is made to carry a proposition in itself.

This statement lies in the mesmerizing chattering of forms that propels the distinctive experimentation of Weimar-era montage, particularly as it became increasingly focused, in the mid-1920s, on the ways in which perception interacts with physical forms in shaping the contours of the material world. A case in point is the bewildering intermingling of objects and shapes that breathes a strange life into Heartfield's composite image, casting the physiognomic attributes of each element into sharp relief and enacting a dynamic play of forms that is in excess of, though not necessarily in opposition to, other processes of signification. The montage straddles the line between metaphorical claim and literal statement, thus taking seriously the materiality of the objects that carry allegorical meaning—for instance, the newspaper as a blindfold that hampers the man's vision. In the end the image will of course be read allegorically when placed in the context of its own textual inserts and other content in the *AIZ*, suggesting that the working class is being duped by the disingenuous reformism that Germany's social democracy peddles in the pages of *Vorwärts*. Yet its vividness goes beyond the visual joke of the cabbage head, asking what it might be like for someone to have a bundle of paper where the head should be. As John Berger once noted, Heartfield uniquely excelled at this literal handling of objects, his images being most compelling when they present objects as things, and only secondarily as symbols, so that their thingness is never completely subsumed under the allegorical messages they carry.[18] Paraphrasing Walter Benjamin's characterization of allegory in his treatise on the German mourning play, one could say that in Heartfield's literalizing photomontages the thingness of objects is never reduced to serving as the inert shell of allegorical content but rather shines forth with unsettling effects.[19]

• Photomontages like Heartfield's thus raise the question of how contemporaries negotiated the physical allure of objects in composite artifacts, including photography, that functioned as the repository of a tantalizing instability that both promised openness and threatened to undo allegorical meaning. A sharp awareness of the literal force of photomontage is found in Franz Roh's introduction to *Foto-Auge* (*Photo-Eye*, 1929), one of two illustrated volumes that appeared in conjunction with the pathbreaking exhibi-

tion Film und Foto held under the auspices of the Deutscher Werkbund in Stuttgart in 1929. A noted art historian and eloquent champion of the modern movement in art, Roh focused his essay on largely familiar debates on photography before offering a survey of contemporary photographic forms that devoted significant attention to photomontage, a medium with which he himself experimented. Writing barely nine years after Herzfelde's introduction to the Dada Fair catalog, Roh observed that the formal destructiveness and compositional anarchy of Futurist and Dadaist montage had gradually been displaced by streamlined compositions marked by "almost classical moderation and calm."[20] Roh paid explicit homage to recent work by the Malik Verlag, presenting it as part of a new trend that needed to be set off from previous experimentation with collage, most notably cubism. In casting his account in the language of Constructivism Roh argued that cubism had focused primarily on formal experimentation in its endeavor to represent objects by dissecting them into simple geometric forms. By contrast the cut and paste of contemporary photomontage was more akin to manipulating fragments torn from the objects themselves. In other words, while cubism's geometrical abstractions were still operating within a representational logic, albeit an anti-illusionistic one, photomontage for Roh came closer to Herzfelde's indexical understanding of montage artifacts. It entailed constructing new material units that Roh dubbed "graftings of reality."[21] These experiential offshoots did not so much depict reality as modify it by their very existence. In this discourse the traditional logic of representation, which hinges on transposing a content into a linguistic or symbolic code, is replaced by a logic of recombination that emphasizes the medium's physical ability to directly alter the orders of the real. Roh did not specify what this may mean in the concrete, and it may be tempting to dismiss the clumsy term *Wirklichkeitspropfung* as a conceptually fuzzy and argumentatively inconsequential metaphor. Yet earlier statements by him show that he took the material force of photomontage literally, querying the unorthodox narratives that were produced by such grafts of the real, which he linked to a depsychologized understanding of expression that was rooted in the philosophical anthropology of the Weimar period.

The question of expression looms large in his early *Nach-Expressionismus* (*Post-Expressionism*, 1925), a remarkable investigation of the perplexing realist aesthetics that displaced the metaphysical pathos of Expressionism in the visual arts and that was subsumed under the label of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, or New Objectivity, from the mid-1920s on.[22] Roh manifestly struggled to find suitable terms of analysis for appraising the resurging interest in the "world of objects" (*Gegenstandswelt*) that drove the return of figuration and illu-

sionistic representation in the visual idioms of his day. Concerned that the contemporary focus on *Gegenständlichkeit*, or the object-ness of things, might be mistaken for the return of a dubiously affirmative realism, Roh insisted that the new figurative trends rather displayed a material world transfixed in a state of mesmerizing strangeness. Their fascination with "the world of objects" was not an affirmation of reality's unyielding facticity and objective status, but rather provided a venue for rediscovering the awe-inspiring magic of the forms found in experience, understood as the trigger for a perception that did not simply record experience but rather shaped it in fundamental ways.[23] Roh thus championed the new art for its ability to foreground the uncanny concreteness and alluring strangeness of the phenomenal world, as grounding in awareness that the very thingness of the real was inseparable from the event of perception. As a result, the new aesthetics of *Gegenständlichkeit* could no longer rely on a traditional notion of mimesis hinging on providing representations that enlisted the artist's ingenuity and transformative intervention to animate an inarticulate world. In other words, the artist's task was no longer to make a mute universe speak by lending the silence of things expressive power, but was rather about capturing, in the moment of perception, the giddiness of a world saturated with inherent expressivity.[24]

Photomontage, Roh believed, epitomized this new aesthetic sensibility by enjoining the exactness of photography in capturing the absolute expressive power of objects, while at the same time showcasing the dynamics of a technologically augmented perception. Its piecemeal aesthetics lent itself to emphasizing the nonorganic quality of its artifacts and thus foregrounded the constructive streak of perception, which fabricated objects in accordance with the forms of the phenomenal world rather than serving as a passive vehicle for their sensuous recognition. For Roh, photomontage's ability to capture an experience saturated by the overwhelming expressivity of things made it into a unique conceptual pivot for rethinking the entire field of art, and in fact, of all human expression.[25] Understanding the new aesthetics through the lens of montage helped to redefine the central category of *Ausdruck* (expression), a staple of Expressionism's aesthetic discourse. *Ausdruck* in Roh's study no longer stood for the outward expression of an artist's inner vision but rather entailed an utterly externalized *Ausdrücken*, a stamping out of experience to be obtained through the interaction of perception and form. This in turn called for an imitative engagement with the objects of the phenomenal world that was not premised on reproducing their semblance, but rather aimed at a generative duplication of forms, a type of mimicry that could shape the ways in which the world was to be grasped through percep-

tion. Mimesis as mimicry thus configured itself as a powerful tool for manipulating perception in a dynamic that directly produced experience.

Roh's rejection of an anthropocentric notion of mimesis and depsychologized understanding of the artistic process resonated with contemporary inquiries into the imitative triggers of animal and human behavior. His understanding of expression as marking the congruence between the sensory apparatus and the forms of the experiential world strikingly echoes the account of *Ausdruck* that formed the core of Helmuth Plessner's philosophical anthropology from the early 1920s on. Plessner defined expression as a noninstrumental bodily routine that discloses the individual's essential orientation toward his environment. As a feature that defines humans as embodied beings, *Ausdruck* was fundamentally indeterminate, a zone of psychophysiological indifference drained of specific emotional or cognitive directionality. As such it lent itself to investigating the vital role that interaction with an embodied world plays in the individual's constitution. This was grounded for Plessner in the double-edged relation humans entertain to their bodies—both inhabiting them as the incarnated locus of the self and using them as another material tool for engaging their environment.[26] In this split experience of incarnation, Plessner argued, the self should not be seen as a psychic or spiritual entity emanating from the body that houses it, but is rather an interpolation of body and environment, the product of a phenomenological "here" realized through the interaction between the individual and the embodied world. This interaction is itself based on a fundamental expectation of reciprocity that ties the individual to the world. As Plessner insisted, what constitutes the body as *Leib*, as the incarnated locus of the self, is the presence of an environment that both affects it and which it in turn affects.[27]

Thus for Plessner *Ausdruck*, as a bodily routine that is cognitively and emotionally blank, marked a degree zero in the human interaction with the phenomenal world while at the same time foregrounding the expectation of reciprocation that made this very interaction possible. Franz Roh's celebration of a world of objects drenched in intrinsic expressivity (*Eigenausdruck*) may be seen as voicing the awestruck awareness about this fundamental reciprocity—indeed, as marveling at the intuition of a self formed in the encounter between the body and the forms of the world, of which the body is itself one. If seen from this perspective, the principle of montage cherished by Roh dramatizes a fundamental relation to the world, including one's own body, which grasps it as at once already formed (*gestaltet*) and open to further forming (*Gestaltung*). *Gestaltung* in this context entails an ex-pression, a pressing out or outwardly oriented action that does not so much involve a meaning—as the externalization of an inward content—as a making. *Aus-*

druck, as a degree-zero mode of interaction with the world, acknowledges the mutual character of this making, which involves a self shaped by a world that it shapes in return. Transposed into the conceptual register of a phenomenological aesthetics, *Ausdruck* provides the foundation for a poietic process in which interaction with the forms of the experiential world produces other forms in an imitative process in which each new form is not an inferior copy of the one that triggered repetition, but is rather situated on the same phenomenological plane.

Mimesis in this respect becomes a principle of direct intervention into a world whose physiognomy can presumably be redrawn by means of a creative miming of forms. Within the discursive matrix of Constructivism from which Roh was drawing, this entailed "to think and produce forms elementally" so as to enact the principles of "simplicity, balance, self-evidence, highly refined economy" that sustained the equilibrium governing the relations among objects and living creatures in the experiential world, as Werner Gräff put it in an essay that appeared in the inaugural issue of *G*, the journal of art and design founded by Hans Richter in 1923.[28] The *Gestaltung* or creative forming championed by Gräff was meant to reveal the underlying unity of a phenomenal world defaced by the chaos of proliferating life-spheres and ideological claims. Along these lines, in a programmatic text published the previous year László Moholy-Nagy had called for a new art predicated not on reproducing the semblance of the real but on "creating ever new, previously unknown relations" that would renew the equilibrium that sustains the experiential world while at the same time making it perspicuous.[29] Moholy pleaded for enlisting the new mechanical technologies of film and photography in amplifying the enlivening congruence between the body and the world given to perception, and thus exploit to the fullest the biological potential of humans. This resonated closely with the Bauhaus's agenda of revitalizing experience by radically remaking the objects that give everyday life its form, an agenda that Moholy helped further after his appointment as instructor of the Bauhaus's pioneering "basic course." It involved the return to an ancient notion of *technē* that refused to abide by the traditional divide separating the purposeless sphere of art from that of utilitarian, industrial production, thus encouraging artists to move freely between commercial and nonutilitarian spheres. Not surprisingly, then, many artists associated with Constructivism did not see a conflict between their endorsement of an art devoted to emancipating humanity by refashioning the material world and their pursuit of the very same principles in the exploitative world of commerce and industrial production. This apparent blind spot was further compounded by the open contempt some of them voiced for contemporary po-

litical ideologies and philosophical discourses that would have provided a salutary testing ground for the suspiciously abstract vision of a world marked by simplicity, clarity, and balance that frequently authorized their work.

This is a familiar criticism of Constructivism's role in fostering dubious aspects of technological modernity, and it needs to be acknowledged.[30] At the same time it is also important to recognize the insight afforded by the understanding of reality that authorized its practices. Indeed, the appeal and reach of a montage aesthetics is hard to grasp if one does not take seriously the phenomenological vision of experience as a relational web woven through the reciprocal interaction of bodies and objects. In this respect one should note that the interest in manipulating perception by altering the relations of the real was rarely motivated by a reductive behaviorism, that is, by a view of human conduct as deterministically shaped by a stimulus-response mechanism. In the discourse of Moholy and other artists associated with the Bauhaus, the technological enhancement of human perception served both utilitarian aims and was an end in itself, marking a heightening of being and enlargement of nonconceptual knowledge that were worth pursuing in their own right. In borrowing key terms from the conceptual arsenal of Constructivism Franz Roh also evoked its sense of wonder at the awe-inspiring blurring of nature and technology in a poietic activity that revived the Aristotelian vision of a world caught in a process of immanent self-actualization. Accordingly, montage for him denoted the ability to contribute to weaving the dynamic ties that hold experience together by cutting out and grafting its pieces through artifacts that did not represent the world but rather directly renewed it.

• For Roh, as for many artists associated with Constructivism, the new art dramatized a world that was at once rational and full of marvel. He coined the term "magical realism" to capture its aesthetic outlook, and while acknowledging that this was a flawed and potentially misleading label, he also insisted that it came closest to describing a state of affairs for which there seemed to be no better designation. In particular, the term "magical" suggested itself for its ability to convey both the sense of awe elicited by the phenomenal world and the eerie power of the antiorganicist aesthetics epitomized by the montage principle, which promised to meddle with the world by altering its forms.[31] Magic was to be understood literally as an active intervention into the world that operated by appropriating its physiognomy, that is, through acts of manipulative mimicry.

Walter Benjamin keenly described the resurgence of this submerged mi-

metic mode in the sensuous power of commodities and the proliferation of mimetic technologies like photography and film. At stake for him was a concept of imitation that stresses the moment of embodiment, and which Michael Taussig describes as a fundamental cognitive function that approaches the otherness encountered in the world through acts of sensuous assimilation. In replicating a person's or an object's physiognomy as embodied form, Taussig notes, one produces a copy that is not merely meant to convey a semblance, but is rather invested with the power of the original—an imitative procedure he dubs "sympathetic magic," borrowing the phrase from James Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Its power of magic derives from the assumption of physical contact that lends force to imitative behavior, and that Taussig ascribes to the "unstoppable merging of the object of perception with the body of the perceiver and not just with the mind's eye."[32] In other words, because perception always involves the incarnated body, the value of making concrete copies does not exhaust itself in their conceptual or representational content, but also resides in the physiological resonance with the object that is elicited by the process of imitation. Taussig is keen to emphasize the cognitive import that lies in engaging the experiential world through imitative acts that lift one out of oneself and into the otherness of the fabricated copy.[33] In other words, mimesis is for him valuable as the faculty to "yield into and become other."[34]

One can extrapolate that all inscription technologies, whether based on textual, visual, or aural media, are ultimately modalities of sympathetic magic according to Taussig's Benjaminian framework, as they involve making copies that mobilize the body at a physiological level. While this power of mobilization was overlooked by a Western philosophical discourse constrained by its conceptual neglect of the material role of media in communication, Taussig points to Benjamin's discussion of montage strategies in advertising as evidence of the forceful resurgence of this "primitive" understanding of mimesis within industrial modernity. At issue is the aphorism from *One-Way Street* (1928) in which Benjamin describes the visceral mimetic force of advertisement, its ability to touch its recipients and move them out of themselves in ways that potentially exceed the pull of the commodities it peddles.[35] This mimetic impact was premised for Benjamin on the deployment of montage strategies that bypassed argumentative discourse and contemplative modes of reception and instead hit their recipients with rapid-fire juxtapositions, which hinged on collapsing the conventional distance separating the represented objects as well as the distance between object and recipient. In Taussig's discussion of Benjamin's gloss, montage epitomizes the sympathetic magic of inscription by explicitly enlisting and thematizing the physiological dimension of the mimetic.[36]

Taussig's discussion of mimesis as sympathetic magic finds important resonances in Sally Stein's comparative analysis of the montage practices adopted by German and American commercial artists in the interwar period. Stein contrasts the open aversion American advertisers demonstrated to the more experimental forms of photomontage, especially in cases that visibly tampered with the human figure, with the practices of the German avant-garde, which involved conspicuously antinaturalistic compositions that were tolerant of violating the body's integrity. For Stein this difference is to be traced back to the risk-adverse attitude of American advertising agencies, which feared alienating audiences that may interpret the nonnaturalistic representation of the human body as an actual violation. While one can debate whether American advertisers rightly gauged or underestimated their audience's ability to deal with patently distorted representations of the body and the natural world, their anxiety evinces an at least implicit awareness of the mimetic "magic" of montage. That manipulating representations of the human figure could come across as a literal defilement underscores how producing "copies" that disarticulated and reassembled the elements of the real was potentially understood as a disconcerting rupture of intact experience. American commercial artists, Stein maintains, sought to defuse this sense of rupture by couching the disjunctive moment of montage within an overall naturalistic composition.[37]

In emphasizing the prevalence of an antinaturalistic montage aesthetics in Germany, Stein's findings have implications that go beyond its underlying rejection of an aesthetics of verisimilitude or illusionism. At stake is the demise of the understanding of mimesis as *imitatio* that the modern period inherited from the Renaissance, and that hinged on capturing the likeness of things by means of transfiguring representations that had the power to shed light on experience, yet whose character as copies endowed them with a structural bad conscience, sealing their subordinate status vis-à-vis a reality to which they were by constitution inferior.[38] By contrast, mimesis as duplication of forms erases the hierarchical relation between original and copy, its proliferating forms meddling directly with the orders of the real, collapsing distance and transgressing boundaries. Narrative in this context hinges on imitative behavior that affects perception by miming forms in a variety of media and genres rather than a paradigm for constructing stories that function as an *analogon* to experience.

This concept of mimesis is unsettling in different, and arguably more profound, ways than any notion of mimesis predicated on reproducing semblance as *schöner Schein*. In surveying the enthrallment with physiognomic boundary-crossing and the propensity for blurring media and modes of in-

scription in many montage works of this time, one obtains a strong sense of distortion and violation that forms the dark underbelly of the feeling of awe for which Roh celebrated the aesthetics of the New Objectivity. The mimetic impulse, as described by Taussig, may well make possible an encounter with the embodied world that yields a knowledge untainted by consciousness, yet "to get hold of something by means of its likeness," that is, to engage in acts of sensuous assimilation to otherness comports a threat of depersonalization or even the possibility of an organism's dispersion in space.[39] This danger is made especially urgent by the proliferation of mechanically reproduced images in the media. While objects and their "reproductions" may well occupy different functional positions, their categorical difference is never secured ontologically and is always at risk of collapsing.

Put in the conceptual terms of Helmuth Plessner's anthropology, assuming that the self is the by-product of an imitative interaction between body and environment also postulates a structural disjuncture between the self-awareness that is constitutive of selfhood and the body that enables this very awareness through its encounter with the world. In other words, the very interaction that allows for the self's constitution harbors the potential for its unraveling, understood as the self's decentering with respect to its sustaining body, which becomes one of countless objects and bodies littering experiential space.[40] This threat of dissipation is often thematized in the physiognomic explorations of montage. It involves becoming unable to discern where the body stops and the surrounding world begins, or being unable to tell what belongs with what in a world of endlessly overlapping forms and bodies. In this regard montage lends itself to interrogating the unstable and constructed bounds of personhood, not as a psychological phenomenon but as consigned to the fragile equilibrium between the perceiving body and the world with which it interacts.[41]

• The imitative performance that undergirds a montage aesthetics is at bottom a form of parody that emphasizes the material physiognomy of the mimed object. To once again take Höch's *Multi-Millionaire* as an example, parody here concerns the relation between the photographic inserts and the objects they reproduce evocatively, both as individual fragments (the men's half faces, the guns' segments, the metal tools, etc.) and in their physiognomic permutations as component parts of the assembled image (the gun segments as the unsettling substitute for the back of one of the men's heads). To assert that the gun fragments function as a parodic supplement to the man's head requires, however, a more capacious concept of parody than the

one suggested by traditional practices aimed at casting ridicule on an object or a person by means of distorting imitation. In this respect it is helpful to recall Linda Hutcheon's expanded understanding of the parodic as a "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity."[42] Emphasizing repetition instead of belittling ridicule enables Hutcheon to highlight the cultural labor performed by parody's mimicry, which lies in staging a dialectic of similarity and difference that subjects cultural and social codes to scrutiny. At bottom, this augmented notion of parody encompasses distancing practices bent on producing "copies" whose twist on the original engenders critical insight.

At a perceptual level, the interweaving of similarity and difference that ties the parodic object to its referent rests on the operations of analogy. Analogy, as defined by Barbara Stafford, revolves around "the proportion or similarity that exists between two or more apparently dissimilar things." In marking a partial overlap of singular objects that does not require generalizations or universal categories, analogy rests on a "vision of ordered relationships articulated as similarity-in-difference."[43] While acknowledging analogy's role in conceptual and cognitive processes, Stafford especially emphasizes its embodied nature, which for her is tied primarily to vision and its ability to glean and exploit resemblance. As she argues, analogy's foundation in the basic mechanisms of perception drives its ability to draw meaningful connections that may well be "seen," but are not immediately expressible in conceptual, discursive terms. In dubbing analogy "the art of connecting," Stafford insists that it be regarded as "a demonstrative or evidentiary practice" that does not entail observing and verbalizing relations of similarity found in experience so much as dynamically producing them in the event of perception.[44] This involves, in the arts as in other domains, replicating these relations in a "participatory performance" that is bound to produce artifacts that demonstrate analogical ties by enacting them.[45] It is significant, in this regard, that Stafford marshals various forms of montage art (collage, photomontage, and assemblage) that all dramatize the process of "compelling disparate things to converge," as illustration of the "inherent mimeticism" and active, processual nature of analogy.[46]

If Stafford's discussion of analogy and Hutcheon's examination of parody are both premised on an imitative interaction with the experiential world that feeds off a productive tension between similarity and difference, their distinctive emphases also result in different assessments of this interplay. Stafford emphasizes the connecting moment of analogy, specifically its ability to weave together discordant particulars in acts of discernment that dramatize the intuitive processes at the heart of thinking and cognition. Hutcheon, by con-

trast, stresses the critical insights engendered by the moment of disunity that characterizes parody. In other words, if Stafford valorizes analogy for its ability to glean similarity in difference, Hutcheon's parody inverts the terms of the relation by foregrounding the moment of difference in similarity. This does not mean that the two categories are at odds with each other, however, quite to the contrary. Parody is a specific deployment of analogy, a strategic mode of repetition that mobilizes the analogical ability to make connections in order to mine the insights produced by the moment of difference thematized by the very act of connecting. Underscoring the analogical operations of parody has several advantages. In the first place, it illuminates the physiognomic level at which parody operates, and that involves the dynamic interplay between perception and the forms of the experiential world. Second, it highlights the fact that parody, as a mode of imitative repetition, is about connecting as much as it is about separating; it produces contiguities at the same time as it distances. This dialectic of disjuncture and conjunction aptly captures the multiple codings of montage artifacts, indeed, the multivalence of its acts of transcontextualization and frequent flip-flopping between critique and affirmation. Finally, this movement is not to be understood as a predictable oscillation between stable entities. Emphasizing that parody is based on the dynamic nature of analogy as a perceptual process allows for describing the parodic imitation of montage as a spiraling interaction between sensory apparatus, technologies and media, and the modes of representation and communication they sustain at a given historical moment.

• Let me recapitulate, in closing, the main features of the narratives that are framed by the understanding of expression, mimesis, and parody I have sketched so far. To do so it will be helpful to draw on the diagnosis of a crisis of the novel that drove debates on narrative in the early decades of the twentieth century and contributed to setting the parameters for the scholarly discourse on the modernist novel in post–World War II Europe. In an essay from 1964 Hans Blumenberg posited that the novel's difficulties in the modern period stemmed from a structural disjunction whose description also provided an account of the modern condition—a claim that captures the main premise of much discussion about the novel in the first half of the twentieth century. For Blumenberg the novel is the modern aesthetic form that uniquely bears witness to the dynamism of a world whose infinite potentiality is realized in time. Under this experience of open-ended temporality, reality is no longer pictured as a fundamental quality of experience that one could make manifest through appropriate sensuous forms, but is rather

viewed as an internally consistent syntax of elements, a text that infinitely constitutes itself by following rules that immanently define its coherence. According to Blumenberg, this new understanding of reality is inscribed in the task that defines the novel as a genre, and that consists of creating worlds whose relational structure and inner consistency possess what Blumenberg calls *Wirklichkeitswert* (value or quality of reality). Yet the novel's material finitude, as determined by the fixity of print, is fundamentally at odds with the temporal dynamism that defines reality's relational web. One can conclude that the novel's difficulties stem from the demand that it live up to an impossible task, namely, that it provide a correlate to the dynamism of time through a form that is temporally fixed. Accordingly, modernist masterpieces like Robert Musil's *The Man without Qualities* (1930–32) dramatize a reality whose dynamism resists fixation through their unruly and inconclusive structure.[47]

Blumenberg's account of the novel's quandary may at first recall Hegel's verdict on the structural shortcomings of aesthetic forms, whose sensuous finitude constitutively falls short of the demand of presenting a nonsensuous Idea unfolding in time. Its attempt to link specific understandings of art to evolving notions of reality further evokes the philosophy of aesthetic forms developed by Georg Lukács in *The Theory of the Novel* (1914–15), which hinges on establishing a congruence between seminal stages in the self-understanding of consciousness and corresponding moments in the development of aesthetic forms. Yet Blumenberg departs from the metaphysical teleology of history endorsed by Hegel and Lukács in ways that provide an illuminating foil for discussing the mode of narrative ascribed to montage. If for Lukács the temporal open-endedness of the modern condition registered by the novel makes it impossible to construct a stable hermeneutic horizon that would lend itself to making sense of experience, for Blumenberg the question that haunts the novel concerns its failure to produce a correlate to the dynamic syntax of relations that constitutes the real. Significantly, Blumenberg traces this inability back to the anachronistic notion of mimesis that ties narrative to reality in a relation of mutual implication and legitimation. That is to say, for Blumenberg the novel's problem does not lie primarily in its inability to represent the open-ended time of modernity but rather in the demand that mimetic representation produce images that correspond to reality—in this case, that the novel's relational structure make reality's syntax of elements perspicuous. The criterion of *adaequatio* at the heart of this demand, Blumenberg notes, goes back to a notion of mimesis centered on presenting reality as momentarily self-evident truth, which grew out of the Platonic understanding of being as exemplary, static, and self-contained.

Defining mimesis as the production of enlightening congruence, whether at a semantic or formal level, turns the dynamism of time into an intractable problem given the novel's static form.[48]

Blumenberg's analysis helps to outline key aspects of narrative as it unfolds within the discursive matrix of montage. They include, in the first place, conceiving of both experience and narrative as relational structures. Narrative furthermore relates to experience in a mimetic mode. The mimetic mode enacted by montage is, however, not driven by the criterion of congruence Blumenberg deemed problematic. Instead it involves a form of mimicry that seeks to refashion the physiognomy of experience by producing artifacts and engendering events designed to manipulate perception. Mimesis in this framework no longer hinges on summoning images that correspond to reality at either a semantic or formal level, but rather involves a parodic repetition that produces forms endowed with the same status as the objects they imitate. By their sheer existence, the new objects reconfigure the relations of the real. Narrative thus defined is not an object or a practice that abstracts from experience in order to adequately represent its truth, but is rather implicated in the "making" of experience at a par with other practices. This understanding departs from a vertical model of narrative as a portal that grants access to reality's deep meaning and reconfigures it as one of many practices spread across a horizontal axis, one that involves stamping out experience by altering its relations through imitative behavior.

This horizontal understanding of mimesis helps illuminate the role that analogical ties play in the parodic practice of narrative. To be sure, the production of resemblances or correspondences is at the heart of imitative behavior. After all, repetition hinges on producing analogical overlaps, that is, it involves a calibrated interplay of similarity and difference that establishes relations of partial correspondence between two objects. In the mimetic paradigm described by Blumenberg, however, analogical correspondence does not simply stake out the terrain of imitative behavior; it also supplies the principal criterion for assessing the relation between narrative and reality. In this account the novel, as an artifact, is set apart from reality, a cognitive or experiential construct, and the two stand in an uneasy relation to each other due to faulty correspondence. Proper correspondence would produce the cognitive surplus that could make that relation meaningful, that is, that would allow for elucidating reality's relational web through narrative. In montage narrative, by contrast, analogical overlaps establish connections that are understood as spatiotemporal ties in an embodied world whose physiognomy they seek to alter. They are not necessarily a means for extracting meaning through enlightening resemblance; put differently, the produc-

tion of meaning—as a cognitive or ideological content—is not a primary criterion for engendering analogical practice. This is not to say that meaning has no place in this understanding of narrative. Rather meaning becomes one factor among others, an important one, to be sure, but not the crucial, defining factor, as is the case for hermeneutically driven accounts. De-emphasizing the role that cognitive sense-making plays in narrative allows for foregrounding aspects that normally get short shrift, such as the interplay between the sensory apparatus and specific technologies and the import of a medium's specific material qualities in the event of communication.

It is significant, in this respect, that Blumenberg's characterization of reality as a dynamic relational network is patterned on a notion of linguistic structure as only marginally inflected, if at all, by the material qualities of the medium in which it is instantiated. The linguistic and textual biases of his account are inscribed in the essay's presumption that the novel constitutes the foremost narrative form of the modern period—a bias that reflects an understanding of narrative dominant up to structuralism. This assumption underwrites Blumenberg's discussion of mimesis as the requirement that there be congruence between the novel, a linguistic artifact, and a reality conceived as a dynamic syntax of elements, that is, as a signifying unit whose successful instantiation rests on specific rules whose enactment will guarantee its inner consistency.[49] In pointing to this limitation, my aim is not to critique Blumenberg's account from the perspective of hindsight but rather to use its conceptual constraints as a foil for outlining the reconceptualization of narrative at play in montage practices. At stake is the assumption that the print media that propelled the novel in modernity successfully efface their materiality in encoding and transmitting content. This assumption goes hand in hand with an understanding of the book as a tool for conveying an immaterial content that is minimally, if at all, affected by the medium's physical qualities. The discourse and practice of montage corrects the literary and linguistic bias of this influential concept of narrative. In particular, the new awareness about the perceptual potential of technologies like film and photography redirects attention to a medium's physical qualities, including those of print. This involves a concept of materiality that, in the words of Katherine Hayles, does not simply map onto the physical qualities of objects and media but rather acknowledges their boundedness with signifying processes. As Hayles explains,

> It is impossible to specify precisely what a book—or any other text—is as a physical object, for there are an infinite number of ways its physical characteristics can be described. Speaking of an electronic text, for

> example, we could focus on the polymers used to make the plastic case or the palladium used in the power cord. . . . What matters for understanding literature, however, is how the text creates the possibilities for meaning by mobilizing certain aspects of its physicality. These will necessarily be a small subset of all possible characteristics.[50]

By noting that only a small set of physical qualities is relevant in describing how texts and artifacts produce signifying effects under specific circumstances, Hayles is able to conclude that "the materiality of an embodied text" is not synonymous with the sum total of its physical properties, but is rather "the interaction of its physical characteristics with its signifying strategies," which include "the social, cultural, and technological processes that brought it into being."[51] The montage practices under examination here are often precisely about exploring the border between the physical and the material through multiple forms of mimicry, indeed, about pushing the physical until it tips over into the material, that is, until it produces semantic and rhetorical effects. They thus dramatize materiality as "an emergent property," to use another of Hayles's formulations, a construction that is processual and constantly reshaped in the manipulative interplay of perception, technology, modes of signification, and relations of power.[52]

This tipping of the physical into the material is at the heart of Walter Benjamin's understanding of storytelling and related interest in the effects of filmic montage, which form the focus of the next two chapters. In his essay on *The Storyteller* (1936) Benjamin was among the first to historicize the relation between narrative practice and material media and forms of communication by reconstructing, in a speculative vein, the conditions of possibility of storytelling in oral cultures, which for him grounded in mnemonic processes supported by routines of the body. In deemphasizing the involvement of consciousness, meaning, and interpretation for narrative practice Benjamin called attention to the limiting conceptual framework that dominated current debates on a crisis of narrative, which rested on the uninspected association of narrative with the novel as a print medium. Unlike many contemporaries, Benjamin neither celebrated nor bemoaned the demise of the printed novel following the rise of new media and instead sought to describe the realignment of narrative practices that was bolstered by the rapidly shifting media-scape of his day. This endeavor enabled him, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (1935–39), to reconceptualize mimesis as form of mimicry that finds its most advanced technological enactment in filmic montage.

Both "The Storyteller" and the artwork essays were drafted in the mid-

1930s, at a time when much of Weimar-era montage art had been proscribed by the Nazis. Yet the material and the concerns mined in the essays relate directly to Benjamin's engagement with the work of artists associated with Dada, Constructivism, and surrealism during the Weimar years. They thus offer an illuminating reflection on the peculiar mimetic force and technological adaptability of the understanding of narrative associated with montage in the 1920s.

2 • The Narrative Restitution of Experience

Walter Benjamin's Storytelling

Montage holds a distinctive place in Benjamin's discourse. The term comes up with remarkable insistence in his writings, which probe the rich meanings the concept assumed in contemporary discourses bent on outlining the realignment of literature, drama, and the visual arts following the rise of new media and mass-cultural forms. In surveying the term's semantic range and occasional vagueness, one can easily receive the impression that it functions like a useful conceptual prop in Benjamin's texts, its role subordinated to what invariably appear to be more pressing concerns—the need for an alternative thinking on history in the face of modernity's loss of experience, the rise of new epic forms in drama and prose, the poetics of allegory and citation, and the function of film and photography in redefining the status of art and the mechanisms of aesthetic experience. In general, Benjamin saw montage as an aesthetic response to the alienation of modern labor and the disjointedness of urban life. If one adds to this that for him the anomie of modern experience also found expression in the death of the communal art of storytelling, one could safely conclude that a montage aesthetics was in his eyes incompatible with true narrative practice.

When read carefully, however, the textual patches devoted to montage unfold a more complex picture. For Benjamin the aesthetics of montage was both the signature of modern alienation and a blueprint for inquiring into the possibility of a new storytelling lodged at the intersection of new technologies and perceptual patterns. Within this frame narrative, broadly conceived, was key to restoring the substantive mode of experience that modernity lacked and that was predicated on modalities of communicability and reciprocity indispensable for creating substantive collective bonds. This positive reading of montage hinges on juxtaposing arguments from Benjamin's essay "Der Erzähler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows" ("The Sto-

ryteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," 1936) and his treatise "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" ("The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," 1935–39). In discussing the two texts in tandem, I also draw on a larger complex of longer and shorter texts and annotations dating between 1929 and 1935 that contribute to highlighting the thematic ties between montage and narrative. My thesis is that the artwork essay adapts key traits of the desirable narrative practice described in "The Storyteller" to outline a mode of narrative that cannily turns to its advantage the noxious blend of massified experience and altered forms of perception produced by urban life, as reinforced by new technologies like film and undergirded by the alienated forms of labor of industrial-capitalist modernity. Montage, I argue, is the key conceptual term in this work of adaptation.

By focusing primarily on "The Storyteller," this chapter outlines the features of desirable narrative that provide a frame for the analysis of the artwork essay in chapter 2. As a reading of this broad textual constellation will make clear, Benjamin's discussion of montage is primarily inspired by film as a technology of mechanical reproduction that accelerates and radicalizes the transformation in the status of art and the nature of (aesthetic) experience ushered by photography. At the same time, his discourse on filmic montage revives a pre-Platonic understanding of mimesis whose import goes well beyond a discussion of film poetics, laying the foundations for a broader reconceptualization of narrative as a form of imitative behavior predicated on a mimicry of forms that manipulates perception to engender new forms. This understanding of narrative mimesis is no longer concerned with evaluating stories based on verisimilitude as a criterion of resemblance or correspondence, but rather depends on exploiting the interaction between the human sensory apparatus and new technologies of mechanical reproduction.

• Benjamin's persistent concern with the waning of storytelling as a mode of narrative whose defining features are especially pronounced in oral cultures relates to his project of accounting for the impoverished quality of experience in secularized, industrial-capitalist modernity. In general terms, storytelling represents for Benjamin a correlate to authentic experience, understood as a righteous and fulfilled mode of being in the world that is marked by an ethos of unconditional accountability to the whole of creation. This attitude dislodges the human from its presumed position at the center of the creaturely world and reconceives it as enmeshed in a web of reciprocal relations that call for fundamental, undiscriminating responsibility.[1] Story-

telling is key to forging these relations, understood synchronically as the ties that ground reciprocal community and diachronically as the operations of tradition that weave the present in the vast fabric of other presents that make up past experience. This work of transmission does not conceive of the past as a neat sequence of bygone events but rather folds it into the present in the form of a conjectural futurity, that is, by querying the significance for the present moment of the possible futures any past moment could have had. As a result, the continuity of tradition undergirded by storytelling is not to be understood as a linear unfolding of time, let alone a causal development, but rather as a proximity established among past moments in relation to a querying present. These relations of contiguity between past and present (both actual and potential) ground a substantive experience of the contemporary moment, what Benjamin called *Erfahrung*. Their collapse, which finds its historical index in the demise of storytelling and concomitant rise of the novel, marks the atrophic experience of modernity as comprised of discrete, unrelatable *Erlebnisse*—a condition Benjamin explored at length in his *Arcades* project.[2]

"The Storyteller" contributes to the contentious debates concerning a crisis of the novel that unfolded in German-language literary journals between the 1910s and 1930s while twisting the terms of the discussion in significant ways. Rather than start from the perceived shortcomings of the novel as a genre, the essay raises the larger question of the narrative practice in which the novel is grounded, which it accounts for by pointing to the demise of storytelling, a dying art exemplified by the work of Russian novelist Nikolai Leskov. The focus on storytelling allows for presenting narrative as an embodied practice deeply shaped by material conditions and embedded within a host of entwined processes that require a long-range historical perspective—the shift from oral to literary cultures, the development of media such as the book and the newspaper, the ensuing rise of new modes of communication informed by the dominance of presumably objective information, the existential isolation of the individual confronted with the anonymity of mass society and the alienated forms of labor of industrial modernity. In tracing the historical developments that led to the rise of the novel and the atrophy of storytelling, the text develops a typology of these narrative forms that portrays them as antithetical. Storytelling, which has its grounding in oral cultures, is embedded in collective practice. It has a practical utility, that is, aims at conveying moral guidance or a specific teaching.[3] This is a type of wisdom that does not depend on abstractly verifiable truths or explanations, but rather grows out of an exemplary knowledge of life rooted in the shared experience of a community (*SW* 3:147–48 and 156–57; *GS* 2.2:443–45 and

457–58). Hence, the narratives of storytelling are open-ended and continuously unfolded by those who engage in the practice. They reinforce the bonds of community and produce a wisdom that is fruitfully bequeathed to future generations, constituting the positive force of tradition (*SW* 3:153–54; *GS* 2.2:453–54). The novel, by contrast, reflects the loneliness of the modern individual who is confronted with an experience deprived of meaningful collective bonds. Life as narrated in novels has lost its exemplarity; it has become incommensurable and thus unshareable (*SW* 3:146–47; *GS* 2.2:442–43). Unable to convey the sort of practical wisdom that true collective experience produces, the novel caters to the individual's existential forsakenness by staging an abstract quest for life's meaning, for which it disingenuously substitutes the artificial sense of closure conjured by the finality of the protagonist's life (*SW* 3:154–56; *GS* 2.2:454–57).

As critics have noted, the essay's emphasis on storytelling as a practice embeds it within a bundle of historical processes that are framed by changing material conditions and move at different speeds. This undermines any simple causal scheme that would hold the novel responsible for the demise of storytelling and instead underlines the historical contingencies that led to its becoming the dominant narrative form in modernity. The avoidance of reductive causal explanations also makes it possible to identify and analyze modern examples of storytelling in the works of Leskov, Hebel, Gotthelf, Robert Walser, and especially Döblin and Kafka, to whom Benjamin dedicated important essays. In other words, the issue for Benjamin is not the utter extinction of storytelling in modernity, but rather its loss of relevance as a collective practice capable of producing substantive experience. This loss is reflected in the relation that epic forms entertain to modern conceptions of history and historiographic methods. As expounded in sections XI and XII of "The Storyteller," the stories relayed through storytelling assume an understanding of history as "natural history" (*Naturgeschichte*) (*SW* 3:151; *GS* 2.2:450). This means that they must be regarded as exemplary cases punctuating the course of world events (*SW* 3:152; *GS* 2.2:451) rather than as instances building up to a progressive historical teleology. Hence their exemplarity calls for *Auslegung*, that is, for their discursive embedding in a providential or cosmic scheme rather than for the explanations of a rationalist historiography bent on retrospectively construing chains of events governed by criteria of causality and progressive unfolding. By the same token, the historiographic form that serves as the proper correlate of storytelling is the chronicle, an account whose embeddedness in a cosmic or providential history assumes a fundamental commonality and shareability of experience. The exemplary force of both storytelling and the chronicle stands in sharp

contrast to the strained explanatory framework of modern historiography, with its insistence on empirical verifiability and factual accurateness (*SW* 3:152–53; *GS* 2.2:451–52). The artificially constructed telos of modern historiography finds a formal analogon in the novel's willful emphasis on the finality of its protagonist's fate (*SW* 3:156; *GS* 2.2:456–57).

Conceiving of storytelling and the novel as epic forms that index different relations between narrative and history carries far-reaching implications. For one, it foregrounds the different forms of remembrance and memorialization on which each relies—at stake is the opposition between the memory (*Erinnerung*) of storytelling, which entails the capacious recording of inherently meaningful occurrences, as opposed to the remembrance (*Eingedenken*) of the novel, whose immortalization of individual characters and events exposes their ultimate insignificance by its very attempt at transcending it through aesthetic form (*SW* 3:153–54; *GS* 2.2:453–54). Just as important, this approach fruitfully undercuts any account that would treat the atrophy of storytelling and concomitant loss of tradition as the endpoint of a trajectory that leads away from a primordial state of grace. As Beatrice Hanssen has argued, the demise of storytelling does not entail a process of decay understood as the loss of origin or of an immediate access to nature, but rather a transformation of historical awareness driven by changing experiential modes.[4]

Benjamin's emphasis on the collective and exemplary quality of storytelling resonates with key concerns voiced in contemporary debates dealing with the beleaguered status of the novel and the possibility of grounding narrative in revived epic forms. Yet his essay on Leskov reprises these issues while eschewing their underlying anxieties about a weakening of the mimetic paradigm that had authorized narrative forms for centuries. In order to appreciate the distinctiveness of Benjamin's approach, as well as its implications for a montage aesthetics, it will be helpful to review the main issues of these debates by briefly examining the positions taken by Alfred Döblin in his influential lecture on the epic, "Der Bau des epischen Werkes" ("The Construction of the Epic Work"), which he presented in Berlin in 1928. Döblin's reflections form an illuminating counterpoint to Benjamin's in many respects. For one, he was a dedicated and vocal participant in the debates on a renewal of narrative that raged in literary journals during the 1910s and 1920s. In addition, his *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was hailed by critics, including Benjamin, as a model for a new kind of epic made possible at a formal level by the montage principle. Benjamin was not only familiar with Döblin's lecture on the epic, but seemed directly inspired by his appeal for a new epos rooted in exemplarity and collective relevance.[5] At first sight his understanding of storytelling appears to align neatly with Döblin's proposal for a new epos

grounded in collective truth and opposed to the novel's centeredness on abstract knowledge. The apparent overlap with Döblin's text helps cast into sharp relief the substantially different framework that defines desirable narrative in "The Storyteller."

Döblin's remarks on narrative over a period of two decades read as a catalog of the most pressing concerns of his day. At stake was the perceived obsolescence of influential genres such as the bildungsroman and, more generally, of a realist paradigm predicated on the psychological excavation of the inner life of characters; the need for more flexible and capacious narrative forms that would allow for presenting complex social processes and the new collective quality of metropolitan life; the challenge literary genres faced as a result of the turn to narrative of mass media like film, as well as the seeming retreat of the book as a medium hinging on outdated modes of individual production and reception; the overcoming of the illusionistic paradigm of bourgeois literature accomplished both in the activist turn to reportage of the radical Left as well as in the overtaking of novelistic discourse by philosophical and essayistic digression in the prose of high modernism.[6] Döblin's most ambitious response to this discourse of crisis, as outlined in his "Bau des epischen Werkes," hinged on challenging the traditional distinction between the epic and the novel that Lukács still invoked in his influential *Theory of the Novel*.[7] Instead of pitting the epic, as a mode whose orientation toward the past endows it with desirable closure and finality, against the novel, as a narrative that struggles with the insufferably open temporality of the present, Döblin pleaded for seeing in the epic the narrative form suited for grasping the present's unfinished contemporaneity as a salient moment that inscribes essential features of the human condition. As outlined in the essay's concluding statement:

> What distinguishes the epic work? The author's ability to get close to reality and to pierce it to reach the simple, great, elementary situations and figures of the human condition. In addition, in order to create the living language artwork, the author's incisive ability to construct a fable. And third, the whole pours itself into the stream of living language, which the author follows.[8]

Unlike the novelist, who is beholden to the superficial appearance of things, the epic author sets up an architectonic structure that reaches through to reality's core, tapping collective values and knowledge and drawing on the dynamic power of language. This neutralizes the threat of subjectivism that

haunts the novel and endows narrative with exemplary force.[9] The epic thus configures itself as an imaginative engagement with the present that has no use for the constraints of a normative aesthetics and especially rejects the latter's relegation of art to the illusionary domain of beautiful semblance, which constituted the hothouse in which the modern novel thrived. Döblin's reconceptualization of the epic thus reflects his concern with endowing narrative with a type of cognitive insight that is at a par with the knowledge produced by other human practices, thus rescuing it from its second-rate status as the fanciful concoction of a creative individual. At the same time, it is significant that his proposal for grounding narrative in a new epic practice did not challenge the mimetic paradigm that had framed the discourse on the epic since Aristotle. At stake is an understanding of narrative as a means of representation that depends on the human ability to discern a meaningful tie between an aesthetic artifact and experience. This is at bottom an analogical relationship; it hinges on the ability to perceive some kind of similarity or partial correspondence between a story and experience. Döblin's emphasis on the writer's skill in constructing a fable, his extended discussion of narrative conception and production, and general concern with spelling out the seemingly incongruous relationship between narrative and reality in his lecture belies his desire to hold on to a traditional understanding of mimesis as correspondence while freeing narrative from its confinement to the spheres of illusionism and beautiful semblance.

The contemporary debates on a crisis of narrative explicitly or implicitly revolved around the difficulties of just this understanding of mimesis. Its implications are exemplarily summarized in a much-quoted passage from Robert Musil's *The Man without Qualities* (1930–32), which unfolds trenchant poetological reflections on the novel by ascribing them to its antihero, Ulrich:

> And in one of those apparently random and abstract thoughts . . . it struck him that . . . the basic law of this life, the law one longs for, is nothing other than that of narrative order that enables one to say: "First this happened and then that happened . . ." . . . stringing all that has occurred in space and time on a single thread, which calms us; that celebrated "thread of the story," which is, it seems, the thread of life itself. . . . This is the trick the novel artificially turns to account: Whether the wanderer is riding on the highway in pouring rain or crunching through snow and ice at ten below zero, the reader feels a cozy glow, and this would be hard to understand if this eternally dependable narrative device, which even nursemaids can rely on to keep

> their little charges quiet, this tried-and-true "foreshortening of the mind's perspective" were not already part and parcel of life itself. Most people relate to themselves as storytellers.[10]

In Ulrich's ruminations narrative configures itself as a fundamental skill that enables individuals to abstract and select relevant elements from experience so as to tie them together into stories that give life direction and purpose. The passage thus hints at the crucial cognitive labor performed by narrative. Far from being confined to the realms of literature and the arts, narrative emerges as a basic human practice that allows for bestowing order onto the indifferent anarchy of experience and thus enables individuals to purposefully relate to themselves and others. The passage also implies that narrative's distinctive cognitive import lies in the analogical tie, that is, in the relation of partial similarity, that individuals perceive between stories and experience, as this relation is what permits to project the order of a story onto experience. It follows that the inability to discern an analogy between narratives and reality does not merely entail the obsolescence of an aesthetic paradigm based on resemblance but rather throws the whole of experience into disarray, making it incommensurable and incommunicable.[11] It is telling that Ulrich wraps up his reflections by concluding "that he had lost this elementary, narrative mode of thought."[12] As he comes to realize, his newly discovered inability to project the telos of narrative onto lived experience fuels the condition of existential paralysis that has befallen him and that the novel investigates.

Musil's diagnosis of narrative crisis seems to resonate directly with Benjamin's interlocking concerns with the waning of experience and the atrophy of storytelling. This makes Benjamin's own silence on the fate of mimesis in the demise of storytelling in the Leskov essay appear all the more conspicuous. This is not to say that Benjamin was unconcerned with mimesis, witness his sustained interest in a nonsensuous mimetic power that he viewed as the relic of an expansive human ability to glean similarities and correspondences in all of creation. In important texts that link his early theological-messianic understanding of language with his later historical materialist concerns, Benjamin singled out mimicry as perhaps the most important faculty that enables humans to interact with their environment. This faculty was not simply about recognizing sensuous correspondences existing in nature, but rather drove humans to produce similarities as part of a valuable compulsion "to become similar and to behave mimetically" (*SW* 2:720).[13] Benjamin speculated about the ontogenetic and philogenetic aspects of this mimetic faculty, which he believed had considerably atrophied in modernity, becoming con-

fined to seemingly unconnected practices ranging from gambling to astrology and graphology. It was, however, still consistently displayed in the play of children who imaginatively interact with their environment by impersonating any aspect of it, including inanimate objects. Such playful mimicry, Benjamin believed, was capable of enlivening the ostensive inertness of things, unlocking the traces of bygone experience inscribed in material objects and enabling the touching of past and present in a reciprocal relation that destabilizes the dominance of linear time.[14]

Benjamin's discussion of a mimetic faculty unfolds in a conceptual register that is very different from the one mobilized by Musil's "foreshortening of the mind's perspective." If for Benjamin mimesis is primarily about physiognomics, that is, about the miming of sensuous forms, Musil's passage rather casts the analogy between narrative and experience in terms that recall the semantic displacement that for Paul Ricoeur is at the heart of all narrative. At issue is the "synthesis of the heterogeneous" performed by narrative, its ability to engender meaningful experience by creating "a new congruence in the organization of the events."[15] This congruence or order of experience—that which humanizes time and provides an arena for meaningful agency—is ultimately metaphorical according to Ricoeur; that is, it constitutes a semantic surplus produced at the level of discourse. The inability to engage in this imaginative semantic mode—to produce analogies that order experience—thus deprives humans of a fundamental tool for engendering purposeful conduct. Benjamin was not oblivious to this understanding of narrative mimesis, but did not believe that its alleged crisis had anything to do with the demise of storytelling. To understand the full implications of his position it will be helpful to review his discussion of the distinctive mimetic impulse that in his eyes shaped the writings of Franz Kafka.

In a radio talk celebrating the posthumous publication of Kafka's collection of stories, *Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer* (*The Great Wall of China*, 1931), broadcast by the Frankfurter Rundfunk in 1931, Benjamin praised the narratives for their vivid presentation of the minutiae of an unfathomable experience. Specifically, he identified Kafka's gift for storytelling in his ability to offer painstakingly construed, hyperreal analogies to the world we know. The hyperreality of these "precisely registered oddities" (*SW* 2:496) grounded in the manifest tension between the similar and the dissimilar that constituted them as analogies, endowing them with disjointive force. This in turn defamiliarized the familiar order of things, summoning an altogether different order without ever spelling it out. In hinting at the twisted analogical dynamics in Kafka's stories Benjamin was keen to distinguish the precision and wealth of detail of his storytelling (*Erzählen*) from the mimetic aspira-

tions of the novel, which he saw as bent on exploiting the similarity between narrative and experience in order to claim for itself a measure of self-sufficiency and closure:

> Hence, his [Kafka's] love of detail has a quite different meaning from that of an episode in a novel. Novels are sufficient onto themselves. Kafka's books are never that; they are stories pregnant with a moral to which they never give birth. This is why Kafka learned . . . not from the great novelists but from much more modest writers, from mere storytellers. (*SW* 2:496)[16]

The mimetic work of storytelling distinguishes itself from that of the novel by its allusion to a moral teaching that opens the narrative up to lived experience and prevents it from folding onto itself.[17] In Kafka's stories this moral teaching is cognitively unavailable, yet the deictic gesture of his narrative—its built-in nod toward a practical dimension that points to extratextual experience—is enough to land the narratives under the category of storytelling. The novel, by contrast, deploys the analogical tie to reality to construe a putatively self-relying fictional world that is surreptitiously buttressed by its formal closure.

It is significant that the distinction between the novel's aspiration to closure and the open-endedness of storytelling also drives Benjamin's 1930 review of Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, which anticipates key arguments of "The Storyteller." Here the contemporary narrative crisis is linked to the novel's self-reflexive turn, as illustrated by the "writerly novels" (*Schreibromane*) of French novelist André Gide (but also, one may add, by the kind of poetological reflection unfolding in the passage from *The Man without Qualities* cited above). As Benjamin maintains, the formal self-reflexivity of the contemporary novel is an outcome of its ingrained imperative to close itself off from a nonnarrative outside: "In short, this *roman pur* is actually pure interiority; it acknowledges no exterior, and is therefore the extreme opposite of the purely epic approach—which is narration" (*SW* 2:300).[18]

If the contemporary novel suffered from a self-inflicted form of navel-gazing, then the solution to its crisis, Benjamin believed, lay in shattering the genre's formal closure, a path exemplarily pursued by Döblin through the montage procedure:

> 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. The film at its best moments made as if to accustom us to montage. 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. (*SW* 2:301)[19]

Here Benjamin praises the incorporation of unsublimated linguistic material in Döblin's narrative as a strategy for undermining the compulsion to closure that buttressed the novel's form. As the passage suggests, in their insistence on documentary truth the linguistic inserts operate in a quintessentially indexical mode. This is to say, they point directly to themselves and indirectly to the extratextual contexts from which they were culled, which they document while renouncing further signification. In other words, these linguistic elements only stand for themselves, thus eschewing the analogical work that is at the heart of mimetic representation; their indexical force is at bottom antimimetic. Their authority does not lie in the cognitive insight they may carry when deployed analogically, but rather in its very obverse, that is, the sheer force of obstinate indexicality. In this way the montage procedure undermines the mimetic play that authorizes the novel's claim to formal self-sufficiency, opening narrative up to the obstinate humbleness of the quotidian and granting it epic force.

It is not surprising that Benjamin credited Dadaism with harnessing the disruptive force of montage. The Dadaists' uncompromising rejection of redemptive notions of art, beauty, and aesthetic experience entailed the radical valorization of even the most abject aspects of everyday life, a stance that found its correlate in the openness of the montage procedure to any material and compositional strategy. This resonated deeply with Benjamin's own belief in the necessity to heroically embrace an experientially destitute modern life.[20] The passage also echoes the radicalized discourse of those Dadaists who hailed montage for its presumed ability to short-circuit the process that turns the recalcitrant elements of experience into fungible signs. As Wieland Herzfelde proclaimed in his introduction to the catalog of the First International Dada Fair (1920), montage offered Dadaism a tool for bypassing the mediation of representation and present objects in their semiotically mute materiality.[21] This was part of an all-out war on an academic artistic practice that only approached the quotidian through a disavowing gesture of trans-

figuration. If Benjamin's characterization of montage in this passage may well echo the naive realism entailed in this agenda, it should be pointed out that he did not share the repudiation of mimesis that implicitly drove Herzfelde's text. Benjamin had no problem with the analogical, at times strongly allegorical, thrust of Biberkopf's story, its rootedness in Berlin's underworld and simultaneous "bourgeois" theme of bartering with misery. For Benjamin, the incorporation of indexical material into Döblin's narrative was not meant to undercut the analogical work of mimesis, but rather served to shatter the novel's formal closure and lend the narrative epic open-endedness. Hence, the only criticism Benjamin uttered in what is otherwise a glowing review of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* targeted its contrived ending, which portrays how a wised-up Biberkopf finds a measure of contentment in his newly gained ability to accept his station in life. The problem with this ending was not that it unabashedly drew on the normalizing impulse of the bildungsroman, but rather that the manufactured roundedness of Biberkopf's fate undid the epic open-endedness of the narrative, robbing it of its exemplary force and imposing on it the artificial closure of the novel (*SW* 2:303–4; *GS* 3:234–36).

Benjamin's discussion of Kafka's and Döblin's work suggests that for him the present crisis of narrative did not hinge on the atrophy of the analogical framework that undergirded the conventional notion of mimesis—either as a result of a crisis of language and available epistemological paradigms or of the radical attacks of the avant-garde, as often adduced in accounts of modernism. Rather, Benjamin pointed the finger to the novel's imperative of formal closure, which hindered the orientation toward experience that formed an essential prerequisite of storytelling.[22] The question is how this orientation toward an outside is to be understood if not in terms of an analogical relation between narrative and experience. In other words, what grounds the cognitive and moral labor of storytelling if not the work of mimesis thus conceived? It is in pursuit of this question that I now turn to analyzing the features of desirable narrative practice, or *Erzählen*, as outlined in "The Storyteller."

• It is at first noteworthy that the essay refrains from discussing storytelling primarily in terms of the mediating function of representation. This is already apparent in the opening of section II, which provides a basic characterization of storytelling: "Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn" (*SW* 3:144).[23] Desirable experience is thematized here as a source from which the storyteller draws, not an object to be depicted. As the text further elaborates in juxtaposing the novelist's isolation to the storyteller's collective embedded-

ness, "The storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale" (*SW* 3:146).[24] Storytelling is thus portrayed as a processual practice that is constitutive of the experience of both the storyteller and his listeners, and not just a medium for communicating a content that is independent of it. Whereas the novelist relies on content that is grounded in the putative self-sufficiency of abstract information, the storyteller's ability to mold stories from the clay of experience concretely shapes both his and his listeners' life:

> The storytelling that thrives for a long time in the milieu of work . . . does not aim to convey the pure "in itself" or gist of a thing, like information or a report. It submerges the thing into the life of a storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus, traces of the storyteller cling to a story the way the handprints of the potter cling to a clay vessel. (*SW* 3:149)[25]

Storytelling is woven so deeply into the fabric of experience that it bears the storyteller's physical imprint just as a clay vessel carries the traces of the hand that molded it. The image of the potter molding a vase is, however, not intended to evoke the centuries-old aesthetic discourse of art-making as an individual's skillful negotiation of both the raw material of a given art form and the elements of experience. The essay portrays the storyteller as the facilitator of an open-ended collective practice rather than the lone maker of aesthetic artifacts. The collective dimension of this process is intimately bound up with the practical type of knowledge storytelling conveys:

> [The real story] contains, openly or covertly, something useful. In one case, the usefulness may lie in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers. But if today "having counsel" is beginning to have an old-fashioned ring, this is because the communicability of experience is decreasing. In consequence, we have no counsel either for ourselves or for others. After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is in the process of unfolding. To seek this counsel, one would first have to be able to tell the story. . . . Counsel woven into the fabric of real life [*gelebten Lebens*] is wisdom. The art of storytelling is nearing its end because the epic side of truth—wisdom—is dying out. (*SW* 3:145–46)[26]

This passage unfolds the essay's central theme of a relation between the decreasing communicability of experience and the fading of storytelling. As the argument goes, storytelling is on the retreat because experience can no longer be communicated the way it used to. This begs the question of what, exactly, is meant by the *Mitteilbarkeit* the text presents as a precondition of both authentic experience and storytelling. At stake is not the kind of exchange of information that would be implied by the ability to understand and properly answer a question. What is rather at issue is the sharing of "counsel" (*Rat*), a practical knowledge that can take the form of a moral teaching or a piece of advice. Sharing these practical truths, what Benjamin calls "wisdom," presupposes a listener who is not a mere recipient of information, but rather an integral part of the unfolding story recounted by the storyteller. In other words, communicability is not about the transfer of information from an individual with superior knowledge to one with inferior knowledge, but rather entails a symbiotic relation between a storyteller and a listener.The storyteller can only offer counsel to a listener who is already part of the process and even able to continue unfolding it himself. For storytelling's wisdom to emerge, then, the storyteller needs the listener as much as the listener needs the storyteller. Their positions are equal and in principle reversable, which accounts for both the anonymous character and the collective quality of storytelling.

Section XVI further elaborates on the collective utility of storytelling by focusing on what is assumed to be its most basic narrative form, namely, the fairy tale. As Benjamin maintains, the narrator of fairy tales enjoins the experiential wisdom of the community in order to challenge myth, that is, the blind acceptance of the forces that dominate individual and collective existence under the guise of immutable fate. Hence, storytelling is a key practice that allows humans to act deliberately and freely in defiance of the forces that oppress them. It does not simply relay experience, but constitutes it in fundamental ways by enabling an emancipatory mode of collective agency that is at the heart of the positive understanding of tradition the text subscribes to. One must note in this regard that the emancipatory *Märchengeist* of storytelling does not entail claiming unrestricted mastery over nature, but rather enables humans to recognize their embeddedness in the whole of creation, engendering the stance of radical openness to the creaturely world that imbues Leskov's stories. At stake is the unconditional attentiveness to an alterity that "surpass[es] the confines of the merely human," as Beatrice Hanssen has maintained. The ethos engendered by this stance is "sentient and prereflexive," that is, ultimately mystical in its irreducibility to conceptual reflec-

tion.[27] This is to say that righteousness is not something one knows or understands. Rather, the righteous individual is given to encounter his own righteousness in the symbiotic practice that ties him as storyteller to a listener, or, as formulated in the apodictic statement that closes the essay: "The storyteller is the figure in which the righteous man encounters himself" (*SW* 3:161).[28] It is in this symbiotic relation that ethics is, as it were, performed.

The assumption of a symbiotic relation between storyteller and listener further raises the question of the specific circumstances that enable the *Mitteilbarkeit* at the heart of storytelling. This question is key to accounting for the distinctive openness to experience that sets storytelling off from the novel's mimetic self-sufficiency and makes it a more desirable narrative practice. A good point of entry is the baffling, almost literal-minded insistence on the materiality of storytelling throughout the text. This is defined at first as a mode of communication that hinges on bridging a distance defined in either temporal or spatial terms:

> "When someone makes a jouney, he has a story to tell," goes the German saying, and people imagine the storyteller as someone who has come from afar. But they enjoy no less listening to the man who has stayed at home, making an honest living, and who knows the local tales and traditions. . . . If peasants and seamen were past masters of storytelling, the artisan class was its university. There the lore of faraway places, such as a much-traveled man brings home, was combined with the lore of the past, such as is manifested most clearly to the native inhabitants of a place. (*SW* 3:144)[29]

In this stylized account of a bygone age, the artisan emerges as the unsurpassed master of storytelling for his ability to combine the peasant's skill in narrating tales from the past with the seaman's gift for relating the lore of distant places. One may at first be tempted to interpret the trope of a distance to be bridged as belonging to the staple imagery of hermeneutics. The *Ferne* traveled by the storyteller would then be a metaphor for the overcoming of alterity in the act of understanding that is a precondition of a meaningful encounter between self and other. It is, however, significant that the subsequent section, which further unfolds this theme in relation to Leskov's storytelling, reprises the image of distance in pointedly literal terms, namely, as the traversing of space that establishes a physical proximity. "Leskov was at home in distant places as well as in distant time" (*SW* 3:145),[30] and this is to be understood in a concrete rather than metaphorical sense. Leskov's gift for

storytelling, the text suggests, was nourished both by the experiences he gathered traveling for work throughout Russia and by his intimate relation to the Orthodox Church as the repository of Russia's past.

This emphasis on the direct contact with sources that informs Leskov's firsthand knowledge of experience recalls the physical contiguity of storyteller and listener in the scene of oral communication. Benjamin's concern with relating salient aspects of storytelling to the material conditions framing the practice in oral cultures has rightly been seen as anticipating key insights of cultural anthropology and media studies. One aspect that has not received sufficient attention in this regard is his preoccupation with accounting for the different ways the body is affected by storytelling. This is not simply tied to the specific effects of aural narratives, but also to the relation between the body's overall engagement and the mnemonic processes that condition the retention and transmission of stories:

> There is nothing that commends a story to memory more effectively than that chaste compactness which precludes psychological analysis. And the more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological shading, the greater becomes the story′s claim to a place in the memory of the listener; the more completely the story is integrated into the latter′s own experience, the greater will be his inclination to repeat it to someone else someday, sooner or later. This process of assimilation, which takes place in the depths, requires a state of relaxation that is becoming rarer and rarer. If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation. Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience. . . . His nesting places—the activities that are intimately associated with boredom—are already extinct in the cities and are declining in the country as well. With this, the gift for listening is lost and the community of listeners disappears. For storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained. It is lost because there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they are being listened to. The more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply what he listens to is impressed upon his memory. When the rhythm of work has seized him, he listens to the tales in such a way that the gift of retelling them comes to him all by itself. (*SW* 3:149)[31]

This passage explores what may at first seem like a strained connection between the antipsychological orientation of storytelling and its boundedness with a mnemonic practice sustained by the rhythms of the working body. In

dispensing with the long-winded psychological explanations that serve to unlock the meaning of novels, storytelling enjoins those physical aspects of reception that promote the story's retention by weaving it concretely into the listeners' bodily experience, which will in turn enable them to retell the story. This claim is predicated on situating the privileged scene of storytelling in the premodern workplace of artisans who tell each other stories as they tend to the monotonous tasks of their work. The repetitive quality of this labor promotes a state of physical relaxation and self-oblivious listening (*Lauschen*) that is key to assimilating stories. Retaining a story thus has nothing to do with the mental alertness demanded by a focus on meaning and interpretation, but is rather bound up with its very opposite, namely, a mode of unself-conscious listening sustained by the bodily routine of rote labor.[32] The following section (IX) and a key passage in the essay's final section further elaborate on the relation between storytelling and premodern forms of labor, suggesting that the atomistic work practices of industrial modernity have contributed directly to the present demise of storytelling:

> With these words, a connection is established between soul, eye, and hand. Interacting with one another, they determine a practice. We are no longer familiar with this practice. . . . The role of the hand in production has become more modest, and the place it filled in storytelling lies waste. (After all, storytelling, in its sensory aspect, is by no means a job for the voice alone. Rather, in genuine storytelling what is expressed gains support in a hundred ways from the work-seasoned gestures of the hand.) That old coordination among the soul, eye, and hand which emerges in Valéry's words is that of the artisan which we encounter wherever the art of storytelling is at home. In fact, one might go on and ask oneself whether the relationship of the storyteller to his material, human life, is not in itself a craftsman's relationship—whether it is not his very task to fashion the raw material of experience, his own and that of others, in a solid, useful and unique way. (*SW* 3:161–62)[33]

Coming on the heels of quoted remarks by Paul Valéry that stress the quasi-mystical interplay of mind, perception, and action in the artistic process, this passage ties storytelling to an artisanal mode of labor predicated on coordinating the eye, the hand, and the mind. This connection is all but lost in an age in which the hand can only claim a marginal role in the labor process, presumably as a result of the shift to discrete, automatized tasks in an industrial environment.[34] Benjamin's desire to underscore the link between story-

telling and bodily movements prompts him to claim that the same hand gestures that are used in telling a story are also involved in performing artisanal labor. This statement well exemplifies the text's peculiar discursive thrust, which tends to generalizing extrapolations that draw on what would be empirical observations, yet as a rule lack the necessary nuance and supporting evidence. While one may well take objection with the blurring of observation, conjecture, and apodictic judgment that often shapes the essay's discourse, this mix is important in accounting for the distinctive materialism that undergirds its arguments. In spite of its avowed debt to *The Theory of the Novel*, the text charts a very different course from the Hegelianism of the early Lukács, who saw in the novel the aesthetic form that registers the progressive self-alienation of consciousness understood as the engine of world history. At the same time, it is also at odds with the humanism that drove the early Marx's denunciation of the alienating modes of production in capitalist modernity. The most significant departure from a Marxian account lies in the conceptual terms that frame the depiction of artisanal labor, and, by extension, of the labor of storytelling. Consciousness, as the indispensable moment of self-awareness that grounds a person's unity and moral agency, does not play a role in either. It is neither the guarantor of just labor that could effect a reconciliation between individual and nature, nor the principal actor in an all-important quest for meaning grounding in hermeneutics. In this respect it is significant that, in part thanks to the framing through the Valéry quote, the text ends up casting its account in conceptual terms that curiously recall those of contemporary psychotechnics. Specifically, the claim that both artisanal labor and storytelling rely on the partially autonomous interplay of different functions—the mind, the perceptual apparatus, and the motoric ability to execute actions—recalls the psychotechnic understanding of the person as consisting of discrete modules that need to be coordinated for processes to run smoothly. To be sure, the insights of psychotechnics were at bottom what authorized the Taylorist forms of labor that the text holds responsible for storytelling's demise. At the same time they also made it possible to describe an older mode of coordination among the individual's functions that accounts for the peculiar tie between artisanal work and storytelling without mobilizing fraught notions like consciousness.[35]

In this way, the text underscores that storytelling's tie to experience, its outward orientation as it were, hinges on its association with the habitual routines of the body as shaped by specific technologies and modes of labor. This provides a template for ensuring narrative's formal openness to experience, that openness which Benjamin had recommended as an antidote to the novel's closure in his review of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. As previously noted,

this stance does not entail an utter disavowal of mimesis or a repudiation of the analogical work on which narratives rely, which would ultimately make it impossible to endow stories with the practical truths that are the staple of storytelling. Yet it avoids making mimesis, as predicated on analogy, the linchpin of the connection between narrative and experience, thus undercutting the supremacy of interpretation as the privileged way of approaching stories. The emphasis thus shifts toward what one may term a rhetoric of the body, that is, to deliberate efforts to affect the body physically through the ways narratives are construed and delivered. This entails identifying and exploiting the ingrained motoric patterns governed by present-day technologies and forms of labor.

• Considering "The Storyteller" from this perspective suggests that the essay's objective is not bound up with nostalgia for the wholeness of a premodern world. In other words, the point is not to look backward and reconstruct the material circumstances of storytelling in order to better mourn their loss in the present. If storytelling as a collective practice that creates substantive experience depends on the physical experience of producing and receiving a story, if its retention and transmission are predicated on synchronization with the rhythms of bodies engaged in specific activities or types of labor, then the fate of storytelling in the present hinges on how modern technologies and modes of labor may lend themselves to practices that are analogous to the symbiosis between artisanal activity and oral storytelling evoked by the text. Even the highly stylized presentation of this symbiosis then appears as a parabolic example that is useful not so much for the empirical claims it makes as for the methodological framework it outlines.

The essay skirts the question of how modern media may adapt to and in turn ensure the survival of storytelling as it discusses its fraught relation with a print culture predicated on the insular practice of silent reading. While the ascendance of an isolating mode of reception driven by the book is linked to the demise of the collective dimension that sustained storytelling, the essay refrains from portraying the book as utterly incompatible with this desirable narrative practice: "A man listening to a story is in the company of the storyteller; even a man reading one shares this companionship. The reader of a novel, however, is isolated" (*SW* 3:156).[36] Benjamin suggests here that one can read a story and still enjoy the company of the narrator; by contrast, the reader of novels is inescapably lonesome, and this, one can extrapolate, does not have to do primarily with the material constraints of print media, but rather with the novel's formal closure, that is, its self-imposed separatedness

from experience. That the book is not an insurmountable hindrance to storytelling is further corroborated by the simple observation that storytelling has not completely disappeared in a modern period dominated by print. This implies that storytelling is not exclusively tied to orality but is in principle adaptable to other media, provided the body is involved in salient ways. The question then becomes how books can affect readers physically.

A helpful hint in this regard lies in the portrayal of the lonely reader of novels developed following the claims quoted above. This reader, the text maintains, is bound to obsessively consume narrative much as a flame devours logs in the fireplace (*SW* 3:156; *GS* 2.2:456). The analogy hints at the logic of appropriation that drives the behavior of the reader, who is eager to identify with the novel's hero and draw meaning from a life that is given final contours either by death or the narrative's ending. Hence the character's rounded fate becomes a flame that vicariously warms the frosty unfinishedness of the reader's life. What makes the passage's extended metaphor especially interesting is its reference to devouring (*verschlingen*) as a practice of physical incorporation. The term plays an important role in a gloss from 1929 to 1935 that, unlike "The Storyteller," discusses the novel in positive terms, depicting both the writing and reading of novels as activities akin to the preparation and consumption of food:

> Reading novels is like "eating." That is, the pleasure of incorporation. In other words the conceivably sharpest opposite to what critics generally assume to be the reader's pleasure, namely, substitution. . . . One would have to ask whether "devouring" a book constitutes a genuine, experiential metaphor in this sense. . . . This would come down to the paradoxical yet incisive truth that writing novels means to wring the edible out of things, their taste. A *continuous* spectrum stretches from eating to reading novels.[37]

In contrast to the passage from "The Storyteller" quoted above, *verschlingen* here does not denote the metaphorical operation of substitution that enables a reader to exchange his frigid life for the warmth of a character's rounded fate, but rather an act of physical incorporation (*Einverleibung*). The text endeavors to support this claim by pointing to the animistic understanding of eating as an activity that aims to assimilate the spirit of things through physical incorporation (*GS* 4.2:1013). Hence the difference between eating and the reading of novels is not a qualitative one, but is rather conceived in terms of variation on a continuous scale. One could conclude that the desirable narrative practice consigned to books hinges on a bodily mode of incor-

poration akin to eating much as oral storytelling is contingent on a corporeal mode of assimilation that relies on the self-oblivious listening induced by rote labor.[38] While Benjamin ultimately dropped the reference to reading as as a physical process of incorporation from "The Storyteller," rather using the term *verschlingen* as a metaphor for the forlorn reception of novels, it is still significant as an attempt at establishing a substantive physical connection between readers and books that would account for narrative's orientation to experience outside of an interpretive framework. This attempt resurfaces in the analogy that frames the rhetorical questions at the end of the section on Valéry in "The Storyteller": "In fact, one might go on and ask oneself whether the relationship of the storyteller to his material, human life, is not in itself a craftman's relationship—whether it is not his very task to fashion the raw material of experience, his own and that of others, in a solid, useful, and unique way" (*SW* 3:161).[39] Here the common denominator between artisanal labor and storytelling lies in processing the raw material of experience so as to make it useful—one may say edible in keeping with the culinary metaphor of the unpublished gloss.

Benjamin's concern with identifying salient aspects in the physical interaction between readers and books entails grasping the materiality of media as a shifting interplay between a medium's physical properties, the perceptual patterns and signifying strategies it activates, and the social and cultural processes in which its operations are embedded. Materiality thus configures itself as a shifting constellation of factors, an emergent property, to use Katherine Hayles's formulation, and not a static dimension. By the same token, the bodily or corporeal is not a fixed inventory of physical characteristics that attach to individuals and objects, but rather the product of an evolving interaction with historical environments shaped by technologies, modes of labor, and power relations. This emphasis on an evolving notion of materiality explains why for Benjamin the demise of storytelling was not simply attributable to a lost ability to glean discursive analogies between stories and experience, but rather was caused by failure to tie the analogical power of narrative fruitfully to modern technologies and the bodily routines they engender. The crucial role played by such interplay also explains how film could function as the counterpart of oral storytelling in instantiating a modern narrative practice that is collective and oriented toward an outside. Montage, as both a technological prerequisite and an aesthetic principle, is the conceptual pivot for understanding this new configuration, which enjoins modern technology in the endeavor to produce mimetic behavior that directly affects the relational network of experience.

3 • Storytelling in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility

Benjamin on Film and Montage

"The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (1935–39) and "The Storyteller" share much common ground. Both texts seize on the transformed status of art and aesthetic experience as a privileged point of entry for reflecting on the modern condition. Each essay examines the changes wrought by a watershed event in the development of technology—in "The Storyteller," the propagation of movable print and a book culture that displaces the oral practice of storytelling, marking the dislocation of the collective wisdom of tradition by the putative objectivity of information; in the artwork essay, the advent of photography and especially film, which undermines the quasi-sacral weave of authenticity and uniqueness that both embedded the artwork in the authority of tradition and buttressed this very authority. If "The Storyteller" focuses on the loss of shareable experience symbolized by the dying art of storytelling, the artwork essay inverts this discursive trajectory by emphasizing the potential gains to be reaped from the accelerating collapse of tradition caused in part by new technologies of mechanical reproduction like film. As the text's well-known thesis goes, the combination of accessibility, portability, and positively coded transience symbolized by film ushers in a reorganization of perception that alters the status of art by shattering its aura, that is, the nimbus of authority that enveloped artworks in a nexus of uniqueness, unattainability, and putative permanence. To be sure, the two essays are suffused by very different moods, the elegiac tone of "The Storyteller" forming a sharp contrast to the activist register of the artwork essay, which often seems to celebrate the very developments that "The Storyteller" decries. Yet on the whole the two texts make a consistent argument, which hinges on accounting for the present by historicizing (aesthetic) experience and mapping the deep changes produced by

technology. These changes boil down to a loss of substantive community as a result of the rise of mass society. The continuous, self-contained quality of tradition, as undergirded by the contemplative self-sufficiency of auratic experience, contrasts sharply with the disjointedness and sensory overload of modern life, which finds an apt counterpart in the juxtaposition of filmic images. When considered from this perspective, the montage of images in film, which bear the imprint of the disjunctive perception of modern life, stands in an antithetical relation to storytelling.

Before leaping to this conclusion, however, it will be helpful to briefly describe the discrepancies in the accounts of tradition developed by the two texts. In "The Storyteller" tradition appears as a shared patrimony that has equalizing effects. It is the work of a cohesive collective—Benjamin imagines it as a premodern community comprised of handworkers, seafarers, and peasants. This is a community of equals, or at least a community in which virtually anyone has the right to engage in the vital practice of storytelling as the weaving and handing down of tradition. By contrast, the force of tradition that the auratic artwork both exploits and reinforces serves a vertical social structure. In short, if "The Storyteller" offers an account of tradition as an inclusive and equalizing force, the artwork essay treats it as a tool of power, suggesting that its demise following the collapse of aura levels social distinctions and has potentially democratizing effects as an opening for the masses to come into their own. In this respect, the concept of the masses assumes a positive valence as the horizontal conglomerate of individuals deprived of long-established social attachments in the anonymity of the modern metropolis. The different understandings of tradition in the two texts make it possible to see the masses of the artwork essay not simply as a product of the disintegration of community bemoaned in "The Storyteller," but rather as community's inchoate counterpart in modernity. Understanding the masses as a potential foil to premodern community begs the question of what practices and media can lend themselves to producing the effects of storytelling, that is, of instantiating experience by means of collective practice. This chapter shows how the desirable features of storytelling outlined in the Leskov essay—its emphasis on a rhetoric of perception, its grounding in routines of the body shaped by specific modes of labor, its dependence on practices that both necessitate and reinforce physical proximity, its equalizing impact and ability to produce a collective experience informed by a sense of reciprocity, its orientation toward an outside that does not hinge on an analogical relation between narrative and experience—are adapted to the contemporary moment in the sections the artwork essay devotes to montage. This will in turn provide a frame for reading film as a narrative medium whose montage

principle has aesthetic repercussions that go well beyond film itself, suggesting a far-reaching reconceptualization of narrative as a mimetic practice that is not primarily centered on meaning.

• The artwork essay has been at the center of the phenomenal Benjamin reception that has enlivened fields of inquiry ranging from media theory to cultural studies, film and visual studies since the rediscovery of Benjamin's work in the 1960s. While it may well be one of Benjamin's most influential texts, critics agree that it is also problematic on account of its elliptical reasoning, conceptual leaps, and peremptory judgments that appear unsupported by the evidence at hand. This relates in part to the essay's complex textual history and the editorial issues posed by the existence of four versions—three in German and one in French—none of which can be regarded as the definitive one. In spite of differences that are at times significant, the various drafts revolve around the same main argument and share a common discursive scaffolding. This hinges on a set of neatly stacked oppositions—authenticity/uniqueness versus reproducibility/iterability, auratic art versus technologically mediated film, contemplative versus distracted or scattered reception—that drive a historical trajectory whose underlying causality brings it uncomfortably close to the pernicious historicism Benjamin tirelessly criticized in his lifelong engagement for a nonteleological model of history.[1] As Miriam Hansen has noted, this reading may well account for the shortcomings of the third (and last) German version of the artwork essay, which was published in 1955 in the collection of Benjamin's *Schriften* edited by Theodor and Gretel Adorno and has since been at the center of the text's phenomenal reception. This draft is, however, a compromise (and for some compromised) version of a typescript from 1936 that contains the text Benjamin originally intended for publication. This version, often referred to as Benjamin's urtext, was pushed to the wayside by the later draft after it appeared in a drastically cut and altered French translation in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaften* in 1936.[2] This second German draft unfolds a more nuanced discussion of the collapse of aura and concomitant rise of the masses, which, as Hansen points out, complicates the teleological thrust of the essay. In addition, an important lengthy footnote in this version offers a layered understanding of technology as a realm that is not merely destructive, but can provide room for an emancipatory form of play (*Spiel*) understood as "an alternative mode of aesthetics . . . that could counteract, at the level of sense perception, the political consequences of the failed—that is, capitalist and imperialist, destructive and self-destructive—reception of

technology."[3] The differentiated understanding of both aura and technology that Hansen develops by focusing on this second draft and on other texts by Benjamin is invaluable in linking the desirable narrative practice described in "The Storyteller" to a reading of film as a mass technology that can lend itself to practices analogous to premodern storytelling. A brief review of Hansen's arguments will thus provide a framework for discussing the significance of montage as an aesthetic principle that accounts for film as the narrative medium of the masses.

"What then, is the aura? A strange weave of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be" (*SW* 3:104–5; translation modified).[4] If the concept of aura functions as an anchor for the diverse lines of argumentation pursued in the essay, then Benjamin's attempt at defining it in this oft-quoted passage appears as elliptical as it is clarifying. Aura is portrayed here as a paradoxical mode of spatial-temporal apperception that renders objects remote no matter how close they may actually be. This type of apperception accounts for the quasi-sacral status of artworks that can be physically approached as material objects, yet are ontologically unattainable in their quasi-religious status as art. Key to this spatial dialectic of farness and nearness is the distancing temporality of tradition, which embeds objects in the singularity of a pregnant moment and then exploits it as the source of their putative authenticity and uniqueness. The sum total of these singular moments constitutes the very fabric of tradition, giving rise to the circular relation that allows tradition to both authorize and be authorized by artworks. Film, like photography, undercuts the exceptional status of the singular on account of its reproducibility, thus undermining the auratic mode of spatial-temporal perception on which both tradition and bourgeois art rely. In collapsing the ontological distance that endowed art with a halo of unapproachability, it brings aesthetic practice close to the masses for deployment in the contemporary struggle against fascism, which is itself intent on fabricating aura through the spectacle of aestheticized war.

This reading suggests an uncompromisingly negative valuation of aura as a tool of domination whose destruction can only be welcomed. Yet, as Hansen observes, Benjamin's glosses on aura in other texts paint a more differentiated picture, one marked by deep ambivalence at the prospect of aura's decay. This is bound up with the complex temporality inherent in the perception of aura, which goes well beyond turning the poignant singularity of historical experience into power-mongering claims to authenticity and uniqueness. Aura, Hansen explains by drawing on Benjamin's reflection in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939) and "Little History of Photography" (1931), is the vestige of an archaic mode of perception predicated on a bond of reci-

procity tying humans to nature. In this archaic age aura was not restricted to the realm of the aesthetic, but entailed a general mode of apperception bound to ascribe to any and every element of creation the ability to reciprocate one's attention, or, to draw on the Romantic trope Benjamin used in his discussion of Baudelaire, to return one's gaze.[5] In modernity this auratic mode of perception has withdrawn to the realm of aesthetics following the rise of a quintessentially exploitative engagement with nature. The "schöner Schein," or beautiful semblance, for which Goethe cherished art is a remnant of this ability to perceive objects not as part of an indifferent nature to be mastered, but rather as looking back in an act of reciprocation that places them on the same level as the human gaze that beholds them. This is at bottom a projection that Hansen accounts for by drawing on Freud's understanding of the uncanny. In the auratic mode, she argues, one glimpses oneself engaged in an archaic process of transference. What the individual perceives in glancing at a creaturely world that returns his gaze is not the magically animated nature of animism, but rather his own submerged ability to project on things the ability to look back. Because this reciprocal mode of apperception has been suppressed in the present, its resurfacing has uncanny effects in the Freudian sense, that is, it appears as the return of something that was once familiar, yet has been repressed and can only manifest itself under the guise of unsettling strangeness. What the individual glimpses in the auratic mode is at bottom himself engaged in a suppressed modality of selfhood that makes him a stranger to himself.[6]

This positively connoted understanding of aura accounts for Benjamin's ambivalence toward its decay. In hastening the withering of aura, photography and film are not just undermining a tool of domination that authorizes a hierarchical social structure, but also the last remnants of a form of apperception that productively destabilized subjectivity, providing glimpses of that reciprocal relation to creation whose prereflexive ethos is celebrated in "The Storyteller." Aura's association with this modality explains why Benjamin occasionally asked himself whether film could also produce auratic effects.[7] As Hansen points out, the issue for him was not to reendow film with the status of auratic art, but rather to appropriate it as the fitting correlate of the technologically altered perception that shaped modern experience. The ultimate aim was to use film as a collective tool for counteracting what Susan Buck-Morss has called the anesthetizing effects of technology, which Benjamin saw routinely deployed to lull individuals into perceiving their own dehumanization as an aesthetic spectacle.[8]

Film can become a tool of emancipation when considered within a differentiated understanding of technology that grasps both its liberating po-

tential and its destructive effects in capitalist-industrial modernity. Crucial to this layered reading of technology is a section in the second draft of the artwork essay that distinguishes between a "first technology" dominated by the instrumental impulse to subjugate and exploit nature, and a "second technology" that, by contrast, can engender a balanced interplay between humans and nature. At issue is a new ecology of the senses fostered by the prereflexive insights disclosed by a technologically augmented apperception (*SW* 3:127–28 n. 22; *GS* 7.1:368–69)—at stake in the case of photography and film are the insights relayed by close-ups, frog's- and bird's-eye views, slow motion, and playback, which serve as an "optical unconscious" in their ability to derail the ossifying experience of putatively self-same time and space (*SW* 3:117–18; *GS* 7.1:375–78).[9] This positive understanding of technology makes it possible to read film as paradigmatic for a technologically enhanced storytelling hinging on the principle of montage.[10]

• At first glance the artwork essay does not seem especially concerned with exploring the narrative potential of film. This is all the more notable as the so-called *Kinodebatte* of the 1910s and 1920s, driven as it was by desire to assign film its proper place within a rapidly shifting constellation of old and new media and art forms, persistently compared film to narrative literature and drama both as a way of dismissing the new medium as mere technology and in the contrary effort to elevate it by assimilating it to high-brow artistic media.[11] Instead, Benjamin's discourse follows the work of the pioneering Soviet directors—Eisenstein, Vertov, and Pudovkin—in focusing on montage as the conceptual pivot for describing the aesthetics of film. Unlike the Russian filmmakers, however, Benjamin was not interested in exploring the operations of montage as a principle of film poetics, that is, as a technique or set of practices that allow us to describe the features of specific films. Rather he treated montage as a primarily aesthetic category that resonated closely with contemporary forms of experience and modes of labor and thus encapsulated film's perceptual and cognitive surplus vis-à-vis other media.[12] Grasping this surplus through the notion of montage was for Benjamin key to describing how film revived a broad understanding of mimesis based not just on reproducing semblance but also on a performative form of mimicry, a kind of play that could restore a balanced relation between humans and technology. In what follows I will examine how montage forms the centerpiece of this mimetic play in ways that adapt the desirable narrative practice outlined in "The Storyteller" to the new technology of film.

Benjamin introduces his discussion of montage in section X of the art-

work essay by drawing a comparison between film and photography, the visual technologies deemed to be hastening aura's liquidation in the present. The discussion is framed by the question of the artistic quality that inheres in technologies of mechanical reproduction—the question of art being at bottom a question of how to harness the transformative perceptual and cognitive surplus harbored by these technologies. While film, as "moving pictures," may initially appear to be a mere extension of photographic technology, its essential reliance on the montage principle introduces a key qualitative difference that Benjamin elucidates by focusing on the modality of reproduction on which the two media rely. Neither photography nor film, he notes, derives its artistic quality from the objects it reproduces—in other words, the fact that photography and film may be reproductions of artworks does not automatically endow them with the perceptual qualities of the objects they depict. Unlike photography, however, film relies on a technical procedure that is bound to produce a new artistic element, that is, to affect perception in ways that are in excess of the sum total of what film depicts. This procedure is editing: "The work of art is produced only by means of montage. And each individual component of this montage is a reproduction of a process which neither is an artwork itself nor gives rise to one through photography" (*SW* 3:110).[13]

The discussion that follows makes clear that montage should not be simply understood as a technical principle proper to film. Rather, its operations form an illuminating correlate to the dehumanizing features of modern life, a claim that sections X–XII seek to corroborate in a long detour that defers discussion of montage as constitutive of film as art.[14] The question of montage as an aesthetic principle had, however, already been broached in section VII, which juxtaposes film to photography by likening its concatenation of still frames to the role played by textual inserts (*Beschriftung*) in helping read photographs in illustrated magazines:

> The directives given by captions to those looking at images in illustrated magazines soon become even more precise and commanding in films, where the way each single image is understood seems prescribed by the sequence of all the preceding images. (*SW* 3:108)[15]

This statement summarizes a longer discussion unfolding at the end of Benjamin's "Little History of Photography," which examined photography as a medium that traversed in a compressed way the historical trajectory leading up to the atrophy of aura in the present. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Benjamin argued in this earlier essay, the proliferation of photo-

graphic material in the illustrated press had exposed photography's heteronomy, that is, its inability to function in a self-sufficient, autonomous mode. This was especially glaring in illustrated magazines, which reversed the traditional hierarchy that placed images in a subordinate relation to texts, which could also be received without illustrations. In betting on photographic material as the main carrier of entertainment and information, the photomagazine had to resort to captions or textual inserts that showed not only photography's dependency on another medium, writing, for its disambiguation and contextualization, but also the historical contingency and ideological nature of the relation between text and image, which turned out to be the very obverse of the splendid self-sufficiency and semantic plenitude promised by auratic art. Benjamin insisted that the fact that in principle photographs cannot be made sense of without accompanying information delivered a salutary shock, that is, a jolt at the level of apperception that was the actual repository of their authenticity, as it spoke to the heteronomy of all art, to its fundamental boundedness to structures of perceptions, material technologies, and modes of labor (*SW* 2:527; *GS* 2.1:385).[16]

These issues, Benjamin suggests in reprising the discussion from the photography essay, are productively magnified by the kind of *Beschriftung* or captioning film instantiates. Film, the passage indicates, pushes the logic of captioning to an extreme by stringing together images that must rely on each other for the necessary work of contextualization. In other words, in film the function of captioning is taken on by the surrounding images rather than by textual inserts, so each image never exists for itself but is always already positioned in relation to others, which it helps disambiguate. *Beschriftung* in this context partakes of two separate, seemingly incongruous moments. On the one hand it fulfills a disjointive function by interrupting the flow of images and thus emphasizing the heteronomy of the single image, that is, its fundamental dependence on the preceding one. On the other, it serves to conjoin the images to one another and helps form complex syntagmatic units that generate meaning on the basis of contiguity. Hence the new perceptual arrangement that film engenders on account of its specific features—its ability to both shrink and stretch time and space—not only explodes "the prison world" mediated by reified sensory routines, but also reassembles its shards following a combinatory, oneiric logic that, as Benjamin asserts in a controversial passage dropped from the essay's later versions, form a correlate at a collective level of the dream processes of an individual psyche, allowing for therapeutic effects (*SW* 3:117–18; *GS* 7.1:376–77).

To unfold the implications of this logic, one can think of Lev Kuleshov's

momentous experiments with filmic montage, particularly the much-discussed sequences that feature the same take of a blank male face in combination with shots of disparate objects—a bowl of soup, a revolver, a baby. These sequences function as minimal syntagmatic units that give the impression that the man is exhibiting wildly different feelings or emotions—craving for food, fear, affection. As Sam Rohdie pointedly puts it, the experiment is notable not solely because it showcases the human ability to make sense of any sequence of contiguous units, showing that meaning is at bottom contextual, that is, constituted at the level of the utterance. The experiment also emphasizes that the moment of fiction in these sequences does not reside in the images themselves, but in the cutting and pasting that makes up the sequence. Unlike D. W. Griffith, whose montage sequences imaginatively reassembled shots of objects that had occupied the same physical space or mise-en-scène, Kuleshov pasted together images derived from wildly disparate spatiotemporal contexts without in the least weakening the narrative force of his sequences. This demonstrated the constructive power of editing, which could produce narratives that did not hinge on reproducing/filming an existing state of affairs but rather in conjoining disparate material that was unrelated in "real life." The force of the fiction constructed in this way was thus able to render imperceptible the moment of conjunction—the stitching together of unrelated elements—on which it nonetheless depended, dramatizing the inextricable nexus of dissociation and conjunction that makes up Benjamin's concept of *Beschriftung* as the logic driving montage in film.[17]

The juxtaposition I have drawn with Kuleshov's montage experiments helps to emphasize the Constructivist streak of Benjamin's understanding of montage, indeed, its focus on the element of production rather than reproduction of reality, but underplays an important aspect of his analysis, namely, its emphasis on the physiognomic potential of the medium and lack of concern for its semiotic aspects. That is, while Kuleshov's experiments foreground the ability of filmic montage to produce a surplus at the level of discourse or story, Benjamin was rather more interested in the peculiar mimetic play that film engenders, which unfolds at the level of a production of forms. Key to this understanding of mimesis is a lengthy footnote from the urtext that discusses the ancient practice of mimes engaged in ritual representation:

> The mime presents his subject as a semblance [*Der Nachmachende macht seine Sache scheinbar*]. One could also say that he plays his subject. Thus we encounter the polarity informing mimesis. In mimesis, tightly interfolded like cotyledons, slumber the two aspects of art: semblance and play. (*SW* 3:127)[18]

As Benjamin explains, in the oldest forms of performance the mime had no other material or medium than his body to work with. He summoned the semblance of things through a gestural, corporeal *Nachmachen* that was at bottom a "doing like," an acting or becoming like the thing being mimed. Mimesis at this early juncture was thus based on the coexistence of two distinct moments: the demonstrative moment of performance (*Spiel*) and the imitation of appearances (*Schein*). The effectiveness of the mime's operations, one can extrapolate, resided in a mode of mimicry that had little to do with modern concepts of illusionism or verisimilitude, but was rather about enacting salient features of the mimed object through performance. In the Western understanding of mimesis, however, the focus on the production of semblance gradually gained the upper hand at the expense of the dimension of performance or play, according to Benjamin, giving rise to the modern emphasis on art as *schöner Schein* or idealizing representation of appearances. Hence, the ancient understanding of mimesis as playful mimicry became supplanted by a focus on delivering an artifact that could function semiotically as the transfiguring stand-in for an original.[19] For Benjamin the modern atrophy of aura allowed the reversal of this development and recovery of the mimetic moment of aesthetic play:

> What is lost in the withering of semblance and the decay of the aura in works of art is matched by a huge gain in the scope for play [*Spiel-Raum*]. This space for for play is widest in film. . . . In film, the element of semblance has yielded its place to the element of play, which is allied to the second technology. (*SW* 3:127)[20]

Film, as the modern instantiation of potentially emancipatory technology, was thus the medium that allowed for engaging experience again through playful mimicry. This claim, however, begs the question of how, exactly, film engenders mimetic play—not as a particular mode of emplotment or production of discourse, as in the Kuleshov example discussed above, but as physiognomic interaction with the world. This also raises the question of how to characterize closer the emancipatory import of mimesis thus defined.

To delve deeper into these issues it will be helpful to draw on an analogous discussion unfolding in Rudolf Arnheim's *Film als Kunst* (*Film as Art*; 1932), which provides a foil for Benjamin's analysis of film and is quoted at length in the footnote immediately preceding the one on mimesis I just examined (*GS* 7.1:367).[21] On closer inspection, much of Benjamin's discussion in this and the following sections (XII–XIV) echoes Arnheim's extended examination of film's illusionism. Spelling out film's illusionary power was

for Arnheim a key step in naming its artistic quality and thus rebuking those who portrayed the new medium as brute technology only capable of an artless rendering of reality (*Wirklichkeitswiedergabe*).[22] Far from delivering a replica of the experiential world, Arnheim maintained, film produced it anew and thus fulfilled the fundamental human impulse to imitate, that is, to negotiate experience by re-creating it through representation.[23] Within Arnheim's modernist anthropological framework, art's ability to produce experience was predicated on exploiting the gap separating the aesthetic artifact from the sensory image elicited by an object in real life. In the case of film, this meant that the "film image" (*Filmbild*), with its pronounced flatness and lack of color, wasn't anything like the corresponding "world image" (*Weltbild*) as relayed through the human sensory apparatus, yet precisely the divergence between the two mobilized perception and engendered the productive repetition that was at the heart of film's evidentiary force.[24]

Arnheim, in short, identified film's mimetic ability in its playful amplification of a gap between perception and technological apparatus. Translated into the conceptual framework of Benjamin's mime, who summons an object by enacting its salient features through the gestural performance of a body that looks pronouncedly different from the object itself, one could say that what Arnheim called the inherent deficit of the film image, its conspicuous departure from the object as normally perceived, would be the demonstrative moment, the moment of play or performance, whereas the similarity or physiognomic overlap between film image and the object's appearance would constitute the moment of *Schein*, or semblance. Thus film functions as a technological prosthesis that realizes the mimetic play valued by Benjamin by juxtaposing the ingrained appearance of selfsame time and space to the productively jumbled, distorted images of an "optical unconscious" (*SW* 3:117; *GS* 7.1:376). Within this framework the montage of images in film executes a form of mimicry that does not copy, but rather produces experience by repeating it with a differential physiognomic surplus. At issue is a creative imitative impulse that is realized at a most fundamental bodily level, that is, by mobilizing perception.

This connection is confirmed by Benjamin's discussion of the paradoxical sense of immediacy evoked by film. In section XIV Benjamin directly reprises, without explicitly quoting them, arguments that structure Arnheim's comparison between the illusionism of stage drama and the illusionism of film. He, however, tweaks Arnheim's conclusions by maintaining that film's ability to conjure a perfectly self-contained, illusionistic world relies, paradoxically, on the overwhelming encroachment of technology:[25]

> In principle, the theatre includes a position from which the action on the stage cannot easily be detected as an illusion. There is no such position where a film is being shot. The illusory nature of film is of the second degree; it is the result of editing. That is to say: *In the film studio the apparatus has penetrated so deeply into reality that a pure view of that reality, free of the foreign body of equipment, is the result of a special procedure—namely, the shooting by the specially adjusted photographic device and the assembly of that shot with others of the same kind.* The equipment-free aspect of reality has here become the height of artifice, and the vision of immediate reality the Blue Flower in the land of technology. (*SW* 3:115)[26]

Live drama, this passage contends, can be enjoyed from a perspective that masks the moment of illusion. The audience can, for instance, forget that the actors on stage are playing roles and instead experience the dramatic action as immediately unfolding events. This has to do with the distinctive illusionism of drama, which hinges on witnessing live actors perform in real time. Film's illusionism is qualitatively different in that its diegetic unfolding is the result of individual shots that have been spliced together through montage. This means that film does not allow for a vantage point that could induce the viewer to forget about the constructed nature of the single shot. Indeed, in film the sense of immediacy ("a pure view of that reality"; *der Anblick der unmittelbaren Wirklichkeit*) engendered by the apparent absence of technological mediation ("the equipment-free aspect"; *der apparatfreie Aspekt*) is actually the result of montage as a technical procedure essential to film, and which, as discussed in the Kuleshov example above, produces a coherent effect through a complex nexus of dissociation and conjunction. This sets film off from the immediacy summoned by stage drama, which ultimately arises from viewers watching an action actually unfolding before their eyes.[27] Hence Benjamin concludes that the unmediated ("equipment-free") quality of the reality relayed by film actually constitutes its most constructed ("artificial" or *künstlich*) trait. In this respect the impression of immediate reality in film can be given the status of a deluded yearning for an uncontaminated natural condition, one that Benjamin sardonically likens to the Romantic longing for a mythical blue flower unfurling in a contemporary landscape saturated by technology.

While this statement would seem to usher in a critique of film as a most pernicious technology bent on manufacturing the simulacrum of immediate reality in order to amplify and entrench the phantasmagoric delusions of

commodity capitalism, the subsequent paragraph drops this argumentative thread and instead adds new terms of comparison to the juxtaposition of theater and film. At issue are, quite surprisingly, the positive effects of the immediacy produced by film, which is valorized not for its illusionistic power, that is, for its skill in summoning lifelike appearances, but rather for its ability to collapse distance. In a complicated analogy that involves, among other things, substituting painting for the example of stage drama unfolded up to this point, this paragraph juxtaposes the practice of the painter and the cameraman to the healing art of the magician and the surgeon, respectively. Like the painter, the magician retains a natural distance from the person on whom he imposes his healing hands. By contrast, the surgeon resembles the cameraman in that he radically collapses the distance to his patient and even violates the integrity of his body in order to heal it. If the magician/painter retains a total picture of experience as a result of his preserving the conventional distance to it, the image of reality produced by the cameraman/surgeon is conspicuously piecemeal and reassembled according to a new law, a principle that is different from any structure gleaned in experience:

> The images obtained by each differ enormously. The painter's is a total image, whereas that of the cinematographer is piecemeal, its manifold parts being assembled according to a new law. *Hence, the presentation of reality in film is incomparably the more significant for people of today, since it provides the equipment-free aspect of reality they are entitled to demand from a work of art, and does so precisely on the basis of the most intensive interpenetration of reality with equipment.* (*SW* 3:116)[28]

Taking the analogy between cameraman and surgeon full circle, this passage claims that film's contemporary relevance lies in granting access to reality in a mode that circumvents technological mediation. This is made possible, paradoxically, by film's radical commingling of reality and technology—what a few lines before was dubbed its heightened artificiality. The seeming incongruity of this claim is compounded by the parenthetical remark according to which the person of today is entitled to demand of the artwork a presentation of reality unencumbered by the apparatus. But why should the contemporary individual expect a presentation of experience free of the apparatus? What value does it have and how does it square with the contradictory claim about film's artificial immediacy?

Key to unfolding these admittedly cryptic statements is the differentiated understanding of immediacy that is entailed by the qualifiers *unmittelbar* and *apparatfrei*. While *unmittelbar* in the phrase "Anblick der unmittelbaren

Wirklichkeit" evokes the illusionary moment of art, that is, its ability to produce sensuous forms that promise direct access to undistorted reality, the term *apparatfrei* in the expression "den apparatfreien Aspekt der Wirklichkeit" refers to the absence of technological mediation as a material condition. This semantic difference is consequential, as *apparatfrei* is not burdened by an understanding of immediacy as a quest for uncontaminated nature and mythical blue flowers, but rather signals the elimination of material hurdles that may prevent access to the real. This aligns film with the surgeon's willingness to collapse the putatively natural distance from his patient and cut his body open in order to heal it. Film's constructed ability to present reality as unencumbered by the apparatus recalls the ways in which the artificial, demonstrative thrust of Brecht's epic drama endeavors to tear down the invisible wall that separates the audience from the actors in auratic forms of drama, according to Benjamin.[29] This artificiality is dialectically linked to a notion of immediacy that may well promise to grant access to unadulterated reality, but is at bottom the product of convention, and as such erects a barrier between audience and dramatic action, producing the impression that the events unfolding on stage are endowed with transcendent authority and immutability. Along similar lines, film's interlacing of illusion and artificiality destroys the "conventional" distance to the real by dramatizing the fact that the reality it presents under the guise of immediacy is in fact thoroughly constructed, as it has been cut up and reassembled through the principle of montage.[30]

One can conclude that the artificial immediacy film produces appears desirable not because of its ability to summon a lifelike world, but rather because its distinctive illusionism helps bring reality closer by presenting it as constructed and changeable. Shrinking distance, moreover, recalls a trait that quintessentially defines storytelling as a practice that produces collective experience. This begs the question of how, exactly, one is to understand the argument about collapsed distance that forms the core of film's constructed immediacy. Early in the essay Benjamin had emphasized photography's and film's ability to make the semblance of things portable and thus bring them before the masses (*SW* 3:103–4; *GS* 7.1:352–53). One could observe that this type of portability certainly collapses distance, though what is ultimately moved here is the image of a thing duplicated by mechanical means. While it is true that reproducibility destroys the object's aura by engulfing the phenomenological singularity of its appearance in an ocean of duplicates, the question is how a viewer engages with the portable image itself. Does collapsing distance entail viewing a reproduction that presents the object much in the same way the photographer or cameraman would have seen it? Is this about the possibility of experiencing the object vicariously without being in

its presence? This would bring us back to a discussion of illusionism, of evoking semblance through illusion. Hence collapsed distance would be metaphorical in the final analysis; it would be another term for illusion. Film and photography would then allow for getting closer to objects in what is fundamentally the mode of *Schein* and not involve any type of physiognomic play.

Significantly, the following sections directly reprise the question of play by exploring the collective mode of reception engendered by film. This entails, at an individual level, a form of engagement that eschews the immersive response demanded by auratic art and rather favors a distracted attitude (*SW* 3:119),[31] one that recalls the stance of "expert appraisal" championed by Bertolt Brecht. Benjamin moves, however, beyond Brecht's position by postulating a simultaneous collective reception that forms a correlate to the reception engendered by the epic and by architecture (*SW* 3:116–17; *GS* 7.1:374–75). While what immediately follows focuses on the *Spielraum* that is opened by the augmented visual range of film, which is famously likened to an "optical unconscious" (*SW* 3:117; *GS* 7.1:376), the argument takes an unexpected turn in section XVII, which involves valorizing film as much for the tactile mode of reception it engenders as for its ability to broaden visual perception. Key to this valorization of the haptic is the question of how to account for the collective quality of film reception given that the visual remains haunted by the lure of contemplation and thus by the threat of an isolating mode of reception. If the visual is always in peril of yielding to the contemplative when left to its own devices, Benjamin intimates, the tactile provides a much-needed corrective that allows for engaging objects in an unself-conscious and habit-driven mode, recalling the mix of self-oblivious listening and habitual bodily routine that fosters storytelling in the Leskov essay (*SW* 3:120; *GS* 7.1:381). Notably, this tactile engagement is made possible by the breakdown of perceptual routines elicited by the montage of shots in film. As expounded in an important footnote that continues the comparison between film and painting, the breakdown induced by montage produces a shock that prevents contemplative immersion:

> The image on the film screen changes, whereas the image on the canvas does not. The painting invites the viewer to contemplation; before it, he can give himself up to his train of associations. Before a film image, he cannot do so. No sooner has he seen it than it has already changed. It cannot be fixed on. The train of associations in the person contemplating it is immediately interrupted by new images. This constitutes the shock effect of film, which, like all shock effects, seek to induce heightened attention. *Film is the art form corresponding to the*

> *pronounced threat to life in which people live today*. It corresponds to profound changes in the apparatus of apperception. (*SW* 3:132 n. 33)[32]

The rapid succession of images in film undercuts contemplation by interrupting the natural flow of associations that provide a spontaneous frame of reference for reading individual images. In this respect film formally mimics an essential trait of modern life, which incessantly subjects individuals to experiences that cannot be fitted into available experiential patterns. As Benjamin noted in a similar discussion unfolding in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," consciousness intervenes to parry the shock produced by inability to weave these experiences into the web of unself-conscious, habitual practices and thus helps defuse their traumatic potential.[33] However, while in the Baudelaire essay the shock-driven perception of film is valued solely as a formal correlate to the alienated rhythm of labor on the assembly line, the shock effect is here given a more positive twist, as it allows for preventing the immersive, contemplative mode engendered by the historical conditioning of the visual. Another significant difference is that shock is here associated with a presence of mind (*Geistesgegenwart*), a heightened state of alertness that does not quite rise to the level of consciousness (*Bewußtsein*) described in the Baudelaire essay. That is, the jolt that derails the contemplative state of automatized visual reception is treated here more like a physical effect than a complex psychological phenomenon.[34] Filmic montage thus reproduces a basic physiological response to the alienated circumstances of metropolitan life and modern labor in order to make it productive for an emancipatory engagement with experience.

Before I discuss the ramifications of this last point, which pulls together the essay's various argumentative strands and ushers its conclusion, let me sum up the main aspects of montage as a principle that is key to defining film as art. Montage figures in the essay not so much as a technique that is helpful in describing the poetics of film, but rather as a point of interface between technology and the human sensory apparatus that operates at various, interconnected levels. At the physiognomic level suggested by discussion of the Arnheim intertext, the incongruous mix of similarity and difference that marks the relation between our picture of the world and the montage of film images hinges on a type of mimicry that operates at the level of perception to deform the trusted physiognomy of the real and thus explode the iron cage of conventional experience. In addition, the coexistence of a disjointive and conjunctive moment in montage produces an effect of artificial immediacy that shatters the halo of unattainability that envelops auratic art. In so doing montage collapses distance not only to the artistic object, but also to the ex-

perience it represents, making both appear accessible and changeable. Finally, the shock produced by the montage of images engenders a state of alertness that jolts the viewer out of the automatized contemplative mode associated with vision—that very mode which causes the individual to fold onto himself and cuts him off from the outer world.

It is this physical jolt that accounts for the tactile quality of film—a quality that turns individuals outwardly, favoring their incorporation into a mass of other individuals. In forming an antithesis to both the psychological focus and the physical segregation produced by contemplative visuality, this mode of reception is *zerstreut* in the double sense of distracted and scattered:

> Distraction and concentration form an antithesis, which may be formulated as follows. A person who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it; he enters into the work. . . . By contrast, the distracted masses absorb the work of art into themselves. Their waves lap around it; they encompass it with their tide. This is most obvious with regards to buildings. Architecture has always offered the prototype of an artwork that is received in a state of distraction and through the collective. (*SW* 3:119f)[35]

This passage famously juxtaposes the tactile visuality of film to the unself-conscious, habit-driven mode of interaction elicited by architectural forms. At issue is the kind of simultaneously distracted (i.e., not focused through consciousness) and scattered (that is, plural, collective) reception that marks the physical engagement with architecture, and which enables a mass of individuals to engulf buildings with the metamorphic movement of constantly shifting waves. In this scattered mode driven by habit and utilitarian considerations, individuals come into contact with objects and with each other, establishing patterns of ever-changing physical contiguity.[36] In the words of Michael Taussig, this distracted mode is about "the unstoppable merging of the object of perception with the body of the perceiver and not just with the mind's eye."[37] In restoring tactility to the visual, it allows for recuperating vision for a kind of mimesis, that is, a technologically augmented repetition of forms that presents key features of desirable storytelling. In the first place, it is oriented outwardly and marked by an emphasis on habit and need, thus undercutting the self-segregating self-sufficiency of auratic art. It further presents reality as open to intervention by producing an artificial immediacy that collapses distance to both the art object and the experience it presents. Collapsed distance is here to be understood physiologically, as an appropriation of bodily routines governed by the shock-driven rhythms of modern la-

bor. This tweaking of bodily responses opens the way for unself-conscious patterns of apperception that complement the visual by means of a tactile mode that facilitates forms of reception predicated on distraction and habit. Bridged distance is in turn key to creating physical contiguity and engendering collective bonds among individuals. *Zerstreuung*, one may say in closing, elicits a mode of experience that is inherently plural and enables the masses to come into their own as a substantive collective.

• It has often been noted that many of the conclusions Benjamin reaches in the artwork essay do not appear particularly stringent or even plausible. This is especially true of the epilogue's wildly optimistic prognosis, which famously hails the incipient politicization of art at the hands of communism as a formidable antidote against the aestheticization of politics perpetrated by fascism. The evocative force of this chiasmatic formula cannot paper over the generic nature of the recommendation, which begs for a much harder look at the specifics of the contemporary historical moment. How, given the state of the film industry in the mid-1930s, could a collective of moviegoers make the transition to a proletariat ready to take on class struggle? And based on what could one celebrate film's all-pervasive, artificial illusion given the ways Hollywood studios and the national-socialist film industry put this very illusionary power to work to peddle ideologically noxious or mind-numbing film fare? Furthermore, why should the shock of montage jolt the body back to desirable tactile modes governed by habit instead of intensifying the neurotic forms of behavior developed on the modern workplace?

While I acknowledge the importance of these questions and of the criticism that drives them, my concern here is not with evaluating the diagnostic power of Benjamin's analysis, but rather with reconstructing the implicit understanding of narrative practice that informs his discussion of film. This practice comes into sharp focus if one juxtaposes the essay's account of montage to the unconventional notion of storytelling developed in the Leskov essay, which grounds storytelling in a mode of imitative behavior that appropriates key tenets of contemporary philosophical anthropology. This hinges on a notion of mimesis that operates at the level of perception and involves a mimicry of forms that produces new forms. The understanding of narrative thus engendered no longer rests on investing experience with meaning through stories that illuminate it in an analogical mode. Narrative practice, rather, directly produces desirable experience by activating routines of the body linked to contemporary experiential environments and modes of labor. Their immediate effect is to collapse distance among individuals and the ob-

jects that make up one's environment. Within this framework, the physical contiguity of storytelling in premodern times finds its counterpart in the haptic mode of reception produced by the montage of images in film, whose shock effect shatters the isolating parameters of visual contemplation and favors the establishment of intersubjective bonds. As a principle of conjunction and disjuncture that productively alters ingrained patterns of perception by mimicking them, montage produces an artificial type of immediacy, that is, a mode of evidence that is not predicated on the illusionistic conjuring of lifelike worlds, but rather on exploiting the congruence between contemporary technology, bodily routines, and forms of apperception. The montage of images in film thus realizes the outward, practical orientation Benjamin identifies with storytelling, which forms a prerequisite of communicable experience.

While identifying montage primarily with film technology, Benjamin repeatedly noted that its principle of disjunction and recombination had implications for other media as well. He famously drew on montage to describe the operations of Brecht's epic theater, remarking that Brecht's notion of gesture was at bottom a transposition of the technical understanding of montage developed for film and radio onto the broader domain of human affairs.[38] These glosses emphasize Benjamin's awareness that montage was bound to play out differently in different media through varying material conditions and institutional constraints. For instance, he noted that epic theater and filmic montage were both predicated on strategies of interruption, but that the moment of interruption in film had primarily *Reizcharacter*; that is, it operated at the level of a basic perceptual trigger, whereas it assumed a more elaborated pedagogical character in drama. This had to do with the fact that illusionistic drama lacked the disjunctive temporality that in film results from the sequencing and splicing of distinct frames. In other words, if film's temporal flow is inherently pieced together, the continuous flow of dramatic time had to be interrupted in the first place by turning the unity of action into an aggregate of distinct situations through a variety of defamiliarizing devices that included the deployment of gestures, understood not as a spontaneous expression of the body but rather as conventional behavioral units crisscrossed by a web of partially conflicting social meanings. Hence Brechtian dramatic praxis was able to reduce character behavior to an assemblage of recognizably conventional, and thus quotable, gestures, whose effect unfolded at a semiotic rather than perceptual level. The effect elicited by Brechtian montage was thus *Staunen*, an amazement linked to a defamiliarizing semiotic play that defies audience expectations and produces new read-

ings of the ostensibly familiar, rather than the more basic shock of apperception of filmic montage.

Benjamin's own appropriation of the montage principle is found in the assemblage of quotations that make up the *Arcades* project, which offers an alternative historical account of the nineteenth century telescoped through the ruins of the Parisian arcades. Here historical writing is to be understood as a "literary montage" of the passages Benjamin transcribed from the myriad of books he poured over at the Bibliothèque Nationale between 1934 and 1940, which are only occasionally interspersed with terse remarks in his own voice. This amounts to a "poetics of parataxis," in the words of Richard Sieburth, that deliberately dispenses with explanatory commentary, that is, forgoes the mediation of generalizing statements and rather relies on the demonstrative force of the copied fragments themselves, whose dialectical constellations allow for a touching of past and present that produces imponderable flashes of insight and recalls the constructed collapsing of distance and artificial immediacy made possible by film.[39] Sieburth especially emphasizes the distinctive mimetic force of Benjamin's act of copying, which "involves a repetition of the same, a reduplication of identity—but an identity that contains within itself a crucial, infinitesimal difference"[40]—a difference that is physiognomic, that is, has to do with the perceptual character of the writing, and not primarily semantic. In further likening Benjamin's activity as a scrivener to the cannibalistic practice of quotation Benjamin himself had eloquently pinned on Karl Kraus, Sieburth stresses how this mimetic understanding of writing entails a mode of physical appropriation, one that, one may add, mirrors the bodily incorporation Benjamin described in his glosses on reading. Hence Benjamin reconceptualized the task of the historian along the lines of a writerly cannibalism that refrains from acts of interpretive commentary that would engender a linear and homogenous narrative of history, and rather offers "history as parataxis," "a montage where any moment may enter into sudden adjacency with another."[41]

Benjamin's understanding of the media-specific inflections of montage practices shows how for him montage was a principle marking the interface between body, technologies, signifying practices, and power structures. The effects of this interface could be appropriated for a narrative mode that did not consist in making experience intelligible by superimposing a meaningful order on it, but rather engendered experience directly through a mimicry of forms. This is, specifically, a desirable experiential mode that is oriented toward an outside and is inherently plural—the plural constituting a fundamental condition of possibility for substantive experience. The body is cen-

tral to this experiential modality as both the locus of the self and a medium for an interactive perception that both centers and decenters the self by enabling or stifling given emotional and perceptual routines. This understanding of narrative places a premium on the body's automatisms and perceptual capability while avoiding the perils of essentialism. Reading the artwork essay in conjunction with "The Storyteller" makes clear that the body or the corporeal is not coterminous with the givens of organic physicality, but is rather incessantly produced through interaction with perceptual forms and technologies. Along these lines, the ability to collapse distance among individuals is not to be understood as an actual touching of physical bodies, but is rather an interconnectedness realized through the multiple ways in which forms and technologies mobilize perception. In short, mapping the changing interaction with technology and its ability to alter experiential patterns allows a phenomenological understanding of the body that is historically inflected as an evolving network of interactions operating at various levels.

Understanding narrative as a manipulation of perceptual routines further suggests that the virtual or fictional of narrative is not a quality that is opposed to a real world of which narrative would be an imperfect or manipulative imitation, but is rather an arena for practicing an interaction with forms and bodies that generates shared experience. Film represented for Benjamin a most advanced technological arena for playing with our world, our senses, and the forms of experience. His valorization of the new medium was not driven by a naive faith in technology, as some critics have charged, but rather by awareness that the same technology that lends itself to subjugation can be appropriated for emancipatory aims.[42] What drives this awareness was the possibility of grasping technology's effects as emanating from a plurality of historically situated discourses and devices, rather than demonizing or idealizing it as a monolithic abstraction. Precisely this optimistic notion of a narrative practice that grounds in perception and the prosthetic potential of technology echoes the discourse and practice of artists associated with Dada and Constructivism, with whose artistic milieu Benjamin was well familiar. In the next chapters I turn to examining exemplary cases that inflect the paradigm of narrative montage delineated in his discourse.

4 • Narrating in Three Dimensions

László Moholy-Nagy's "Vision in Motion"

> One could say that such use of photography will lead to replacing a substantive portion of literature through film in the near future. . . . An equally decisive change is achieved by including photography in posters. . . . The two new possibilities for the poster are: 1. Photography, through which we possess the greatest and most striking narrative apparatus; 2. The *contrastive*-markedly used typography.[1]

This passage wraps up an essay László Moholy-Nagy published in 1923, the year he was appointed to the Bauhaus, where he helped liquidate the romantic existentialism of the Expressionist masters that had shaped the school's aesthetic agenda and usher its orientation toward technology and mass-producible design. Casting a belief shared by many contemporaries in the language of Constructivism, Moholy announces that photography and film are poised to displace literature as a medium of communication in virtue of their superior clarity, simplicity, and exactness. Photography's exactness, in particular, is the source of its striking narrative power, which dispenses with the vagaries of subjective interpretation. The resulting objectivity does not so much constitute the fulfillment of the illusionist regime that dominated the visual arts for centuries, however, as mark its liquidation. As Moholy's reflection in this and other essays suggests, for him photography's narrative potential was no longer to be assessed through the old criteria of verisimilitude and realism but rather abided by a new logic of *Gestaltung*, which was premised on a fundamental expressive impulse rooted in the human experience of embodiment and actualized in the historical interplay between perception and technologies. This vital impulse could be enjoined in rearranging the orders of experience by manipulating the relations among its foundational elements.

In one fell swoop, Moholy thus dispatched a centuries-old visual regime based on the illusionistic rendering of appearances and welcomed the coming of new communicative and narrative modes predicated on the dynamic force of *Gestaltung*.

This chapter examines the two-pronged pedagogical program that circles around Moholy's notion of *Gestaltung*, which hinges on a combinatory logic that treats mechanical records as indexical imprints of the phenomenal world. In its absolute form, which Moholy associated with the autonomous sphere of art, *Gestaltung* served an expansion and sharpening of perception that intensified life, at once dramatizing and enlivening its dynamic flow by optimizing the synergy between technology and the human sensory apparatus. In its utilitarian applications, *Gestaltung* allowed for new forms of communication and narrative that enlisted the objective seeing and evidentiary power of mechanically reproducible images. Whether in its autonomous or utilitarian form, *Gestaltung* countered the differentiation of the senses and their instrumental compartmentalization in modern experience. In so doing it presupposed that experience can be produced, as full and unitary, by embracing and strategically steering a technologically enhanced perception.

While Moholy is rightly viewed as the pioneering theorist of a technologically mediated vision, in this chapter I highlight his endeavor to develop a larger theory of integrated perception that was to be both engendered and manipulated through the principle of montage. In examining the discourse on *Gestaltung* that unfolds in two pathbreaking books he published in 1925 and 1929, *Malerei Fotografie Film* (*Painting Photography Film*) and *Von Material zu Architektur* (*From Material to Architecture*), I will trace his attempt at articulating a mode of vision whose dynamic features were to be extended to the tactile negotiation of three-dimensional objects so as to dynamize matter itself.[2] This endeavor will in turn provide a testing ground for appraising the reach and limits of Moholy's montage procedure. More than a conclusive account of matter in motion, Moholy wound up offering an endorsement of vision's participatory dynamic in shaping the experience of space, that is, "vision in motion," as stated in an essay from 1945.[3] This endeavor was bolstered in part by his awareness of the distinctive narrative potential of old and new visual technologies—an awareness that significantly anticipated the structural homology between narrative and experience described by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s. At issue is an understanding of narrative as a practice predicated on transforming experience through enlivened perception rather than on representing it based on a principle of resemblance.

• Like many fellow artists associated with avant-garde activism, Moholy was an energetic contributor to the journal culture of his day, taking full advantage of the plethora of print venues that provided a flexible conduit for promoting and branding an artist's work. If the pamphlets and manifestos produced within the milieus of futurism, Expressionism, and Dadaism were informed by a categorical rejection of the present that played out in a variety of conceptual and rhetorical registers—vitalist-iconoclastic for futurism, late-Romantic, existentialist for Expressionism, sardonic-nihilist for Dadaism—Moholy's discourse, and that of Constructivism more generally, was driven by a conditional embrace of modern society that called on the artist-engineer-technician to seize on the emancipatory potential of technology and industrial culture while countermanding its harmful applications. This stance accounts for the didactic impulse of Moholy's early essays, which was channeled and refined in the pedagogical agenda he developed as the instructor of the pivotal basic course of the Bauhaus. This agenda spurred the influential series of *Bauhausbücher* Moholy launched in 1925, for which he authored the two books under scrutiny in this chapter.

The first, *Painting Photography Film*, was published in 1925 as volume 8 of the series, and again in 1927 in a revised version.[4] The book contains a comprehensive discussion of the ongoing realignment of the visual arts following the rise of mechanical media. Its conceptual pivot lies in the revolutionary concept of *Gestaltung* that it places at the very heart of visual communication. A mix of manifesto, pedagogical treatise, and theoretical reflection on the role played by old and new visual technologies in contemporary culture, *Painting Photography Film* constitutes a pathbreaking document of the cultural and aesthetic turn associated with the *Neues Sehen* (New Vision) and the aesthetics of the New Objectivity more generally.[5] The book is divided in two sections, of which the first is composed of short theoretical essays focused on specific issues. The second part encompasses a wealth of images accompanied by short descriptive captions that are occasionally augmented by one- or two-line commentaries. While the theoretical essays in the first section frequently reference the images in the second as examples of specific issues and practices, the separation of the two sections suggests that the images ultimately do not require any textual explication to make their point, thus demonstrating the self-standing nature of visual communication. Their breadth and diversity documents Moholy's familiarity with the rapidly growing photographic culture of his time. Beyond examples of "old school" photography patterned on the tradition of painting and samples of innovative New Vision photography, the illustrations include x-rays, camera-less photo-

graphs, photomontages, film stills, and page layouts in which photographic material is used in conjunction with other graphic devices. While Moholy pointedly states that all media and devices should be simultaneously available in meeting the needs of contemporary visual communication, the sense of progression in the arrangement of both theoretical essays and images—from still photography to the dynamism of film, from illusionist styles to abstraction, from straight photography to its combination with a variety of visual prompts—suggests that contemporary mechanical media like photography and especially film are best suited to harness the simultaneity and dynamism of contemporary culture (*Painting* 8–9).

A cursory look at the range of images that make up the second section further raises the question of the volume's actual focus. If the title's paratactic structure promises a discussion of painting, photography, and film that will place all three media on the same plane, the preponderance of photographic images and glaring absence of representations of painting in the second part quickly dispels this presumption. The disproportionate emphasis on contemporary photographic culture finds further confirmation in the theoretical section, raising the question of whether the title's reference to painting may not amount to false advertising. Given that Moholy had originally planned to call the volume "Photography and Film," his seemingly misleading choice for the final title begs the question of why he decided to give painting such prominence. Its inclusion makes sense when one considers the argumentative scope of the theoretical section, whose agenda goes well beyond a simple discussion of the contemporary applications of the three technologies listed in the title. The book's ambition is, rather, to reformulate the very terms that framed current debates on visual culture and thus overhaul the centuries-old Western discourse on vision and visual representation. A discussion of painting was essential to this agenda, as the medium had constituted since the Renaissance the terrain on which this discourse had honed its terms. In addressing the tradition of painting, Moholy followed the lead of his sometime collaborator Theo van Doesburg, whose *Grundbegriffe der neuen gestaltenden Kunst* (*Principles of Neo-plastic Art*) also appeared in 1925 as volume 6 of the Bauhaus series. In his pamphlet, Doesburg drew on examples from music, architecture, and especially painting to unfold his vision of a new art bent on identifying and rearranging the elemental constituents of a medium outside of any instrumental logic. For Doesburg the rapid succession of visual styles inaugurated by impressionism well exemplified this development by progressively jettisoning the instrumentalizing logic of representation and illusionism.[6]

Though Moholy's understanding of *Gestaltung* borrows heavily from Doesburg's neoplasticism, the latter's agenda appears remarkably more nar-

row and conventional when compared with the discourse that unfolds in *Painting*. Though presumably a universal style of expression, *Gestaltung* for Doesburg effectively accounts for the brand of abstraction distinctive for De Stijl, which is portrayed as the telos of a historical development that reaches as far back as Greek antiquity. Moholy by contrast understands *Gestaltung* as the principle that describes the far-reaching reorganization of visual communication brought about by the rise of mechanical technologies. Hence he starts his introduction by directly thematizing the relation between painting and photography while presenting the conceptual shift to *Gestaltung* as a theoretical fait accompli: "The first essential is to clarify the relationship of **photography** to the **painting** of today and to show that the development of technical means has materially contributed to the genesis of new forms in **optical** creation" (*Painting* 8).[7] As the passage's larger context makes clear, the current proliferation of older and newer visual technologies has caused a realignment of visual practices that commands a new distribution of tasks among the available media. Painting, which previously united in itself the domains of utilitarian representation (*Darstellung*) and the autonomous investigation of the expressive qualities of color, has now been relieved of its former representational duties by the advent of photography. This simultaneously frees it up and relegates it to the self-referential exploration of color: "From now on painting can concern itself with **pure colour composition**" (*Painting* 9).[8] If the narrative that portrays painting as both redeemed and displaced by photography resonates with the teleological discourse of many contemporaries, it is important to note that for Moholy this shift does not simply imply that one medium replaces the other in virtue of its technical superiority. In freeing up painting to pursue color as its elemental feature photography did not simply exempt it from the chore of representation (*Darstellung*) but also helped it shed the yoke of the visual regime of the *Abbild*, or the mimetic image, which for centuries held *Darstellung* hostage to the dictates of illusionism and verisimilitude.[9] The reconceptualization of *Darstellung* led in turn to rethinking the whole field of visual production in terms of the creative forming, or *Gestaltung*, of the fundamental elements proper to any given medium. All visual practice, whether it serves the ends of *Darstellung* or the self-referential play with a medium's material properties, could now be redefined as the shaping of the relations that exist among a medium's basic constitutive elements rather than about producing images that abide by a criterion of resemblance.

Hence Moholy's account of contemporary visual media no longer pivots on a discussion of the representational needs they fulfill but instead starts from an analysis of their elemental properties. As a result, a cleft opens up

between painting, which is defined by the calculated arrangement of pigment on a canvas, and photography and film, which are first and foremost about the manipulation of light through specific apparatuses (*Painting* 7–9). As Moholy contends focusing specifically on photography, one task this manipulation can perform entails the exact reproduction of appearances, but this function is by no means the primary one, even if it has provided the rationale for photography in its long-standing rivalry with painting. Defining photography in terms of light manipulation through an apparatus effectively unmoors it from the age-old discourse on mimesis, illusionism, semblance, and verisimilitude that vexed painting in the Western tradition and makes it possible to appraise its value as a specifically modern art form in entirely new ways (*Painting* 33–34). Cast within the conceptual register of *Gestaltung*, this reappraisal makes it possible to foreground vision as a domain of behavior and active intervention predicated on the interaction between perception, technology, and the phenomenal world.[10]

Moholy's discourse on *Gestaltung* is buttressed by belief in a distinctive biological disposition shared by humans. Far from representing a hard scientific concept, the term "biological" functions as a code word for the anthropological utopia of sentient beings whose shared perceptual abilities form the foundation for preconceptual, intersubjective bonds. Indeed, Moholy's discourse consists of a philosophical anthropology conjoined with a phenomenology and aesthetics of media more than an empirically tested pedagogy.[11] Its invocation of a biological substratum is symptomatic of its underlying vitalism, which helps us to understand the peculiar functionalism that drives his vision. This is premised on a view of the modern individual as an amalgam of specialized capabilities and functions that include the operations of consciousness (*Painting* 30–31). Far from being defined by consciousness, however, human existence grounds in a vital expressive impulse (*Ausdruck*) that constitutes the most important actualization of the human biological fundament. *Gestaltung* harnesses this impulse through its enlivening exercise, producing the individual as a holistic being beyond the specialization of distinct abilities and laying the groundwork for a harmonious collective.[12] As an active principle of expressive form-giving, *Gestaltung* thus fulfills the highest biological function of embodied human existence. It unifies the individual by locating its center of gravity in the self-certainty of the sentient body as it interacts with the forms of its environment. While Moholy's vitalism is at loggerheads with the anthropocentrism that portrays human consciousness as the pinnacle of embodied being, it remains deeply humanistic in positing that the holistic individual forms the cornerstone of a harmonic

collective and that human life is endowed with ultimate directionality and perfectibility.

Given its pivotal role as a form of agency that draws from the certainty of the sentient body, *Gestaltung* becomes the object of a pedagogical program that encompasses both absolute and utilitarian applications. In its absolute form, which corresponds to the autonomous domain of art, *Gestaltung* pursues the utmost intensification of pure (i.e., non-goal-oriented) *Ausdruck*: "Art comes into being when expression is at its optimum, i.e., when at its highest intensity it is rooted in biological law, purposeful, unambiguous, pure" (*Painting* 17).[13] The intensity of expression functions as a salutary physical innervation that recenters the individual around an inner sensual core, harmonizing functional capabilities that are otherwise cultivated in separation and producing existence as unitary and holistic beyond the modern compartmentalization of experience (*Painting* 17–18).[14] The utilitarian, or representational/*darstellerisch*, uses of *Gestaltung* call for a closer analysis of the suitability of specific media for various purposes of visual communication. This raises the question of what photography (and by analogy film, which is hurriedly assimilated to the former as its extension in time) have to offer to modern visual culture if their mechanical exactness can no longer be validated through a waning visual regime predicated on representational fidelity. In other words, given that *Gestaltung* is premised on a creative form of seeing that does not valorize the faithful reproduction of appearances, the new media's technological precision can no longer be deployed as a lazy trump card in the old game of illusionism.

What, then, do mechanical media offer? To answer this question Moholy reprises familiar arguments on photography's ability to perfect human vision by technologically supplementing the eye. In so doing he embarks on a discussion of optical truth and objectivity that seems to directly contradict his faith in creative *Gestaltung*. As he argues, the camera offers a "purely optical image," an imprint of appearances that is unavailable to the unaided human eye, which automatically compensates for its own constraints by means of psychological adaptations and rationalizations (*Painting* 28). These have been traditionally sanctioned and codified by regimes of vision bent on closing the gap between what the eye sees and how things are by effectively naturalizing visual convention—the most glaring case in point being one-point perspective. Photography pierces through naturalized convention by offering optical records that may well seem distorted or flawed, yet only appear so because they are themselves free of the distortions of psychological supplementation and cultural tradition. Hence photography offers "the most reli-

able aid to a beginning of objective vision. Everyone will be compelled to see that which is optically true, is explicable in its own terms, is objective, before he can arrive at any possible subjective position" (*Painting* 28).[15]

This passage is remarkable for the terminological slippage that drives the argument and that involves equating the "purely optical image" produced by the camera to an "objective vision" based on the "optically true" inherent in mechanical images. This surreptitiously associates the camera's mechanical perspective with optical truth and objectivity, recalling the sometimes naive valorization of photography's and film's mechanical neutrality that militant artists enjoined in the task of depicting oppressive socioeconomic conditions under capitalism.[16] Yet it quickly becomes clear that the "objective vision" championed by Moholy does not automatically disclose any deeper truth about human existence, let alone support a preordained ideology. Indeed, it constitutes more a point of departure than a goal to aim for:

> **We may say that we see the world with entirely different eyes**. Nevertheless, the total result to date amounts to little more than a visual encyclopaedic achievement. This is not enough. We wish to **produce** systematically, since it is important for life that we create *new relationships.* (*Painting* 29)[17]

Objective seeing, this passage suggests, should not limit itself to piecing together an encyclopedic compendium of the world by sheepishly recording the *Optisch-Wahre* made available by photography, but should rather provide the basis for an activist, productive vision aimed at forging new relations among the elements of the real. The medium's truth is thus emptied of any intrinsic content. The exact records it yields do not have value unless they are subjected to the manipulation of *Gestaltung*. This point is reprised and clarified in the essay that immediately follows, titled "Production Reproduction," which counts among the volume's most ambitious theoretical statements.[18] Whether in the nonutilitarian domain of art or in the applied domain of *Darstellung*,

> *The creations are valuable only when they produce new, previously unknown relationships.* . . . Since production (productive creativity) is primarily of service to human development, we must endeavour to expand the apparatus (means) which has so far been used solely for purposes of reproduction for productive purposes. (*Painting* 30)[19]

Productive *Gestaltung* does not merely reproduce the way things are by registering the imprint of appearances, but rather produces new relations among

their constituent elements. Its value does not so much lie in its ability to disclose objective conditions, as in augmenting the human biological disposition in which the expressive impulse is grounded. At the latest here it becomes clear that for Moholy the actual import of photography's optical objectivity lies not so much in its ability to faithfully document contemporary socioeconomic relations as in the enlivening impact that the creative reshuffling of its optically true records has on humans. In other words, humans can produce, rather than reproduce, the real by manipulating the optically true seeing enabled by photography. In exercising this fundamental expressive impulse they are themselves constituted as whole persons.

• The limitations of this view have often been pointed out. It rests on claims that may well invoke the authority of scientific research yet are often empirically untested and conspicuously unconcerned with addressing specific socioeconomic issues.[20] This disinterest is all the more glaring when measured against Moholy's sweeping claims on the emancipatory role of modern technology. While it is true that such statements were more often authorized by an axiomatic vitalism than a hard-nosed analysis of mass culture under capitalism, Moholy's paradoxical ascription of content-less truth value to mechanical media walks a theoretical tightrope that brings him in good company with discerning theorists like Siegfried Kracauer.[21] Upon closer look, his claim about photography's optical objectivity is prompted less by an overreaching technological enthusiasm than by his groping for an adequate description of the unique effects of visual technologies' force of evidence. The resulting formalism springs from desire to inquire into the interplay between perception and technology without having this inquiry hijacked by an overdetermined reading of technology's function in society. Moholy's call for innervating the human sensory apparatus through montage operations that enlist modern technologies further reflects the avant-garde's preoccupation with harnessing the interplay between perception and technology as a defining feature of modern life—a preoccupation that provided the basis for Benjamin's work on film and montage in the 1930s. Indeed, the montage principle that underlies Moholy's creative seeing directly recalls Benjamin's emphasis on the active production of experience, understood as a reciprocal network of relations that can be reshuffled and renewed through the enlivening manipulation of perception.

This raises the question whether narrative, too, has for Moholy the emphatic role it plays for Benjamin. Moholy's writings contain scattered references to narrative, in both its nominal and adjectival forms, but his use of the

term often appears inconsistent. On the one hand, Moholy lambasts the subordination of film and photography to literary forms of narrative that merely reproduce a conventional understanding of experience. These are accounts whose causal, psychological, or illusionistic motivation imposes on the new visual media a heteronomic logic that eschews the creative exploitation of their foundational elements, rendering them "literary" in the pejorative sense of the world. On the other, he occasionally praises photography as an innovative narrative medium—as in the quotation that opens this chapter, which juxtaposes the striking narrative force of photography ("most striking narrative apparatus") to the waning medium of literature. In other words, literature and narrative overlap functionally in that they offer structured accounts of experience. However, literature, in its pejorative meaning, merely translates a preordained conceptual vision into the expressive language of a given medium, using it in a reproductive, rather than productive, fashion. Desirable narrative, by contrast, enjoins the elemental qualities of given media to produce novel accounts that directly augment experience instead of reproducing existing clichés.[22] The poetics of this desirable narrative mode is governed by a combinatory principle that finds a succinct formulation in Moholy's analysis of the new practice of photomontage—what he calls "photoplastic":[23]

> They [the photoplastics] are pieced together from various photographs and are an experimental method of simultaneous representation; compressed interpenetration of visual and verbal wit; uncanny combinations of the most realistic, imitative means that cross over into an imaginary realm. They can, however, also be concrete, tell a story; more veristic "than life itself." (*Painting* 36)[24]

The composite images Moholy refers to in this passage distinguish themselves for their ability to fuse different temporal and spatial planes in a simultaneous presentation that undoes their conventional ties. This imaginative practice draws its force from the realist/imitative operations it deploys, enjoining both verbal and visual elements in narrative compositions that appear "more veristic 'than life itself.'" The scare quotes around the latter phrase help foreground the terms of the comparison on which the claim about the image's verism relies, namely, narrative and life, raising the question about their mutual relation. Put simply, what does it mean that the images at stake here do not just appear "veristic," that is, vividly evocative of everyday life, but are actually "more veristic than life itself"? How is the notion of verism to be understood if what's at issue is not simply simulating but rather outstripping

life's inherent quality? And in what way does the distinctive verism of photomontages relate to the pictures' ability to narrate?

To delve into these questions it will be helpful to examine one of the photomontages referenced in this section, which features an advertisement for a car pneumatic drawn from the American magazine *Vanity Fair*. It portrays the top portion of an automobile tire whose metal wheel has been replaced by a bird's-eye view of a city street bustling with auto and pedestrian traffic.[25] By manipulating scale and inserting the street view inside the tire the image inverts the conventional relation between means of transportation and street—the latter figuring as a metonymical stand-in for the city itself. The oversized wheel dwarfs the depicted city traffic, suggesting that the automotive traffic enabled by the advertised tire reduces distances and makes it possible to master city life. In other words, rather than contain cars and tires, the city is being contained by them. When viewed against the backdrop of this image, Moholy's suggestion that the story concocted by photomontage can be "more veristic 'than life itself'" is not a statement decrying the maddening relativity of truth but rather points to the basic narrative and rhetorical work that is involved in concisely and effectively presenting a state of affairs—in this case, the circumstance that a good tire makes city life manageable by shrinking space. This state of affairs is not represented following the canons of verisimilitude. One can neither see, nor picture as an available sight, a cityscape nestled inside a tire in order to translate it into a visual representation. Rather, the image literally produces this state of affairs, which may well express a truth of urban life yet is endowed with a verism or literal vividness that surpasses anything one could expect to experience in real life. In heeding Moholy's terminological emphasis on the moment of production one can hardly overstate the importance of the poietic moment he ascribes to montage, which consists in making a story out of ready-made materials—the optically true records of photographic images—that are treated as building blocks ready to be assembled. Thus conceived montage embeds objects in new, surprising contexts and alters the conventional narratives that give them meaning. It does so by harnessing photography's evidentiary power, its "optically true" quality, while relinquishing conventional modes of seeing tied to illusionism. Far from taking away from the force of the photographic image, this operation opens it up to a rich play of signification that yields novel insights into a state of affairs while at the same time foregrounding the moment of narrative construction.[26]

The rhetorical strategies that drive such narratives have no inherently virtuous direction. They can be deployed in the service of both critical and affirmative endeavors, as evidenced in the wealth of examples featured in Mo-

American tyre advertisement Photoplastic : **VANITY FAIR**

111

From László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting Photography Film*, 1925, 1927, trans. Janet Seligman (London: Lund Humphreys, 1969).

holy's photobook, which range from advertisement to satire, from reportage to political propaganda.[27] If these narratives possess any emancipatory potential, this does not lie in their specific ideological message but rather in their ability to mobilize recipients and compel them to actively ascribe meaning to the composition. Moholy endorsed the images' open-endedness even as he was fully aware that their effects could not be fully calculated and controlled. In a gloss on a photomontage ad for a gardening exhibition published in *Gefesselter Blick* (*Captivated Gaze*), a 1930 anthology of programmatic statements by some of Europe's cutting-edge graphic designers, he praised the visibly assembled landscape it portrayed, whose sense of depth is not created by the conventional means of one-point perspective but is instead achieved by cleverly juxtaposing fragments of different scales.[28] This strategy produces an evocative landscape whose nonillusionistic quality leaves ample latitude for the artist's imagination without diminishing its realist force. More important, the impression of a landscape as a unitary, coherent object is not achieved through the synthetizing spatial articulation of one-point perspective, but is actively produced by the eye's ability to roam the image's discrete elements. In the absence of the visual hierarchies created by the devices of perspective (figure/ground relations; light contrasts; conventional compositional patterns), the eye is compelled to forge its own path and piece together its own account of the overall image. Moholy's gloss suggests that the artist can direct this activity to some extent, but also makes clear that the roaming is open-ended and ultimately uncontrollable. Photomontage thus construes seeing as an act of forging a path through the visible that entails choosing among multiple options and accounts. This is in essence a narrative act that fuses perception and evaluation, a mode of active behavior by which observers creatively interact with their environment.[29]

• The reshuffling of elements enabled by montage does not stop at the manipulation of photographic material within a single image but rather heralds a radical reorganization of the visual field—in Moholy's case, the book's double-page spreads—that jettisons traditional rules of encoding and freely juxtaposes the semiotic codes of disparate elements, including mechanically reproduced images, type, iconic symbols, and blank and filled spaces. Moholy labeled this synergic aggregate "typophoto," presenting it as the epitome of a new literary form whose communicative force resided in the simultaneous presentation of visual, conceptual, associative, and synthetic elements:

László Moholy-Nagy, advertisement for a garden exhibition. Photomontage. In *Gefesselter Blick*, ed. Heinz Rasch and Bodo Rasch (1930), 71.
(Courtesy of Hattula Moholy-Nagy. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

> The form, the rendering is constructed out of the optical and associative relationships: into a visual, associative, conceptual, synthetic continuity: into the typophoto as an unambiguous rendering in an *optically* valid form. . . . The typophoto governs the new tempo of the new visual literature. (*Painting* 40)[30]

In asserting that the optical validity of visual compositions depends on exploiting the inherent properties of graphic elements, this passage affirms a vision of graphic design that is axiomatic for the New Typography movement, a loose group of artists that sought to revitalize typographical aesthetics by jettisoning the conventions that had governed book design since Gutenberg—most notably the primacy of linear, symmetrical arrangements and the functional separation between text and image.[31]

It may seem counterintuitive that Moholy would ascribe unambiguous force to compositions whose multilayeredness and overdetermination he clumsily described as "visual-associative-conceptual-synthetic continuity." This claim clashes with his belief in the open-ended, active involvement required of recipients in interacting with montage compositions, which of necessity produce multivalent readings. To be sure, the assertion about the typophoto's semantic and representational straightforwardness served the rhetorical function of setting the new visual literature off from traditional literary practice, which for Moholy was limited by the subjectivism and interpretive ambiguity of verbal language. In appropriating montage compositions for an ostensibly more effective literary modality the goal was also to overcome their association with their early antinarrative deployment in the disruptive practice of Dadaism. But the question remains of whether there is something substantive to the typophoto's mélange of language and visual devices that would justify the assertion of its superiority as a new visual literature. At issue is particularly the question of how to account for the specific "unambiguousness" of visual communication Moholy ascribes to the new literary mode. For him this is a question of the new visual ecology that befits a modern environment marked by film, neon advertisement, and the simultaneity of disparate sensuous experiences (*Painting* 38). It calls for a mode of communication that no longer relies exclusively on the resources of conceptual/argumentative discourse but rather fully deploys the visual qualities of the book page:

> Gutenberg′s typography, which has endured almost to our own day, moves exclusively in the linear dimension. The intervention of the photographic process has extended it to a new dimensionality, recognised today as total. The preliminary field in this work was done by the illustrated papers, posters and by display printing. (*Painting* 39)[32]

As this passage suggests, the use of photographic material adds full dimensionality to the planarity of the printed page, exploding the linearity and putative transparency of Gutenberg's typography and spatializing the experience of the book. More specifically, the photograph brings depth to type by inviting its reception as a visible element and thus encouraging the plastic reception of all elements on the page. This gives the new literature a total dimensionality that matches the full dimensionality of life, producing dynamic effects that complement and augment verbal/conceptual modes of communication.[33]

The implicit criterion of correspondence that frames this argument raises

the question of whether the valorization of the page's new multidimensionality does not ultimately entail a return of illusionism, given that the photograph's spatializing effects ultimately lie in its ability to evoke a naturalistic sense of volume and space in spite of its flatness. To be sure, illusionism was not a problem per se for Moholy but only became such when placed in the service of literary narratives that failed to valorize a medium's expressive elements and instead used them to represent a preconceived content. Moreover, the illusionistic use of photography suggested by this passage neither relegates it to the role of illustration nor serves compositions that abide by the canons of one-point perspective. Nevertheless the idea that deploying photography in montage compositions is ultimately about evoking the sense of an object's plasticity make them seem far less revolutionary than Moholy's rhetoric would have it. Does Moholy's productivist aesthetics ultimately aim at the visual simulation of space and its dynamic experience, even if not one abiding by the canons of illusionism? How deep and innovative is the perceptual amplification elicited by these compositions in the end? To answer these questions it will be helpful to examine the elaborate example of typophoto featured at the end of *Painting* against the agenda outlined in Moholy's theoretical reflections on the new visual literature. As I will show, while the typophoto certainly deploys illusionistic representation in varying registers, it also goes beyond the illusionistic rendering of space and time by more abstractly thematizing the permutations of perception in the interplay among different technologies and objects. This has important ramifications for Moholy's appraisal of montage as a principle of storytelling.

• *Dynamic of the Metropolis*, the typophoto at issue here, marks the culmination of the visual samples featured in *Painting Photography Film*. It contains a scenario for a film on the modern metropolis that stretches over several two-page spreads.[34] With his prefacing comments Moholy embeds the project in contemporary debates on the narrative turn of commercial cinema (*Painting* 122–23), siding with those early film theorists who chided narrative cinema for squandering the potential inherent in the medium in order to peddle shopworn literary tales.[35] Accordingly, Moholy insists that the film described by the typophoto does not aim to teach or moralize, let alone narrate. Its goal is instead to explore the medium's optical impact by concentrating on its inherent properties. In order to do so the film does not center solely on abstract perceptual experiences (in the manner, say, of Hans Richter's *Rhythmus* shorts), but rather draws on two fundamental experiences that are distinctive both of film as a medium and of life in the metropolis, namely,

movement/speed and light. In positing the congruence between film and metropolitan life, the film (as presented in the sketch) weaves together a complex network of motifs—industrial sites, mechanized means of transportation, sports, synchronized dancing (Tiller Girls), the circus, and predatory animals (a tiger, a lynx, a lion). The whole suggests an account of the modern metropolis as an environment that draws on modern technology to both unleash and harness irrepressible natural energies.

The scenario's two-page layouts comprise a montage of images, abstract and iconic signs, and textual inserts arranged in an irregular grid of intersecting horizontal and vertical lines. The grid's irregularity prevents the conventional scanning of the page from left to right and top to bottom, occasionally suggesting multiple paths of reception. For the most part, however, its arrangement seeks to control the eye's roaming by directing it along specific paths, albeit not linear and predictable ones. The verbal inserts fall into two categories set off by different fonts. The great majority of them, printed in a fairly large sans serif font, describe lists of objects and sights that make up the film's montage of images, thus complementing the images appearing on the page. The few verbal inserts printed in a smaller serif font contain commentaries on the anticipated effect of specific images or visual arrangements.

Both images and verbal inserts are juxtaposed within a paratactic arrangement that eschews explicit conceptual links and instead relies on the allusive iteration of specific visual and verbal motifs: the refractory properties of translucent surfaces like glass and water; the juxtaposition of extreme frog's- and bird's-eye perspectives; the energy, dynamism, and fierceness of metropolitan life as embodied by sport, dance, and the military. In many ways this allusive procedure recalls the futurist agenda of a "stringless imagination" predicated on juxtaposing disparate sense perceptions while dispensing with conventional discursive connections. Yet Moholy's attention to the modulation of perception in different media goes well beyond the associative model developed by the futurists, which ultimately relies on illusionism, ekphrasis, and onomatopoiea to simulate the speed and immediacy of the modern city.[36] Unlike the futurists, Moholy was interested in foregrounding and exploiting the limited perceptual overlap shared by the media he was dealing with—the moving image and the printed page—in order to both shape and thematize perception. At the heart of this operation are the disparate tasks the sketch has to perform in order to effectively relay the convergence between filmic medium and metropolitan life, which is the film's main objective. First, the typophoto has to present the film's visual content and through it the dynamism of metropolitan life not primarily as illusionistic representation, but rather as an enlivening encounter between the cinematic medium

From László Moholy-Nagy, *Dynamic of the Metropolis*. Typophoto. In *Painting Photography Film*, 1925, 1927; trans. Janet Seligman (London: Lund Humphreys, 1969).

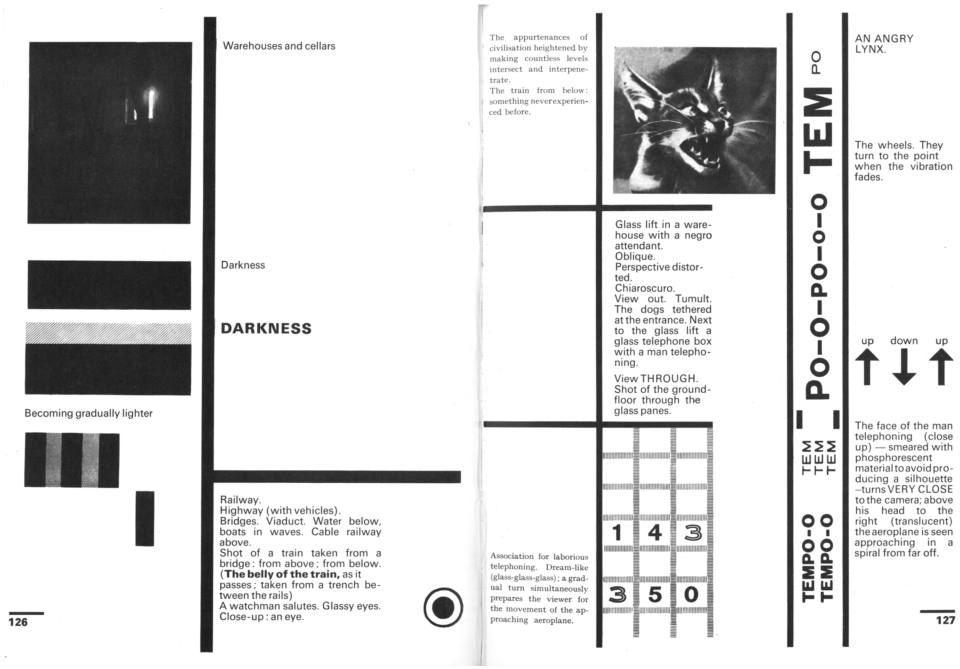
(Courtesy of Hattula Moholy-Nagy. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

and the human perceptual apparatus. Second, the sketch needs to do so while taking into account that the material properties of its own medium are very different from those of film, as the printed page lacks the linear temporality of rolling film and the fundamental experience of images as projected light. In other words, the typophoto's specific potential for synergic interaction with the human perceptual apparatus needs to be grasped and exploited. Hence Moholy's typophoto does not simply attempt to transpose filmic strategies onto the book medium, but rather tries to achieve those effects by reckoning with the perceptual coordinates of the printed page. This manipulation of the specific perceptual mechanisms of a given medium lies at the heart of Moholy's ideal of a new visual literature and its montage structure.

The typophoto's first image, which presumably is the film's first image, describes "a metal construction in the making," according to the caption that occupies the bottom-left corner of the cell enclosing the image. This is at first

an animated sequence of moving dots and lines that fades into the image of a zeppelin under construction. In the section directly underneath, a verbal insert points to a "crane in motion during the building of a house Photographs: from below from above." An arrow that crosses the section transversally underscores the direction of the motion. The last section at the bottom of the page contains the image of a brick wall; the caption underneath specifies that the theme here is once again motion: "Hoisting bricks Crane again: in circular motion" (*Painting* 124). The theme of movement established on this first page is further developed on the facing page, whose elongated segments suggest that the horizontal reading practiced at the top of the page should be replaced by vertical scanning. Movement is here highlighted by visually juxtaposing a racing car and a house as specified in a verbal insert. The pent-up, kinetic energy of the metropolis is further symbolized through the image of a tiger that "paces furiously round and round its cage," as specified by the image's caption. The irresistible movement of the urban environment, suggested by the up-and-down motion of railway signals, ends up infecting the houses themselves, which become part of the city dynamism thanks to the movement of the camera. The accelerating motion produces "a FLICKERING," as the long caption states (*Painting 125*). Movement becomes light, as the blurring of the racing houses turns into sheer flicker.

This transition introduces the second main theme—the experience of light—that is at the center of the third page. The page comprises two vertical sections of unequal size. The column at left contains the image of a cellar whose darkness is made more pronounced by a faint electric light in the background. Below there are two abstract images of horizontal and vertical lines whose contrast is meant to suggest "becoming gradually lighter" (*Painting* 126). Light is thus at first introduced by its almost complete absence in the cellar, followed by its gradual return. The larger vertical section at right is divided in two by a horizontal line about one-fourth from the bottom of the page. The bottom segment contains a description of what one will see once light is restored, reminding the viewer that light is indeed the enabling medium of vision.[37] The top portion of the right-hand column contains captions describing the image on the left-hand side as a cellar and the abstract images as darkness—the word "darkness" is printed in black twice in different font sizes against a white background. This is an important move that dramatizes Moholy's attempt at evoking the effect of light in film while taking into consideration that the medium he is using operates under very different perceptual conditions. The image of the cellar needs a caption because its darkness makes it difficult to identify what the photograph depicts. But the black horizontal lines that enclose the thinner white and gray lines right



From László Moholy-Nagy, *Dynamic of the Metropolis*. Typophoto. In *Painting Photography Film*, 1925, 1927, trans. Janet Seligman. (London: Lund Humphreys, 1969).

(Courtesy of Hattula Moholy-Nagy. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

underneath especially need captioning. Unlike the image above, this is not a photograph but an abstract pictorial representation that both doubles and comments on the image of the cellar by suggesting that dark is not an absolute quality, but is rather an effect of the contrast with light. This contrast is itself not absolute, but rather arises in the moment of perception (as documented by the fact that our vision adapts in time to what it first perceives as darkness if there is enough residual light in the environment). The perceptual contrast is produced on the static page through a juxtaposition of black and white that is doubled in the column at right, which sets the word for dark in black against a white background. This abstract representation serves to highlight that at issue on this page is not light per se, but rather the perceptual contrast of which light is an effect. The return of light schematized at bottom in turn emphasizes that what happens when one perceives light is

not an elimination of darkness, but rather a shift in a relation between what we perceive as dark and light.

To draw the conclusion from this brief analysis of the typophoto's first two spreads: light and movement, which are at the center of the film described in the typophoto, are what the scenario cannot directly simulate because of the printed page's material constraints. Hence movement is evoked with a variety of devices, which include textual inserts containing the description of distinct shots, the ekphrastic use of type (the word "tempo" printed in various font sizes and repeated different times in order to suggest different speeds), and graphically foregrounding the movement elicited by steering the viewer's gaze through a specific arrangement of the visual field. Similar devices lend themselves to summoning the theme of light as perceived contrast: verbal prompts referencing light and darkness; the illusionism of the photograph of the cellar; and the contrast between black, gray, and white on the page. In this array of devices, the deployment of strategies that both thematize and elicit perception directly speaks to the question that prompted my discussion of the typophoto, namely, what constitutes the full dimensionality and unambiguous directness of the new visual literature Moholy champions. It is significant that the typophoto does not merely reproduce movement and light, film's distinctive features, in an illusionistic fashion, but also conjures them by producing a correlate of the body's physiological response to film that relies on print's distinctive perceptual qualities. The endeavor to activate perception by reckoning with and thematizing the perceptual constraints of the printed page presupposes a type of mimicry that goes beyond the realism of the photographic image or other modes of illusionist depiction in order to directly enlist the body's physiological reaction. In other words, what's at stake here is not the illusionist imitation of film's effects but rather the body's own mimicry of a physiological response analogous to that elicited by film but explicitly produced under the perceptual conditions of the printed medium. In this way the scenario's montage narrative aims to endow both the "story about the film" and the "story told by the film" with the force of evidence—a principle that functionally replaces the traditional demand of verisimilitude or *Naturtreue*. To put it differently, one could say that Moholy's ideal of endowing the page with full dimensionality is ultimately about the dimensionality of the body as it moves in space, not about simulating absent space or absent light on the printed page.

It is apparent that the literary mode circumscribed by this practice is not primarily centered on transposing discursive strategies onto visual media, let alone relaying a plot, but rather circles around presenting a state of affairs whose evidentiary force draws from the optimal activation of an individual's

perceptual apparatus. In this phenomenological model, narrative arises from the encounter between a recipient and an artifact. The artifact's material properties lend themselves to manipulating perception and steering reception through a montage procedure that enlists perception actively in the creation of a narrative assemblage. In the end the "clarity" and "optical validity" praised by Moholy depend on exploiting the self-certainty of the perceiving body. The sense of immediacy elicited by this procedure that does not hinge on the medium's effacement but instead relies on the evidence of bodily response in the encounter with the artifact. Endowing the page with full dimensionality thus entails setting vision in motion through its encounter with the page's perceptual qualities. Vision within this framework is not about relaying images to a contemplative interiority that organizes and makes sense of them through automatized protocols involving intellectual and cultural adaptation. Moholy turns vision inside out, makes it into an outwardly oriented behavior that is trained and stimulated by contemporary conditions and actively shapes the event of perception. In so doing he anticipates Benjamin's celebration of a technologically enhanced, tactile vision that counters the isolating, contemplative modality entrenched in Western culture. Benjamin's tactile vision involves being touched through the primary stimulation of perceptual patterns that are not randomly elicited but are integral part of quotidian modernity—in Moholy's case this entails correlating the ways light and speed are experienced in the metropolis and in film.

One may well argue that Moholy's discourse on the new visual literature promises far more than his typophoto actually delivers. In the end, *Dynamic of the Metropolis* relies heavily on verbal descriptions as well as illusionist and ekphrastic strategies, and only to a small degree on the more active, creative seeing predicated on the direct manipulation of elemental perceptual experiences. One could also debate how successful the artifact ultimately is in producing the effects it aims for, both in terms of "the visual-associative-conceptual-synthetic continuity" praised by Moholy as the typophoto's distinctive achievement and in terms of the force of evidence that presumably flows from it. More generally, one may speculate about the communicative limitations of a strategy that hinges solely in thematizing perception. While these are legitimate questions, demonstrating the effectiveness of Moholy's typophoto is not what my analysis was after. Rather my interest lay in reconstructing Moholy's understanding of a participatory vision that can be enlisted in the creation of narrative via the principle of montage. This hinges on an understanding of mimesis as the ability to produce specific bodily experiences outside of the logic of illusionism. At stake is a modality of vision that is not about simulating the sensory experience of touch through illu-

sionist representations, which would still presuppose an interiority that functions as a receptacle for images. Moholy' vision is rather turned inside out by the immediacy of perceptual contact. This outward movement engenders a participatory engagement with the world that paradoxically recenters the individual. The question for Moholy becomes how to extend the synergic and dynamic features of this visual modality to a more general engagement with sensory perception. To address this central question I now turn to *From Material to Architecture*, which I will read as a sequel of sorts to *Painting Photography Film*.

• The last volume of the *Bauhausbücher* edited by Moholy, *From Material to Architecture* reflects on his five-year engagement as the instructor of the Bauhaus's foundational *Vorkurs* (preliminary or basic course). As intimated by the title, under Moholy the course aimed to train students to work imaginatively with basic materials, starting from elementary sensory experiences and progressing on to complex tasks involving three-dimensional objects dynamically positioned in space. Published in 1929 shortly after Moholy left the Bauhaus, the book draws on his instructional practice with volumetric artifacts to offer a comprehensive account of the transformative power of *Gestaltung*, thus fully laying out a vision that was only sketchily outlined in *Painting Photography Film*. In so doing it also reckons with the new orientation toward industry-friendly, affordable design promoted at the Bauhaus by Hannes Meyer, who had replaced Martin Gropius as the school's director in 1928. Moholy was likely thinking of Meyer in his broadsides against a narrowly commercial functionalism that enjoins technology in entrenching the modern division of labor and compartmentalization of an individual's faculties. *From Material to Architecture* counters this development with a plea for enlisting old and new technologies in fostering a person's holistic growth by augmenting her fundamental biological dispositions and perceptual abilities. In acknowledging the historical entwinement between technology and perception, the book makes this very interplay the basis for a pedagogically structured engagement with materials that starts from the immediate experience of touch. This focus helps to explain the book's idiosyncratic argumentative frame and curious mix of technological enthusiasm and unbending formalism, which exempts itself from discussing the concrete applications and wider socioeconomic ramifications of the practices it outlines.[38]

The volume's agenda emerges most clearly in its embrace of an emphatic notion of art as the domain of a noninstrumental functionalism. Art, as the most incisive language of the senses and the source of a sensuously discern-

ible order, encompasses practices that are indispensable for society in that they spring from and strengthen an immediate connection among individuals (*New Vision* 67; *Von Material* 73). Its pedagogical task lies in training the senses to recognize the perceptual qualities of given materials for the purpose of their manipulative reproduction based on a fundamental impulse to expression (*Ausdruck*) (*Von Material* 21–32; *New Vision* 23–34). This understanding of *Ausdruck* closely resonates with the phenomenological anthropology of the day. Accordingly, expression is not about the externalization of an inner content, but rather involves the calibrated interplay between perception, technology, and the forms of the phenomenal world that allows for shaping experience in novel ways. In *From Material to Architecture* the task of harnessing *Ausdruck* starts from the synergic experience relayed by the organs of touch, which Moholy valorizes as the simultaneous conduits of a range of sensations—pressure, temperature, puncture, vibration (*New Vision* 24; *Von Material* 21). Touch thus comes to symbolize a desirable mode of engagement with the embodied world that is predicated on direct contact and allows for both internally differentiated and simultaneous perceptual grasp. In making explicit the link that ties *From Material* to key concerns of *Painting*, Moholy credits photography's meticulous and differentiated rendering of the phenomenal world with helping to foster the present "tactile culture."[39] In generalizing this insight, he points to the new forms of expression produced by the mimetic reshuffling of tactile sensations facilitated by old and new technologies:

> The assembling of tactile values, arranged purposely, gives a new medium of expression just as colors or tones are no longer present as single color or tone effects if placed in a known mutual relationship (or unknown, but with a definite purpose). They are transposed into something meaningful, into an organism, which radiates force and which has the power of releasing a new feeling of life. (*New Vision* 27)[40]

The imitative engagement relayed by touch is not based on aggregating sense impressions by means of an additive procedure. Instead it aims to amplify perception by allowing the senses to play in unison, engendering a new whole endowed with life's innervating intensity. At the heart of this operation is a montage procedure that hinges on rearranging the relations among available sensations, thereby creating new relational patterns, or *Gestalten*, that acquire organic quality as they coalesce in the event of perception. Moholy finds this instantaneous and simultaneous grasp epitomized in the montage principle of film technology: "Hence film—and more generally the montage principle—

creates an exercise in lightning quick observation of simultaneous existences on all levels of creativity."[41] The ultimate aim, for film as for any mode of creative engagement, is not the imitation of available experiential patterns, whether as representations of objects or states of mind/feelings, but rather the forging of new patterns as the precondition of a new reality. In training perception to apprehend new forms, art augments the range of available experiential patterns beyond the ones entrenched in the contemporary world.[42]

The simultaneous grasp produced by the interplay between material medium and perception allows for setting the material in motion according to Moholy's vitalist vision. The ultimate goal is to produce a dynamic experience of space that contributes to fostering the dynamism of universal life.[43] In moving beyond the fixity of planary compositions—which, incidentally, was the goal of *Painting*'s typophoto—the point is not to produce static volumetric objects but rather dynamic space, understood as consisting of an intricate web of relations suspended in a state of fluctuating equilibrium: "Space creation is today much more an interweaving of parts of spaces, which are anchored for the most part in invisible, but clearly traceable relations, moving in all directions, and in the fluctuating play of forces" (*New Vision* 184–88).[44] To produce space by means of *Gestaltung* thus entails grasping and reshuffling the relations among existing spatial units, in a movement that is at once produced by innervated perception and reinforces it in return. Dynamization thus serves two interconnected ends. It activates the recipient, engendering a participatory attitude. In so doing it binds individuals dynamically to their environment, producing experience as unitary and collective. In epitomizing the dynamism of flowing life, dynamic space is at once an end in itself and the greatest aim of all actions.

This begs the question of how to translate this lofty vision into a concrete program, no less a pedagogy that could serve both the students of the Bauhaus and the consumers at which their design was aimed. As Moholy acknowledges, the shift from mass to movement that is required to dynamize objects necessitates a "sublimation of the material" that is premised on broadening the conventional understanding of volume beyond the idea of a measurable, three-dimensional mass to encompass the volumetric expansion of light in space (*Von Material* 167).[45] In other words, for Moholy the degree-zero of volume lies in the three-dimensionality of objects as perceivable by the eye. This in turn allows him to equate the effects of volumetric mass to those of three-dimensional light projections. In so doing he effectively reduces the dynamic engagement with space to vision's ability to grasp and alter its fundamental relations: "Sculpture is the path from material volume to virtual volume and from tactile grasp to visual grasp" (*New Vision* 132; trans-

lation modified).[46] The conceptual slippage between mass and its visualization as a three-dimensional object in space is further enabled by Moholy's generic understanding of tactility as the simultaneous, dynamic grasp of disparate sensations, which allows for placing the ostensive simultaneity of vision at a par with the simultaneous grasp of perceptions mediated by different senses (auditory, olfactory, etc.)

In sum, Moholy assumes that vision is equivalent to, and thus an adequate substitute for, a layered, multisensory grasp of three-dimensional objects. The spatial dynamization he advocates can thus be defined in terms of the enlivening interplay between vision and light as they both move through and, by this movement, shape three-dimensional space. It is thus not surprising that the last section of *From Material to Architecture*, which once again links the dynamic arrangement of space to the optimization of human perception, appears dominated by examples that entail enhanced vision, either as the new aerial views afforded by the airplane or as the visual foreshortening produced by the penetrating light of neon advertisement. By the same token, the images that conclude this last section are all about capturing, through vision, the at once massive and dynamic quality of a modern urban environment transformed by technology. The last one, titled "Architecture," particularly serves to dramatize the endpoint of the progression intimated in the volume's title. At the same time it provides a visual document for Moholy's understanding of architecture as a dynamic interpenetration of space. The image consists of the superimposed negatives of two massive buildings whose luminous silhouettes seem to float into one another. The accompanying caption highlights the illusion of spatial interpenetration that is produced by the overlapping negatives, offering it as an experiential paradigm that will perhaps be realized by a future generation through the architectural deployment of glass (*New Vision* 204; *Von Material* 236). One of the volume's last sentences provides further commentary on its effects and desirability: "The inside and the outside, the upper and the lower, fuse into unity" (*New Vision* 202).[47] This dynamic, experiential fusion of spatial coordinates in a fluctuating whole is tantamount to taking charge of space in Moholy's utopian vision.

In the end, Moholy's agenda of dynamizing space is actually about mobilizing vision in shaping the experience of space. In this way the endpoint of *From Material* takes the inquiry of *Painting* full circle. If *Painting*'s discourse was about achieving tactility in vision, that is, a simultaneous and layered grasp that could dramatize the full dimensionality of space in the calibrated encounter between the eye and the page, *From Material* expands this inquiry to the multidimensionality of touch as the basis for the engagement with

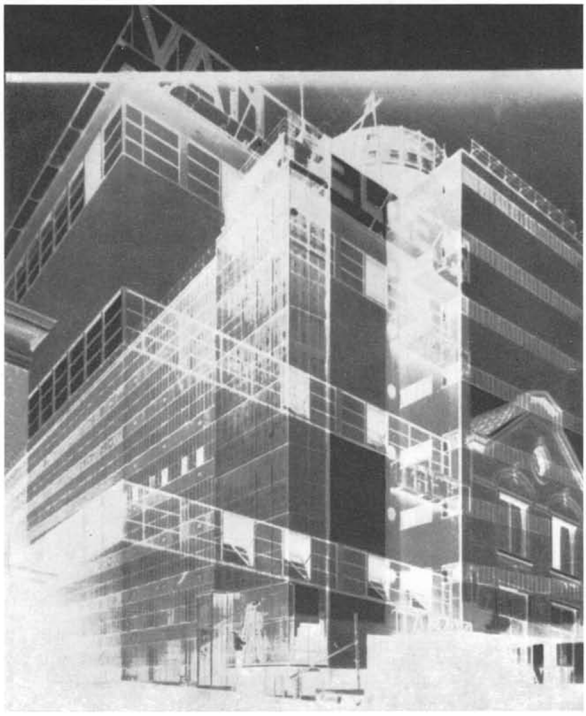


foto: jan kamman / schiedam

abb. 209 „architektur"

aus zwei übereinanderkopierten fotos (negativ) entsteht die illusion räumlicher durchdringung, wie die nächste generation sie erst — als glasarchitektur — in der wirklichkeit vielleicht erleben wird.

236

From László Moholy-Nagy, *Von Material zu Architektur* (*From Material to Architecture*), 1929.

volumetric objects. Yet the imperative to dynamize space that drives Moholy's discourse is so patterned on vision that it ends up assimilating the complex perceptual dynamics of bodies in space to vision's perceptual coordinates. Rather than actively harness the stratified experience of the organs of touch, which is the task with which *From Material* begins, Moholy substitutes vision's synthetic grasp for it in an operation that leaves actual touch behind. In this respect, it is no coincidence that his final remarks on the architecture of the future best describe his own abstract sculptures, whether made of light or solid material, that are meant to engage vision rather than be touched. One can legitimately ask whether these artifacts truly offer a blueprint for complementing existing space by enhancing its livability or altogether postulate its overcoming instead.

While Moholy fails to deliver a plausible account of a desirable, dynamic engagement with space that substantively involves all the senses, he still offers a provocative understanding of participatory vision as an active behavior that turns the individual outwardly. This behavior is narrative in a broad sense of the term, in that it hinges on forging new relations among the perceptual elements of the phenomenal world so as to construct novel versions of it. As dramatized by the assembled landscape featured in *Gefesselter Blick*, this engagement exploits the mimicry made possible by new visual technologies like photography, whose exactness is tied to a new type of immediacy, one that springs from the self-evidence of the perceiving body rather than from the force of self-emanating truth. Photomontage thus both dramatizes and encourages vision's narrative ability to forge a path through the visible so as to reconfigure its relations. The question of how to harness this participatory vision in negotiating the truthfulness and exactness ascribed to the photographic medium will be further explored in the next chapter, which focuses on the narrative strategies developed in exemplary picture books of the Weimar period.

5 • Narrative Resemblance and the Modernist Photobook

It would be difficult to overstate the impact of technologies of mechanical reproduction on the visual culture of Weimar Germany, as a flood of images from photography and film upended conventional models of cultural literacy following the media boom of the early 1920s. Within this context film has attracted far greater attention than photography because of its explosive potential as a mimetic medium that can convey a sense of unfolding time and engender fresh modes of collective reception. Yet the photographic image was an even more ubiquitous and flexible instrument of visual dissemination because of the unprecedented proliferation of newspapers and illustrated magazines. Contemporary debates on the use and value of photography initially went through the moves of a conventional aesthetic discourse bent on asking whether photography could claim a place among the arts or should not rather count as mere technology, but eventually ran aground on a seemingly intractable aporia. On the one hand, photography emerged as the medium that beat painting at its own game of verisimilitude, thanks to its ability to reproduce appearances in an exact fashion. On the other, this exactness turned out to be a skin-deep affair that lent itself to all manner of ideological manipulation. This aporia, it soon became clear, was not inherent in photography itself, but instead was produced by the discourse's own outdated conceptual terms, which equated mimesis—the faithful representation of the experiential world—with verisimilitude and illusionism and placed the label of truthfulness over the whole equation.[1]

Photography's aporia begged the question of how to harness the medium's aptitude for exact reproduction without conflating exactitude with truth. This question engendered a fresh exploration of vision and its technological mediations in a variety of practices ranging from New Vision photography to photomontage. While Dada artists had already deployed photogra-

phy's realism in ideologically charged photomontages during the war, postwar newspapers and photomagazines enlisted photography as but one powerful tool in a semiotic arsenal that assembled a variety of visual and verbal devices—type, iconic symbols, the manipulation of space and scale besides titles, captions, and other textual inserts—to produce highly complex narratives. In this montage of codes and devices, the realism of the undoctored photograph was often used as a glossy veneer of documentary truth overlaid upon the rhetorical moment of narrative. In reflecting on this development, key theorists of the visual came to identify this rhetorical moment—and the montage aesthetics required to unleash it—as the repository of photography's truth. This chapter traces the surprising turns of this investigation as it unfolded in the modernist photobook, a hybrid genre that placed photography's realism in the service of narratives crafted through montage. At issue are especially the pedagogical programs that often underwrote the photobooks, and that aimed to train vision in negotiating the truth claim of mechanical images. In juxtaposing Albert Renger-Patzsch's celebrated photobook *Die Welt ist schön* (*The World Is Beautiful*, 1928) to the scrapbook assembled by montage artist Hannah Höch around 1933–34, I will outline two diverging models for enlisting resemblance, the staple of a traditional aesthetics of verisimilitude, to manipulate the relation between an image and its referent.

• At the beginning of his 1927 essay on photography Siegfried Kracauer subjects a hypothetical reader of illustrated magazines to a test designed to illustrate how images function in the complex interplay of knowledge, time, and memory. When asked to identify two photographs, one of a famous diva and the other of the reader's own grandmother as a young woman, the reader, Kracauer surmises, will readily recognize the diva but puzzle at his grandmother's image. Because he has no personal recollection of the grandmother's youthful appearance, Kracauer explains, the reader will be at pains to draw a connection between the photograph and the image he can access through memory, while he can promptly recognize the diva because he has encountered her innumerable times in the media. In other words, the viewer's ability to recognize the diva's photograph depends on his previous knowledge of the original's appearance as mediated through a variety of sources. Her photographic image thus functions as an "optical sign" that can activate preexisting knowledge or memory; without this aid it would be unable to generate any insight about the diva. By contrast, the grandmother's photograph appears as a "ghost," a spectral sign devoid of semantic resonance, be-

cause her appearance as a young girl belongs to a past that is inaccessible to the viewer's memory.[2]

As Kracauer further maintains, the spatial continuum of the instant depicted in the grandmother's photograph comes across as a medley of meticulously captured details—the crinoline, the old-fashioned gown, the hair tied up in a knot—that are eerily devoid of sense because they cannot be placed in any meaningful context. Rather than convey a "knowledge of the original," these pedantically reproduced details depict "the spatial configuration of a moment."[3] In a clever discursive move Kracauer turns the tables on the pictures he has been comparing, using the blank meticulousness of the grandmother's photograph to indict the photographic images that circulate in the illustrated magazines. The fastidious reproduction of images for which viewers lack meaningful references substitutes the exact but empty depiction of objects, places, and individuals for substantive information. The blank precision of the photograph is thus elevated to a standard of truth that preempts and replaces the work of memory and the historical narratives that are key to thoughtful interpretation and judgment. As visual saturation becomes synonymous with thoroughness and truth, Kracauer concludes, the glut of images that propel the illustrated magazines succeeds in obfuscating the world it purports to reveal.[4]

Kracauer's indictment of the role played by photography in the print media is echoed by Bertolt Brecht, who repeatedly denounced the evidentiary claim of the photographic material used by the press as empty and dishonest, noting that faithfully reproducing the appearance of objects seldom provides valuable insights into a given state of affairs. In a laudatory gloss on the photo-reportage of the left-leaning *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* Brecht went a step further as he chided the bourgeois press for the pernicious misuse of images in the contemporary photo-reportage, concluding that "the camera can lie just as well as the typesetting machine."[5] Brecht's statement targets the deception perpetrated by the mainstream press, which in his eyes deliberately exploited the evidentiary force of photography in order to conceal the truth of a state of affairs. Yet it is not immediately clear what one should make of his claim that the camera itself has the ability to lie, as opposed to the deliberate manipulation one could ascribe to the photographer or the editor of the illustrated magazine. In other words, what does it mean for the camera to lie when it produces nonposed, undoctored photographs?

To answer this question it will be helpful to first flip it around and ask what it means for the camera to tell the truth, or what is the nature of the truth the camera tells. In his analysis of the different semiotic layers that intersect in the photographic image, Clive Scott draws on a long line of reflection on pho-

tography's authenticity to maintain that the basic truth claim of the photograph lies in its indexical status, specifically, in the moment of contiguity that ties the photographer, and by implication the photograph, to what is being photographed. To use Kracauer's example, someone took a picture of the grandmother, and that encounter, which is materially inscribed in the momentary exposure of light-sensitive film stock, grounds the authenticity of the photographic document. But this authenticity, Scott argues in paraphrasing Roland Barthes, simply boils down to the statement "This was then"; it lacks any temporal depth or extension.[6] In other words, if the photograph succeeds in making the past present by providing an unassailable record of it, it does so by witnessing to an instant that is utterly singular and does not allow for duration. Because it does not automatically conjure up a temporal sequence into which it could be inserted, this instant is essentially antinarrative. In the case of Kracauer's grandmother, there exists a temporal gulf between the viewer and his grandmother's youthful portrait that the photograph per se is unable to bridge. Or, to put it differently, the image confronts the viewer with the statement "This was then" but fails to provide a narrative as to the identity and the meaning of the "this," so that it remains unclear how the viewer should relate to the specific "then" whose details appear alarmingly blank. One could conclude that the photograph's moment of authenticity is empty. On its own it is unable to vouch for the state of affairs the photograph depicts, namely, that this is in fact the viewer's grandmother.

The indexical moment does not, however, exhaust the signifying properties of the photograph, which is also the repository of narratives nestled at the iconic level, which aim to identify what is depicted based on likeness and resemblance, and at the symbolic level, which is concerned with interpretation and evaluation. For Kracauer's viewer, the unsettling moment grows out of an incongruity at the iconic level, as the young woman depicted in the photograph fails to resemble the grandmother he knows from memory. Because the youthful grandmother flunks the resemblance test, her image is unable to function as a sign that activates available knowledge, in spite of the viewer's awareness that this is, in fact, his grandmother. The spatial context that surrounds young Grandma thus defies further symbolic operations and fails to coalesce into a meaningful whole. Instead, it unravels in the meticulously depicted details of an indifferent spatial continuum. But Kracauer's viewer presents further reasons for bewilderment, which are rooted in a perceived disjuncture between the indexical, the iconic, and the symbolic. As Scott explains, the iconic and the symbolic levels, the moments of identification and interpretation, open the photograph up to a semiotic game that far exceeds the evidentiary guarantee of the "This was then" while surreptitiously

feeding on its authenticity. The multiple options and potential for manipulation this game entails make it impossible to insist on the photograph's claim to unmediated truthfulness, which, however, is always there thanks to the indexical moment. In the case of the diva the three moments overlap seamlessly so that the viewer has no reason to question what he sees; but for the grandmother the authenticity claimed by the indexical and filled with the information about the woman's identity is at odds with the viewer's recollection of her appearance. This incongruity endangers the photograph's authenticity claim and accounts for its haunting quality. It is because of this incongruity that one could argue, with Brecht, that the photograph, the camera's untampered product, can lie.

Or, to put it differently, such incongruity demonstrates that photography's authenticity, while real, does not vouch for the identity or meaning of the objects it depicts. This meaning is articulated rhetorically and embedded in a context that must be illuminated. When Brecht polemically remarks that the camera can lie, he has in mind the gulf between the claim to truth underlying photography's indexical moment and the complex weaving of the iconic and the symbolic moments, of identification and interpretation of what the photograph portrays. As he suggests, contemporary photo-reportage surreptitiously deploys the evidentiary moment of photography as legitimation for narratives that affirm or obfuscate the status quo rather than shed light on it. The mendacious potential Brecht attributes to photography then lies in this manipulation of the symbolic level, specifically, in denying the narrative/ideological moment at work in the way the press uses photographs and the active work of interpretation this moment demands of the viewer.

As has by now become clear, neither Kracauer's nor Brecht's indictment of the use of photographs in the press is driven by a traditional distrust of mimesis, that is, by the age-old wariness toward reproducing the world of appearances, which is repudiated for being a deceptive veil cast upon the true essence of things. Rather they are animated by awareness that photography's potential does not lie in its ability to reproduce appearances in an exact way. If anything, insisting on this ability as a path to truth lends itself to ideological distortion. In his essay "The Author as Producer" (1934) Walter Benjamin chided the rosy-eyed agenda of some photographers of the New Objectivity, whose proclivity to authorize photography through its aptitude for exactness wound up glorifying the given, so that even abject poverty could be turned into a "object of enjoyment" available for consumption. Benjamin especially singled out Albert Renger-Patzsch's successful photobook *Die Welt ist schön* (*The World Is Beautiful*, 1928), a compendium of stunning images of both the natural world and contemporary industrial society that documented Renger-

Patzsch's faith in photography's capacity to transfigure objects by reproducing them with utmost fidelity. Turning Renger-Patzsch's reasoning on its head, Benjamin treated photography's touted fidelity as a hindrance because its putative objectivity could be used as a mystifying tool for affirming dominant narratives about experience. He thus recommended critically formulated captions as an antidote to the manipulative claim to objectivity.[7] Captioning, Benjamin explained at the end of his "Little History of Photography" (1931), helps shatter the automatized associations attached to reproducible images. It not only makes it possible to take control of and change the naturalized narratives in which images are embedded; it also exposes photography as partaking in what Benjamin, drawing on Brecht, called the "literarization of the conditions of life," that is, as a powerful tool in weaving the narratives that authorize contemporary material and social relations.[8]

Benjamin's final remarks in the "Photography" essay suggest that photography's eminently reproducible, though temporally extentionless, exactitude is an explosive force that needs to be harnessed in the militant construction of truth, even if it itself should not be mistaken for objectivity or truthfulness. The medium or structuring principle of this construction was for Benjamin montage, a strategy for producing novel accounts of experience that reshuffle materials culled from everyday life and thereby unsettle its dominant narratives. Benjamin's emphasis on the montage principle recalls the closing of Kracauer's essay on photography, though Benjamin gives a different spin to his colleague's insights. For Kracauer, the clutter of photographs in the illustrated press formed a gargantuan collage whose arbitrary configurations marked the historical endpoint in consciousness' alienation from nature. In its very indifference and disarray, the photographic patchwork spoke volumes to a consciousness that could no longer glimpse intrinsic meaning in the experiential world.[9] In other words, Kracauer's account did not emphasize photography's ability to depict specific conditions, as Benjamin does, but rather focuses on the medium as a material witness to the latest stage of the history of being as consciousness. As a result, photographs in magazines tell the same overdetermined story over and over again, regardless of what they show. Benjamin by contrast echoed key tenets of Constructivism in foregrounding the potential for new, emancipatory narratives to be told through the creative assemblage of photographic material.

• In mid-1920s Germany the valorization of montage's rhetorical and narrative properties became associated with a move away from the disjointed compositions produced by the Dadaists after the war and toward a renewed

interest in figuration as a means of storytelling. This reflected the new legitimacy accorded to montage practices, which went along with their growing normalization and commercialization in the press, especially the illustrated magazine. After 1925 one observes an increase in single-image montage works with clear figurative themes or works that combine single photographs in more or less explicit narrative series, often encased in a grid. It would be misleading to see in the return to figuration and the ostensibly untampered photograph solely a retrenchment carried out in the interest of advertisement and propaganda. At stake was rather a more sophisticated understanding of the narrative potential of montage as inscribing the experience of a complexly articulated field of vision traversed by diverse modes of encoding (verbal language, manually and mechanically produced images, type, and the alternation of blank and filled spaces).[10]

The rise of the photobook in mid- and late-1920s Germany reflects an interest in exploring the narrative properties of photography, often through explicit reference to a montage aesthetics.[11] This new genre aimed to showcase photography's ability to fulfill old and new representational needs by focusing on a broad array of themes—the utopian horizons of modern architecture in Erich Mendelsohn's *Amerika: Bilderbuch eines Architekten* (*America: Photobook of an Architect*; 1926); the marvels of natural and human environments in Karl Blossfeldt's *Urformen der Kunst* (*Art Forms in Nature*; 1928) and Albert Renger-Patzsch's *Die Welt ist schön* (*The World Is Beautiful*; 1928); Germany's social stratification in August Sander's *Antlitz der Zeit* (*Face of Our Time*; 1929); the contemporary range of photographic technology in Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold's *Foto-Auge* (*Photo-Eye*; 1929) and Werner Gräff's *Es kommt der neue Fotograf* (*Here Comes the New Photographer*; 1929). At the same time photobooks offered a media-specific tool for a theoretical and pedagogical reflection upon photography's potential that could not take place in photo-reportage or the illustrated magazine. What distinguished the photobook is not simply that it provided accounts of the world that privileged visual over literary strategies. Rather its images were endowed with a performative quality, that is, they were meant to demonstrate the representational strategies proper to the photographic medium, which the photobook sought to foreground and reflect upon. In other words, if the deployment of photographs in the press and especially in photo-reportage adopted the realist conceit of the story that tells itself and thus concealed the medium's rhetorical ability to shape the act of narration, the photobook made this very moment a part of the stories it told.

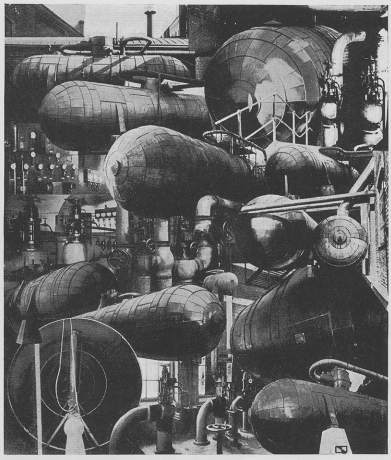
László Moholy-Nagy's *Painting Photography Film* (1925–27), one of the foundational texts of New Vision photography, is often regarded as the pro-

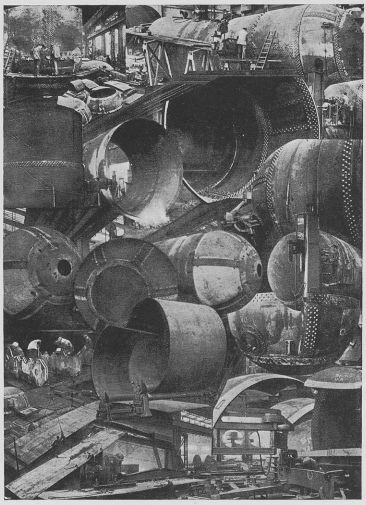
totype of the photobook, displaying several of the features that define the genre in interwar Germany: imaginative layouts that would encourage a mode of perception predicated on simultaneity and the viewer's ability to actively combine various kinds of information; the inclusion of a variety of images that would spur multiple kinds of visual engagement, from distracted glancing to intense scrutiny; the rejection of a strictly linear or causal sequencing of the pictures, which were instead arranged in associative groups suggesting multiple combinations and competing narratives; and the inclusion of methodological and didactic considerations—often relegated to introductory sections—designed to emphasize the distinctive expressive power of the photographic image.[12] As Moholy's volume well exemplifies, the reshuffling of elements enabled by montage did not stop at the manipulation of photographic material within a single image, but rather heralded a radical reorganization of the visual field—in his case, the double-page spreads of his photobook—that jettisons traditional rules of encoding and freely juxtaposes the semiotic codes of disparate elements—mechanically reproduced images, type, iconic symbols, and blank and filled spaces. Thus conceived montage fulfills and expands Benjamin's principle of captioning by situating objects in new, surprising contexts and thereby altering the narratives that give them meaning. It does so by harnessing photography's mimetic power while relinquishing conventional modes of seeing tied to illusionism. Specifically, its combinatory logic makes it possible to insert the antinarrative instant of the photographic fragment into contexts that give it narrative depth, while making it clear that the story is a constructed one. Paraphrasing Benjamin, one can assert that exposing narrative artifice makes it possible to exploit photography's evidentiary power while steering clear of the equation of exactitude with objectivity or truth. Far from taking away from the force of the photographic image, this operation opens it up to a rich play of signification that yields novel insights into a state of affairs.[13]

Moholy's example suggests that the expressive possibilities of the photobook were intimately tied to a montage procedure by which single photographs are juxtaposed to verbal and visual information that enable them to tell stories, that is, complement their indexical muteness by adding layers of identification and interpretation. In other words, if the photobook emerged as the medium for a self-reflexive inquiry into a field of vision saturated by mechanically reproducible images, montage named the grammar of this investigation. The narrative potential of assembled images was not lost on practitioners of photomontage, who often drew on film's narrative quality as a means of comparison. A case in point are Cesar Domela-Nieuwenhuis's observations in a gloss published in *Gefesselter Blick* (*Captivated Gaze*), a 1930

anthology of programmatic statements by some of Europe's cutting-edge graphic designers. In describing two photomontage ads featuring the production of massive metal containers, Domela compares photomontage to film and concludes that film would be more effective in rendering the multitude of details that make up the production process, which in his assembled image is intimated by juxtaposing large-scale images of the containers and smaller-scale depictions of assorted machinery. As he maintains, "A whole film is here captured in one image. Significant perspectives from the 'film' are placed in a spatial relationship to each other, so that the instantaneously roaming eye of the viewer receives an absolute plastic impression. He is set in motion and finds himself in the thick of things."[14] The shared ground, yet also the difference, that marks the narrative potential of photomontage and film lies precisely in the kind of movement that sustains their narratives, as intimated by Domela's remarks. In the case of film, movement denotes the unfolding of a fixed sequence of shots, while for photomontage the movement is that of the viewer's gaze. In Domela's example, the film sequence would immediately suggest the correct unfolding of the production process. Given the conventionless simultaneity of photomontage, however, it is far more difficult to determine the direction of the eye's motion once the viewer is plunged "into the thick of things." This is why film would be the more effective medium for telling the containers' story. One can conclude that the potential plurality of the narratives engendered by photomontage make it a more ambiguous medium, one that is in need of being contained more than film.[15] In contrast to film, the montage of still images can empower viewers by teaching them that seeing is not a passive registering of visual stimuli but an act of piecing together. Thus, it is inherently narrative, if by narrative one understands constructing accounts whose unfolding along potentially multiple paths enables observers to actively bestow meaning on experience. In this way, photomontage claims a truthfulness for itself that is not about exact reproduction but rather lies in the active encounter between an observer and an object given to perception. This truth is contextual, plural, and dynamic.

For Domela as for many graphic artists of his day, montage in static forms thus required structuring the visual field through mixed-media devices that served to contain and direct the viewer's roaming gaze so as to support a specific content. These devices included the verbal information contained in titles and captions as well as the visual conventions that photography had adapted from the traditional genres of painting (eye-level portrait, landscape, etc.) A further resource lay in the abstract graphic devices developed within the New Typography movement: lines, dots, and arrows deployed to demarcate textual space; the emphatic or painterly use of boldface and font size; the





Fotomontagen für einen Prospekt über Ruths-Speicher. Die Fülle interessanter Einzelheiten, die bei der Fabrikation ersichtlich sind, ließen sich natürlich am bequemsten in einem Film zeigen: Man wandert um die Dinge herum, sieht sie von allen Seiten, sieht ihren Aufbau und ihre Wirkung. Hier wurde dementsprechend ein ganzer Film in ein Bild gebannt. Wichtige Standpunkte aus dem „Film" sind in räumliche Beziehung zueinander gestellt, sodaß das blitzartig wandernde Auge des Beschauers einen absoluten plastischen Eindruck gewinnt. Er wird in Bewegung versetzt und befindet sich mitten unter den Dingen.

45
Cesar Domela

Cesar Domela-Nieuwenhuis, advertisement for metal containers. Photomontage. From *Gefesselter Blick*, ed. Heinz Rasch and Bodo Rasch (1930), 45.

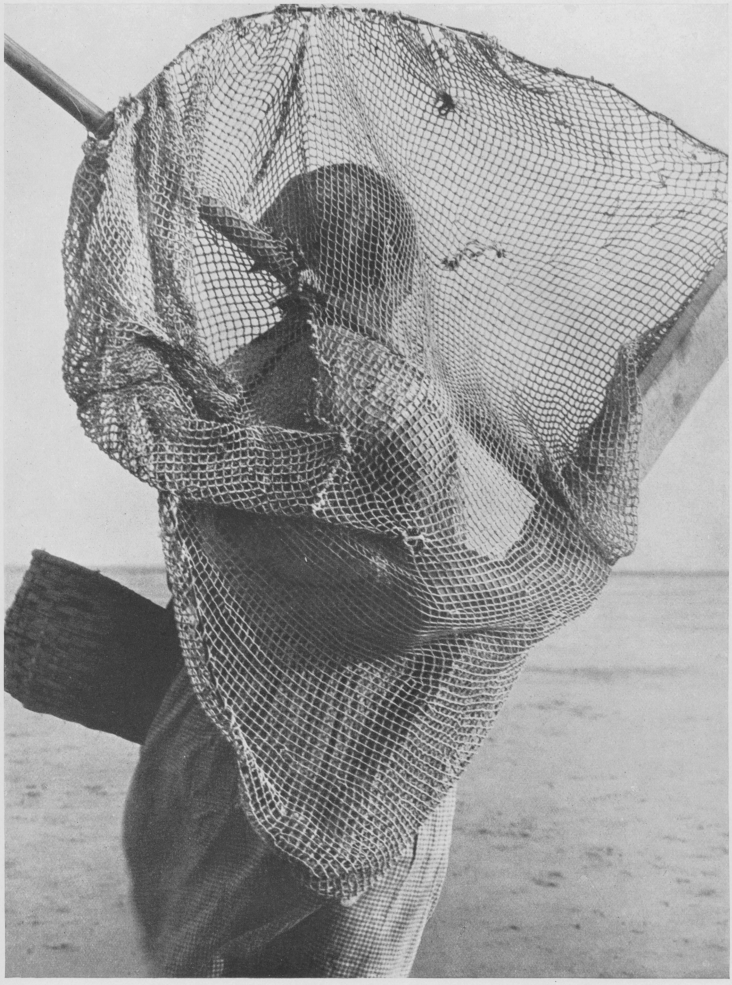
alternation of blank and filled space in pointedly asymmetrical arrangements; and the nonnaturalistic use of color.[16] Of special interest in this context was the valorization of resemblance as a way of establishing ties among disparate visual material and articulating a specific relation to an image's referent. At issue was especially the suggestive use of abstract resemblance patterns, whose deployment was linked to the renewed emphasis on form as the trigger for perception and the repository of nondiscursive modes of orientation. Barbara Stafford has emphasized the constructive moment that inheres in grasping and deploying resemblance, which she describes as an imaginative analogical practice that relies on the evidence of sensory perception to weave "discordant particulars into a partial concordance." This practice depends in great measure on the incarnational nature of vision, which brings together similarities gleaned from manifold dissimilars in acts of "sympathetic thought."[17] Stafford especially emphasizes the participatory quality of analogical operations, which do not so much consist in gleaning patterns objectively given in the phenomenal world as in constructing them actively by drawing from a multiplicity of sensory data and giving them shape in the event of perception. Visual analogy thus epitomizes the ways in which humans as embodied beings make sense of an incarnated world by situating themselves firmly in its midst and shaping it through mimetic operations that valorize the visual surface of things.[18] Precisely this ability to link orientation to embodiment made of visual analogy a powerful instrument for montage artists, further playing an important role in the pedagogy of vision that unfolded in contemporary photobooks. In the remainder of this chapter I will examine Albert Renger-Patzsch's *Die Welt ist schön* and Hannah Höch's *Album* as emblematic for contrasting pedagogies of vision that enlist straight photography in montage narratives structured in part through visual analogy.

• When it appeared in 1928, Albert Renger-Patzsch's *Die Welt ist schön* was immediately hailed as a paradigmatic achievement for the aesthetics of the New Objectivity and a compelling example of new trends in photography. Comprised of one hundred uncaptioned black-and-white images of the natural and industrial worlds, including flowers, animals, landscapes, cultural monuments, commodities, and industrial sites, the photobook at once celebrates photography's revelatory power and the awe-inspiring forms of everyday objects. The images' mode of presentation is designed to harness the evidentiary force of straight photography in ways that seem antithetical to contemporary, experimental uses of the medium, first and foremost photomontage. Each photograph takes up the recto of a double-page spread and

faces a blank verso, demanding in its isolation an immersive mode of reception that plunges the viewer right into the object. Yet the images' unconventional perspectives and radical use of cropping, their conspicuous decontextualization of the depicted objects and emphasis on abstract formal patterns clearly inscribe them in the horizon of what has become known as New Vision photography. Their unadorned directness is further testament to its agenda of developing a visual idiom specific to the photographic medium over and against the conventions of art photography, which sought to endow mechanical images with the aura of art by emulating the visual styles of painting. Renger-Patzsch openly endorsed this objective, pointedly rejecting any attempt at assimilating photography to art and rather insisting on the photographer's duty to exploit the camera's mechanical exactitude, what he called its objectivity, in providing a record of the phenomenal world.

Objectivity, however, meant more to Renger-Patzsch than the banning of a photographer's subjective effusions. For him photography's ability to capture the visible surface of things entailed a fidelity to the object that allowed for disclosing its essence beyond the moment's contingency.[19] This ability grounded for him in the distinctive mimetic power of photography, which allowed for reproducing the essential physiognomy of things by purging them of the transient and the redundant. As Thomas Janzen has noted, Renger-Patzsch often achieved this effect through an innovative use of cropping, which he deployed to magnify an object's details in order to at once convey a plastic sense of its materiality and foreground its abstract formal patterns. This emphasis on the paradigmatic aspects of the visible world and disavowal of transience accounts for the peculiarly static quality of Renger-Patzsch's photographs, which endow things with hieratic presence by downplaying or altogether erasing temporal markers, be they clues to an object's environment or movement and shadows that would indicate a specific moment in time.[20]

Renger-Patzsch's aesthetics thus postulated that essence and transience are both inscribed on the visible surface of things, ready to be told apart by the camera's objective eye. This objectivity was rooted for him in photography's distinctive mimicry, understood as the ability to produce copies that enable humans to reach through to things' essential being. Its implicit disavowal of transience accounts for the peculiar mood that suffuses the photographs collected in *Die Welt ist schön*, which often recall still-life painting in their blend of lush physicality and embalmed fixity. Indeed, the depicted objects often appear incomparably vivid and peculiarly lifeless at one and the same time, the beauty of their forms turned into enigmatic ornamental patterns. This is especially conspicuous in the rare images featuring human fig-

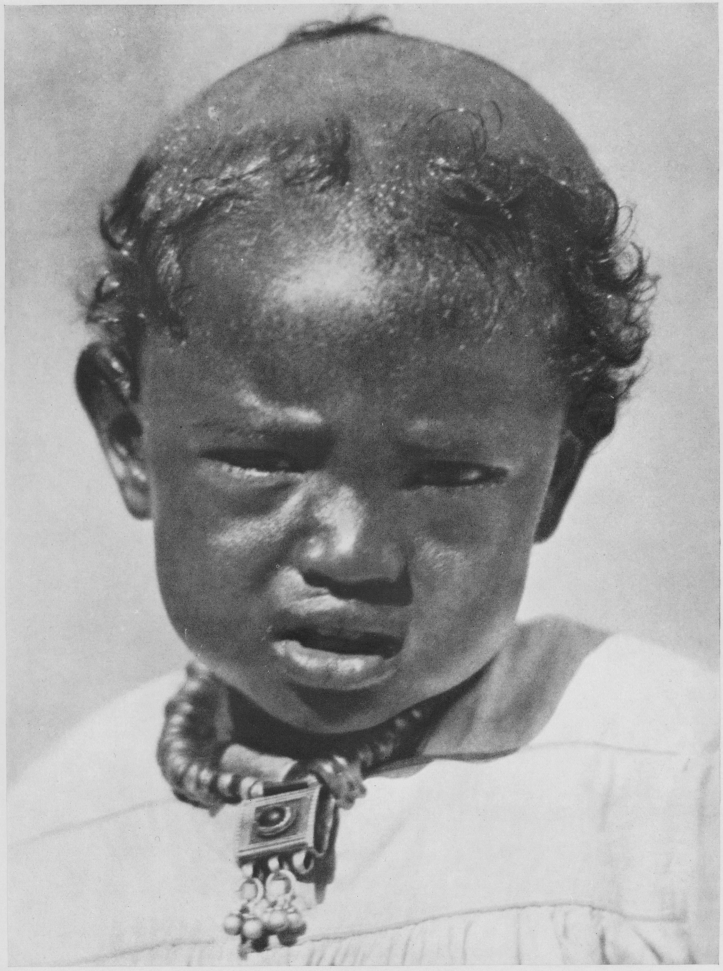


32

From Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt ist schön* (*The World Is Beautiful*), 1928.
(Copyright 2015 Albert Renger-Patzsch Archiv / Ann u. Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.)

33

From Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt ist schön* (*The World Is Beautiful*), 1928.



34

From Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt ist schön* (*The World Is Beautiful*), 1928.

35

From Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt ist schön* (*The World Is Beautiful*), 1928.
(Copyright 2015 Albert Renger-Patzsch Archiv / Ann u. Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.)

From Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt ist schön* (*The World Is Beautiful*), 1928.
(Copyright 2015 Albert Renger-Patzsch Archiv / Ann u. Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.)

ures, five out of the one hundred that make up the collection. Four of them are clustered in a sequence that starts with the faceless silhouette of a fisherwoman draped in a fishing net, proceeding on to the eye-level portraits of a woman staring to one side and a Somali child whose shiny skin looks like polished material, and closing with the mummified head of a Maori warrior, which reinforces the overall sense of hovering in a peculiar undead zone. The fifth image, situated toward the end of the collection, features the detail of a Pietà sculpture depicting the martyred body of the dead Christ. The image's evocation of the Christian narrative of redemptive death serves to further underwrite the link between lifelessness and essential being.[21]

It is not hard to see why the book became such a lightning rod for critics like Walter Benjamin, who took it as confirmation that the aesthetic trend dubbed as the New Objectivity ultimately rested on the dubious conflation of the world's visible factuality with the truth of a state of affairs. Critics found this conceptual sleight of hand epitomized in the volume's very title, *Die Welt ist schön*, which was lampooned for its unabashed celebration of a creaturely world whose ostensive beauty reduced eloquent visual records of abject poverty and industrial anomy to a beautiful play of forms. Thus for many the book came to epitomize the dishonest invocation of photography's exactness in the underhanded attempt to prop up the status quo in Weimar Germany.[22] Other contemporaries, who were not as invested in social commentary and shared in principle Renger-Patzsch's faith in photography's physiognomic power, took objection to other aspects of his aesthetics. The most notable case is Franz Roh, whose celebration, in *Nachexpressionismus*, of the interplay between perception and the forms of the material world strongly resonated with Renger-Patzsch's valorization of photography's ability to conjure the magic of things.[23] Roh, however, decisively parted ways with Renger-Patzsch in emphasizing the constructive moment that marked the encounter between the object and a technologically enhanced perception. For him the contingent open-endedness of this interplay authorized the imaginative use of photography, which was to be deployed as a tool for augmenting perception and simultaneously remaking a phenomenal world caught in a relentless process of becoming. This was quite different from Renger-Patzsch's insistence on photography's objectivity as a portal to an object's nontransient being, which valorized the phenomenological encounter between form and perception only to downplay the transformative power harbored by its contingency and open-endedness.[24]

The immersive mode of reception demanded by the individual images and their depiction of conspicuously decontextualized objects raised additional questions for the book as a whole. Taken together, the images may well

convey the sense of a world made up of things transfigured in splendid self-sufficiency, but this is just as well a world without depth and hierarchies, which is only structured by the repetitive "and then . . . and then . . ." of parataxis. The volume's introduction, which was penned by art historian Carl Georg Heise, openly counteracts the latent atomism of this arrangement by imposing a symbolic order onto the sequence of images, which, it suggests, are divided up in eight thematic groups—plants, animals and humans, landscapes, materials, architecture, technology, the manifold world, and the symbol. This sequential arrangement allows for inserting each object, understood as paradigmatic for its class, into larger conceptual groups and thus building thematic relations that counterbalance the lurking sense of randomness suggested by the heterogeneity and disconnectedness of the images. Heise's discussion of the "symbol" in the introduction's final section further suggests that the book's overall order is shaped by a movement or progression of sorts, which imparts to it a sense of narrative unfolding. This lies in the simultaneous discovery of the symbolic power of everyday objects and of photography's role as a catalyst in disclosing their power:

> They [the last pictures in the book] are true pregnant images. However, we certainly should not forget that at bottom it is nature and formed life that carry such symbolic power in themselves for every beholder, that the photographer's work does not create the pregnant images but can only make them visible![25]

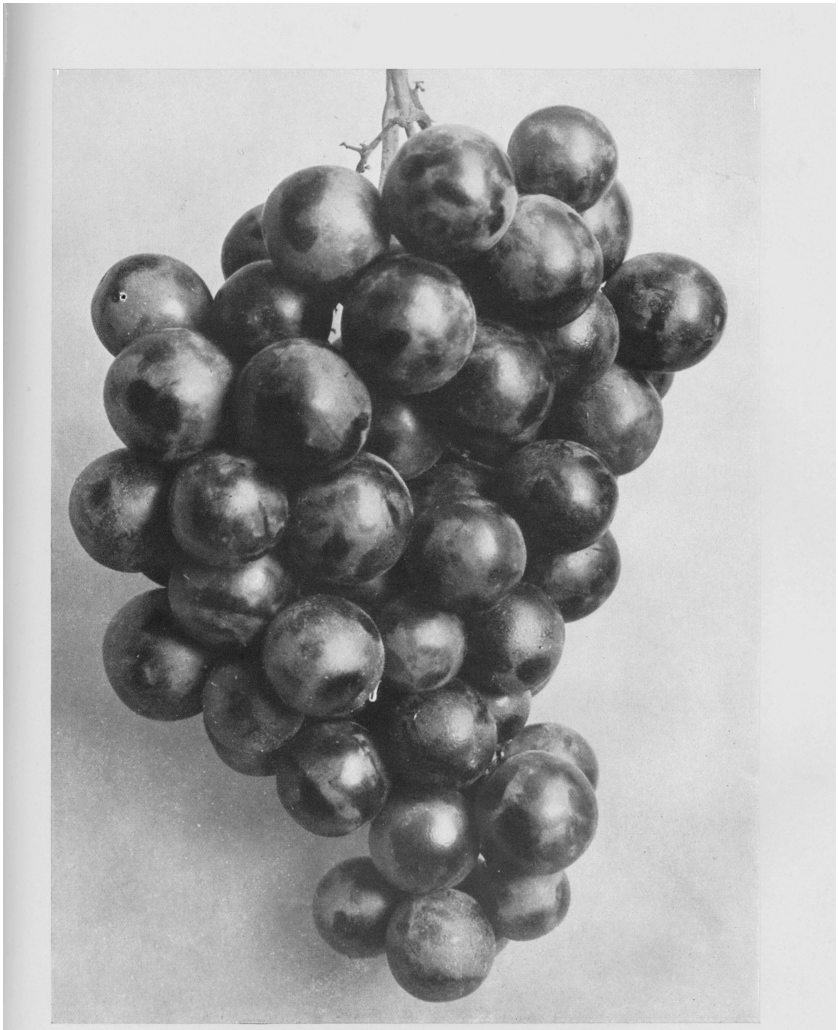
This passage seizes on Renger-Patzsch's insistence on photography's objectivity, which it implicitly conflates with the medium's transparency, in order to celebrate its self-effacing role in making visible the symbolic power of objects. The point of photography is, in other words, not to create symbols but rather to help reveal the symbolism intrinsic to the forms of everyday life. This is tantamount to disclosing an essential dimension that is itself static and nontransient, the very opposite of the contingent and dynamic interplay of forms celebrated by Roh. While it may well be that Renger-Patzsch himself did not endorse the final symbolic twist Heise gave to his introduction, its dominant place as the volume's framing narrative has the effect of suggesting an essentialist and static view of his aesthetics, which strongly downplays the complex physiognomic play presupposed by the images' formalism in order to better foreground their symbolic meaning. In so doing it links Renger-Patzsch's photography to a vague and suspect spirituality, turning its claim about the medium's hard objectivity on its head and most certainly contributing to the book's notoriety in progressive circles.

Heise's discussion of the symbol in this section also makes clear that the last set of objects belongs to a category that exceeds the thematic criteria used for the previous groups. In identifying as symbols the images of assorted objects gathered in this last section, Heise effectively suggests a retrospective reading of all the photographs as symbolic. Indeed, the images in this section include objects drawn from all previous sections: the chimneys of a foundry, the base of a construction crane, standing shoemaking irons, the arched ceiling of a gothic cathedral, the stairs to a wing of the Zwinger museum in Dresden, the lamps of the music room of the Hans Sachs house in Gelsenkirchen, a net hanging from a fishing boat's mast, a mountain fir, the core of an agave plant, and finally, two conjoined female hands. The heterogeneity of these objects suggests that the symbolic is not a class among others, but rather functions as a category that subsumes the previous groups. Its strategic placement at the end of the book helps bestow on it a sense of narrative climax and simultaneously an ending. At the same time, the question becomes what especially marks the objects in this section as symbols, in other words, in what way these photographs constitute paradigmatic visual expressions of the symbolic, which is a far less concrete category than the previous ones and arguably harder to visualize. In other words, if it is true that all things appear endowed with symbolic power when beholden by the camera's objective eye, then what do the disparate sights in this last section share that visibly qualifies them as symbols?

Each picture in this last group is dominated by strong verticals that portray the depicted objects as either rising or striving skyward, in an upward movement that is often accentuated through unusual cropping (as in the case for the crane and the agave) or unusual bottom-up perspectives (see especially the foundry chimneys and the cathedral) or even the sideways placement of the photograph (as illustrated by the image depicting the museum steps, which is placed on its side so as to turn the steps' horizontal pattern into stark vertical lines). By recalling the gesture of prayer, the final close-up of conjoined hands fills the formal signifier "upward direction" with an identifiable symbolic, indeed religious, meaning. This meaning is foreshadowed by some of the preceding images, including the bottom-up view of the cathedral's ceiling and the Christ sculpture. By the time viewers are presented with the conjoined hands of the last image they have become well aware of the web of visual assonances that ties the images together, and which intimates that upward direction functions as the visual correlate of the symbolic power harbored by the objects. To be sure, the use of this vertical symbolism to signify (spiritual) ascension may come across as trite, but it certainly proves effective as an abstract device that establishes connections among objects

across the bounds of the individual photographs without tarnishing their claim to formal self-sufficiency. Upon closer inspection, one can follow the deployment of analogical patterns all throughout the book. For instance, the upward orientation of the conjoined hands in the final image resonates with the downward orientation of the blossoms in the first image, tying the end to the beginning in analogical fashion. Subsequent photographs present different images from the plant world—the petals of a flower, a bunch of grapes, the leaves of a cactus plant, the thorns on another cactus plant (plates 3–8) as visually symbolizing the unity of the manifold in the one. Plates 68–71 focus on the rounded, organic forms of industrial machinery and power lines, possibly intimating an underlying affinity between natural and technological forms, while images 50–59 portray sets of objects that thematize seriality as a dialectic of sameness and difference.

To appreciate the role that visual analogy plays in the book it is helpful to draw on the discussion of Kracauer's essay developed earlier. At issue are especially the difficulties that the grandmother's picture posed to the viewer, who could not reconcile his personal recollection of the elderly woman's appearance with the photograph's momentary record of her youth. This issue does not arise for the beholder of Renger-Patzsch's photographs, as the images' emphasis on paradigmatic form downplays the individuality of the depicted objects. That is to say that in each case the ostensive generality of the object's form tends to subsume the singularity of the situation, effectively downplaying the image's claim of witnessing to a specific moment in time. In the case of the fisherwoman shrouded in her net, for instance, this means that her contingent appearance is presented under a guise of exemplarity that is designed to foreclose questions about her as a specific individual. Indeed, the image formally articulates the indexical "This was then" as a "This is always," which renders any question about the specific moment in time superfluous. Since the photograph minimizes the indexical moment, the next step, the moment of identification or recognition, is not to be formulated in terms of "Who was the specific fisherwoman portrayed on this photograph?" but rather as "What human type does this photograph depict?" In case of the image of the fir tree featured toward the end, one could say that it does not ask the viewer to identify an individual tree that a photographer might have encountered at a specific time and location, but rather wants to be read as the visual record of a fir tree's paradigmatic appearance. Heise's introduction reinforces this operation by suggesting that the third moment, that of the attribution of meaning, likewise exceeds the contingent meaning that may be ascribed to each individual object. As he intimates, the interpretive moves demanded by the photographs circle around grasping the object's symbolic



4

From Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt ist schön* (*The World Is Beautiful*), 1928.

5

From Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt ist schön* (*The World Is Beautiful*), 1928.

valence as revealed by the camera's objective eye. The final effect is that the three levels that carry the photograph's semiotic operations—the indexical, the iconic, and the interpretive/symbolic—end up stacking up in a neat hierarchical order, which preempts the kind of incongruity that plagued the grandmother's beholder in Kracauer's essay. Indeed, the viewer soon realizes that she needs no information about the specific objects other than being able to recognize their formal patterns as paradigmatic, and the interpretive moment is likewise taken care of through reference to an unspecified symbolic valence inherent in the thing itself.

Visual analogy plays an important role in cementing the neat congruence of the three moments. It not only provides the decisive visual signifier, "upward movement," for the symbolic valence of objects in the last section, but also serves as a tool for producing narrative cohesion, for instance by linking disparate objects through visual assonances and smoothing abrupt transitions. To be sure, Renger-Patzsch's formalist approach is not atypical for the photography of his day, and his work resonates with that of contemporaries like Moholy-Nagy and Werner Gräff in its emphasis on form as an abstract trigger for perception. Like theirs, it lends itself well to exploiting visual analogies, and one often finds analogical patterns deployed in modernist photobooks as a means for bestowing cohesion on images presented as a sequential visual montage that dispenses with disambiguating verbal information. What makes Renger-Patzsch's photobook striking, however, is that its emphasis on the evidentiary force of photography endeavors to suppress the main challenge that arises when one takes photography seriously as a medium in its own right. This is its indexical quality, that is, its ability to bear witness to a singular moment in time, which is, however, a blank moment of authenticity. In the narrative spun by Renger-Patzsch's photobook that moment of authenticity is filled with the claims of the paradigmatic, in a move that requires taming the indexical by subsuming it under the iconic and the symbolic. Visual analogy is what produces the tight articulation of the three levels so as to ensure that each photograph will be understood as representing not just any object, but "the" object in its essential form. This makes for a visual narrative that feels predictable and regimented after a while in spite of the images' arresting beauty.

• Sometime between 1933 and 1934 Hannah Höch pasted 421 images taken from German-language and foreign illustrated magazines onto two issues of *Die Dame*, the most successful fashion periodical of the Weimar era.[26] The images survey many popular themes that dominated the visual culture of

the by then defunct Weimar Republic: the cult of fitness and the body, film stars, the New Woman and its attendant ideal of femininity, the marvels of the natural world and contemporary technology, exotic landscapes and peoples, travel, and the joys of children and pets (especially cats). Notably absent are references to the political and economic turmoil of the last Weimar years, to inflation, mass unemployment, and street violence. Höch left no statement as to the purpose or even the title of this work, which she saved until her death. While it bears some resemblance to the archive books used by contemporary photographers to organize pictures for future use, it has been customarily treated as a scrapbook of sorts that documents Höch's private enjoyment of the lures of consumerism and the reveries of Weimar culture.[27] Based on this psychological reading, the scrapbook was for Höch an escape valve that enabled her to indulge the disingenuous promises of a market-driven mass culture even as she was busy deconstructing these very promises in her merciless photomontages.[28]

I believe that the rise of the modernist photobook in Weimar Germany provides a different context for appraising Höch's scrapbook, one that foregrounds the inquiry it unfolds into the construction of visual meaning and the complex narratives made possible by the montage principle.[29] Following photobook conventions, Höch's scrapbook primarily contains undoctored photo-reproductions, though there are a few examples of visibly cropped images. While most photobooks of the time featured one photograph per page, however, Höch's scrapbook typically arranges three to eight photographs on a given page, usually in a grid format that recalls the conventions of the illustrated press. Unlike the commercial photobook, Höch's scrapbook has no title that would suggest an overarching theme; it furthermore lacks page numbers or other systems of reference, as well as any explanatory apparatus. Finally, many images have no caption or title and are unattributed. Where captions are present, they are generally printed in a small font and often in gothic type, which makes for limited legibility. The idiosyncratic arrangement of these textual inserts often complicates what appears to be an already crowded layout rather than help in its disambiguation.[30]

It is important to address at the outset the seemingly affirmative quality that for many critics suffuses the scrapbook's montage of images, and which forms a stark contrast to the biting incisiveness of Höch's photomontages. If the scrapbook appears to lack the critical force of the latter, this is because the montage principle at work in the photomontages is predicated on a different semiotic strategy than that of the scrapbook. Höch's photomontages exploit to the fullest the disjointive quality of the montage procedure, which they enjoin in the service of an allegorical operation. They generally consist of

Hannah Höch, *Deutsches Mädchen* (*German Girl*) (1930). Photomontage and collage on paper.

(Photo courtesy of Berlinische Galerie, Berlin. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

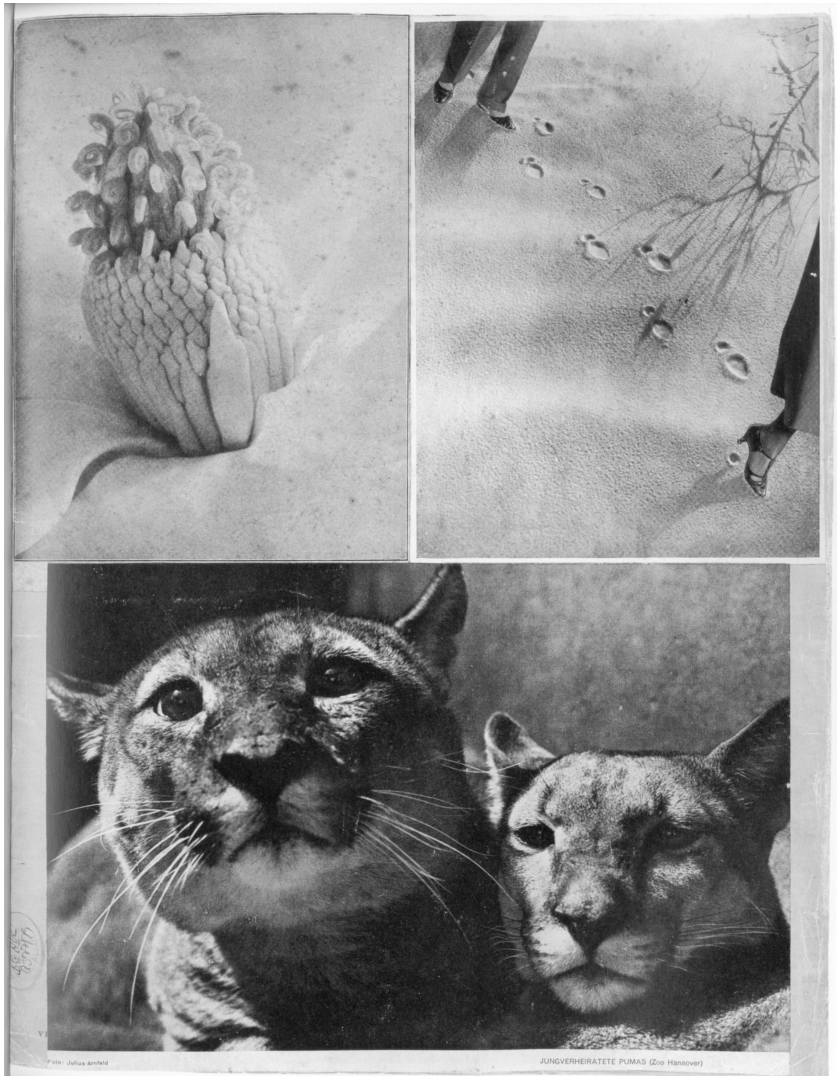
what is supposed to pass for one coherent image, yet is comprised of fragments that clearly do not belong together. For example, *Deutsches Mädchen* (*German Girl*), a collage from 1930, promises the portrait of a wholesome German young woman, which however turns out to be a jarring composite of disparate elements. A case in point is the girl's hair, which is tightly knotted in a dark bun and turns out to be the hair of a Japanese woman. As Maud Lavin has noted, Höch's portrayal of German femininity appropriates the traditional hairstyle of a Japanese woman in order to signify "tradition," thus suggesting that the visual culture of 1920s Germany lacked a signifier for traditional femininity.[31] The critical force of this operation lies in the disjointive power of allegory, which allows for contextually attaching the signified "traditional German femininity" to the signifier "traditional Japanese woman's hairstyle," while foregrounding the artificiality of this move. Because allegory emphasizes the difference of the terms it unites, it pointedly depicts the evocation of traditional German womanhood as resting on a problematic exotic fantasy, one that is bound to seize signifiers and images from a different culture or era to compensate for what is lacking in one's own context.

As this brief discussion indicates, Höch's single-image photomontages engage an allegorical mode of signification that emphatically invests the collaged fragments with a meaning that does not inhere in them, thereby foregrounding the constructedness and incongruity of the whole composition. By contrast, her scrapbook arranges single photographs in grids of various formats. Though cropping and overlaps are conspicuous at times, the single photographs are generally allowed to stand alone and demand to be read as self-contained units of a narrative series, thus discouraging an allegorical interpretation.[32] Because virtually all of the images suggest a positive reading of their subjects, which are often lionized by foregrounding their aesthetically flattering aspects or endearing sentimentality, critics have tended to read the pictures as a deadpan celebration of Weimar's dazzling visual culture. Indeed, the book looks like a compendium of the most arresting sights of contemporary print culture. These are thematically arranged in convenient grid layouts that are occasionally complicated by small irregularities but otherwise suggest a linear reading of the double-page spreads from left to right and top to bottom. At closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the neat grid layout is only a superficial means of orientation laid upon an intricate web of analogical references that tie images together at various levels—single page, double-page spread, and across several pages. It is the narrative power of this analogical network that the scrapbook harnesses and performatively comments upon. This inquiry is not propelled by the demystifying critique that drives Höch's allegorical photomontages. Instead what is at stake is how vi-

sual meaning can be rhetorically produced by means of a montage procedure that ties photographs together into complex analogical networks.

I will draw on one exemplary page from the scrapbook to begin discussing the dynamic play it stages with visual analogy. The page at issue appears toward the middle of the scrapbook and features three images connected by a number of visual allusions.[33] The picture in the upper-left corner depicts a flower's pistil photographed at extremely close range, which makes it look like a pillowy, alien plant. The image is flanked at the right-hand side by a photograph featuring the feet of an elegantly dressed couple taken from a skewed top-down angle. The imprints left by the woman's feet on the sandy terrain suggest that she is walking away from the man. A plant outside the field of vision casts its shadow between the two pairs of feet and recalls the flower's pistil at the right, whose rounded protuberances are also echoed by the woman's rounded footprints. These two images rest, as it were, on a large photograph of two pumas, which takes up the whole bottom half of the page. This is a frontal portrait of the animals that are dubbed "Jungverheiratete Pumas (Zoo Hannover)" ("Newlywed pumas, Hannover zoo") by the only caption on the page. The pumas' heads form a diagonal line that traverses the image bottom-up and right to left and parallels the diagonals formed by the woman's footprints and the flower's pistil. Paraphrasing Moholy-Nagy, one could maintain that this assemblage of disparate images foregrounds unsuspected mutual relationships grounded in analogy. The parting human couple stands in ironic counterpoint to the newlywed pumas, whose anthropomorphizing portrayal invests their presumed union with the full force of matrimonial obligation. The flower at the top might then allude to a nuptial celebration, but everything on the page looks skewed, from the abstract depiction of the flower's stem to the equally abstract portrayal of the parting couple, of whom only the feet are visible, and on to the safe realism of the newlywed pumas, whose hammy portrait looks like a sentimental caricature when compared to the boldness of the two photographs with which it is associated.

The complex analogical play engendered by both visual and textual elements on this first page introduces several themes and strategies that unfold in the pages that follow. To begin with, the juxtaposing of the three images calls attention to the redundancy of the caption accompanying the pumas' portrait. Clearly the caption states the obvious—the animals look like mates—but precisely this redundancy forms the caption's revealing trait, in that it calls attention to the fact that the pumas resemble a married couple because their photo recalls the conventions of the newlywed portrait. In other words, the caption may not say anything of substance about the ani-



Hannah Höch, *Album* (1933–34), ed. Gunda Lyuken (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004), 1 (60).

(Courtesy of Berlinische Galerie, Berlin. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

mals, but it does highlight the fact that their presumably realistic portrayal is based on an anthropomorphizing perspective enshrined in photographic convention, which endows the animals' otherness with human attributes and thus domesticates it.[34] More generally this example shows how captions in the scrapbook are not meant to provide information regarding a photograph's subject but rather to shed light on the different relationships captions can establish between the viewer and the viewed.

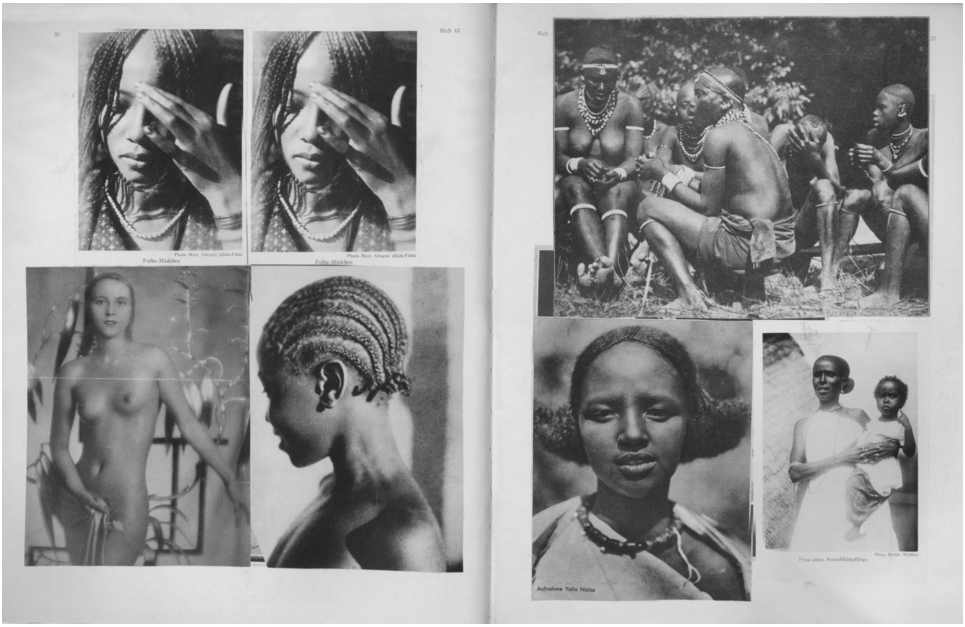
Second, the eye-level portrait of the pumas derives its force from the intensity of the animals' gazes. This point is further underscored in the juxtaposition with the faceless photograph of the human couple. Both pumas face the camera, although the larger one looks upward past the camera and to the side, while the other engages the camera—and by implication the viewer—directly. The viewer's gaze is thus provided at least two different paths for roaming the page: one involves following the upward movement of the puma at left, while the other entails returning the smaller puma's gaze in an act that thematizes the relationality of seeing and vision. In a similar way, the movement and direction of individuals', animals', and even dolls' eyes is a preeminent feature in the arrangement of many double-page spreads, often offering analogical trails along which the viewer's own gaze is invited to bounce in contravention to the linear order of the grid. In keeping with Stafford, one could say that this emphasis on the gaze highlights how vision is a privileged instrument of analogical discovery.

Finally, the analogical juxtaposing of the human couple and the pumas has a dereferentializing effect that is crucial for the scrapbook. It is as though the indexical, iconic, and symbolic levels, which one can still piece together in purveying the individual images, had come unglued as a result of the images' assemblage on the page. For instance, the pumas' humanizing characterization, which the caption emphasizes, accentuates the depersonalizing presentation of the human couple, of whom only the feet are shown. The combination of the two images raises the question of what kind of relationship the pumas might actually have, a question one is bound to ask of the human couple as well. In other words, the associations one might initially martial to decode the individual images are suspended or placed into question by the images' montage on the page. As the automatized steps of identification and interpretation seem to run aground, what is left is the images' indexical presentness. That is, the montage procedure divests the individual images of their conventional status as "optical signs" and turns them into blank signs, while opening up their indexical blankness to the play of visual analogy. Höch's montage strategy thus achieves two objectives. On the one hand, it unmoors the individual images from the iconic and symbolic mo-

ments in which they have become entangled. On the other, it invites new symbolic operations, this time as a commentary on and an inquiry into the mechanisms of seeing. Its use of analogy could not be more different from the practice that unfolds in Renger-Patzsch's photobook, which deploys it to reinforce the ties among the three levels and to promote an immersive mode of reception.

This is emblematically illustrated by a double-page spread that features images of African women analogically tied by the theme of progression from childhood to adulthood and motherhood (*Album* 20–21). This narrative is complicated by the photograph of a young European woman in an artistic nude pose, which does not seem to fit the "passage to adulthood" theme, yet appears connected to the other images by a different set of analogical assonances. Her photograph occupies the bottom-left corner of the left page, which includes two identical portraits of an African girl at the top identified as "Fulbe girl" ("Fulbe Mädchen") by the caption. The bottom-right corner has a head-and-shoulder portrait of an African girl looking away from the camera. The doubling of the Fulbe girl at the top suggests that the two images at the bottom—the naked European woman and the African girl in profile—can also be read as doubles. An equivalence is thus established between the demure African girl, whose shoulders are exposed, and the European woman, who smiles into the camera while chastely draping a cloth across her womb. The latter photograph's soft focus and stylized ornamental background, as well as the girl's staged pose, level an artistic claim that tempers the potential offense of her nudity, her bare breasts both recalling and forming a contrast to the exposed breasts of an African woman shown while chatting with other men and women on a photograph on the adjacent page.

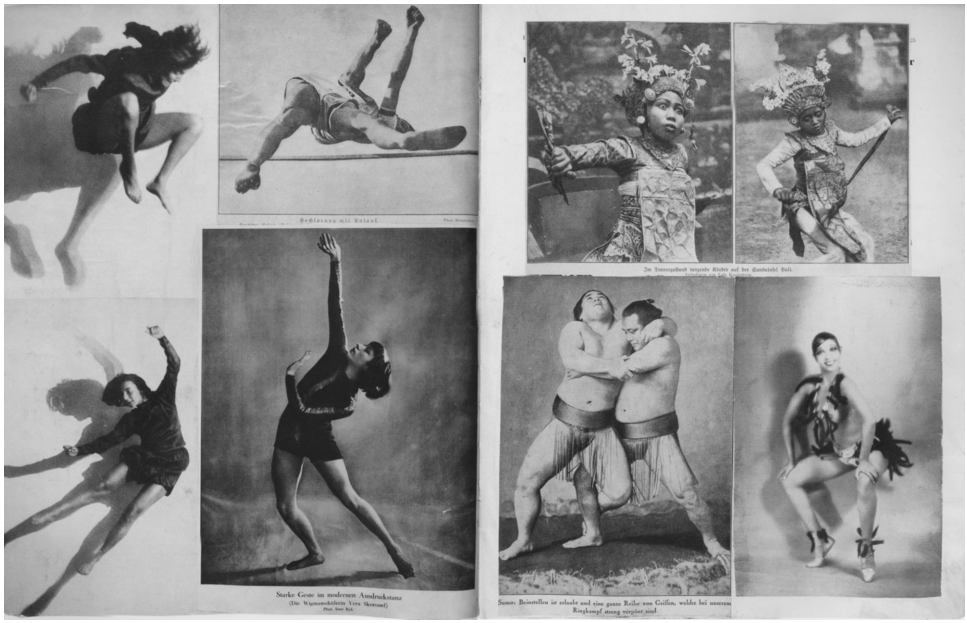
The images of female nudity on this two-page spread document the ways in which Weimar visual culture negotiated the taboo of nudity and the perils of the pornographic by investing the nude body with connotations of beauty, naturalness, and innocence. Höch's scrapbook contains an extensive repertoire of such images, which range from naked children and adults exercising in the outdoors to non-Western peoples captured in their "natural" way of life and images that recall the centuries-old tradition of the female nude portrait. In all cases the sensuality of the naked—primarily female—body is transfigured and sublimated in an aesthetic operation designed to foreground the body's innocence and intrinsic beauty. Yet on this spread the juxtaposing of the naked bodies of the European girl and the seated African woman at the top of the right-hand page is jarring. The latter is talking while sitting in a slouched position, her elongated breasts draped across her belly, the ordinary quality of her demeanor preventing aestheticization or idealiza-



Hannah Höch, from *Album*, 20–21.
(Courtesy of Berlinische Galerie, Berlin. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

tion. This makes the European woman's pose seem all the more contrived, casting doubt on the pretense of artistry and innocence that authorizes it. It compels the reader to inspect more closely the narrative suggested by the two pages, which involves a progression from the virtuousness of girlhood to the experience of motherhood in the last picture of a Somali woman holding a young child. Are the moments of innocence one can glean from these depictions constitutive of the lives of these African women, or are they rather constructed through the conventions of the photographic medium, as is the case for the European woman in the nude? Does the narrative of untainted girlhood and motherhood apply to these African women at all or is it a Western fantasy determined to find in the exotic and the primitive what it has presumably lost at home?

Another double-page spread raises similar questions by its visual exploration of the themes of movement, dance, and sports (*Album* 18–19). It features a sequence of eight photos arranged on a grid, which starts at the top left-hand corner with an image of the popular dancer Gret Palucca captured in an athletic jump and ends with an iconic image of Josephine Baker in one



Hannah Höch, from *Album*, 18–19.
(Courtesy of Berlinische Galerie, Berlin. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

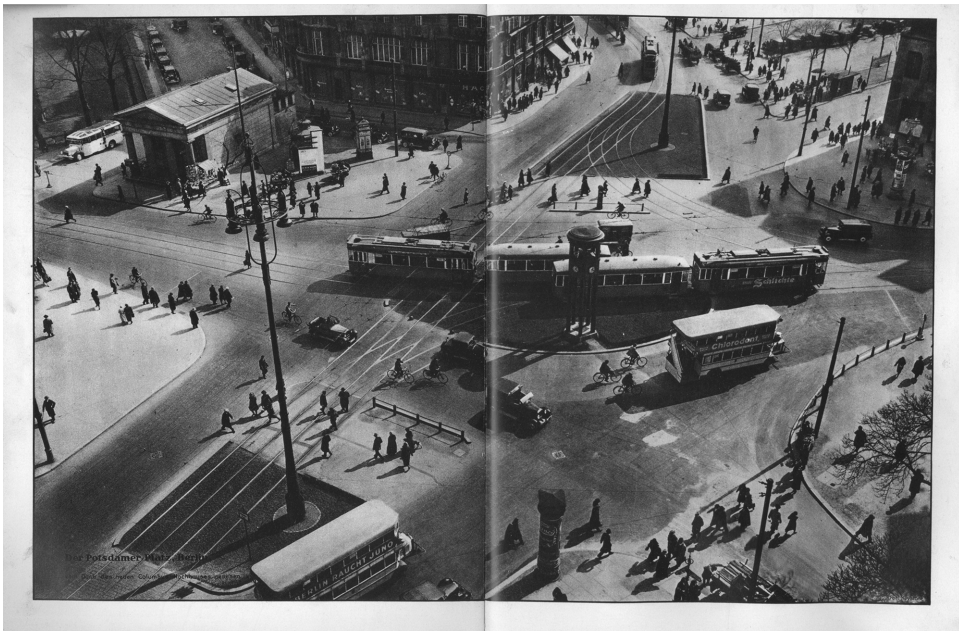
of her exotic costumes. The visual assonance of the two women's crouching position bookends, in sequential order, the image of a man pole-vaulting, another shot of Palucca engaged in a sideway leap, an image of dancer Vera Skoronel in a statuary pose,[35] two images of a Balinese young girl in ceremonial costume executing a trance dance,[36] and a photo of two sumo wrestlers in a hold position—this latter image is captioned "Sumo: Beinstellen ist erlaubt und eine ganze Reihe von Griffen, welche bei unserem Ringkampf streng verpönt sind" ("Sumo: tripping and a whole array of moves that are censured in our wrestling are here allowed"; *Album* 19). The sequence is harnessed by a web of analogical references that link the visual and the conceptual in far-reaching associations. The leap of the pole vaulter resonates directly with the athletic jumps of the female dancers. In addition, Vera Skoronel's concentrated expression echoes the stupor of the Balinese dancer at right. The dancers' and athlete's physical prowess on the left page finds an incongruous resonance in the wrestlers' heavy-set bodies on the facing page. Their athletic embrace whimsically recalls ballroom dancing, but also resembles Baker's coquette dancing squat at right. Her sexually inviting expression

and skimpy exotic costume in turn forms a counterpoint to the men's partial nudity, which appears far less appealing by the aesthetic standards implied by her portrayal.

On the whole, the analogical relationships created by the images illuminate the ties existing between the fields of sports and dance, while also foregrounding the specific cultural and normative horizons that regulate them, as alluded to by the reference to the distinctive rules of sumo wrestling found in the caption. This in turn raises the issue of how one is to sort out the allusions to aestheticized bodily prowess, religious enrapture, exoticism, and sexuality found in the images. To what extent is sumo wrestling a dance? To what extent is modern dance a kind of wrestling? What is one to make of the fact that the focused expression of one of the wrestlers recalls that of the Balinese child dancer? Is modern dance analogous to the child's ritualized movements? If so, what kind of religiosity is implied in both? And what is its relationship to the sexualized body celebrated by mass culture?

While it might be possible to answer these questions so as to reconstruct, by means of conjecture, the commentary Höch intended to provide on these issues, what interests me more is that the questions are raised at all via an analogical procedure that exposes often surprising ties among images. The consistency of this operation makes the scrapbook's last image, a panoramic view of Berlin's iconic Potsdamer Platz spread across two pages, all the more striking. When compared to the dizzying mosaic of images the viewer has been asked to make sense of, the oversized single photograph of Berlin's most bustling square looks disarming and almost cozy in spite of the monumental scale of the environment it encompasses. The conventions of the panoramic photograph endow it with a sense of surveyable place and familiar modernity that binds together and embeds the variety of experiences offered in the scrapbook. In wrapping up its journey through all manner of defamiliarizing perspectives and visual experiences, Höch's scrapbook seems to end by visually producing the very context that encompasses the modern medley of visual stimuli. But the image's disarming simplicity fails to fully convince after the hermeneutic acrobatics imposed by the montage narratives of the preceding pages. At the very least, the montage of images has chipped away at the mystique of the straight photograph, with the result that the viewer can no longer take at face value its instantaneousness and putative self-containment. In other words, the paradoxical sense of quotidian familiarity and anonymous metropolitan life conjured by the photograph becomes a riddle that requires an active work of decoding.

The mode of this decoding forms the very crux of Höch's scrapbook, as foregrounded by the placing of this photograph at its very end. It is the only



Hannah Höch, *Album*, final two page-spread.
(Courtesy of Berlinische Galerie, Berlin. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

image that occupies an entire double-page spread and is thus allowed to stand alone in the field of vision delimited by the book. It is as though the viewer were now invited to test the viewing skills honed while negotiating the scrapbook's visual medley on an image presented in a more conventional fashion. Indeed, the conventional reception of this photograph would involve an act of identification or recognition of what the image depicts, an act that requires matching the depicted with a referent based on resemblance.[37] This is, at bottom, the likeness test flunked by Kracauer's youthful grandmother. After experiencing the montage of images presented in the scrapbook, the viewer is, however, less likely to ask a conventional question such as "What object or place in real life does this image resemble?" but will rather puzzle over what other images the photograph possibly recalls, how it overlaps analogically with other sites (and sights), and what this visual overlap might say about the depicted referents. In other words, resemblance in Höch's scrapbook is no longer about the mimetic relation between an image and a referent, let alone the claim, leveled by Renger-Patzsch, that an image can embody an object's essential physiognomy. In heeding, as it were, the

cautionary discourse of Kracauer, Benjamin, and Brecht, the book no longer enjoins resemblance to illusionism and verisimilitude as warrants for the truthfulness of the photographic image, but rather turns it into a medium for multiple analogical comparisons among ostensibly unrelated images. These are, to paraphrase Benjamin, operations of mutual captioning that cast a new light on the relations among the depicted referents, allowing for the active construction of narratives that lay claim to truth.

• My analysis of Renger-Patzsch's *Die Welt ist schön* and Höch's scrapbook has focused on the pedagogy they unfold through their exploration of visual analogy. In both cases the pedagogical moment is not consigned to theoretical statements, but rather to a performative investigation of photography's narrative and rhetorical power. If in Renger-Patzsch's volume formal resemblances allow for tying together the diverse semiotic layers that mediate reception of a given photograph, then Höch's *Album* is rather concerned with the pedagogical yield of undoing these ties. In her scrapbook the montage procedure strips photographs down to their indexical status, exposing the indifferent spatial continuum of their visible surface. This is not to be taken as an early statement about a reality in which the possibility of truth has been supplanted by an endless play of simulacra. Höch's work instead valorizes images by taking seriously their indexical moment, the fact that they refer back to an instant in time that grounds their authenticity. At the same time it makes clear that this instant is semiotically blank because the context that frames it cannot be supplied by the photograph itself. The pedagogical moment lies in practicing attribution of iconic and symbolic information outside of automatized routines, in asking how much images can "say" if one exercises vision's capacity for establishing analogical connections.

After the first couple of pages the viewer becomes used to the double valence of each photograph, which is both allowed to stand alone as a self-contained indexical statement and to enter into relationships with other photographs and textual material. These relationships are based on thematic and formal resemblances that suggest multiple possible accounts, but the work of filling in the dots ultimately falls to the viewer. In these operations the familiar and the exotic, the proximate and the distant, the natural and the civilized, the animate and the inanimate are mixed up in analogical networks that complicate their antonymic relations without altogether undoing them. As the montage procedure turns something into its opposite—the familiar becomes exotic, the animal human, the human inanimate, and so on—the point is not to destroy distinctions per se, but rather to show that they are

not inherent properties of objects, but rather heuristic tools of perception whose deployment depends on contextualization. What the assembled photographs withhold from the viewer in terms of critique or affirmation serves to underscore the open-endedness and empowering moment of the montage procedure, which mimics the ways in which seeing analogically pieces together elements of the real.

The debates about photography I described in the first part of this chapter ultimately boiled down to the question of how one is to orient oneself in a world saturated by mechanically reproducible images. What is one to do with those images that purport objectively to present a state of affairs for which we have no context? And what about those images that, under the pretense of mediating knowledge of the strange and the exotic, only reflect back to us our biases and uninspected beliefs, so that the image's ostensive moment of discovery and recognition winds up strengthening the blinders that occlude our vision? Höch's scrapbook twists the terms of the debate by turning the issue of truth—as presumably vouchsafed by a photograph's exactitude and objectivity—into an investigation of resemblance. The photograph's potential for truth then hinges on the multiple analogical relations it can enter into with other information, whether visual or verbal. Where Renger-Patzsch uses analogy to transfigure objects, removing them from the mundane and contingent, Höch's scrapbook deploys it for acts of discernment guided by the question of what else I am able to see if I reshuffle the conventional orders in which images appear. In a world where meaningful seeing is often coterminous with recognizing, and where recognition is sustained by media images whose endless resemblance creates the impression that we actually know what we recognize, the task her scrapbook undertakes involves turning resemblance, the endless mirroring of images in the media, into a tool for active seeing.

6 • Abstraction and Montage in the Work of Kurt Schwitters

Perhaps no other artist has offered as comprehensive and layered an exploration of montage as Kurt Schwitters, whose imaginative engagement with strategies of disarticulation and assemblage over four decades casts a long shadow on the art of the twentieth century.[1] Working in a variety of media, Schwitters pushed the bounds of montage with a single-mindedness that is only matched by the doggedness with which he interrogated the enabling conditions of his artistic practice. Yet precisely his reflection on montage as a fundamental aesthetic principle has presented a formidable stumbling block for Schwitters scholars ever since the rediscovery of his oeuvre in the 1950s. For all the inventiveness and boldness of his work his notion of *Merz*, or abstract montage, appears curiously esoteric, seemingly revolving around a rigidly formalist understanding of autonomous art. One can hardly imagine a greater mismatch than the one separating Schwitters's idea of art as a domain that transcends quotidian affairs, especially politics, and the exuberant transgression of boundaries—of the canvas, of the text, of different media and codes—staged in his work, which rather suggests the exhilarating embrace of a messy and incoherent everyday. If one adds to this Schwitters's keen business sense and baffling willingness to deploy the same principles he saw at the heart of autonomous art in his successful commercial ventures, one will easily understand the distrust, even chagrin, expressed by some of his contemporaries, who dismissed him as a cynical self-promoter and a betrayer of the avant-gardists' ethos. Critics have openly wrestled with the uncomfortable mix of visionary boldness, naive idealism, and conceptual inconsistencies in Schwitters's profile and endeavors, often concluding that his pathbreaking work was incongruously propelled by a nostalgic understanding of art as a site of transcendence bound to offer the harmony and order sorely missing in Weimar Germany.[2]

While it is true that Schwitters's writings befuddle readers by mixing the grating irreverence of Dada with the mystical rhetoric that suffuses strands of De Stijl and Constructivism, a close examination of his work shows that his understanding of art's transcendence was not tied to belief in a metaphysical realm opposed to everyday experience. Rather it related to the possibility of realizing abstraction in art through strategies of juxtaposition and quotation that aimed at subverting the relations among objects in everyday experience. Far from forsaking the everyday, abstract art was called to explore its bounds by making its signifying structures perspicuous. This chapter examines key literary works from the 1920s and 1930s to reconstruct Schwitters's understanding of intransitive art, which hinges on separating ordinary sense-making from the linguistic structures that enable it. Intransitivity in this context is a strategy that disassociates perception from meaning in order to make its enabling structures apparent. This allows for grasping their singularity and contingency and for highlighting their being susceptible to transformative manipulation. This understanding of communication is explored in narratives that performatively enact the very structures they set out to explore. In so doing they provide test cases for a mode of storytelling that draws on montage to explore intransitivity as the negative side of ordinary meaning, in an operation that aims at embracing and expanding the reach of everyday communication.

• Schwitters's aesthetic practice turns on his program of *Merz*, a theory of montage that supplied him with both an analytic framework and a brand label for his diverse artistic pursuits.[3] He developed and promoted this program in numerous essays that appeared over the course of the 1920s in avant-garde publications and in his own journal *Merz*. These texts reflect his determination to shape the debate on contemporary art so as to create a discursive environment favorable to reception of his work.

Schwitters found himself fighting on two fronts in promoting his art in the early 1920s. On the one hand he took on the art critics associated with the cultural establishment, whose bourgeois pretentions and chauvinistic narrow-mindedness he tirelessly lampooned. On the other, he vied for the recognition of, and simultaneously competed with, the artists that belonged to the self-proclaimed progressive camp, especially Dada. With this camp he shared a marked aversion for aesthetic decorum and the desire to anchor artistic practice in everyday life. At the same time he vehemently rejected the political engagement of Dada's militant phalanx, a position that placed him on a collision course with activists like Richard Huelsenbeck and George

Grosz. Not coincidentally, Schwitters's first comprehensive discussion of *Merz* is found in a 1921 essay that sketches his response to the politicization of Dadaism following the establishment of the Berlin Club Dada in 1918. The text marks the culmination of his feud with Richard Huelsenbeck, one of the founders of Dada in Berlin who had vehemently opposed Schwitters's membership in the group. Schwitters's manifesto is a rebuttal to Huelsenbeck's charge that his championing of abstraction was at bottom an escapist position, one that failed to take a robust political stance vis-à-vis the conservative retrenchments of postwar Germany while indulging the discredited idealism of Expressionism.[4] The dispute with Huelsenbeck forced Schwitters to articulate the paradox at the heart of his project. That is, art's distinctiveness from other practices lies in its abstraction, that is, its nonreferential, noncommunicative quality; yet this very intransitive quality is the foundation of its transformative impact on experience. How can a practice that only points back to itself, one may ask, relate productively to the environment in which it unfolds and even help change it?

The 1921 *Merz* manifesto opens by detailing Schwitters's reasons for renouncing naturalistic representation in painting, which, as he maintains, is an academic skill that can be learned by anyone who is not color-blind. Art is a practice of a different order, Schwitters insists, one devoted to coordinating given elements. Its aim is not to transpose reality's semblance into illusionistic representation; it rather pursues *Ausdruck*, an absolute mode of expression that serves no purpose. With the mobilization of the term *Ausdruck* the essay moves onto conceptually unorthodox, and at times seemingly incongruous, terrain. A key term in the aesthetic discourse associated with Expressionism, *Ausdruck* had played a central role in Kandinsky's influential paean to abstract painting in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912), and Schwitters seems to at first borrow from the Russian's conceptual arsenal in his own defense of abstraction. Yet if in Kandinsky's discourse "expression" was a path to disclosing a suppressed spiritual reality by translating the vibrations of the artist's soul into a pure language of color and sound, Schwitters's idiosyncratic use of the term relieves it from the task of rendering inner states of mind, or, for that matter, anything at all. As he puts it, "expression" does not translate anything and only marks an aesthetic assemblage whose intransitivity is the hallmark of all art.[5]

Such emphasis on art's intransitivity may at first resonate with the aesthetic ascetism championed by Clement Greenberg, who saw in the modernist disavowal of illusionism a token of the artist's refusal to engage with a contemporary experience defiled by materialism, greed, and corrupt power.[6] This refusal, Greenberg maintained, drove a self-reflexive inquiry into the

expressive qualities of a medium whose quest for truth pushed beyond the appearance of the material world. Yet for Schwitters art is not about exploring the possibilities of a specific medium in an ascetic quest for purity. Quite to the contrary, it endeavors to establish connections encompassing all kinds of materials, no matter how lowly or degraded their status may be in everyday life. Thus any object can be yanked out of its customary environment, divested of its purpose, and treated at a par with color and line on the canvas. This is possible because art is, fundamentally, about the operation of giving form:

> The material is as unessential as myself. The only essential thing is giving form. Because the material is unessential, I use any material the picture demands. By harmonizing different types of materials among themselves, I have an advantage over mere oil painting, for besides playing off color against color, I also play off line against line, form against form, etcetera, and even material against material, for example wood against burlap. I call the worldview from which this mode of artistic creation arose "Merz." (*pppppp* 215)[7]

Art is thus about juxtaposing all kinds of materials in order to create relational configurations. Schwitters's repeated downplaying of the properties of given elements is meant to preempt the notion that montage practice is about producing additive concoctions whose effect lies in the sum total of their component parts. Instead he insists that the works' formal configurations arise from the contrastive logic of given juxtapositions. In setting wood against canvas, for instance, the point is not to combine the physical properties of those two materials but to exploit the effect of their relational interplay. If one juxtaposes wood to a piece of metal, different aspects of woodness will come into play. Wood is thus not valuable for the absolute qualities it may possess, but rather for its ability to interact differently with different materials—in Schwitters's own words: "All values exist exclusively through the mutual relationships they establish."[8] Artistic "forming" consists of manipulating these relational interactions, as exemplified by the very term *Merz*. A syllable culled from the word *Commerzbank* ("commerce bank"), *Merz* does not possess any recognizable qualities when treated in isolation. Once inserted into Schwitters's discourse, it enters relationships with other terms that endow it with specific functions.

In creating relational patterns, montage artworks add to the web of relations that makes up reality. Their relational structures do not mirror or reproduce the semblance of the relational network of experience, but rather

possess distinctive configurations, what Schwitters calls "rhythm," appropriating a key term that circulated in the discourse of Expressionism and Constructivism. Rhythm denotes relationships that are not random or coincidental, but rather ground in a properly aesthetic logic that differs from the communicative and utilitarian dynamics that links objects in nonartistic realms. For this reason the patterns created by artistic relations are quintessentially self-referential.[9] The dispensation from having to relate to external reality grounds art's autonomy from the prescriptions of mimetic representation and the pressure to infuse the artwork with some explicit ideological message. 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. In his discourse, abstraction grounds an artistic practice that reassembles elements culled from experience by means of a logic that disregards the mutual relations of objects in everyday life. Its underlying montage principle allows a dramatic extension of the possibilities of any given art form, since the range of materials that can be used is virtually limitless. Within this frame, traditional boundaries among art forms become irrelevant; indeed, they come to represent an indefensible obstacle to artistic practice. Hence *Merz* allows for producing a total work of art, one that imaginatively hybridizes media and genres, while also blurring the conventional distinction between art and nonart as it lays claim to appropriating any given element of reality for artistic practice (*pppppp* 216–18).[10] Within this frame art is no longer about representation. Instead, it constitutes a concrete intervention into experience, an operation that directly adds to its fabric.

• Schwitters's integration of sundry elements from everyday experience defuses Huelsenbeck's charge of escapism by fulfilling his demand that artistic practice embrace the cacophonous stuff of modern life. Schwitters shrewdly seizes on this central demand of militant Dadaism to portray his own principle of *Merz* as being more radical and broadminded toward contemporary experience than Huelsenbeck's exclusionary discourse, which he discredits as an attempt at constraining art's transformative potential by subjugating it to political aims (*Werk* 5:77–78). His early stories "Die Zwiebel" ("The Onion") and "Franz Müllers Drahtfrühling" ("Franz Müller's Wire Springtime") further continue the showdown with Huelsenbeck by transposing it onto the plane of grotesquely comical narratives. Notably, they probe the relation of art to politics by juxtaposing two different understand-

ings of montage, which allows Schwitters to deliver a caustic commentary on the narcissism and cynicism of politically engaged Dadaists.

"The Onion," published in 1919, is a surreal tale of disemboweling and reassemblage cheerfully told in the first person by its protagonist and sacrificial victim, Alves Bäsenstiel.[11] The event, which Bäsenstiel has helped orchestrate, transposes religious ritual and juridical execution onto a gory slaughterhouse setting. A surprising turn occurs when the king, the star guest at the event, which is also witnessed by an unspecified *Volk*, greedily ingests Bäsenstiel's eyes and dies. The king's daughter hastily orders that his scattered parts be put back together so that he can be resuscitated and save the king. The newly collaged Bäsenstiel, however, refuses to comply and seals the king's demise. His character's ambiguity in "The Onion" is dispelled in "Franz Müller's Wire Springtime," which functions as a sequel of sorts to the first narrative.[12] In three chapters, the text tells of the revolutionary uprisings unleashed by the subversive behavior of one Franz Müller, an artist whose indifference to the questioning of well-situated citizens and a policeman first sparks street riots and then prompts the convening of the country's parliament. Bäsenstiel makes his appearance as an opportunistic politician who wantonly accuses Müller of seditious conduct (*Werk* 2:41).[13] The story's various episodes, which are strung together without much regard for continuity or motivation, are capped by a happy ending of sorts consisting of Müller's erotically charged encounter with a young woman, whose white clothes he symbolically soils. Taken together, the two stories offer an erratic allegory of the turbulent months following the demise of the German Kaiserreich and the establishment of the Weimar Republic. Their stock descriptions of political actors driven by the basest human instincts—greed, dishonesty, grandstanding, and power-mongering—deliver at best a cranky and trivializing record of events during and after the war. Yet they stand out for the centrality they ascribe to montage as both an allegorical framework and a formal principle for exploring competing understandings of assembled identity.

Both narratives unfold in theatrical settings that underscore the importance of acts of watching and witnessing—the slaughterhouse/gallows/sacrificial altar in "The Onion"; the street and parliament chamber in "Franz Müller's Wire Springtime." In "The Onion" the self of the first-person narrator exists primarily as the object of an other's perception, including its own as filtered through the first-person narrative. In "Franz Müller's Wire Springtime" Müller's unwillingness to acknowledge bystanders by looking back at them becomes a transgression that ultimately sparks street riots, forming a stark contrast to the conduct of all other actors, which is patterned on a dialectics of watching and being watched in return. This prominence of the the-

atrical makes the stories into early dramatizations of the culture of exteriority that for Helmut Lethen distinguishes Weimar Germany from the Kaiserreich. In his *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte* Lethen paints a vivid portrait of postwar Germany's new culture of exteriority, which displaced the ideology of inwardness that had authorized influential cultural discourses up to Expressionism.[14] In this cultural framework subjectivity is formed through individuals' interaction with their environment and in the reciprocal gaze they exchange with others. The emphasis here lies on shaping and controlling the ways in which an individual is perceived, because perceived being is all that counts in a culture that no longer believes in essential identities. Bäsenstiel, the character that connects the two stories, is a paradigmatic example of the cold persona described by Lethen, which in his account forms the desirable cultural type bound to emerge in a social setting dominated by appearances and simmering violence. A paragon of cold conduct, Bäsenstiel embodies a mode of agency that hinges on asserting oneself by exerting the utmost control over one's body. His cold acquiescence to his dismembering empowers him to a most radical political act, namely, regicide, and contributes to subverting the tale's political order.

The implications of this befuddling turn of events become apparent if one recalls Helmut Plessner's phenomenological account of the constitution of subjectivity in the reciprocal interaction with others, which plays a key role in Lethen's reading of Weimar culture. Schwitters's story cannily dramatizes the dual role that the body plays for Plessner in the subject's constitution, as both the incarnated locus of the self and one of many tools on which the individual draws in his interaction with the environment. As an interpolation of body and environment, the self thus comes into being as a phenomenological given that is intimately tied to the body but not fully contained by it. This points to the expectation of a reciprocal interaction between individual and environment that forms the enabling condition of selfhood for Plessner.[15] In "The Onion," this expectation is illustrated by the narrator's puzzling ability to recount the process of his disemboweling even after his skull has been cracked open and he is effectively dead. The possibility of narrating his own dismembering allows him to assume the role of the observer and the observed at once, turning the narrative into a medium of reciprocal interaction that enables the observing narrator to paradoxically survive after he has witnessed his own killing. The crucial role played by reciprocity is further documented by the king's pitiful demise, which is brought about by his greedy determination to devour the narrator's eyes. This Oedipal fantasy of castration can also be read, with Plessner, as an attempt at suppressing the reciprocal interaction on which the ruler depends to constitute selfhood and

thus ground his authority. In other words, the king's cannibalistic act is an attempt at suppressing, with the narrator's gaze, the very alterity that makes reciprocity and selfhood possible. In this respect it is significant that the king's ingestion of the narrator's eyes does not so much free him from the reciprocal bond that ties him to his subject as destroy the very precondition of selfhood, killing him.

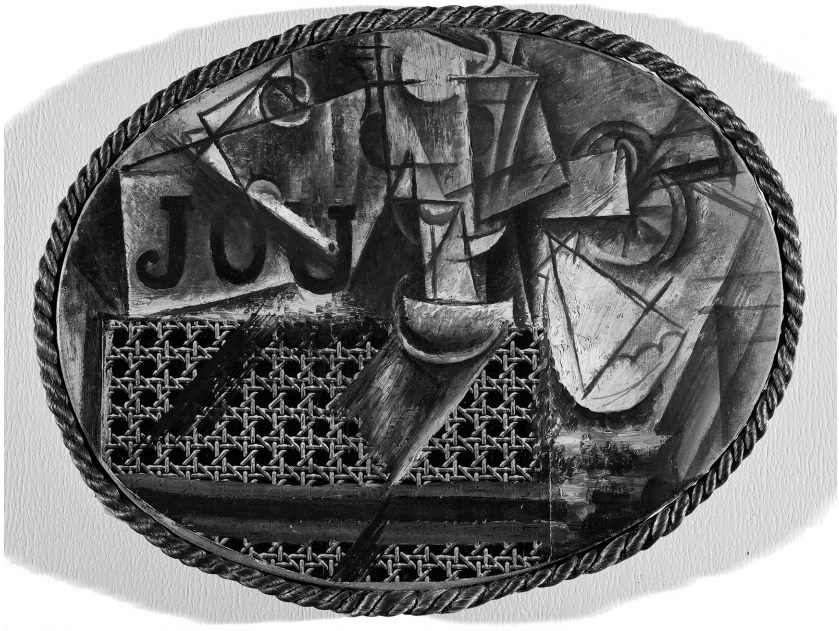
The reciprocity of seeing and the theme of bodily incorporation also play a prominent role in "Franz Müller's Wire Springtime." Müller's unwillingness to interact with bystanders can be read as a cipher for the incommunicative quality that distinguishes art for Schwitters. If his passivity winds up unleashing riots and thus recalls Bäsenstiel's lethal acquiescence, he also embodies a montage principle that is very different from the one dramatized in the earlier narrative. If Bäsenstiel's paradoxical self-assertion lies in his submission to a gory spectacle that involves being physically dismembered and reassembled, Müller's montage practice is markedly nonviolent and grounds an unorthodox, antiheroic mode of artistic agency.[16] As it turns out, Müller's attire and public persona are assembled from trash gathered from the gutter, as confirmed by his last name, which recalls the word for garbage, *Müll* (*Werk* 2:34–35). Müller's clothes even resemble the collages of refuse created by Schwitters as the self-identified narrator/author, and this makes of him a strolling *Merz* sculpture. But trash is also Müller's favorite food, a circumstance that provides for some humorously disgusting digressions. The contrast to Bäsenstiel could not be more striking. Bäsenstiel's ostensive willingness to feed the king by immolating his own body proves toxic. Müller, on the other hand, is willing to eat refuse, that is, to draw nourishment from the debased domains of everyday life. While this entails engaging experience in a nonviolent manner, the humorously repulsive description of his behavior prevents any idealization or heroization of his character. Indeed, Müller's propensity for eating rotting garbage makes him no more a point of identification than Bäsenstiel. He is neither a hero nor a savior, but simply a practitioner of *Merz*, the montage principle advocated by Schwitters. Müller's unheroic and repulsive behavior thus challenges the late-idealistic narrative that makes art into a domain for transfiguring everyday life and instead portrays both the artist and the artwork as made of the same smelly and unflattering stuff of ordinary experience.[17]

Schwitters's narratives thus put forth distinct models of montage that map on contrasting notions of subjectivity and agency. If Bäsenstiel's sacrificial montage literalizes the warmongering discourses of the 1910s that promised the birth of a new man through the violent sacrifice of the old one, Müller exemplifies the results of transposing onto the body a nonviolent, artistic

practice that operates by embracing any material from everyday life, including refuse, through physical incorporation. While violence is integral to the unnatural disassembling and reassembling of Bäsenstiel's body and is instrumental to his empowerment following the king's death, for Müller the incorporation of disparate elements, which artistic montage symbolizes, does not produce violent effects per se but rather occurs via the ordinary bodily function of eating. This recalls the material acts of incorporation Walter Benjamin described in his glosses on writing and reading, which undergird his reflection on storytelling as a practice that is not primarily centered on discerning meaning but rather hinges on mobilizing the body and its routines. The two narratives leave little doubt as to which version of montage Schwitters embraces. If Bäsenstiel, Huelsenbeck's doppelgänger,[18] comes to symbolize the self-serving and destructive conjunction of art and politics in Dada's activist groups, then Müller appears as a stand-in for Schwitters's own understanding of an abstract art, whose intransitivity is paradoxically linked to the unprejudiced embrace of experience in its entirety.[19]

• Schwitters's debunking of Huelsenbeck's position in the two narratives I just discussed helps to flesh out some of the arguments on abstract montage that unfold in his *Merz* essay but also leaves crucial questions unanswered. What do recipients get out of the abstract artworks Schwitters champions if not some conceptualizable meaning? And what is the function of intransitive art, exactly? At issue is, specifically, the transformative intervention of montage artworks.

Paraphrasing a 1925 remark by German art historian Franz Roh, Christopher Phillips describes the impact of visual montage as the confluence of two crucial tendencies in modern visual culture, namely, modernist abstraction and the realism of the incorporated fragments.[20] Phillips's remark also echoes Clement Greenberg's discussion of Picasso's and Braque's turn to collage in their cubist work, which for Greenberg revolves around staging a contrast between the abstraction of cubist painting and the literalness of the collated elements. One may think in this context of Picasso's iconic *Still Life with Chair Caning* (1912), which juxtaposes painted objects made unrecognizable by cubist stylization to a hyperrealist, faux chair caning glued directly onto the canvas. The possibility for playing abstraction off against realism relies on the double signification engendered by montage techniques, which operate via a transfer of materials from one context to another. In this transfer, materials become functional parts of the new context while maintaining allusions to the previous one(s). Hence, Picasso's fragment of chair caning, while being



Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Chair Caning* (Spring 1912). Oil on oilcloth over canvas edged with rope. Photo: R. G. Ojeda. Musée Picasso.
(Copyright RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Copyright 2015 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.)

one of several still-life objects on the canvas, exceeds the painting's frame of reference by metonymically evoking the chair from which it was taken. This metonymic reference to the "real object" playfully mocks the conventions of illusionistic representation, which are brought into sharp relief through contrast with the cubist rendering of objects that make up the rest of the composition.[21] In short, the hyperrealism of the chair caning accentuates the anti-illusionism, or abstraction, of the overall composition. At the same time, the unsublimated fragment explodes the boundedness of the canvas by stubbornly pointing back to the whole to which it once belonged. In this way it dramatizes the ability of montage fragments to evoke the contexts out of which they were extracted as though they were affected by an incurable semantic cross-eyedness.[22]

This semantic and referential double-coding makes for the jarring quality and lack of closure of montage artifacts and accounts for their critical potential in the practice of Dada. Yet this subversive moment is distinctively absent

in Schwitters's discourse on *Merz*. His understanding of art's intransitivity is predicated on stripping materials of former contextual valences so as to make them fit the artwork's self-contained relations. This entails suppressing the realist orientation of the collated elements, that is, their ability to point to a context extrinsic to the artwork.[23] As it turns out, Schwitters's radicalization of the hybridity and messiness of montage has the paradoxical effect of buttressing a most intransigent claim to artistic autonomy, and it is not difficult to imagine the chagrin of artists like Huelsenbeck and Grosz, who cringed at witnessing a most incisive avant-garde practice being appropriated for a position that was indistinguishable in their eyes from the academic elitism Schwitters claimed to despise. But Schwitters's position seems to be untenable at an even more fundamental level, which has to do with his apparent determination to suppress the double talk of montage by blocking the outward orientation of the incorporated materials. If one were to take his claims about the artist's ability to "dematerialize" materials at face value, one would have to conclude that the fragment of the cigarette ad used in his collage *Miss Blanche* can completely sever its ties to the world of advertisement and act as a blank signifier whose function derives solely from the relationships it enters into with other collaged elements.[24] Yet it appears doubtful that the cross-eyedness of montage fragments can ever be entirely suppressed. The simple-mindedness of Schwitters's pronouncements in this regard has stymied many scholars, lending credence to his reputation, bolstered already by many contemporaries, as an artist whose collage practices are boldly experimental, but whose concept of art as a self-contained realm of order and harmony is at bottom escapist and nostalgic.[25]

Upon closer scrutiny, the essay on *Merz* offers a more nuanced analysis than the contention that one can fully divest materials of their allusions to previous contexts. Key to this more layered understanding of montage is Schwitters's discussion of *Merz-Dichtung*, that is, the unfolding of *Merz* in language. Schwitters's engagement with literature has received far less attention in English-language criticism than his work in visual media in spite of the fact that it was as important to him as the latter, witness his copious literary output over four decades. Indeed, while his 1921 manifesto starts out with a narrative outlining his development as a visual artist, the text shifts to the domain of language when it comes to explaining in detail the functioning of *Merz*, both as a word fragment and the label for abstract montage. This leads to thematizing the insuppressible semantic ambivalence of montage:

> Poetry arises from the playing off of these elements against each other. Meaning is only essential if it is to be used as one such factor. I play off

Kurt Schwitters, *Mz 231. Miss Blanche* (1923). Collage. *(Collection Dr. Werner Schmalenbach, Düsseldorf. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)*

> sense against nonsense. I prefer nonsense, but that is a purely personal matter. I pity nonsense, because until now it has been so neglected in the making of art, and that's why I love it. (*pppppp* 215)[26]

Much like *Merz* painting, *Merz* poetry is abstract in the sense that it aims at establishing unconventional relationships among the broadest range of materials. This is obtained by playing words off against each other, as well as any available, preformed linguistic units, which represent the equivalent of the sundry materials Schwitters used for his visual collages. Schwitters implicitly acknowledges that such materials—phrases, slogans, clichés—come with attached, contextual meaning. After all, it is their very formulaic character that makes them into discrete units to be treated as ready-made objects. While it is not possible to fully desemanticize words and phrases, that is, to completely suppress the meanings that adhere to them, one can treat such meanings as one factor among others in assembling linguistic units. Since the priority lies in expanding the range of artistic expression, non-sense is as good a material for *Merz* poetry as is sense. Indeed, what Schwitters terms *Unsinn*

can be seen as the linguistic counterpart of the refuse Schwitters fervently collected for use in his collages.[27] It is precisely the juxtaposition of *Unsinn* with conventionally signifying language that accounts for the production of abstraction in literature. Abstract montage thus understood serves to disclose the fundamental mechanisms that govern everyday communication by scrutinizing its flip side, namely, linguistic intransitivity. This is to say that *Merz* literature does not represent processes of communication by summoning virtual worlds that simulate real-life communication, but rather mimics the structure of communication through a parodic performance that calculatingly refuses to replicate the logic of conventional meaning production. I now turn to examining the reach of this parodic play by focusing on some of Schwitters's early essays and short stories.

• Schwitters's programmatic description of *Merz* in literature suggests that literary abstraction lies in suppressing the ties that conventionally bind linguistic materials by establishing new connections in which the common meanings attaching to linguistic units are played off against the non-sense produced by unconventional combinations. An enlightening example of this practice is found in his *Tran-Texte* (literally, "fish-oil texts"), the caustic essays Schwitters wrote in response to negative reviews of his works. These are more than personal attempts at getting even with pesky critics. If the *Merz* essay from 1921 discussed above marks a key moment in Schwitters's campaign against the exclusionary sanctimoniousness of politically engaged artists, then the *Tran* essays engage the other main front line of the discursive warfare Schwitters conducted in the early 1920s, which targeted the smugness and incomprehension of those art critics who belittled contemporary art in the pages of established literary and cultural magazines. These early prose texts weave humorous patchworks collaging Schwitters's attacks on the critics, quotations from the critics' own reviews, and seemingly unrelated linguistic material ranging from simple phrases to complete sentences, which are usually set off by parentheses—their bold linguistic and textual experimentation amply documenting the influence of futurism and Dada. The following passage, which is drawn from an essay published in the Berlin avant-garde journal *Der Sturm* in 1920, exemplifies their primary textual strategy:

> For a moment today, let us "take up" Mr. Felix Neumann. "Nothing kills faster than ridiculousness," he writes. But dear Sir, you are committing suicide! Didn't you read your article of January 6, 1920, in the Post? Sheer suicide! (Nothing kills faster than ridiculousness.) . . . You

> say I'm gnawing with a thousand like-minded comrades at the roots of our strength. (A pretty picture.) Don't you mean: your strength? No, a million times, no, I'm not gnawing, put your mind at ease. I am no rat and you are no tree. I wouldn't have the first clue where to find the roots of your strength. Besides, I would prefer to gnaw my way alone, if you please, without thousands of co-gnawers. But I am no rodent. On the contrary; I am the one being gnawed on. Undoubtedly you will cease gnawing on me any moment now; otherwise I will make you ridiculous, rest assured! Otherwise I will make you ridiculous. Don't you know, that kills. . . . All I need to do is copy what you yourself have written; that is enough.[28]

This passage seizes on two offhand remarks in the critic's review, the proverb-like motto "Nothing kills faster than ridicule," used to disparage Schwitters's poetry in the volume *Anna Blume Dichtungen* (*Anna Blossom Poems*, 1919), and the charge regarding Schwitters's presumed detrimental influence on contemporary audiences: "He gnaws at the roots of our strength with a thousand like-minded souls." The critic's hyperbolic style is mocked by Schwitters, who seizes on the metaphorical "pretty image" of the harmful rodent gnawing away at the roots of a tree, and humorously unfolds it as though it had been meant literally. This allows him to debunk the chauvinistic insinuation entailed in the critic's image of a hoard of rats chipping away at the healthy roots of "our" strength, by suggesting that at issue must rather be the critic's own strength: "You mean your strength?" Second, Schwitters turns the degrading image of the gnawing rodent against the critic himself, claiming that, if anything, he is the one being attacked in a parasitic and insidious way ("gnawed on"), while also protesting the suggestion that he is just one of an entire hoard of artists who are doing exactly the same things he does. Finally, the text makes its own strategies manifest in the last comic death threat launched against the critic. If, as the critic had pompously stipulated in reviewing Schwitters's collages, "nothing kills faster than ridiculousness," then Schwitters threatens to simply reuse a few sentences from the critic's own review, whose preposterousness renders them a lethal weapon. The whole review, Schwitters establishes at the beginning, is tantamount to suicide by the critic's own standard that "nothing kills faster than ridiculousness."

This excerpt well illustrates Schwitters's strategy of seizing on words and phrases from the critic's review and recycling them by "merz-ing" them, that is, adapting them for a new context. One strategy exemplified above includes removing a term, "gnawing," from its syntagmatic context and exploring its paradigmatic relations to other terms. This forms an equivalent to exploiting

the cross-eyedness of collaged fragments in Picasso's *Still Life*, for the semantic valence of the verb "gnawing" is not allowed to exhaust itself in the actualization of the meaning suggested by the critic's sentence. Rather, the word is made to look outside the sentence in search for other meanings that could be actualized within the linguistic context of the citation. This leads to a slippage from metaphorical to literal meaning, so that "gnawing" is interpreted as concretely pointing to the activity of rodents. A whole new context is constructed around the sentence to support this new, actualized meaning, giving way to a humorous juxtaposition between the new literal image (this painter is a rodent who is eating away at the roots of our tree) and the charge entailed in the critic's puffed-up metaphor (this painter is a persistent, though not immediately visible threat to the health of our nation's art and culture). Arguably, the non-sense that is produced in this way makes a lot of sense as a weapon of ridicule turned against the critic. The humor is compounded by the fact that it is the critic's own claims, in their recycled form, that help to expose his pompousness and smugness.[29]

Schwitters's montage principle entails an assault on the linear unfolding of discourse, which is constantly interrupted by parenthetical inserts that either provide a commentary or contain seemingly unrelated linguistic material. This practice casts into sharp relief Schwitters's understanding of montage as a process that establishes novel, unconventional relations among linguistic elements that are treated as found material. The nonsense produced in this way does not make the impression of chaos but unfolds in a highly methodical fashion, engendering a coherent, parallel universe to sense.[30] This is very different from the assault on poetic coherence that marks the *Wortkunst* ("word art") tradition endorsed by the avant-garde circle around Herwarth Walden's *Der Sturm*, which Schwitters had initially followed. This poetic model revolved around stripping language to the bones, allowing for an ecstatic feeling to replace grammatical structure. The result is texts dominated by paratactic constructions and word chains, as exemplified by the poetry of August Stramm, its most celebrated representative. If Stramm's language is set in motion by releasing the unstructured intensity of feeling, then Schwitters's linguistic experimentation hinges on exploring alternatives to its ordinary use, which is thus exposed as conventional. In this context nonsense does not represent a negation of sense through the polemical display of gibberish. Rather non-sense appears contiguous to sense, as a parodic manipulation of available material that is close enough to sense to be deciphered as the other of conventional meaning, but outlandish enough to be recognized as lying outside of the established automatism of signification.[31]

• Schwitters's description of how *Merz* functions in the domain of literature resonates closely with Helmut Lethen's account of the cultural shift that shook postwar Germany, away from a conception of meaning as essentially given and toward understanding communication as grounding in models of conduct designed to protect individuals in a potentially hostile social arena. Within this frame communication is not about expression of some inward substance. Rather, as suggested by Schwitters's juxtaposition of sense and non-sense, it is an outward practice that functions through the manipulation of existing materials and signs. In this context, one should note the dispassionate, cold terminology, to use another of Lethen's categories, that structures Schwitters's discourse on art, and that decisively sets it off from the "incandescent," late-idealistic pathos of Expressionism. "Evaluate," "play off," "given parts," "materials," "factors" are the central concepts denoting artistic practice. This language conveys an understanding of experience as a relational network defined by contingent, shifting practices rather than as organic totality. Art represents an intervention on these practices that playfully manipulates existing elements to obtain different relational configurations. In so doing, it prides itself with recycling even those elements that have lost their original purpose, such as refuse, or those linguistic segments that do not make sense in the conventional system of communication, and are thus designated as non-sense.

Lethen's discussion also accounts for the unapologetic agonism that distinguishes Schwitters's replies to his critics, which can easily cross into the vituperative. They can be seen as carrying out the exteriorized "shaming rituals" that took the place of the inner control of conscience in the new "culture of shame" described by Lethen.[32] Schwitters's texts stage these rituals by drawing on the tool of parody. That is, their main shaming strategy lies in debunking the critics' credibility and authority by repeating their statements with some key modification so as to cast ridicule on them, a strategy that is explicitly thematized in the passage quoted above. Yet parody for Schwitters is not simply a strategy of mocking criticism, but rather discloses the fundamental way in which communication functions and as such plays a key role in his understanding of montage, as documented by its ubiquity in his oeuvre. Bernd Scheffer has extensively discussed Schwitters's use of parodic practices of (self-)quotation, which is especially conspicuous in his early literary work and finds a paradigmatic example in his "An Anna Blume" ("Anna Blossom"), one of the most successful poems of the Weimar Republic. The text does not just parody the tradition of erotic poetry, mocking yet also embracing the Western discourse that celebrates erotic experience as an ecstatic moment of subversive unboundedness while domesticating it through senti-

mental clichés so as to render it morally palatable. Anna Blossom is a protean trope that gains a life of its own in Schwitters's texts, returning in a variety of incarnations that traverse his early oeuvre. That is, Schwitters reuses Anna Blossom as a conceptual image, a linguistic pun, an emblem of poetic practice, and an ideogram in visual compositions.[33] This practice is not limited to Anna Blossom, the phantasmagoria of erotic love to whom Schwitters owed an unexpected celebrity and which he unabashedly exploited. Schwitters systematically recycled elements from his own works ranging from single characters to titles of prose texts and entire textual fragments.[34] What makes this practice notable is the extent to which the recycled materials remain fully recognizable as inserts, never completely losing their tie to the context from which they were extracted.

The link that ties Schwitters's parodic practice to montage can best be elucidated by drawing on Linda Hutcheon's nonderogative understanding of parody. For Hutcheon, parody goes well beyond the traditional practice of imitating a text or an object while injecting the imitation with some humorous difference aimed at casting ridicule on the original. To be sure, Hutcheon echoes the traditional definition of parody in seeing the relation between the model and the parodied text as one of "ironic inversion." However, she stresses that the irony is "not always at the expense of the parodied text," but rather serves to mark the moment of difference, that is, to make clear that the imitation is at variance with the original. Hence parody consists for her of a "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity."[35] When considered within the context of Schwitters's montage practices, parody is a strategy for recycling materials where the moment of recycling or imitation is made explicit by the ironic variation on the original. Reusing materials derived both from his own work and that of others, Schwitters weaves a complex patchwork of relations in which texts are never fully contained in themselves, but always point outside their contingent boundaries to allude to other texts. In its manifest double-coding, parody functions as an overt intertextual strategy that foregrounds the signifying mechanism proper to montage. This practice challenges conventional notions of authorship and the bounded text while at the same time establishing a high degree of coherence in Schwitters's oeuvre. It is a type of coherence that is predicated not so much on the repetition of specific content or materials as on the formal relations that repetition establishes.

This understanding of parody is paradigmatically enacted in "Schacko," a story from 1926 that probes the reach of abstraction in literature.[36] The story's title refers to its central figure, a parrot whose illness and untimely death constitute the narrative's primary focus. Most of the story is told in the first

person by the parrot's owner, a woman mourning the recent death of her husband. "Such a naked tiny animal," she repeats tirelessly. As she explains, the bird compulsively pulled all its feathers during the time spent with the ailing man (*Werk* 2:289). The vet has now been summoned to save the bird, who becomes afflicted in tight sequence by constipation due to a hernia, a sudden, disastrous attack of diarrhea, and, finally, by fluid in its lungs, which causes its ultimate demise. The story ends, quite humorously, with the fearless woman performing an improvised autopsy to ascertain the bird's cause of death. She then lovingly buries its corpse at the feet of her husband's grave, thus fulfilling his last wish.

In a preface to the 1933 reprint of the story Schwitters explicitly thematizes the role of abstraction in literature:

> It is very difficult to realize abstraction in literature. I would like to point to the structure of "**Schacko**," to its abstract law of **composition**. I have heard Schacko's story myself told from a woman, **word for word, the whole tale** . . . this brought the material closer to me from a human standpoint; but **as such** it was not yet an artwork. **The matter became an artwork only through form**: how the woman's statements are juxtaposed to each other, how they are repeated, complement each other, how they anticipate or confirm each other, how they hang together as a whole so as to make ever more manifest the woman's love for her husband, **an abstract concept**, and her desperation, **yet again an abstract concept**, and this is **the content of this story**. You can analyze all my texts in this way and you will have to admit that their form is always abstract in this way: statements are juxtaposed to each other. (*Werk* 2:431–32)[37]

According to this passage, the narrative is based on a true story its protagonist related to the writer of the preface. While the story is not made up, it is also not a faithful recording of the tale told by the woman. Rather the narrative recycles materials supplied by the model by rearranging them within the medium of literature. Its artistic attributes, that which distinguishes it from the woman's narration, lie in its distinctive form, what Schwitters calls its abstract law of composition. Form in this context concerns the way in which the woman's statements, which are made more poignant by their disarming ordinariness, are merzed/collaged, that is, repeated and juxtaposed so as to bring to the fore what are essentially abstract constructs, namely, her feelings of love and desperation. This abstract content calls for the deployment of formal abstraction, which in this case denotes the refusal

von nebenan durch die Wand ohne sich groß was dabei zu denken. Morgens war ihr erster Weg zur Küche; sie mußte waten, denn die ganze Wohnung stand unter Wasser. Tische und Stühle kamen ihr entgegengeschwommen. Die Schränke waren dick aufgequollen, wie Pappe. Von den Wänden waren die Nägel abgerostet, und alle Bilder nebst Wandschmücken lagen unten im Wasser, das ihr bis ans Knie ging. Sie dachte: „Wenn's nur dem Tierchen gut geht, dann bin ich's ja gern zufrieden!" – Aber dieser Schreck. Denken Sie, wie sie in die Küche kommt, **liegt das Tier tot.** Es ist ganz dick aufgequollen und muß wohl ertrunken sein. Den Kopf hatte es hoch unter den Gaskandelaber gehängt, aber das Wasser mußte in der Nacht wohl höher gestanden haben, und da war es offenbar zu lange unter Wasser gewesen. Und nun das aufgequollene Tier wieder herauszukriegen! Frau Schönwetter stellte gleich den Wasserhahn ab, denn nun hatte es keinen Zweck mehr, das Wasser laufen zu lassen. Und nun sah man erst, wie die Türen gequollen waren, und als das Wasser abgelaufen war, waren die Fußböden so schlammig und weich, wie die Feldwege im Winter. Und dann das Gewicht des Tieres! Ein normales Flußpferd wiegt nach Herders Konversationslexikon, dritte Auflage, reich illustriert durch Textabbildungen, Tafeln und Karten, dritter Band, Elea bis Gyuilay, Freiburg im Breisgau, Berlin, Karlsruhe, München, Straßburg, Wien und St. Louis, Mo. Seite 675, **bis 2500 Kilogramm.** Aber Frau Schönwetter war helle. **Sie schnitt einfach das Tier von hinten in kleine Scheiben,** die sie selbst bequem tragen konnte, und trug es dann scheibenweise mit dem Mülleimer in den Wechselsack. So sparte sie wenigstens den Dienstmann.

Und nun die Steinböcke? Angangs schliefen sie ganz ruhig auf dem Fußende von Gleiwitzens Bett. Aber mitten in der Nacht mußten doch wohl Meinungsverschiedenheiten entstanden sein, und nun ging's aber los! Sie rasten hintereinander her, und Gleiwitz war aufgewacht und pfiff mit seiner schrillen Pfeife dazwischen. Und die vier Steinböcke rasten an den Wänden hoch und warfen aber auch alles um. Da wußte sich Gleiwitz nicht zu helfen, **er nahm sein Taschenmesser und erstach einen nach dem anderen.** Und wie nun die vier tot dalagen, schnitt sich Gleiwitz die Pulsadern auf und legte sich daneben; denn er hätte das wertvolle Porzellan nie im Leben wieder bezahlen können.

Warnung:
Schreiber dieses hat so ausführlich geschrieben, um die eminente Gefahr einer Zoologischen-Garten-Lotterie deutlich zu demonstrieren. Man sollte die außerordentliche Gefahr nicht verkennen und die zoologischen Gärten so stellen, daß sie ihre Insassen standesgemäß beherbergen können: **dem Löwen eine Wüste, dem Nilpferd einen Strom, den Steinböcken ein Hochgebirge.** Das ist soziale Tierpflege, und das ist standesgemäß für die Tiere.

Schacko Jacco

Sie werden sicher denken: **„Son nackiges Tierche",** isser auch. Der hat sich nämlich alle Federn ausgerissen. Weil unser Vater doch so hat leiden müssen, ehr daß der starb; und da hat der abends immer Licht angehabt, **weil der nicht hat schlafen können;** und da hat dann das Tierche auch nicht schlafen können, **weil der immer Licht angehabt hat,** son armes Tierche; und da hat der sich aus Kummer vor lauter Langerweile alle Federn ausgerissen. Auf seinem kleinen Kopfe, da hatter ja noch welche, **schön siehter ja nicht grade aus,** son nackiges Tierche. Pfui schäm dich, Schacko, dreh dich mal um, und der schämt sich noch nicht emal!

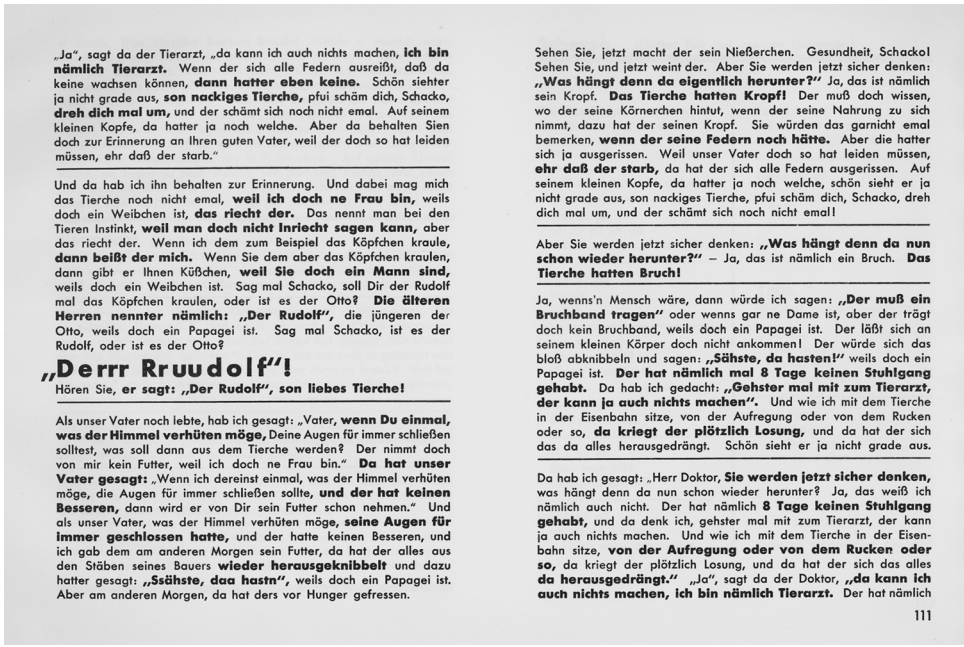
Aber ich denke: „Gehster mal mit zum Tierarzt, der kann ja auch nichts machen." Und da sagich: „Herr Doktor, Sie werden sicher denken, son nackiges Tierche, **isser auch.** Der hat sich nämlich alle Federn ausgerissen. Weil unser Vater doch so hat leiden müssen, **ehr daß der starb;** und da hat der abends immer Licht angehabt, weil der nicht hat schlafen können, und da hat das Tierche auch nicht schlafen können, weil der immer Licht angehabt hat, **son armes Tierche;** Und da hat der sich aus lauter Kummer **vor Langerweile** alle Federn ausgerissen. Auf seinem kleinen Kopfe, da hatter ja noch welche, schön siehter ja nicht grade aus, son nackiges Tierche. **Pfui, schäm dich, Schacko,** dreh dich mal um, und der schämt sich noch nicht emal!"

110

Kurt Schwitters, "Schacko," 1926; *Merz* 21 (1931): 110.
(Courtesy of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

to render the woman's state of mind through a mimetic narrative that would draw on conventional psychological observation. Hence, the terms love and desperation are never used in reference to her. Yet the narrative enacts these abstract concepts through its structure and linguistic form, which thus bear further scrutiny.

The story is composed of thirteen sections typographically set off by horizontal lines. The first nine sections contain the woman's first-person account; the tenth segment bears the title "POSTSCRIPT, for the Reader's Orientation" and introduces segments told from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, who claims to have heard the story from the woman herself (*Werk* 2:291). The narrative is patterned after the rapid back-and-forth of vernacular dialogue, which at times contains short descriptive inserts providing a bare minimum of background information. Each section reintroduces and juxtaposes phrases and idioms from the previous sections in an almost compulsive manner, which at once foregrounds the formulaic character of the linguistic



„Ja", sagt da der Tierarzt, „da kann ich auch nichts machen, **ich bin nämlich Tierarzt.** Wenn der sich alle Federn ausreißt, daß da keine wachsen können, **dann hatter eben keine.** Schön siehter ja nicht grade aus, **son nackiges Tierche,** pfui schäm dich, Schacko, **dreh dich mal um,** und der schämt sich noch nicht emal. Auf seinem kleinen Kopfe, da hatter ja noch welche. Aber da behalten Sien doch zur Erinnerung an Ihren guten Vater, weil der doch so hat leiden müssen, ehr daß der starb."

Und da hab ich ihn behalten zur Erinnerung. Und dabei mag mich das Tierche noch nicht emal, **weil ich doch ne Frau bin,** weils doch ein Weibchen ist, **das riecht der.** Das nennt man bei den Tieren Instinkt, **weil man doch nicht Inriecht sagen kann,** aber das riecht der. Wenn ich dem zum Beispiel das Köpfchen kraule, **dann beißt der mich.** Wenn Sie dem aber das Köpfchen kraulen, dann gibt er Ihnen Küßchen, **weil Sie doch ein Mann sind,** weils doch ein Weibchen ist. Sag mal Schacko, soll Dir der Rudolf mal das Köpfchen kraulen, oder ist es der Otto? **Die älteren Herren nennter nämlich: „Der Rudolf",** die jüngeren der Otto, weils doch ein Papagei ist. Sag mal Schacko, ist es der Rudolf, oder ist es der Otto?

„Derrr Rruudolf"!

Hören Sie, **er sagt: „Der Rudolf", son liebes Tierche!**

Als unser Vater noch lebte, hab ich gesagt: „Vater, **wenn Du einmal, was der Himmel verhüten möge,** Deine Augen für immer schließen solltest, was soll dann aus dem Tierche werden? Der nimmt doch von mir kein Futter, weil ich doch ne Frau bin." **Da hat unser Vater gesagt:** „Wenn ich dereinst einmal, was der Himmel verhüten möge, die Augen für immer schließen sollte, **und der hat keinen Besseren,** dann wird er von Dir sein Futter schon nehmen." Und als unser Vater, was der Himmel verhüten möge, **seine Augen für immer geschlossen hatte,** und der hatte keinen Besseren, und ich gab dem am anderen Morgen sein Futter, da hat der alles aus den Stäben seines Bauers **wieder herausgeknibbelt** und dazu hatter gesagt: **„Ssähste, daa hastn",** weils doch ein Papagei ist. Aber am anderen Morgen, da hat ders vor Hunger gefressen.

Sehen Sie, jetzt macht der sein Nießerchen. Gesundheit, Schacko! Sehen Sie, und jetzt weint der. Aber Sie werden jetzt sicher denken: **„Was hängt denn da eigentlich herunter?"** Ja, das ist nämlich sein Kropf. **Das Tierche hatten Kropf!** Der muß doch wissen, wo der seine Körnerchen hintut, wenn der seine Nahrung zu sich nimmt, dazu hat der seinen Kropf. Sie würden das garnicht emal bemerken, **wenn der seine Federn noch hätte.** Aber die hatter sich ja ausgerissen. Weil unser Vater doch so hat leiden müssen, **ehr daß der starb,** da hat der sich alle Federn ausgerissen. Auf seinem kleinen Kopfe, da hatter ja noch welche, schön sieht er ja nicht grade aus, son nackiges Tierche, pfui schäm dich, Schacko, dreh dich mal um, und der schämt sich noch nicht emal!

Aber Sie werden jetzt sicher denken: **„Was hängt denn da nun schon wieder herunter?"** – Ja, das ist nämlich ein Bruch. **Das Tierche hatten Bruch!**

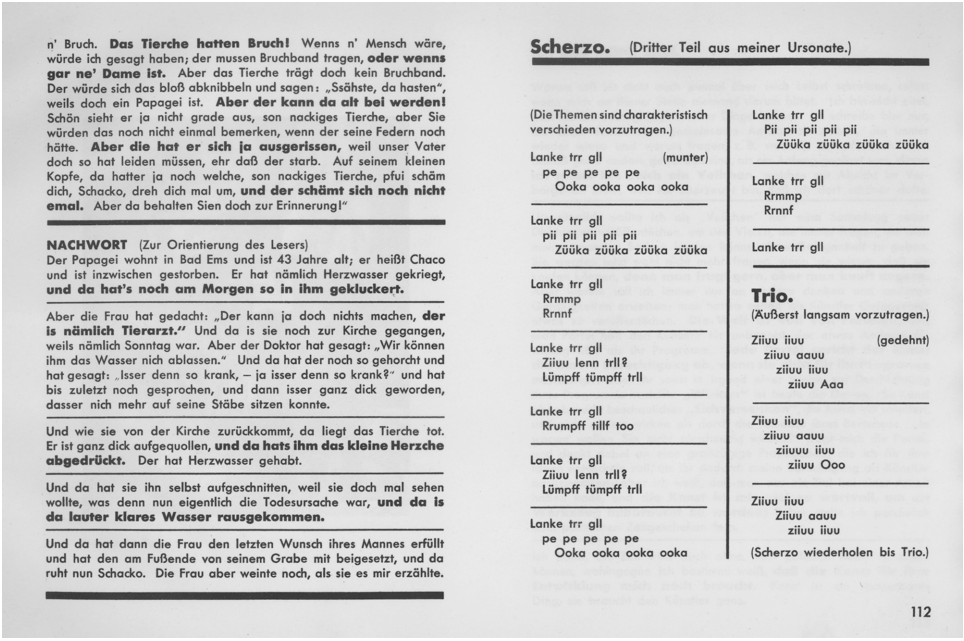
Ja, wenns'n Mensch wäre, dann würde ich sagen: **„Der muß ein Bruchband tragen"** oder wenns gar ne Dame ist, aber der trägt doch kein Bruchband, weils doch ein Papagei ist. Der läßt sich an seinem kleinen Körper doch nicht ankommen! Der würde sich das bloß abknibbeln und sagen: **„Sähste, da hasten!"** weils doch ein Papagei ist. **Der hat nämlich mal 8 Tage keinen Stuhlgang gehabt.** Da hab ich gedacht: **„Gehster mal mit zum Tierarzt, der kann ja auch nichts machen".** Und wie ich mit dem Tierche in der Eisenbahn sitze, von der Aufregung oder von dem Rucken oder so, **da kriegt der plötzlich Losung,** und da hat der sich das da alles herausgedrängt. Schön sieht er ja nicht grade aus.

Da hab ich gesagt: „Herr Doktor, **Sie werden jetzt sicher denken,** was hängt denn da nun schon wieder herunter? Ja, das weiß ich nämlich auch nicht. Der hat nämlich **8 Tage keinen Stuhlgang gehabt,** und da denk ich, gehster mal mit zum Tierarzt, der kann ja auch nichts machen. Und wie ich mit dem Tierche in der Eisenbahn sitze, **von der Aufregung oder von dem Rucken oder so,** da kriegt der plötzlich Losung, und da hat der sich das alles **da herausgedrängt."** „Ja", sagt da der Doktor, **„da kann ich auch nichts machen, ich bin nämlich Tierarzt.** Der hat nämlich

111

Kurt Schwitters, "Schacko," 1926; *Merz* 21 (1931): 111.
(Courtesy of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

material and the intensity of feeling that underlies its use. The repetition of and variation on utterly banal, yet affectionate phrases such as "such a naked tiny animal," "turn around now," "shame on you, Schacko!" (referring to the parrot's missing plumage and wretched looks) drive the story on toward its poignant, grotesque ending. The parrot's own ability to repeat phrases with small variations provides further insight into the imitative patterns that structure communication in the story. The woman tells the doctor that the bird does not just mimic the sounds it hears, but uses the words it repeats in a deliberate manner. Her apparent delusion adds a humorous and poignant touch to the narration while also drawing attention to the pattern of repetition that structures the communication between the actors of the dialogue. Indeed, the speakers feed off each other's verbal input in ways that recall the communication modeled by the parrot. In their repetitions these speakers do not just "parrot" each other, that is, mindlessly reproduce fragments of sonoric sequences, but rather they modulate them, adding new touches.



n' Bruch. **Das Tierche hatten Bruch!** Wenns n' Mensch wäre, würde ich gesagt haben; der mussen Bruchband tragen, **oder wenns gar ne' Dame ist.** Aber das Tierche trägt doch kein Bruchband. Der würde sich das bloß abknibbeln und sagen: „Ssähste, da hasten", weils doch ein Papagei ist. **Aber der kann da alt bei werden!** Schön sieht er ja nicht grade aus, son nackiges Tierche, aber Sie würden das noch nicht einmal bemerken, wenn der seine Federn noch hätte. **Aber die hat er sich ja ausgerissen,** weil unser Vater doch so hat leiden müssen, ehr daß der starb. Auf seinem kleinen Kopfe, da hatter ja noch welche, son nackiges Tierche, pfui schäm dich, Schacko, dreh dich mal um, **und der schämt sich noch nicht emal.** Aber da behalten Sien doch zur Erinnerung!"

NACHWORT (Zur Orientierung des Lesers)
Der Papagei wohnt in Bad Ems und ist 43 Jahre alt; er heißt Chaco und ist inzwischen gestorben. Er hat nämlich Herzwasser gekriegt, **und da hat's noch am Morgen so in ihm gekluckert.**

Aber die Frau hat gedacht: „Der kann ja doch nichts machen, **der is nämlich Tierarzt."** Und da is sie noch zur Kirche gegangen, weils nämlich Sonntag war. Aber der Doktor hat gesagt: „Wir können ihm das Wasser nich ablassen." Und da hat der noch so gehorcht und hat gesagt: .Isser denn so krank, – ja isser denn so krank?" und hat bis zuletzt noch gesprochen, und dann isser ganz dick geworden, dasser nich mehr auf seine Stäbe sitzen konnte.

Und wie sie von der Kirche zurückkommt, da liegt das Tierche tot. Er ist ganz dick aufgequollen, **und da hats ihm das kleine Herzche abgedrückt.** Der hat Herzwasser gehabt.

Und da hat sie ihn selbst aufgeschnitten, weil sie doch mal sehen wollte, was denn nun eigentlich die Todesursache war, **und da is da lauter klares Wasser rausgekommen.**

Und da hat dann die Frau den letzten Wunsch ihres Mannes erfüllt und hat den am Fußende von seinem Grabe mit beigesetzt, und da ruht nun Schacko. Die Frau aber weinte noch, als sie es mir erzählte.

Scherzo. (Dritter Teil aus meiner Ursonate.)

(Die Themen sind charakteristisch verschieden vorzutragen.)

Lanke trr gll (munter)
pe pe pe pe pe
Ooka ooka ooka ooka

Lanke trr gll
pii pii pii pii
Züüka züüka züüka züüka

Lanke trr gll
Rrmmp
Rrnnf

Lanke trr gll
Ziiuu lenn trll?
Lümpff tümpff trll

Lanke trr gll
Rrumpff tillf too

Lanke trr gll
Ziiuu lenn trll?
Lümpff tümpff trll

Lanke trr gll
pe pe pe pe pe
Ooka ooka ooka ooka

Lanke trr gll
Pii pii pii pii pii
Züüka züüka züüka züüka

Lanke trr gll
Rrmmp
Rrnnf

Lanke trr gll

Trio.
(Äußerst langsam vorzutragen.)

Ziiuu iiuu (gedehnt)
ziiuu aauu
ziiuu iiuu
ziiuu Aaa

Ziiuu iiuu
ziiuu aauu
ziiuuu iiuu
ziiuu Ooo

Ziiuu iiuu
Ziiuu aauu
ziiuu iiuu

(Scherzo wiederholen bis Trio.)

112

Kurt Schwitters, "Schacko," 1926; *Merz* 21 (1931): 112.
(Courtesy of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries. Copyright 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.)

The principle of repetition likewise extends to the larger segments that make up the narrative. For instance, sections 7, 8, and 9 each appear to be an expansion of the previous. In barely two lines, section 7 describes the woman's discovery that the parrot's intestines bulge out as a result of the hernia. Section 8 picks up on this description, while identifying constipation as the cause of the parrot's bulging parts and recounting the disastrous resolution of the parrot's problem when the bird relieves itself on the train that takes the woman to the vet. In section 9, the scene is relived and amplified in the woman's dramatic retelling to the doctor. When considered within the story's overall structure, the sections appear to parrot each other, repeating and modulating elements from the previous ones while also adding new detail. While suggesting a clear sequence of events, the overlapping repetitions disrupt the sense of closure and sequential unfolding of traditional narrative. The exuberance and vividness of this seemingly incontrollable repetition harness the text's impact on the recipient. Though the expectation of logically unfolding communication is frustrated at every turn, a different kind of in-

telligibility emerges, one that hinges on understanding communication as a parodic montage of materials. Communication, in other words, is about recycling materials that are already out there by inserting them into different contexts and establishing new connections among them. As an enactment of abstract literature, the text parrots the operations of ordinary language by imitating them in an ironic mode. In so doing, it shows that the building blocks of communication are never new, original, untainted, but always encumbered with resonances from other contexts. Imitation thus understood is self-referential in that it does not revolve around representing a content that would make the story's narrative backbone conspicuous, but rather enacts the mechanism of communication by mimicking it in a distorted mode.

The text's inquiry into the mechanism of communication furthermore enacts the fundamental setting of storytelling in ways that uncannily recall Benjamin's account in "The Storyteller." For Benjamin, storytelling is about transmission of a practical knowledge that presupposes material contiguity and shared bodily routines between storyteller and recipient.[38] Much like in Benjamin's antihermeneutic account, storytelling in "Schacko" is about retelling a story one has once heard, not to elucidate its meaning but rather to relay a content—the woman's love for her husband—by establishing new formal relations among its component parts. This is what makes the story into literature, according to the narrator. His way of recounting the story makes clear that the focus of storytelling is not on interpretation understood as the excavation of a character's psyche or the construction of narrative causality and motivation—for instance, what would explain the woman's devotion to an unwanted pet, how her behavior helps understand her love for her deceased husband, and so on. Rather at issue is the possibility of presenting her feelings of love and desperation through parodic imitation of her linguistic behavior. This does not mean that the story has no plot or that one cannot ascribe meaning to it. What is at stake, however, is not so much the story as an artifact that holds a sense to be disclosed, but rather storytelling as a specific mode of linguistic behavior that can provide insight into the woman's broader conduct and experience. In other words, the widow as the story's main character is presented as a storyteller whose dialogical, narrative practice in her encounters with the doctor is conveyed by the narrator through parodic manipulation. This focus on storytelling as a specific mode of behavior foregrounds the basic framework of storytelling enacted by the text, placing not only the narrator, but also the recipient front and center. As Schwitters's preface makes clear, as the text's narrator he has occupied both positions, first having served as the listener to the woman, and then as a storyteller for the reader of the present text. This helps understand the text's structure as

centered on the woman's own dialogical act of narration, in which she formally addresses a recipient that turns out to be the narrator in whose voice the postscript concludes.

Finally, the text's abstract content—the woman's love as dramatized by her behavior as storyteller—calls for a presentation that shifts the emphasis away from a traditional interpretive framework by drawing on material devices that foreground the separatedness of perception and meaning. This emphasis on perception as a distinct moment helps foreground the material dimension of storytelling as a mode of conduct—material is here understood in the sense used by Katherine Hayles, as the interplay between relevant physical aspects of a given medium and available signifying practices. The text was one of Schwitters's most favorite *Vortragsdichtungen* (performance poems), the pieces he declaimed with exuberant physicality at his soirees. As often suggested by eyewitness accounts, these performances pointedly exceeded whatever "content" the piece was about, and this excess enhanced, rather than trivialized, this very "content," frequently eliciting the audience's spirited response (*Werk* 2:432). In the text's printed version Schwitters took pains to use various typographical devices to visually mark the interplay and simultaneous separatedness of perceptual and semiotic levels, for instance by placing individual words and phrases in bold typeface and marking paragraph breaks through horizontal lines that rupture the text's linearity. This helps to emphasize the structure of repetition that frames the narrative and foregrounds the narrator's intervention in manipulating textual relations. That is to say, the narrative act of manipulation is underscored at a perceptual level through visual, nondiscursive devices and is thus set off from the woman's linguistic behavior, which provides the building blocks for the textual montage. By the same token, one can picture Schwitters's own corporeal performance as marking a perceptual plus to the materials he presented, a device that reinforced the act of storytelling by presenting it as marked behavior.[39]

• Understanding communication as depsychologized behavior that relies on the imitative manipulation of found linguistic material suggests a parallel to Helmuth Plessner's notion of expressivity as marking a spiraling modality of interaction between individual and environment through which both are mutually constituted. But it also recalls Marcel Duchamp's experimentation with the readymade and the found object in the 1910s and 1920s, with which Schwitters was well familiar.[40] While there is much ground shared by the two artists, for the purpose of my analysis it will be instructive to briefly outline the different assumptions that undergird their deployment

of preformed materials. Whereas Duchamp's recycling of found objects was guided by the question "Under which conditions can this object be presented as an art object?"[41]—that is, aimed to test the conventions of art by probing the boundary between art and nonart—Schwitters was never interested in placing the status of art in question. In fact, while ransacking all possible media and idioms for his work, he never wavered in his belief in the autonomy of the artistic medium, defined as the possibility of establishing nonconventional relations among everyday objects, which recipients would readily identify as art. If Duchamp sought to challenge the self-adjudicated, exceptionalist ontology of art by exposing its dependence on contextual and institutional factors, Schwitters was more interested in the claim to ordinariness of everyday life. In other words, one could describe Schwitters's practice by inverting Duchamp's questions, "What makes art into art? What grounds art's claim to an extraordinary status?" so as to ask, "How ordinary is the nonartistic? What lies behind the ordinariness of everyday objects?"

This focus on the ordinary quality of everyday experience recalls Marjorie Perloff's discussion of two competing modernist paradigms for engaging poetic language. The dominant model, Perloff maintains, is defined by belief in a fundamental "distinction between the 'practical' language of 'ordinary' communication and the 'autonomous' language of poetry."[42] This distinction is sustained by a centuries-old reflection on language, conceptual thinking, and art that has been encoded through a variety of oppositions: scientific versus artistic, cognitive versus emotive, denotative versus connotative, literal versus figural, ordinary versus defamiliarizing. Perloff draws on Ludwig Wittgenstein's exploration of linguistic practice in the *Philosophical Investigations* to describe a second strain of modernist poetics. This latter model rejects the distinction between literary and ordinary language and rather views the aesthetic as a realm for scrutinizing ordinary language use, that is, the everyday practices by which we communicate and produce meaning. This examination helps expose the fundamental strangeness of these practices, that is, their situatedness and conventional nature, the fact that they could be organized differently and be just as meaningful. From this vantage point art appears as a medium for grasping ordinary signifying practices by means of a performance that makes them appear unfamiliar. This is the modernist strain that grounds Schwitters's interrogation of the "ordinariness of the ordinary" via a manipulation of its materials.[43]

Wittgenstein's exploration of language as a rule-guided practice, a set of games whose conventions are rooted in the shared way of life of speakers offers an enlightening perspective for assessing Schwitters's manipulation of nonsense in the response to the critic's review discussed above. If, according

to Wittgenstein, meaning is produced by manipulating signifying elements according to the rules of a game, then Schwitters's strategies in this excerpt consist in engaging the critic's language game while tweaking with its rules.[44] Specifically, Schwitters refuses to interpret the image of the "gnawing critter" in the metaphorical sense in which it was intended and instead unfolds its literal meaning, so as to debunk its chauvinistic and debasing implications. This operation raises questions about the ordinariness of this kind of metaphor. Should the disparaging allusion to pest-bringing rodents be treated as a commonplace way of critiquing artistic experiments one finds objectionable? How innocuous is this mode of critique? And how much does one learn about the object at stake from this kind of insinuation? Schwitters's attack on the critic's uninformative and belittling mode of criticism does not marshal reasoned arguments to make its point, but rather unfolds via a linguistic performance that debunks the claim to ordinariness of a slandering metaphor.

In "Schacko," the ordinariness of phrases like "Such a naked tiny animal" mutates into its opposite by way of exuberant repetition, which is made to express the intense feeling that propels the utterance. The banal vernacular phrase thus becomes a touching cipher for the tender, inarticulate love that ties the woman to an unpleasant pet she cherishes as a remnant of life with her husband. Furthermore, the linguistic behavior of the characters in "Schacko" presents close affinities to Wittgenstein's understanding of language games. Their communication unfolds as a chain of overlapping repetitions based on mimicking each other's utterances while also infusing them with difference so as to adapt them to their needs. The impression one gains is that of a disorderly patchwork of exchanges that lack a discernible pattern or recognizable rules, but are nonetheless effective in negotiating communication. This is because the speakers are willing to take their cues from their interlocutors; that is, they appropriate each other's phrases while modifying them as needed. Drawing on a central Wittgensteinian trope, one could say that they play a game whose rules they do not just follow, but also adapt and expand in response to contingent configurations.[45] The point I want to stress here regards the distinctive understanding of language and communication Schwitters shares with Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Communication in this context is not about choosing one option over another from some deep structure of language that would function as a blueprint for possible games. As Stanley Cavell has noted, the novelty and profundity of Wittgenstein's inquiry reside in the realization "that everyday language does not, in fact or in essence, depend upon such a structure and conception of rules, and yet that the absence of such a structure in no way impairs its functioning" (48).

This well describes Schwitters's antipsychological understanding of communication as an aggregate of contingent modes of behavior that bind individuals via a parodic mechanism of repetition. That these individuals are seemingly bereft of an inward space by no means curtails their agency, that is, their ability to engage in meaningful practices.

• What good is the realization that making and trading sense is not about actualizing some systematic properties of language? What kind of artistic intervention does this realization make possible and call for? In other words, what is the relationship between art and the practices of meaning-production that harness everyday experience in a productively disorderly, unpredictable, open-ended network? To answer these questions in closing, I would like to examine a short story, a parable of sorts that Schwitters wrote in an ironic attempt to educate art critics, and that was published in 1920. The story is titled after its unlikely heroine, Augusta Bolte, an eager young woman whose life becomes unhinged one day when she decides to follow ten people she sees walking on the street. Though they at first seem to be mere strangers, the fact that they walk in the same direction and the sheer roundness of the number ten convince Augusta that the ten are involved in a mysterious operation that promises the disclosure of life's wisdom. Certain that her life now depends on solving this riddle, Augusta embarks on a series of adventures that prove to be every bit as absurd as the reasoning that triggered her initial pursuit.

The narrative unfolds along a multilayered pattern of repetitions that are enacted at various levels. One such layer consists of the methodic repetitiveness of Augusta's thought processes, which the narration meticulously renders. Yet the more the narrator praises the young woman for her intelligence, talent, and methodical thinking, the clearer it becomes that Augusta's systematic approach is of absolutely no help in dealing with the events that confront her. For instance, Augusta becomes comically hung up on the recurring rhyme patterns of her own interior monologue and feels compelled to discern in them some mysterious sense:

> And now? How now? A scandalous rhyme! How rhymed with now. Beyond that it seemed especially peculiar to Miss Augusta that not only did how rhyme with now, but now also rhymed with how. . . . The rhyme came up her throat like cod-liver oil. . . . For when something's happening then the most unrhymed things happen to happen. Then all of a sudden what never rhymed before, rhymes. Let's sum up! 1, 2,

> 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 people were walking in one and the same direction, now rhymed with how. Something obviously had to be going on. How should Augusta find out? (*pppppp* 141)[46]

Augusta's reasoning in this passage is based on a pun involving the German *sich reimen*, to rhyme, which also means "making sense," "hanging together in a meaningful way"; by the same token, *ungereimt* ("unrhymed") means inconsistent. So when Augusta detects unexpected rhymes in her self-monologue, she concludes that they must be cues for some deeper meaning. However, the literal rhymes that are involved here are really only a sound pattern.[47] They exhibit recognizable formal relationships that are endowed with a specific perceptual distinctiveness, but have no inherent meaning.

Even if Augusta ultimately fails to learn the secret of life, her experiences have not been in vain. Every turn of her oddball story is a step forward in an educational trajectory that earns her ever higher academic degrees. In the end she realizes that experience is structured by relationships that have no inherent meaning. One has to invest them with meaning by deciding what to care about, and what to interpret (*pppppp* 162). This is not at all a nihilistic insight but rather has a liberating effect because it relieves Augusta from the anxious quest for the hidden meaning she believes to glimpse in the random patterns that structure experience. This realization prompts her to make a clean break with her previous life and concentrate on pursuing a young man, who she is convinced makes a worthy husband. This pursuit, however, comes to an abrupt end when the driver of the cab she has enlisted in the chase abandons her in a remote location because she cannot pay the fare. In this way the narrative averts not only a happy ending, but any kind of ending. The only measure of closure is offered by the narrator, who polemically takes center stage in the last paragraph and addresses the readers so as to preempt their anticipated criticism:

> The reader might have thought that something would be happening here. . . . Certainly the reader will think that Miss Dr. Lif would find out who or what is going on, but she finds out nothing. The reader believes that he has the right to find out, but the reader has no right to find out anything in a work of art. . . . Nope. It's just that the story is over, simply over, no matter how sorry I am no matter how brutal it must sound, there's nothing else I can do. (*pppppp* 163–64)[48]

This declaration by the narrator effectively turns the tables on the reader. It becomes apparent that the reader has been tricked into having fun at Au-

gusta's expense only to find out that he or she has been performing operations similar to Augusta's in reading the story. Like Augusta, the reader has tried to make sense of the narrated events by deciphering narrative cues, by ruling out possible readings, and by making predictions on how the story would continue or end. In foreclosing any conclusion that could tie the narrative together in a meaningful way, the narrator admonishes the reader that one does not have the right to expect to learn anything from an artwork. There is nothing to understand or learn from this story, because there is nothing to learn or understand from art. In this way, the story establishes a parallel between the contingent structure of experience and art. Everyday experience comprises an array of events one navigates without subjecting them to a systematic logic. Many of them exhibit contingent connections, but do not necessarily make sense. Art is just this kind of event or object. Its connections have no intrinsic sense and yet are not without structure.

In spite of the narrator's refusal to supply a meaningful conclusion for the story, the reader does have something to take away at the end. In a way, the story provides a lesson in conduct as described by Helmut Lethen. Specifically, it presents meaning as negotiated through Augusta's linguistic behavior. Augusta's conduct is, however, a negative example, a model of how not to negotiate meaning in everyday experience. As it becomes clear, the flip side of her obsession with random structures is her inability to interact productively with the individuals who cross her path. Her solipsistic determination to decode structures that supposedly hold the meaning of life is precisely the opposite of the cooperative behavior of speakers who negotiate communication based on games whose rules are constantly remade through playing. Rather than actively play by ear in the ever-shifting game of signification, Augusta is played by the structure and therefore loses. In the end she may well understand that the structures one encounters in experience have no inherent meaning, but she never learns to interact effectively with others, including the cab driver who abandons her in the middle of nowhere. With Augusta, the reader comes to see that the practice of ascribing meaning to patterns solely based on their structural regularity is misguided. Meaning is based on patterns, but does not automatically flow from them. In a similar way, art's formal relations do not produce meaning in any ordinary sense of the word, but unfold contiguously to ordinary processes of meaning-production, which they present in a defamiliarizing form that questions their ordinariness and thus makes them perspicuous. Schwitters, who has been accused of reducing art to formalist play, delivers a powerful indictment of formalism understood as an empty manipulation of structure all the while providing a compelling enactment of the mode of artistic abstraction he championed.

Schwitters's montage principle envisions art as a realm for playing with the contingent practices of meaning-production. The abstraction of artistic practice places non-sense alongside sense, not to deny the possibility of meaning but to make the operations of communication apparent by marking at once the separatedness and entwinement of pattern and perception, structure and signification. This is crucial for assessing the value of Schwitters's belief in abstraction and his distinctive brand of formalism. When seen from this perspective, Schwitters's abstraction turns out to be the opposite of the refusal of narrativity that for Rosalind Krauss informs the modernist tendency to abstraction. According to Krauss, the quest for formal purity and compulsion of repetition that drives the avant-garde obsession with the grid foregrounds the structure of permanent deferral that characterizes signification. Put in terms of the Saussurian distinction between langue and parole, Krauss focuses on langue as a systematic network of relations that stages an ultimate absence.[49] Schwitters's formalism, by contrast, is about the parole aspect of language, about its being a playground for the contingent games of signification. Hence, Schwitters's hybrid verbal and visual collages veer toward the messiness of everyday communication rather than toward the purity of a system. By the same token, Schwitters holds on to an emphatic understanding of artistic agency. The artist is not played by structure or beholden to the unfolding of chance, but rather is actively engaged in the game of meaning.

This engagement does not translate into a critical practice that aims to redress perceived injustices by challenging established hierarchies of power. Richard Huelsenbeck was right to find Schwitters wanting in this respect and to point to the affirmative impulse sustaining his work. What Schwitters's work affirms, however, is not the bourgeois order that it fails to condemn, but rather the possibility of an experience whose meaning is constructed and ever-shifting, yet can nonetheless be perceived as whole and consequential. This affirmative moment helps place into perspective Schwitters's emphatic insistence on the autonomy of artistic practice, which is held to stand in an intransitive relation to everyday signifying practices while paradoxically feeding off them. While shunning overt political engagement, Schwitters's avant-garde impulse does nonetheless actualize one strong meaning of critique, conceived as the task of probing the presuppositions and boundaries that delimit a given practice. In this sense, art is understood to be a distinct cognitive medium for testing ordinary signifying practices via an investigation that makes them appear unfamiliar. This investigation exposes their lack of a supratemporal structure and being driven by parodic repetition instead, which highlights their contingency and manipulability.

Such insights are optimistically framed as an opportunity for expanding signification, an agenda Schwitters relentlessly pursued in a range of practices that pushed the bounds of established genres and media. *Merz*, the principle of abstract montage that undergirds his work, rests on the realization that the intersubjective practice we call meaning is but a restricted set of possible games. Its playful challenge to the "ordinariness of the ordinary" tampers with the ways these games are conventionally played, exhorting players to expand the range of possible moves that will allow them to stay in the game.

Conclusion

Montage after Weimar

Barely twelve years after Schwitters wrote his montage narrative about Augusta Bolte, the young woman caught in a solipsistic search for the meaning of life, the question of montage was catapulted to the forefront of debates on art's critical mission by the rise of fascism in Germany and other European countries. The place of modernism in these developments, as telescoped by a montage aesthetics, became a heated point of contention in the exchange that unfolded in the pages of *Das Wort*, the journal published by German émigrés in Moscow as part of the Popular Front's fight against fascism. At issue was how to reconcile the insights and prescriptions of Marxism with the multifarious aesthetic practices of the Weimar years. What kind of aesthetics could provide an appropriate weapon in fighting the twin menaces of capitalism and fascist dictatorship? Could artistic practice supply a platform for revolution, and if so, what should that look like in the present? What role, if any, had modernist experimentation played in the republic's descent into fascism? This last question raised the concern of how to appraise Weimar Germany's aesthetic legacy in view of the present challenges. Much of this discussion crystallized around the proper assessment of Expressionism and surrealism as well as the deeply divergent modernist paradigms staked out by the work of Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann.

Considered against this backdrop, the misadventures of one Augusta Bolte and the kind of montage practices associated with Schwitters and other artists would not seem to measure up to the earnestness of the situation after 1933. Yet already in *Heritage of Our Time* (1935) Ernst Bloch made of montage a conceptual pivot for reckoning with the legacy of the Weimar Republic. As Bloch argued, the poetics of montage captured the pervasive disaggregation of identities, values, and social bonds that had haunted Weimar Germany, corrosively turning the dissecting and reassembling of the free-floating elements

of experience into a fashionable mode of distraction, even a lifestyle of sorts. This, Bloch believed, allowed for portraying deracination as freedom and papering over the cracks that capitalism's contradictions drilled into the surface of the real. Bloch, however, also thought that one could separate this unmediated and pernicious form of montage from an analytical, mediated practice that refunctionalized the fragments from the old order in interim constructions charged with critical insight—a practice opened up by Expressionism and surrealism and explicitly theorized by Bertolt Brecht.[1] In a famous rejoinder to Bloch, Georg Lukács handily dismissed his attempt at salvaging the principle of montage for critical practice, charging that its combinatory logic remained beholden to reality's fragmented surface and didn't even begin to fathom the intricate web of socioeconomic relations that enveloped it as objective totality. For Lukács, montage is what you get when you allow a self-indulgent subjectivity to take the surface of experience at face value, marking the twin triumph of escapist abstraction and a false immediacy. At its best, Lukács believed, montage gives expression to the individual's existential anguish in the characteristically ineffective narcissism of bourgeois individualism. At its worst, it is a license to noncommittal, formalist play.[2]

It may be easy to see, with the benefit of hindsight, how Bloch's attempt at acknowledging the shortcomings of montage by distinguishing between a pernicious and a desirable form revealed a fundamental weakness in his position that played right into Lukács's criticism. Without insight into an objectively given totality that could serve as a dialectical sounding board for the contingent experience of individuals, any distinction between desirable and harmful reassembling of the surface remains bound to experiential immediacy. It devolves to a form of voluntarism that is ultimately unable to supply a criterion for distinguishing between those practices that genuinely break free of ideological indoctrination and those that unwittingly do ideology's bid through their ineffectual gesture of protest. If Bloch's position was unable to supply a criterion between good and bad montage, Lukács's own recommendation of a realist paradigm that could tie subjective experience dialectically to objective reality so as to grant insight into the totality of the real was itself sharply rebuked. To paraphrase Theodor W. Adorno's later remarks, Lukács's "objective totality" was not as capacious a reflection on the thorny question of Marxism's relation to aesthetics. It rather looked more like a strained attempt at falling in line with the doctrinaire prescriptions of socialist realism. At bottom, Adorno concluded, Lukács sealed art's subordinate status in his quest to have it abide by the standards of party politics—a characterization that was correct in principle but seems pointedly ungenerous given the historical conditions with which Lukács had been wrestling.[3]

In offering this admittedly cursory review of the barbs traded over the value of montage in the so-called Expressionism debates of the 1930s, my aim is not so much to rehearse the well-known differences that separated the proponents of montage from its detractors as to note how much terrain the two camps actually shared. This common ground unfolded at a significant distance from the understanding of montage described in this book. First, there was the historical urgency and existential anguish that informed critique for all debate participants, driving their quest for a criterion that would allow for sorting emancipatory from reactionary aesthetic practice in the fight against fascism. Further there was a sense of sharpened vision that was bestowed by the historical gulf that had opened up with the traumatic end of the republic. The swift establishment of dictatorship by the Nazis had made the Weimar years appear like an epoch sealed onto itself, granting it an epic closure that was magnified for many by the distance of emigration. It is no doubt a trivial observation that none of the practitioners of montage discussed here benefited from this sense of total view during the 1920s. More important, this twenty-twenty vision explains how montage could come up as a question of heritage in the first place. As telescoped through the pressing concerns of the 1930s, the discourse on montage was squeezed into monolithic exemplarity, as an aesthetics rendered both contemporaneous and remote by the catastrophe of Nazism.

Finally, there is the hermeneutic paradigm that informed both Lukács's and Bloch's view of desirable artistic practice. Within this framework art fulfills its rightful mandate by referencing the symbolic order of its time in an intelligible and consequential way. This presupposes an understanding of form as the repository of symbolic content that is to be disclosed through acts of interpretation, which will in turn shed light on the real and engender purposeful, transformative action. Understandably this mode of aesthetic engagement appeared indispensable in confronting the threat of fascism. Its hermeneutic presuppositions were, however, not ideally suited to grasp the montage practices described here. These practices' emphasis on perception and downplaying of interpretation seemed instead designed to corroborate Lukács's charge of false immediacy and escapist abstraction, dramatizing the scourge of a formalism that eschewed substantive engagement with the socioeconomic and ideological forces at work in the empirical world. Hence Schwitters's droll story about Augusta Bolte, the young woman who fails wretchedly in her attempts at gleaning meaningful structures from the random patterns of everyday life, may be seen as an unwitting indictment of just the formalist logic that authorizes its humor. In lampooning its own formal-

ism, the narrative may confirm for many Lukács's verdict on the noncommittal distortions of a montage aesthetics.

To be sure, Schwitters's 1922 tale does not display the intellectual earnestness and ideological complexity that would be required in engaging the reality of fascism with historical nuance and philosophical depth. In raising the question about the relation between Augusta's immediate experiences, the patterns she detects in them, and genuine insight the narrative does, however, dramatize, in a whimsical manner, the basic conundrum of relating thinking and experience, knowledge and action, theory and practice. How can Augusta learn from experience, that is, gain a better-informed perspective that will help her break free of her literal-mindedness and near stolidity? Which parts (and patterns) of experience lend themselves to a codifiable knowledge of life? Augusta goes through life gleaning the repetition of patterns amplified by the narrative's montage, yet none of them amount to intelligible structures. They just seem to parody each other in an endless mix of repetitiveness and variation. As a result, the distinctions drawn by an aesthetics predicated on hermeneutics—surface/depth, appearance/essence, universal/particular—seem to have no traction in her world.

This does not make Augusta's world chaotic or incomprehensible, though. One could instead characterize it as "a world of prose," to use the suggestive phrase deployed by Gerald Bruns to describe the relational structure of reality that undergirds Viktor Shklovsky's understanding of narrative.[4] At issue is a narrative mode that conceptualizes meaning as the immanent outcome of relational permutations rather than as correspondence between a specific arrangement of experiential elements and a symbolic order extrinsic to it. This narrative mode constitutes a response to a world made up of objects and events that may well be grasped through discourse but are not held together by a discernible symbolic order that would preexist it. Rather than throw one's hands up at their utter contingency, one can confront it head-on by dissembling and rearranging the physiognomy of the real in narrative practices that exploit the elements' aptitude for relating to each other. This operation suggests a desirable type of formalism whose understanding of structure is substantively different from that of structuralism, and this difference is illuminating. If structuralism accounts for the semiotic operations of the empirical world by describing the underlying principles whose execution generates particular sense-making forms, the relational patterns of formalism abandon all assumptions about deep structure and general rules, and instead presuppose that sense-making depends on the constantly renewed encounter between contingent forms and the perceptual patterns they trigger. In other

words, in its concern with supratemporal structure structuralism valorizes those elements of experience that can function as particular instances of a general rule and dismisses the ones whose singularity resists subsumption under larger principles. By contrast, the desirable formalism Bruns has in mind regards structure as a means for grasping the event as irreducibly singular occurrence. This endeavor presupposes a form of reason whose ethical mandate is not "to endow the ordinary with any transcendental sublimity but simply . . .]to preserve it as the untranscendable horizon of the singular."[5]

This understanding of formalism well describes the "ordinary" dimension of montage practices as a contingent and spiraling entwinement of perception, technologies and media, and signifying strategies. The shock, or startling effect, produced by the dissociation of perception and meaning serves to preserve the singular without altogether denying the possibility of communication. In so doing montage endeavors to grasp a world whose materiality is not ontologically given, but is rather a dynamic horizon made up of singular objects and occurrences woven together in the event of perception. In emphasizing the central role of perception this account contributes to grasping narrative as a relational web for whose realization issues of embodiment are as important as semiotic and discursive aspects. This illuminates the peculiar utopianism that underwrites discourse on montage, and that hinges on a phenomenological understanding of experience as coming into being, as coherent and unitary, through the participatory engagement with a dynamic network of forms. What makes up the unity and purpose of existence at both the individual and collective levels is not an underlying meaning to be excavated but rather a making, a poietic activity that produces experience by expanding its contingent structures and by anchoring them through bonds of reciprocity.

Notes

Introduction

1. László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting Photography Film*, trans. Janet Seligman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 106. See also *Malerei Fotografie Film*, 1927 (facsimile reprint, Mainz: F. Kupferberg, 1967), 104. Henceforth cited as *Painting* and *Malerei*, respectively. For a reading of this image that teases out the connections its component parts establish between capitalist exploitation, militarism, and nationalism, see Matthew Biro, *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 218–22. See also Maria Makela, "Notes to Plate 10," in *Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, ed. Janet Jenkins (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1996), 35.

2. See Brecht's remarks on photography in his account of the *Three-Penny Trial* (*Dreigroschenprozeß*). Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, vol. 21, ed. Werner Hecht (Berlin: Aufbau; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 469. See also Brecht's remarks in "No Insight through Photography," in *Bertolt Brecht on Film and Radio*, ed. and trans. Marc Silberman (London: Methuen, 2000), 144.

3. Matthew Teitelbaum, preface to *Montage and Modern Life, 1919–1942*, ed. Matthew Teitelbaum (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 7–18.

4. Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, 1935, trans. Neville Plaice and Stephen Plaice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); see especially the sections on montage as the ideological and cultural cipher of Weimar Germany, "Transition: Berlin, Functions in Hollow Space," 195–208. For secondary literature that links montage to Weimar Germany's traumatic horizon see Brigid Doherty, "See: *We Are All Neurasthenics!*; or, The Trauma of Dada Montage," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1997): 82–132, as well as "Figures of Pseudorevolution," *October* 84 (Spring 1998): 64–89 and "The Work of Art and the Problem of Politics in Berlin Dada," *October* 105 (Summer 2003): 73–92. See also Michael Cowan, "Cutting through the Archive: *Querschnitt* Montage and Images of the World in Weimar Visual Culture," *New German Critique* 40.3 (2013): 1–40; Sabine T. Kriebel, *Revolutionary Beauty: The Radical Photomontages of John Heartfield* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

5. For an overview of the history of physiognomics and its resurgence in Weimar

Germany, see the introduction and chapter 5 in Richard Gray's *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004). See also Sabine Hake, "Zur Wiederkehr des Physiognomischen in der modernen Photographie," in *Geschichten der Physiognomik: Text, Bild, Wissen*, ed. Rüdiger Campe and Manfred Schneider (Freiburg: Rombach, 1996), 475–513, and Daniela Bohde, *Kunstgeschichte als physiognomische Wissenschaft: Kritik einer Denkfigur der 1920er bis 1940er Jahre* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012).

6. Moholy-Nagy, *Painting* 36; translation modified. See also: "Sie [die Fotoplastiken] sind . . . eine Versuchs-Methode der simultanen Darstellung; komprimierte Durchdringung von visuellem und Wortwitz; unheimliche, ins Imaginäre wachsende Verbindung der allerrealsten, imitativen Mittel. Aber sie können gleichzeitig erzählend, handfest sein; veristischer, als das Leben selbst." Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei* 34.

7. Siegfried Kracauer, "The Biography as an Art Form of the New Bourgeoisie" and "Photography," in *The Mass Ornament*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 101–5 and 47–63.

8. Jakob Wassermann, "Kolportage und Entfabelung," *Neue Schweizer Rundschau* 19 (1926): 362–64. Reprinted in *Romantheorie: Dokumentation ihrer Geschichte in Deutschland seit 1880*, ed. Eberhard Lämmert et al. (Königstein im Taunus: Athenäum, 1984), 140–43.

9. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971).

10. Alfred Döblin, "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker: Berliner Programm," *Der Sturm* 4 (1913): 158–59. Reprinted in *Aufsätze zur Literatur*, ed. Walter Muschg (Olten: Walter, 1963), 15–19.

11. Marie-Laure Ryan, "Narrative," in *Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (New York: Routledge, 2005), 345.

12. Monika Fludernik, *Towards a "'Natural" Narratology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 26.

Chapter 1

1. For a comprehensive overview of the early twentieth-century discourse and practice of montage and collage within a German context, see Hanno Möbius, *Montage und Collage: Literatur, bildende Künste, Film, Fotografie, Musik, Theater bis 1933* (Munich: Fink, 2000). See also Hanne Bergius, *Montage und Metamechanik. Dada Berlin: Artistik von Polaritäten* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2000). For a cross-national overview centered on the development of art in the twentieth century see Brandon Taylor, *Collage: The Making of Modern Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004). For a brief historical discussion see Francis Frascina, "Collage: Conceptual and Historical Overview," in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 382–84. In the same volume, see also Christine Poggi, "The 'Pasted-Paper Revolution' Revisited" and Marjorie Perloff, "Collage and Poetry," 387–92 and 384–87, respectively. For a discussion of the concept's valences for literary media, see Viktor Žmegač, "Montage/Collage," in *Moderne Literatur in Grundbegriffen*, ed. Dieter Borchmeyer and Viktor Žmegač (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994), 259–64. The phrase "pasted-paper revolution" is drawn

from Clement Greenberg's account of Picasso's collage technique in "Collage," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon, 1961), 70–83.

2. For approaches that emphasize the antinarrative and antihermeneutic streak of montage aesthetics and poetics, see Peter Bürger's "The Avant-Gardiste Work of Art" in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 55–82, and Rosalind Krauss, "In the Name of Picasso," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 23–40. See also Jacques Rancière's more recent discussion of Jean-Luc Godard's montage practice in "Sentence, Image, History," in *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2007), 33–67, especially 43.

3. Wieland Herzfelde, "Introduction to the First International Dada Fair," trans. Brigid Doherty, *October* 105 (2003): 101–2. See also:

> Die Dadaisten sagen: Wenn früher Unmengen von Zeit, Liebe und Anstrengung auf das Malen eines Körpers, einer Blume, eines Hutes, eines Schlagschattens usw. verwandt wurden, so brauchen wir nur die Schere nehmen und uns unter den Malereien, photographischen Darstellungen all dieser Dinge auszuschneiden, was wir brauchen; handelt es sich um Dinge geringeren Umfangs, so brauchen wir auch gar nicht Darstellungen, sondern nehmen die Gegenstände selbst, z.B. Taschenmesser, Aschenbecher, Bücher etc., lauter Sachen, die in den Museen alter Kunst recht schon gemalt sind, aber eben doch gemalt. . . . An sich ist jedes Erzeugnis dadaistisch, das unbeeinflußt, unbekümmert um öffentliche Instanzen und Wertbegriffe hergestellt wird, sofern das darstellende illusionsfeindlich, aus dem Bedürfnis heraus arbeitet, die gegenwärtige Welt, die sich offenbar in Auflösung, in einer Metamorphose befindet, zersetzend weiterzutreiben. . . . Die Dadaisten anerkennen als einziges Programm die Pflicht, zeitlich und örtlich das gegenwärtige Geschehen zum Inhalt ihrer Bilder zu machen.

Wieland Herzfelde, "Zur Einführung"; reprinted in *Die zwanziger Jahre: Manifeste und Dokumente deutscher Künstler*, ed. Uwe M. Schneede (Cologne: Dumont, 1979), 31–34.

4. Adorno was quick to emphasize the short-lived impact of this strategy, noting that the shock effect ensuing from its basic undecidability wears out with repeated use and thus opens the door for the rampant semiotic colonization of the montage procedure. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. and ed. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1997), 152–59.

5. For an overview of these debates see Gregory Ulmer, "The Object of Post-criticism," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983).

6. For a discussion of the engagement with language that animates cubist and futurist collage see Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

7. See the prologue in Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1–11, especially 3.

8. For an appraisal of Dada's impact on twentieth-century art see the essays collected in the special issue of *October* devoted to Dada, vol. 105 (2003), especially Leah Dickerman, "Dada Gambits," 3–12, and Helen Molesworth, "From Dada to Neo-Dada and Back Again," 177–81. See also the essays collected in *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dicker-

man and Matthew S. Witkovsky (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2005). For a discussion of Dada's multilayered relation toward academic art and mass culture see Sherwin Simmons, "Advertising Seizes Control of Life: Berlin Dada and the Power of Advertising," *Oxford Art Journal* 22.1 (1999): 121–46. See also Biro, *The Dada Cyborg*, and Michael White, *Generation Dada* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

9. Hanno Hardt, "Negotiated Images: The Rise of Photojournalism in Weimar Germany," in *In the Company of Media: Cultural Constructions of Communication, 1920–1930s* (Boulder: Westview, 2000), 60–88.

10. Hardt, "Negotiated Images" 73.

11. Hardt, "Negotiated Images" 62.

12. On the new types of narratives developed in advertisement and graphic design through montage techniques, see Raoul Hausmann, "Photomontage" (1931), trans. Joel Agee, in *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940*, ed. Christopher Phillips (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 178–79. See also "Fotomontage," in *Bilanz der Feierlichkeit: Texte bis 1933*, vol. 2 (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1982), 130–33. See also Alfred Kémeny's critique of the depoliticization and domestication of photomontage in current advertising and typographic design in the essay he published under the pen name Durus, "Fotomontage, Fotogramm," *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* 5.7 (1931): 166–68; for the essay's English translation see *Photography in the Modern Era*, 182–85.

13. Sally Stein, "'Good Fences Make Good Neighbors': American Resistance to Photomontage between the Wars," in Teitelbaum, *Montage and Modern Life* 128–89, here 141–48.

14. See Moholy's praise of the simultaneous presentation of materials made possible by photomontage in the passage quoted in the introduction. For a discussion of the narrative deployment of the impression of omniscience conjured by visual, screen-based media, which recalls Moholy's terms, see Johanna Drucker's "Graphic Devices: Narration and Navigation," *Narrative* 16.2 (2008): 121–39, especially 138–39. For a brief historical overview of the development and mainstreaming of montage in visual media in Europe and the United States between the two world wars, see Christopher Phillips's introduction to *Montage and Modern Life* 20–35, especially 28–29. For an influential account of the return of figuration and narrative in Soviet photomontage, see Benjamin Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October* 30 (Autumn 1984): 82–119.

15. "Wer Bürgerblätter liest wird blind und taub. Weg mit den Verdummungsbandagen!"

16. See the first line of the text in verse, "Ich bin ein Kohlkopf, kennt ihr meine Blätter?" which translates as "I am a cabbage head, do you know my leaves/newspapers"?

17. See Peter Pachnicke's discussion of Heartfield's appropriation of the visual conventions of pictorial photography and deliberate evocation of painterly effects for his photomontages in "Morally Rigorous and Visually Voracious," in *John Heartfield*, ed. Peter Pachnicke and Klaus Honnef (New York: Abrams, 1991), 44–45; see also Sabine Kriebel's extended reading of this image in "Photomontage in the Age of Technological Reproducibility," in *Revolutionary Beauty* 65–103.

18. John Berger, "The Political Uses of Photomontage," in *Selected Essays*, ed. Geoff Dyer (New York: Pantheon, 2001), 221. For an incisive reading of Heartfield's photomontage practice that focuses on the ways in which similitude and likeness undermine the linguistic semiotic of modernism, see Devin Fore, "The Secret Always on Display:

Caricature and Physiognomy in the Work of John Heartfield," in *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 243–304.

19. See the section "Allegory and Tragic Drama" in Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977), especially 174–82. See also Benjamin's reference to the indexical authenticity of Heartfield's photomontages in "The Author as Producer," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, *1927–1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 768–82, especially 774–75.

20. Franz Roh, "Mechanism and Expression," in *Photo-Eye: 76 Photos of the Period*, ed. Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold (New York City: Arno, 1973) 17. This is a reprint edition of the original volume, which also featured English and French translations of Roh's introductory essay.

21. Roh, *Photo-Eye* 18. For the German term, *Wirklichkeitspropfungen*, see the German version of the essay, also in *Photo-Eye* 7.

22. Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925). Although Roh does not use the term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, much of his account of the new art—its coldness, distance, lack of pathos—resonates with the aesthetics identified with the New Objectivity.

23. Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus* 25–30.

24. *Ausdrucksgesättigkeit* in Roh's terms; *Nach-Expressionismus* 50; see also 47.

25. Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus* 46.

26. Helmuth Plessner, *Lachen und Weinen: Eine Untersuchung der Grenzen menschlichen Verhaltens*, 1941, in *Ausdruck und menschliche Natur*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 235 and 238–40.

27. Helmuth Plessner, "Die Deutung des mimischen Ausdrucks: Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom Bewußtsein des anderen Ichs," 1925, in *Gesammelte Schriften* 7:112–13. For a discussion of Plessner's understanding of mimic expression as a challenge to the traditional understanding of physiognomy and a possible influence on Walter Benjamin's understanding of mimic behavior see Frederick J. Schwartz's "Mimesis: Physiognomies of Art in Kracauer, Sedlmayr, Benjamin and Adorno," in *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 137–234, especially 205–10. If traditional physiognomy held that the body's visible forms reveal an individual's inner truth, the depsychologized and exteriorized understanding of expression theorized by Plessner rather sees the body's visible actions as consisting of an outward address to the environment. For an overview of the history of physiognomics and its resurgence in Weimar Germany, see the introduction and chapter 5 in Richard Gray's *About Face*.

28. Werner Gräff, "Here Comes the New Engineer," in *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film*, ed. Hans Richter; trans. Steven Lindberg with Margareta Ingrid Christian; English edition by Detlef Mertins and Michael W. Jennings (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), 100.

29. László Moholy-Nagy, "Production Reproduction," trans. Caroline Fawkes, in Phillips, *Photography in the Modern Era* 80. See also "Produktion Reproduktion," *De Stijl* 5.7 (1922). A version of this essay appears as a section of Moholy's *Painting* 30–31; see also *Malerei* 28–29.

30. See, for instance, Maud Lavin's remarks on the commercial practices of the ring "neue werbegestalter" (association of new graphic designers), the loose group of typogra-

phers and designers that included Kurt Schwitters, Jan Tschichold, Willi Baumeister, Walter Dexel, and César Domela, among others, in "Photomontage, Mass Culture, and Modernity: Utopianism in the Circle of New Advertising Designers," in Teitelbaum, *Montage and Modern Life* 37–59.

31. Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus* 42–52; see also his discussion of his monograph's title in the one-page preface and 22–35.

32. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 25.

33. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* 16.

34. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* xii.

35. Walter Benjamin, "This Space for Rent," in *One-Way Street*, *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, ed. Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 476.

36. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* 30–31.

37. Stein, "Good Fences" 134–48.

38. For a historical overview of concepts of mimesis within the Western tradition, see Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture Art Society*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). See especially the chapters in section 2, "Mimesis as Imitatio," and section 5, "Mimesis as a Principle of Worldmaking in the Novel and Society."

39. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* 21.

40. Taussig cites in this regard the "disorder of spatial perception" memorably described by Roger Caillois in his "Mimicry and Legendary Psychaesthenia," 1935, in *Man and the Sacred*, trans. Meyer Barash (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980). Imitative behavior, Caillois speculates, is a drive that does not serve the preservation of life (in acts of defensive or predatory mimicry) but rather leads to death as the merging with inanimate matter. Plessner himself pointed to the pathological split between self and incarnated body produced by mental illness as evidence of the off-center position of the self, which in healthy circumstances is nonetheless fully capable of negotiating its constitutively divided experience of incarnation. Plessner, "Deutung des mimischen Ausdrucks," *Gesammelte Schriften* 7:112.

41. Drawing on Michel Foucault's account, in *The Order of Things*, of the succession of epistemic paradigms that framed the conditions of possibility of knowledge in the West, one could argue that montage marks the resurgence, in an anxious and often subversive key, of the physiognomic episteme of the Renaissance within modernity's positivist and historical episteme. For an account of Dada montage that draws on the trope of the cyborg to address some of these issues, see Matthew Biro's *The Dada Cyborg*.

42. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, 1985, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 6.

43. Barbara Stafford, *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 8.

44. Stafford, *Visual Analogy* 23–24.

45. Stafford, *Visual Analogy* 8.

46. Stafford, *Visual Analogy* 146 and 23 respectively.

47. Hans Blumenberg, "Wirklichkeit und Möglichkeit des Romans," in *Ästhetische und metaphorologische Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 64–68.

48. Blumenberg, *Schriften* 55–63.

49. In borrowing a trope discussed in Blumenberg's later metaphorological work, one

could say that the correlation between the two structures (narrative and experience) makes the one legible in terms of the other. Though Blumenberg was well aware that the metaphor of reality as a readable text was laced with material assumptions, both his essay on the novel and his work on the legibility metaphor are framed by a semiotic understanding of textuality as the negotiation of signifying structures that is minimally impacted by material factors. See, for instance, his remark, in "Bücherwelt und Weltbuch," that the term *evolutio*, one of the master tropes of modern scientific discourse, recalls the unrolling of the papyrus scroll; *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 19.

50. Hayles, *Mother* 103.

51. Hayles, *Mother* 103.

52. Hayles, *Mother* 104.

Chapter 2

1. See Beatrice Hanssen's account of "The Storyteller" in *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings, and Angels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 5–6 and 156–58. For an important reading of the question of the creaturely in Benjamin that builds on, but also amends, Hanssen's reading, see Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), especially 25–27. Howard Caygill also underscores Benjamin's insistence on an ethics of reciprocity, which he, however, reads from the perspective of Hegelian-tinged recognition within a liberal framework. Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (London: Routledge, 1998), 61–79. On the circumstances surrounding the essay's genesis, see Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 529–32. For discussions that situate Benjamin essay within present-day narrative and media theory as well as the context of the avant-garde see Detlev Schöttker, "Der Erzähler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows," in *Benjamin Handbuch: Leben, Werk, Wirkung*, ed. Burckhardt Lindner (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2006), 557–66, and Alexander Honold, "Erzählen," in *Benjamins Begriffe*, ed. Martin Opitz and Erdmut Wizisla (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 363–98. For a comprehensive discussion of Benjamin's stance on narrative, see Uwe Steiner, "Reinstatement of Epic Narration," in *Walter Benjamin: An Introduction to His Work and Thought*, trans. Michael Winkler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 126–37.

2. On Benjamin's understanding of *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* in relation to his conceptualization of storytelling, see Martin Jay, "Experience without a Subject: Walter Benjamin and the Novel," in *Cultural Semantics: Keywords of Our Time* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 47–61.

3. Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Selected Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al., ed. Michael W. Jennings and Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996–) (henceforth cited as *SW*), 3:143–66, here 145–46. See also "Der Erzähler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows," in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972–89) (henceforth cited as *GS*), 2.2:435–65, here 441–42.

4. On Benjamin's project for an alternative understanding of history see Hanssen,

Walter Benjamin's Other History. For Benjamin's debt to Jewish mysticism see Stéphane Mosès, *The Angel of History: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem*, 1992 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009). On Benjamin's concept of natural history see also Burckhardt Lindner, "Natur-Geschichte: Geschichtsphilosophie und Welterfahrung in Benjamins Schriften," *Text und Kritik* 31–32 (1971): 41–58, and Eric L. Santner, *The Royal Remains* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 214–16. On intersection of modern historiography with other historical modalities, see also Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), esp. chaps. 5 and 8, and Irving Wohlfahrt, "Re-fusing Theology: Some First Responses to Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project," *New German Critique* 39 (Fall 1986): 3–24.

5. See Benjamin's explicit reference to Döblin's lecture in his review of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, "The Crisis of the Novel" (*SW* 3:299–304); see also "Krisis des Romans: Zu Döblins 'Berlin Alexanderplatz'" (*GS* 3:231), which endorses several arguments from Döblin's "Der Bau des epischen Werks," arguments that are further elaborated in "The Storyteller." They include the observation of the novelist's insularity in contrast to the substantive bond that ties the epic writer to a community; the pivotal role played by the book in displacing the epic as a communitarian practice rooted in orality; the desire to offer a capacious concept of the epic, which is not to be understood in contrast to the lyrical or the dramatic but rather as a counterweight to the novelistic as a form artificially folded onto itself; and the idea of the epic's lasting force in juxtaposition to the sense of transience the novel both summons and attempts to overcome.

6. On the need for overcoming the psychological framework of realism through a depersonalized mode of narration, see Döblin's "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker"; and Carl Einstein, "Über den Roman," *Die Aktion* 1 (1912): 1264–69, reprinted in Lämmert et al., *Romantheorie* 2:109–11. On the displacement of the book as a literary medium, see Adolf Behne, "Die Stellung des Publikums zur modernen deutschen Literatur," *Die Weltbühne* 22 (1926): 774–77, reprinted in Anton Kaes, *Kino-Debatte: Literatur und Film 1909–1929* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1978), 160–63. On the development of a *Tatsachenliteratur* modeled after the journalistic form of reportage see Franz Carl Weiskopf and Kurt Hirschfeld, "Um den proletarischen Roman" (1930); see also the exchange that took place in 1932 between Georg Lukács and Ernst Ottwalt: Georg Lukács, "Reportage oder Gestaltung" (1932); Ernst Ottwalt, "'Tatsachenroman' und Formexperiment" (1932), and Georg Lukács, "Aus der Not eine Tugend." The three essays are reprinted in Lämmert et al., *Romantheorie* 2:185–89; 189–97; and 97–99 respectively.

7. Lukács sees the epic as reflecting the experience of being as a self-enclosed totality in complete harmony with itself. The novel shares the epic's disposition toward totality, yet its aspiration to live up to it at a formal level is stymied by the modernity's open-ended temporality. Lukács, *Theory of the Novel* 29–35 and 55–56.

8. My translation. See also: "Was macht das epische Werk aus? Das Vermögen seines Herstellers, dicht an die Realität zu dringen und sie zu durchstoßen, um zu gelangen zu den einfachen großen elementaren Grundsituationen und Figuren des menschlichen Daseins. Hinzu kommt, um das lebende Wortkunstwerk zu machen, die springende Fabulierkunst des Autors. Und drittens ergießt sich alles im Strom der lebenden Sprache, der der Autor folgt." Alfred Döblin, "Der Bau des epischen Werks," in *Aufsätze zur Literatur* 132.

9. Döblin, "Bau des epischen Werks" 121–31.

10. Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, trans. Sophie Wilkins, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1996), 708–9. See also:

> Und als einer jener scheinbar abseitigen und abstrakten Gedanken . . . fiel ihm ein, daß das Gesetz dieses Lebens . . . kein anderes sei als das der erzählerischen Ordnung! Jener einfachen Ordnung, die darin besteht, daß man sagen kann: "Als das geschehen war, hat sich jenes ereignet!" . . . die Aufreihung alles dessen, was in Raum und Zeit geschehen ist, auf einen Faden, eben jenen berühmten "Faden der Erzählung," aus dem nun also auch der Lebensfaden besteht. . . . Das ist es, was sich der Roman künstlich zunutze gemacht hat: der Wanderer mag bei strömendem Regen die Landstraße reiten oder bei zwanzig Grad Kälte mit den Füßen im Schnee knirschen, dem Leser wird behaglich zumute, und das wäre schwer zu begreifen, wenn dieser ewige Kunstgriff der Epik, mit dem schon die Kinderfrauen ihre Kleinen beruhigen, diese bewährteste "perspektivische Verkürzung des Verstandes" nicht schon zum Leben selbst gehörte. Die meisten Menschen sind im Grundverhältnis zu sich selbst Erzähler.
>
> Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, vol. 1 (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978), 650.

11. See in this regard the debates on the *Entfabelung* of the novel, that is, the perceived fading of the fable in contemporary narrative works. The term was introduced by an article of Jakob Wassermann, "Kolportage und Entfabelung." The concern with the central role the fable occupies in the epic goes all the way back to Aristotle's definition of mimesis as imitation of an action that hinges on an analogy between the fable and experience. The fable is what ties events and characters together, endowing narrative with consistency and meaning.

12. Musil, *Man without Qualities* 709. See also: "daß ihm dieses primitiv Epische abhanden gekommen sei" (Musil, *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* 650).

13. See also: "ähnlich zu werden und sich zu verhalten" (*GS* 2.1:210).

14. On gambling, see Benjamin's "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *SW* 4:329–32 ("Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," *GS* 1.2:632–37). See also Benjamin's "On the Mimetic Faculty" (1933), *SW* 2:720–22 ("Über das mimetische Vermögen," *GS* 2.1:210) as well as the earlier, longer version, "Doctrine of the Similar" (1933), *SW* 2:694–98 ("Lehre vom Ähnlichen," *GS* 2.1:204–10), which also touch on graphology and play. For Benjamin's understanding of play see his essays "The Cultural History of Toys" and "Toys and Play: Marginal Notes on a Monumental Work," *SW* 2:113–16 and 117–21 ("Kulturgeschichte des Spielzeugs" and "Spielzeug und Spielen," *GS* 3:113–17 and 127–32). See also sections in *One-Way Street* (especially "Child Hiding," *SW* 2:465–66) and *Berlin Childhood around 1900* (especially "The Sock," "The Mummerehlen," "Hiding Places"; *SW* 3:344–413; *Berliner Kindheit um 1900*, *GS* 4.1:235–304). For a discussion of the mimetic faculty in Benjamin, see Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing*, 262–75 and Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* 1–43.

15. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), ix. For Ricoeur, the function of narrative, understood broadly as a practice that encompasses both fiction and historical discourse, lies in overcoming the aporias of the human experience of time by giving it an

order or arrangement that he labels as narrative. See especially the chapters on Augustine and on Aristotle's twin concepts of mimesis and muthos in vol. 1 of *Time and Narrative*, 5–51.

16. See also:

> Mithin hat seine [Kafkas] Ausführlichkeit einen ganz anderen Sinn als etwa den der Episode im Roman. Romane sind sich selbst genug. Kafkas Bücher sind sich das nie, sie sind Erzählungen, die mit einer Moral schwanger gehen, ohne sie je zur Welt zu bringen. So hat der Dichter denn auch gelernt . . . nicht von den großen Romanciers sondern von sehr viel bescheideneren Autoren, von den Erzählern. (*GS* 2.2:679)

17. Here Benjamin takes as his example the Haggadah, the Jewish text that sets the order of the Passover Seder, mapping it on a retelling of the story of the Jews' liberation from slavery in Egypt.

18. See also: "Kurz, dieser 'roman pur' ist eigentlich reines Innen, kennt kein Außen, und ist somit äußerster Gegenpol zur reinen epischen Haltung" (*GS* 3:232).

19. See also:

> 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 beruht auf dem Dokument. Der Dadaismus hat sich in seinem fanatischen Kampf gegen das Kunstwerk durch 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. (*GS* 3:232–33)

20. My discussion of Benjamin's engagement with Dadaism and with avant-garde circles in this and the following chapter is indebted to Detlev Schöttker's account in *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus: Form und Rezeption der Schriften Walter Benjamins* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), especially 145–93. Schöttker's reading emphasizes Benjamin's affinity for the aesthetics and poetics of Constructivism, thereby providing a corrective to readings that lay a premium on surrealism's influence on his work. Schöttker cites in this regard the Constructivist foregrounding of the artificial and piecemeal nature of the artwork, its understanding of poiesis as blurring the line between art and technology, its practical orientation, and its endeavor to articulate issues of interpretation and hermeneutics outside of a framework centered on consciousness as the pivot of subjectivity. For Benjamin's engagement with the avant-garde see also Michael Jennings, "Walter Benjamin and the European Avant-Garde," in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 18–34.

21. Wieland Herzfelde, "Zur Einführung," in the catalog of the Erste internationale Dada-Messe (Berlin: Kunsthandlung Dr. Otto Burchard, 1920); digital reproduction available from the International Dada Archive at the University of Iowa (http://sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/Dada_Messe/pages/002.htm; accessed September 2014).

22. Compare Adorno's reflections in "Der Standort des Erzählers im zeitgenössichen Roman," which owe much to Benjamin's discussion in "The Storyteller." Adorno praises the high-modernist novel for its shattering of the mimetic universe through various narrative devices. Adorno understands mimesis narrowly, tying it directly to illusionistic representation. Rejecting the diagnosis of an obsolescence of the novel in the present, Adorno points to the critical role that high-modernist novels play in shattering realism's illusionism, which is bent on conveying a disingenuously coherent image of reality as a totality free of contradictions. In other words, Adorno's target is illusionism, not mimesis per se understood as a narrative's ability to suggest an analogical relation to experience. Analogy for Adorno is not predicated on illusionism but rather on a negative dialectic driven by the blind, monadic quality of the artwork. Theodor W. Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1954).

23. See also: "Erfahrung, die von Mund zu Mund geht, ist die Quelle, aus der alle Erzähler geschöpft haben" (*GS* 2.2:440).

24. "Der Erzähler nimmt, was er erzählt, aus der Erfahrung; aus der eigenen oder berichteten. Und er macht es wiederum zur Erfahrung derer, die seiner Geschichte zuhören" (*GS* 2.2:443).

25. See also: "Die Erzählung, wie sie im Kreis des Handwerks . . . lange gedeiht . . . legt es nicht darauf an, das pure 'an sich' der Sache zu überliefern wie eine Information oder ein Rapport. Sie senkt die Sache in das Leben des Berichtenden ein, um sie wieder aus ihm hervorzuholen. So haftet an der Erzählung die Spur des Erzählenden wie die Spur der Töpferhand an der Tonschale" (*GS* 2.2:447). This passage appears almost verbatim in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" ("Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire"), where it introduces a discussion of Proust's attempts at restoring storytelling in the present (*SW* 4:316; *GS* 2.2:611).

26. See also:

> [Die wahre Erzählung] führt ihren Nutzen mit sich. Dieser Nutzen mag einmal in einer Moral bestehen, ein andermal in einer praktischen Anweisung, ein drittes in einem Sprichwort oder in einer Lebensregel—in jedem Fall ist der Erzähler ein Mann, der dem Hörer Rat weiß. Wenn aber "Rat wissen" heute altmodisch im Ohre zu klingen anfängt, so ist daran der Umstand schuld, daß die Mitteilbarkeit der Erfahrung abnimmt. Infolge davon wissen wir uns und andern keinen Rat. Rat ist ja minder Antwort auf eine Frage als ein Vorschlag, die Fortsetzung einer (eben sich abrollenden) Geschichte angehend. Um ihn einzuholen, müßte man sie zuvörderst einmal erzählen können. . . . Rat, in den Stoff gelebten Lebens eingewebt, ist Weisheit. Die Kunst des Erzählens neigt ihrem Ende zu, weil die epische Seite der Wahrheit, die Weisheit, ausstirbt. (*GS* 2.2:442)

27. Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin's Other History*, 6.

28. See also: "Der Erzähler ist die Gestalt, in welcher der Gerechte sich selbst begegnet" (*GS* 2.2:465).

29. See also:

> "Wenn einer eine Reise tut, so kann er was erzählen," sagt der Volksmund und denkt sich den Erzähler als einen, der von weither kommt. Aber nicht weniger gern hört man dem zu, der redlich sich nährend, im Lande geblieben ist und des-

sen Geschichten und Überlieferungen kennt. . . . Wenn Bauern und Seeleute Altmeister des Erzählens gewesen sind, so war der Handwerkstand seine hohe Schule. In ihm verband sich die Kunde von der Ferne, wie der Vielgewanderte sie nach Hause bringt, mit der Kunde aus der Vergangenheit, wie sie am liebsten dem Seßhaften sich anvertraut. (*GS* 2.2:440)

30. See also: "Leskow ist in der Ferne des Raumes wie der Zeit zu Hause" (*GS* 2.2:441).

31. See also:

Es gibt nichts, was Geschichten dem Gedächtnis nachhaltiger anempfiehlt als jene keusche Gedrungenheit, welche sie psychologischer Analyse entzieht. Und je natürlicher dem Erzählenden der Verzicht auf psychologische Schattierung vonstatten geht, desto größer wird ihre Anwartschaft auf einen Platz im Gedächtnis des Hörenden, desto vollkommener bilden sie sich seiner eigenen Erfahrung an, desto lieber wird er sie schließlich eines näheren oder fernern Tages weitererzählen. Dieser Assimilationsprozeß, welcher sich in der Tiefe abspielt, bedarf eines Zustandes der Entspannung, der seltener und seltener wird. Wenn der Schlaf der Höhepunkt der körperlichen Entspannung ist, so die Langeweile der geistigen. Die Langeweile ist der Traumvogel, der das Ei der Erfahrung ausbrütet. . . . Seine Nester—die Tätigkeiten, die sich innig der Langenweile [*sic*] verbinden—sind in den Städten schon ausgestorben, verfallen auch auf dem Lande. Damit verliert sich die Gabe des Lauschens, und es verschwindet die Gemeinschaft der Lauschenden. Geschichten erzählen ist ja immer die Kunst, sie weiter zu erzählen, und die verliert sich, wenn die Geschichten nicht mehr behalten werden. Sie verliert sich, weil nicht mehr gewebt und gesponnen wird, während man ihnen lauscht. Je selbstvergessener der Lauschende, desto tiefer prägt sich ihm das Gehörte ein. Wo ihn der Rhythmus der Arbeit ergriffen hat, da lauscht er den Geschichten auf solche Weise, daß ihm die Gabe, sie zu erzählen, von selber zufällt. (*GS* 2.2:446–47)

32. As made clear in an early draft of this section, this type of listening forms the opposite of the strained attention to meaning demanded by the novel's emphasis on interpretation, which tends to shift the focus from the story itself to the storyteller in a way that only serves to flatter his vanity (*GS* 2.3:1287).

33. See also:

Seele, Auge und Hand sind mit diesen Worten in einen und denselben Zusammenhang eingebracht. Ineinanderwirkend bestimmen sie eine Praxis. Uns ist diese Praxis nicht mehr geläufig. . . . Die Rolle der Hand in der Produktion ist bescheidener geworden und der Platz, den sie beim Erzählen ausgefüllt hat, ist verödet. (Das Erzählen ist ja, seiner sinnlichen Seite nach, keineswegs ein Werk der Stimme allein. In das echte Erzählen wirkt vielmehr die Hand hinein, die mit ihren, in der Arbeit erfahrenen Gebärden, das was laut wird auf hundertfältige Weise stützt.) Jene alte Koordination von Seele, Auge und Hand, die in Valérys Worten auftaucht, ist die handwerkliche, auf die wir stoßen, wo die Kunst des Erzählens zu Hause ist. Ja, man kann weiter gehen und sich fragen, ob die Beziehung, die der Erzähler zu seinem Stoff hat, dem Menschenleben, nicht selbst eine handwerkliche Beziehung ist? Ob seine Aufgabe nicht eben darin besteht, den

> Rohstoff der Erfahrungen—fremder und eigener—auf eine solide, nutzliche und einmalige Art zu bearbeiten? (*GS* 2.2:464)

34. An explicit contrast between artisanal labor and industrial practice in fostering authentic experience ("Erfahrung") is drawn in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939), where Benjamin quotes from Marx's *Capital*: "'All machine work,' says Marx in the same passage cited above, 'requires prior training of the workers.' This training must be differentiated from practice. Practice, which was the sole determinant in handcrafting, still had a function in manufacturing. With practice as the basis, 'each particular area of production finds its appropriate technical form in *experience* and *slowly* perfects it.' . . . The unskilled worker is the one most deeply degraded by machine training. His work has been sealed off from experience; practice counts for nothing in the factory" (*SW* 4:328–29). See also "'Alle Arbeit an der Maschine erfordert,' heißt es im oben berührten Zusammenhang, 'frühzeitige Dressur des Arbeiters.' Von Übung muß diese Dressur unterschieden werden. Übung, im Handwerk allein bestimmend, hatte in der Manufaktur noch Raum. Auf deren Grundlage 'findet jeder besondere Produktionszweig in der *Erfahrung* die ihm entsprechende technische Gestalt; er vervollkommnet sie *langsam*.' . . . Der ungelernte Arbeiter ist der durch die Dressur der Maschine am tiefsten Entwürdigte. Seine Arbeit ist gegen Erfahrung abgedichtet. An ihr hat die Übung ihr Recht verloren" (*GS* 1.2:631–32).

35. For Benjamin's interest in psychotechnics see his "Karussel der Berufe" (*GS* 2.2:667–76); translated as "Carousel of Jobs" by Lisa Harries Schumann, in *Radio Benjamin*, ed. Lecia Rosenthal (London: Verso, 2014), 283–91. Benjamin's interest in psychotechnics as a field that lent itself to describing the practices of reading and writing finds confirmation in a gloss from 1933, "Der gute Schriftsteller," which is part of a set of aphoristic fragments on the question "Warum es mit der Kunst Geschichten zu erzählen zu Ende geht" (quote from a letter to Hofmannsthal from 1929, quoted in *GS* 4.2:1011) written between 1928/29 and 1935. On Benjamin's relation to psychotechnics, see Frederic J. Schwartz, "Distraction: Walter Benjamin and the Avant-Garde," in *Blind Spots* 37–101.

36. See also: "Wer einer Geschichte zuhört, der ist in der Gesellschaft des Erzählers; selbst wer liest, hat an dieser Gesellschaft teil. Der Leser eines Romans ist aber einsam" (*GS* 2.2:456).

37. My translation. See also:

> . . . warum man Romane liest. Romanlesen das ist wie "Essen". Also eine Wollust der Einverleibung. Mit andern Worten der denkbar schärfste Gegensatz zu dem, was die Kritik gewöhnlich als die Lust des Lesers annimmt: nämlich die Substitution. . . . Man hat auch zu fragen, ob nicht "ein Buch verschlingen" in solchem Sinne eine echte, erfahrene Metapher ist. . . . Nur das käme also auf die paradoxe aber scharfe Wahrheit heraus, daß Romane schreiben heißt, den Dingen ihr Eßbares, ihren Geschmack abzugewinnen. Vom Essen zum Romanlesen geht eine k o n t i n u i e r l i c h e Skala. (*GS* 4.2:1013)

38. The notes further read:

> This is the new "theory of the novel." It extracts the symbolic intention of incorporation and thus a piece of the anthropological symbolic intention from the

> magic, hieratic and proves its reality in the profane. Reading is communion through eating in the profane sense. The carnivore element should be especially foregrounded. Flesh-tension. (My translation)

See also:

> Dieses ist die neue "Theorie des Romans." Sie reißt die Symbolintention des Einverleibens und damit ein Stück der anthropologischen Symbolintentionen aus dem Magischen, Hieratischen heraus und weist ihm Wirklichkeit im Profanen nach. Lesen ist Kommunion durch Essen im profanen Sinne. Das karnivore Element ist besonders hervorzuheben. Fleisch-Spannung. (*GS* 4.2:1014)

On the possibility of grounding a new type of experience on carnivore/cannibalistic incorporation see Benjamin's essay on Kraus, who is presented as an inhuman cannibal ("Menschenfresser"). See Beatrice Hanssen's discussion of Kraus's "other" humanism as seen by Benjamin, especially her reference to the influence of Feuerbach's anthropological materialism. Benjamin quoted Feuerbach's dictum: "Man ist was man ißt." Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin's Other History* 119.

39. See also: "Ja, man kann weiter gehen und sich fragen, ob die Beziehung, die der Erzähler zu seinem Stoff hat, dem Menschenleben, nicht selbst eine handwerkliche Beziehung ist? Ob seine Aufgabe nicht eben darin besteht, den Rohstoff der Erfahrungen—fremder und eigener—auf eine solide, nutzliche und einmalige Art zu bearbeiten?" (*GS* 2.2:464).

Chapter 3

1. See Miriam Hansen's overview of the argument and its inconsistencies in "Benjamin, Cinema, and Experience: 'The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology,'" *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 179–224, especially 179–86, and "Room-for-Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema," *October* 109 (2004): 3–45, especially 3–5. Beginning with Theodor W. Adorno, critics have pointed to the mechanical quality of the arguments authorized by these binaries, which robs Benjamin's discourse of its habitual subtlety and open-endedness and leads to assertions that would need more careful calibration to withstand critical scrutiny—for instance, as regards a differentiated analysis of the masses and their relationship to fascism, or the concrete steps that would allow for claiming film as an effective weapon of communist struggle given the fraught political situation of the mid to late 1930s. In addition, the teleological thrust of the discourse seems to support a dubious technological determinism. As implied by the much-quoted dictum of a fascist aestheticization of politics in the essay's epilogue, film is as much a product of technological modernity as the technologically enhanced warfare that fascism was waging in its totalitarian endeavor to endow politics with the attributes of auratic experience. In its ability to shatter the aura of aestheticized war, the essay suggests, film allows for turning technology's destructive potential against itself. Thus film marks the culmination of a historical teleology that leads to the self-induced implosion of technology, with the masses looking more like an unself-conscious tool than a deliberate actor. This unwittingly obliterates any space for human agency and relegates the communist mobilization

called for by the epilogue to a sideshow in the iron causality of technological modernity.

2. For the designation "Urtext," see *GS* 7.2:662. For the circumstances surrounding the production of the various drafts, see Schöttker, *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus* 70–85, especially note 143 on p. 72 and note 147 on pp. 73–75. See also Hansen, "Room-for-Play" 4. As Hansen notes, the *Ur*-text, or second version, is the one to which Adorno actually responded. As a result many of his criticisms make little sense if one only reads the more familiar, third version.

3. Hansen, "Room-for-Play" 6.

4. See also: "Was ist eigentlich Aura? Ein sonderbares Gespinst aus Raum und Zeit: einmalige Erscheinung einer Ferne, so nah sie sein mag" (*GS* 7.1:355). My discussion in what follows also relies on the second draft of the artwork essay, *GS* 7.1:350–84. Subsequent references to this version appear in parenthesis in the main text.

5. For the relevant passages in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (*SW* 4:338–39); see also "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire" (*GS* 1.2:646–47).

6. This form of apperception, Hansen observes, also contained a precious "element of temporal disjunction" that allows for "the intrusion of a forgotten past that disrupts the fictitious progress of chronological time." Hansen, "Benjamin and Cinema" 311. As concerns the nonlinear temporality of aura, see Benjamin's discussion of the auratic properties of early photography as it crystallizes in his example of the wedding portrait of the photographer Dauthendey and his bride, who committed suicide after the birth of their sixth child in *GS* 2.1:370. For an incisive account of aura that stresses its paradoxical mediatic quality see Samuel Weber, "Mass Mediauras, or: Art, Aura and Media in the Work of Walter Benjamin," in *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 76–107.

7. "Wenn die Aura in den frühen Photographien ist, wieso ist sie nicht im Film?" (*GS* 1.3:1048). See also Miriam Hansen's discussion of Benjamin's ambivalent relation to the phenomenon he dubs aura in "Benjamin, Cinema, and Experience" and "Benjamin's Aura," *Critical Inquiry* 34.2 (Winter 2008): 336–75; reprinted as "Aura: The Appropriation of a Concept," in *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 104–31.

8. See Buck-Morss's argument in "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (Fall 1992): 3–41.

9. This amplified apperception is linked in the second version to the ability to therapeutically discharge destructive psychic energy at a collective level, thus preventing the harmful festering of mass psychoses. The third draft omits this elaboration of the argument, which Adorno had fiercely criticized as reminiscent of Jung's politically dubious arguments about a collective psyche (*GS* 1.2:500).

10. The discussion of a second technology appears at the end of section VI in the urtext and was deleted from subsequent drafts (*SW* 3:108; *GS* 7.1:359–60).

11. These debates are especially hard to ignore if one considers the contested status of film as a mass medium, whose turn to narrative in the early 1920s was seen as challenging traditional narrative genres and exacerbating what contemporaries saw as a long-standing crisis of the novel. For their part, early film theorists warned that film's turn to narrative prevented the medium from developing its own aesthetics, whether based on physiognomics (Béla Balázs), the manipulation of light (László Moholy-Nagy), or abstract movement (Hans Richter). Benjamin's awareness of these debates is signaled by his cri-

tique, in the essay, of present-day attempts at ascribing auratic properties to film by likening it to ritualistic art or a late-Romantic notion of the oneiric as the gateway to the supernatural (*GS* 7.1:362–63). His discourse also draws on the kind of comparison to stage drama that was a staple in the discussions of his day. For an overview of these debates, see Anton Kaes's introduction to *Kino-Debatte* 1–35. See also Heide Schlüpmann's *Der unheimliche Blick*, 1990, trans. as *The Uncanny Gaze: The Drama of Early German Cinema* by Inga Pollmann (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), especially the introduction, 1–22.

12. Benjamin explicitly alludes to the practice of the Russian filmmakers in section XIII, in addition to quoting Pudovkin's classic *Film Technique and Film Acting* in an endnote (*GS* 7.1:367).

13. See also: "Das Kunstwerk entsteht hier erst aufgrund der Montage. Einer Montage, von der jedes einzelne Bestandstück die Reproduktion eines Vorgangs ist, der ein Kunstwerk weder an sich ist, noch in der Photographie ein solches ergibt" (*GS* 7.1:364).

14. For instance, the film actor's performance, which is evaluated step by step by a host of professionals rather than offered to the empathetic view of a live audience, exhibits the dehumanizing moment of testing ("test performance," *SW* 3:111; "Testleistung," *GS* 7.1:365) to which individuals are inexorably subjected in their daily work routines.

15. See also: "Die Direktiven, die der Betrachter von Bildern in der illustrierten Zeitschrift durch die Beschriftung erhält, werden bald darauf noch präziser und gebieterischer im Film, wo die Auffassung von jedem einzelnen Bild durch die Folge aller vorangegangenen vorgeschrieben erscheint" (*GS* 7.1:361).

16. In historicizing key arguments from Kracauer's 1927 essay on photography, this essay maintained that in its early stages photography also partook of a mode of auratic apperception that made it possible to receive the single photograph as a luminous unit of pregnant meaning. Benjamin's observations here draw on Kracauer's discussion of a photographic archive at the end of his photography essay. Kracauer, "Photography," in *The Mass Ornament* 62–63.

17. Sam Rohdie, "Lev Kuleshov," in *Montage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 27.

18. See also "Der Nachmachende macht seine Sache scheinbar. Man kann auch sagen: er spielt die Sache. Und damit stößt man auf die Polarität, die in der Mimesis waltet. In der Mimesis schlummern, eng ineinandergefaltet wie Keimblätter, beide Seiten der Kunst: Schein und Spiel" (*GS* 7.1:368).

19. Beginning with the Renaissance, the idea of mimesis as dynamic and processual activity that revolves around a productive mimicry was gradually displaced by a semiotic concept of imitation ("imitatio") predicated on the ability of aesthetic artifacts to serve as replicas of absent objects or duplicate appearances. The shift from a concept of mimesis based on the functional equivalence between the performance of the mime and its referent to an understanding of imitation as reproduction or doubling up of appearances goes back to the appropriation of the Aristotelian concept in the Italian Renaissance. Yet Aristotle's concept of mimesis in the *Poetics* emphasizes the dynamic moment of mimesis, its engendering mimetic practice, rather than the moment of semblance or appearance. In this regard see Paul Ricoeur's discussion of Aristotle's understanding of mimesis, which treats the concept of "imitating an action" as a mode of emplotment that does not reduplicate given experience but rather orders events and thereby produces narrative (*muthos*); *Time and Narrative* 32–42. For a genealogy of the concept of mimesis that

emphasizes the shifts that took place in the Renaissance see Andreas Kablitz, "Die Unvermeidlichkeit der Natur: Das aristotelische Konzept der Mimesis im Wandel der Zeiten," in *Die Mimesis und ihre Künste*, ed. Gertrud Koch, Martin Vöhler, and Christiane Voss (Munich: Fink, 2010), 189–211. For a compelling reading of this footnote that foregrounds the centrality of the notion of play in advancing an emancipatory understanding of technology see Hansen, "Room-for-Play" 19–24. See also my own discussion, in chapter 1, of Benjamin's understanding of a submerged mimetic faculty that survives in the play of children who are drawn to impersonating all manner of objects.

20. See also: "Was mit der Verkümmerung des Scheins, dem Verfall der Aura in den Werken der Kunst einhergeht, ist ein ungeheurer Gewinn an Spiel-Raum. Der weiteste Spielraum hat sich im Film eröffnet. . . . Im Film hat das Scheinmoment seinen Platz dem Spielmoment abgetreten, das mit der zweiten Technik im Bunde steht" (*GS* 7.1:369).

21. See note 21 in *SW* 3:126–27.

22. Arnheim, *Film als Kunst* 21.

23. Arnheim, *Film als Kunst* 46.

24. Arnheim, *Film als Kunst* 21.

25. Arnheim argues that if film elicits an illusionistic effect that is stronger than the illusion of live drama, this is due in part to the abstraction or sensory deficit inherent in the film image, which enables the audience to tolerate the spatial and temporal leaps produced by the creative use of editing. Unlike Benjamin, however, Arnheim believed that in film too the illusion is ultimately partial, that is, that film features aspects from which the illusionary moment can be recognized as such. Rudolf Arnheim, *Film als Kunst* 34–41, especially 38–39.

26. See also:

> Das Theater kennt prinzipiell die Stelle, von der aus das Geschehen nicht ohne weiteres als illusionär zu durchschauen ist. Der Aufnahmeszene im Film gegenüber gibt es diese Stelle nicht. Dessen illusionäre Natur ist eine Natur zweiten Grades; sie ist ein Ergebnis des Schnitts. Das heißt: *Im Filmatelier ist die Apparatur derart tief in die Wirklichkeit eingedrungen, daß deren reiner, vom Fremdkörper der Apparatur freier Aspekt das Ergebnis einer besonderen Prozedur, nämlich der Aufnahme durch den eigens eingestellten photographischen Apparat und ihrer Montierung mit anderen Aufnahmen von der gleichen Art ist.* Der apparatfreie Aspekt der Realität ist hier zu ihrem künstlichsten geworden und der Anblick der unmittelbaren Wirklichkeit zur blauen Blume im Land der Technik. (*GS* 7.1:373)

27. For discussion of these different types of immediacy see Sergei Eisenstein's "The Montage of Attractions," in *The Eisenstein Reader*, ed. Richard Taylor (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 29–34.

28. See also:

> Die Bilder, die beide davontragen, sind ungeheuer verschieden. Das des Malers ist ein totales, das des Kameramanns ein vielfältig zerstückeltes, dessen Teile sich nach einem neuen Gesetz zusammenfinden. *So ist die filmische Darstellung der Realität für den heutigen Menschen darum die unvergleichlich bedeutungsvollere, weil sie den apparatfreien Aspekt der Wirklichkeit, den er vom Kunstwerk zu fordern berechtigt ist, gerade auf Grund ihrer intensivsten Durchdringung mit der Apparatur gewährt.* (*GS* 7.1:374)

29. Benjamin, "Was ist das epische Theater? Eine Studie zu Brecht," 1931, in *GS* 2.2:519.

30. Tobias Wilke offers a helpful discussion of the paradoxical nexus between immediacy and mediation that drives Benjamin's discussion of film, and which in his eyes draws from Benjamin's debt to avant-garde artists like László Moholy-Nagy, Raoul Hausmann, and El Lissitzky. His reading pivots on Benjamin's use of the word *taktisch* as a term that combines a notion of tactility with tactical thinking—this latter connotation being linked to the warfare register that characterizes much avant-garde discourse. Wilke's concern is ultimately with appraising the repercussions of an avant-garde discourse that relocates the moment of immediacy in the medium itself. Tobias Wilke, "Die Taktik im Medium," in *Medien der Unmittelbarkeit: Dingkonzepte und Wahrnehmungstechniken 1918–1939* (Munich: Fink, 2010), 189–229, here especially 218–19.

31. The terms Benjamin uses are *Versenkung* and *Ablenkung* (*GS* 7.1:379).

32. See also:

> Das Bild auf der einen [der Filmleinwand] verändert sich, das Bild auf der andern [der Leinwand des Malers] nicht. Das letztere lädt den Betrachter zur Kontemplation ein; vor ihm kann er sich seinem Assoziationsablauf überlassen. Vor der Filmaufnahme kann er das nicht. Kaum hat er sie ins Auge gefaßt, so hat sie sich schon verändert. Sie kann nicht fixiert werden. Der Assoziationsablauf dessen, der sie betrachtet, wird sofort durch ihre Veränderung unterbrochen. Darauf beruht die Schockwirkung des Films, die wie jede Schockwirkung durch gesteigerte Geistesgegenwart aufgefangen sein will. *Der Film ist die der betonten Lebensgefahr, in der die Heutigen leben, entsprechende Kunstform.* Er entspricht tiefgreifenden Veränderungen des Apperzeptionsapparats. (*GS* 7.1:379–80)

The passage appears in note 16 of the urtext. It was partially incorporated in the main text in the essay's last draft, which also contains a quote from Georges Duhamel: "I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images" (*SW* 4:267). See also: "Ich kann schon nicht mehr denken, was ich denken will. Die beweglichen Bilder haben sich an den Platz meiner Gedanken gesetzt" (*GS* 1.2:503).

33. The Baudelaire essay singles out film as the contemporary instantiation of technology that trains the human sensory apparatus by imposing, at the level of form, a mode of apperception driven by shock. Hence film mimics at the level of reception the alienated rhythm of labor on the assembly line: "Im Film kommt die chockförmige Wahrnehmung als formales Prinzip zur Geltung. Was am Fließband den Rhythmus der Produktion bestimmt, liegt beim Film dem der Rezeption zugrunde" (*GS* 1.2:631).

34. As Benjamin puts it in comparing the jolt of film to the shock effect the Dadaists sought to elicit: "Film has freed the physical shock effect—which Dadaism had kept wrapped, as it were, inside the moral shock effect—from its wrapping" (*SW* 3:119; Benjamin's emphasis). See also: "*Der Film hat die physische Schockwirkung, welche der Dadaismus gleichsam in der moralischen noch verpackt hielt, aus dieser Emballage befreit*" (*GS* 7.1:380). That is to say, film's shock effect unfolds at the level of physiology, unlike the provocation of the Dadaists, which did not so much jolt the body as elicit moral outrage.

35. See also:

> Zerstreuung und Sammlung stehen in einem Gegensatz, der folgende Formulierung erlaubt: Der vor dem Kunstwerk sich Sammelnde versenkt sich darein; er

> geht in dieses Werk ein . . . . Dagegen versenkt die zerstreute Masse ihrerseits das Kunstwerk in sich; sie umspielt es mit ihrem Wellenschlag, sie umfängt es in ihrer Flut. So am sinnfälligsten die Bauten. Die Architektur bot von jeher den Prototyp eines Kunstwerks, dessen Rezeption in der Zerstreuung und durch das Kollektivum erfolgt. (*GS* 7.1:380)

36. Benjamin's terms are *Gewöhnung* and *Gebrauch* (*GS* 7.1:381; *SW* 3:120). Benjamin was adamant in emphasizing the physiological quality of this *zerstreut* mode, which he pictured as linked to practices of physical incorporation. As he observed in notes jotted down in conjunction with the artwork essay: "Sketch: Theorie der Zerstreuung Zerstreuung wie Katharsis sind als physiologische Phänomene zu umschreiben. Das Verhältnis der Zerstreuung zur Einverleibung muß untersucht werden" (*GS* 7.2:678). "Sketch: Theory of distraction distraction like catharsis are to be circumscribed as physiological phenomena. The relation of distraction to incorporation should be examined" (my translation).

37. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* 25.

38. See Benjamin's "Theater and Radio," *SW* 2:584–85; see also "Theater und Rundfunk," *GS* 2.2:775.

39. Richard Sieburth, "Benjamin the Scrivener," *Assemblage* 6 (1988): 6–23. On Benjamin's understanding of the dialectical image, see Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing*, 73, 210, and 217–21. See also Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

40. Sieburth, "Benjamin the Scrivener" 17.

41. Sieburth, "Benjamin the Scrivener" 14.

42. See Hansen's argument in "Room-for-Play" 42–43.

Chapter 4

1. László Moholy-Nagy, "The New Typography," trans. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, in *Moholy-Nagy: An Anthology*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: DaCapo, 1970), 75–76. Translation modified.

See also:

> Man könnte sagen, daß eine derartige Verwendung der Photographie in kurzer Zeit dazu führen muß, einen wesentlichen Teil der Literatur durch Film zu ersetzen. . . .
>
> Eine ebenso wesentliche Veränderung wird durch das Einbeziehen der Photographie bei dem Plakat erzielt. . . . Die zwei neuen Möglichkeiten für das Plakat sind 1. Die Photographie, mittels welcher wir heute den größten und frappantesten Erzählungsapparat besitzen, 2. Die *kontrastierend*-eindringlich verwendete Typographie.

"Die neue Typographie," in *Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar 1919–1923* (Weimar: Bauhausverlag, 1923; Munich: Kraus-Reprint, 1980), 140.

2. László Moholy-Nagy, *Von Material zu Architektur* (Munich: Langen, 1929; facsimile reprint: Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2001). The treatise was translated into English as *The New Vision: Fundamentals of Design, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, trans. Daphne Hoffmann (New York: W. W. Norton, 1938).

3. See "In Defense of Abstract Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 4 (1945); quoted in Kostelanetz, *Moholy-Nagy* 46.

4. Moholy-Nagy, *Painting*; see also *Malerei*.

5. For Moholy's association with endeavors aimed at circumscribing new modes of vision in the 1920s and 1930s, see Berndt Stiegler, "Das Neue Sehen," in *Theoriegeschichte der Photographie* (Munich: Fink, 2006), 185–214, especially 196–211. See also Devin Fore, "The Myth Reversed: Perspectives of László Moholy-Nagy," in *Realism after Modernism* 21–74. For a general discussion of New Vision photography, see Christopher Phillips, "Resurrecting Vision: The New Photography in Europe between the Wars," in *The New Vision: Photography between the World Wars,* Maria Morris Hambourg and Christopher Phillips (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 65–108.

6. Theo van Doesburg, *Principles of Neo-plastic Art* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1968).

7. See also: "Zunächst ist es notwendig, das Verhältnis der Fotografie zu der Malerei der Jetztzeit zu klären und zu beweisen, daß die Entwicklung der technischen Mittel zu der Entstehung der neuen Formen in der optischen Gestaltung wesentlich beigetragen . . . hat" (*Malerei* 6).

8. See also "Die Malerei kann sich von nun an mit der reinen Gestaltung der Farbe befassen" (*Malerei* 7).

9. Moholy makes this argument most succinctly in an essay from 1926, "Ismen oder Kunst," originally published in *Vivos Voco* V/8–9 (Leipzig, 1926). See "Ism or Art," trans. Sybil Moholy-Nagy, in Kostelanetz, *Moholy-Nagy* 34–37, especially 36. For a historical overview of the concepts of *Abbild* and *abbilden* see Oliver R. Scholz, *Bild, Darstellung, Zeichen: Philosophische Theorien bildhafter Darstellung* (Munich 1991; 3rd ed. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2009). See also Lambert Wiesing, *Artifizielle Präsenz: Studien zur Philosophie des Bildes* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), especially 9–36.

10. This does not mean that Moholy did not appreciate the advantage that photography's technologically mediated exactness gave it over painting. He nevertheless opposed turning exactness into photography's ultimate reason of being or standard of evaluation. *Painting* 27–29 and 33–37; see also *Malerei* 25–27.

11. See in this regard Frederick Schwartz's discussion of the strategic alliance that Moholy and other Bauhaus members entered with representatives of the burgeoning field of psychotechnics. As Schwartz shows, while the principles of psychotechnics and fundaments of a physiology and psychology of perception were indeed taught at the Bauhaus, the extent to which they actually informed working practices was superficial and often contradictory. Schwartz, *Blind Spots* 66–72, especially 68.

12. For Moholy's understanding of the individual as the interplay of modular functions see his essay "Theater, Zirkus, Varieté" ("Theater, Circus, Variety Show") in *Die Bühne im Bauhaus*, ed. Oskar Schlemmer, László Moholy-Nagy, and Farkas Molnar, which appeared in 1925 as volume 4 of the *BauhausBücher*; here quoted in the facsimile reprint edited by Hans Wingler (Berlin: Kupferberg, 1965), 45–56, especially 48–50. Moholy's vitalism finds expression in his unapologetic praise of the Italian futurists and especially Marinetti, whose emphasis on dynamism and tactility he enthusiastically shared.

13. See also: "'Kunst' entsteht, wenn der Ausdruck ein Optimum ist, d. h. wenn er in seiner Höchstintensität im Biologischen wurzelnd, zielbewußt, eindeutig, rein ist" (*Malerei* 15).

14. For a discussion of the multiple valences of the term *Ausdruck* as the crucible of anthropological, psychological, and aesthetic discourses in the interwar period see Helmut Lethen, "The Conduct Code of the Cool Persona," in *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), especially 52–88.

15. See also "das verläßlichste Hilfsmittel zu Anfängen eines objektiven Sehens. Ein jeder wird genötigt sein, das Optisch-Wahre, das aus sich selbst Deutbare, Objektive zu sehen, bevor er überhaupt zu einer möglichen subjektiven Stellungnahme kommen kann" (*Malerei* 26).

16. See for instance the KPD's enlisting of the visual arts and especially photography as a weapon of class struggle after 1925, which fostered the rise of the worker-photographer movement following the foundation of the magazine *Der Arbeiterfotograf*. See Wilhelm L. Guttsman, "Communist Aims and Techniques and the Visual Arts," in *Art for the Workers: Ideology and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 149–70.

17. See also "Man kann sagen, daß wir die Welt mit vollkommen anderen Augen sehen. Trotzdem ist das Gesamtergebnis bis heute nicht viel mehr als eine visuelle enzyklopädische Leistung. Das genügt uns aber nicht. Wir wollen planmäßig produzieren, da für das Leben das Schaffen *neuer Relationen* von Wichtigkeit ist" (*Malerei* 27).

18. An early version of this chapter appeared in the journal *De Stijl* in 1922. Here the argument refers to two other media besides photography, namely, the gramophone and film. Quoted in Phillips, *Photography in the Modern Era* 7.

19. See also: "*sind die Gestaltungen nur dann wertvoll, wenn sie neue, bisher unbekannte Relationen produzieren* . . . . Da vor allem die Produktion (produktive Gestaltung) dem menschlichen Aufbau dient, müssen wir versuchen, die bisher nur für Reproduktionszwecke angewandte Apparate (Mittel) zu produktiven Zwecken zu erweitern" (*Malerei* 28).

20. See, for instance, Victor Margolin's claim that Moholy-Nagy "did not confront the division of the world, and particularly the Weimar Republic, into classes of workers and capitalists" in *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 149. Toward the end of his life Moholy countered the charge that his vision lacked a fine-grained reading of contemporary social reality by pointing to the artist's inquiry into "the central problem of visually constituting this world *in statu nascendi*," which, he insisted, made it possible to appraise the transformative impact harbored by the interplay of perception and technology. "In Defense of Abstract Art," 1945, in Kostelanetz, *Moholy-Nagy* 45.

21. See for instance Kracauer's 1927 essay "Photography," in *The Mass Ornament* 47–63.

22. Moholy's most comprehensive statement on literature's problematic encroachment on other media is found in his 1925 essay "Theater, Zirkus, Varieté." The term "literature" has here a twofold meaning. In its legitimate form, literature denotes verbal media that creatively deploy language to convey a conceptual content. By contrast, problematic literary practice lies in enlisting nonverbal media to relay a predetermined conceptual content or narrative. A case in point is for Moholy the tradition of narrative drama (*Erzähldrama*) dominant in the West, which is patterned on literary, epic structures, that deploy the theater as "illustration, subordinated to narration or propaganda" (Schlemmer, *Bühne im Bauhaus* 49). This is tantamount to suppressing the inherent ex-

pressive features of the theatrical medium. As the essay makes clear, Moholy's pejorative understanding of literature / the literary is not motivated by an all-out polemic against reason or conceptual thinking, but rather aims at a full exploitation of all creative means inhering in a medium, including language.

23. *Fotoplastik* in the German. As Eleanor Hight points out, *Plastik* is here synonymous with the term *Gestalt* and denotes "a process by which the photographer brings together diverse elements in the formation of an image that has an existence and meaning beyond the individual parts." Eleanor Hight, "Encounters with Technology: Moholy-Nagy's Path to the 'New Vision,'" in *Moholy-Nagy: Photography and Film in Weimar Germany* (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Museum, 1985), 8–45, here 18.

24. Translation modified. See also:

> Sie [die Fotoplastiken] sind—aus verschiedenen Fotografien zusammengesetzt—eine Versuchs-methode der simultanen Darstellung; komprimierte Durchdringung von visuellem und Wortwitz; unheimliche, ins Imaginäre wachsende Verbindung der allerrealsten, imitativen Mittel. Aber sie können gleichzeitig erzählend, handfest sein; veristischer "als das Leben selbst." *Malerei* 34.

25. Moholy, *Painting* 111; see also *Malerei* 109.

26. In an essay from 1927 Moholy describes his aim in creating photomontages ("Photoplastiken") as follows: "My goal is to produce photoplastics which—although composed of many photographs (copied, pasted, retouched)—created the controlled and coherent effect of a single picture equivalent to a photograph (with camera obscura). This method allows one to depict a seemingly organic super-reality." Moholy-Nagy, "Photography in Advertising," in Phillips, *Photography in the Modern Era* 92. See also "Die Photographie in der Reklame," *Photographische Korrespondenz* 9 (September 1927): 257–60.

27. For a discussion of Moholy's narrative strategies in *Painting Photography Film*, see Andrea Nelson, "László Moholy-Nagy and *Painting Photography Film*: A Guide to Narrative Montage," *History of Photography* 30 (October 2006): 258–69.

28. *Gefesselter Blick*, 1930, ed. Heinz and Bodo Rasch (reprint: Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller, 1996), 71.

29. For an analogous appraisal of the potential of photomontage by a prominent contemporary, see Franz Roh's introduction to *Foto-Auge: 76 Fotos der Zeit*, a photobook published in conjunction with the path-breaking exhibition Film und Foto that opened in Stuttgart in 1929. *Photo-Eye*, ed. Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold (reprint, New York: Arno, 1973).

30. See also: "Aus den optischen und assoziativen Beziehungen baut sich die Gestaltung, die Darstellung auf: zu einer visuell-assoziativ-begrifflich-synthetischen Kontinuität: zu dem Typofoto als eindeutige Darstellung in *optisch* gültiger Gestalt. . . . Das Typofoto regelt das neue Tempo der neuen visuellen Literatur" (*Malerei* 38).

31. For a discussion of the modalities of knowledge afforded by the typophoto that focuses on Jan Tschichold's practice but also has relevance for Moholy's, see Bernd Stiegler, "Jan Tschichold und die epistemologischen Grundlangen des Typofotos," *Fotogeschichte: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie* 28.108 (2008): 38–46.

32. See also: "Die Typografie Gutenbergs, die bis fast in unsere Tage reicht, bewegt sich in ausschließlich **linearer Dimension**. Durch die Einschaltung des fotografischen Verfahrens erweitert sie sich zu einer neuen, heute als total bekannten Dimensionalität. Die Anfangsarbeiten dazu wurden von den illustrierten Zeitungen, Plakaten, Akzidenzdrucken geleistet" (*Malerei* 37).

33. On the full dimensionality produced by the incorporation of photography and abstract graphic devices in the typophoto, see the section "Photography and Typography" in Jan Tschichold's *The New Typography*, 1928, trans. Ruari McLean (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 87–95.

34. In a preface to the film scenario Moholy dates the project back to 1921–22, noting that the film itself was never made because he was unable to raise the funds needed for production. A note added to the 1927 edition acknowledges the similarities between the project and Walter Ruttmann's *Sinfonie der Grossstadt* (*Symphony of a Metropolis*), which premiered in 1927. *Painting* 122–23. See also "Dynamik der Gross-stadt," *Malerei* 120–35. For a discussion that reconstructs the genesis of Moholy's sketch and outlines some of its main themes, see Edward Dimendberg, "Transfiguring the Urban Gray: László Moholy-Nagy's Film Scenario 'Dynamic of the Metropolis,'" in *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida: Essays in Honor of Annette Michelson*, ed. Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 109–26. See also Susanne Wehde's analysis of Moholy's typophoto within the context of the avant-garde's experimentation with typography: "Typophoto: Moholy-Nagy's *Dynamik der Gross-Stadt*," in *Typographische Kultur* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 384–88.

35. For an overview of the development and consolidation of narrative cinema before and after World War I see Miriam Hansen's "Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?" *New German Critique* 29 (Spring–Summer, 1983): 147–84 and Anton Kaes's introduction to *Kino-Debatte* 1–36.

36. On the contamination of verbal and visual strategies in the paratactical poetics of futurism see Christine Poggi, "Collage Poems: From Words in Freedom to Free-Word Pictures," in *In Defiance of Painting* 194–227.

37. See Frederic Schwartz's suggestion that the abstract rendition of the eye recalls the fatigued vision of the rail station master. Schwartz, *Blind Spots* 74. For a reading of Moholy's typophoto as a reinvention of spatial narrative informed by the experience of subway travel see Lutz Koepnick, "Underground Visions," in *Framing Attention: Windows on Modern German Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 127–62, especially 152–57.

38. The volume's pronounced polemical intent renders it more radical than *Painting* but also more overtly didactic, which translates into a less experimental structure and layout. Its fundamental mode of address hinges on descriptive language and a medley of visual materials (photographs and graphics) that are primarily used as illustrations to support the textual sections. As Moholy polemically sums up the intent of the practices described in the volume (in the introductory section on "tastübungen"): "mit wissenschaftlichkeit oder praktischer konstruktionsabsicht haben die übungen nichts zu tun." László Moholy-Nagy, *Von Material zu Architektur*, 1929 (facsimile reprint: Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 2001) 21. Henceforth quoted in the text as *Von Material*. See also: "The exercises have nothing to do with science or the intent of practical construction." My translation. A version of this passage is found in the English translation of the study, which is a slightly revised version of *Von Material* and includes a new introduction. It appeared in 1938 under the title *The New Vision: Fundamentals of Bauhaus Design, Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2005), 24. Henceforth quoted in the text as *New Vision*. For a discussion of the pedagogical tenets informing Moholy's "basic course" at the Bauhaus see Magdalena Droste, "Vorkurse Josef Albers und László Moholy-Nagy in Dessau," in *Bauhaus 1919–1933* (Berlin: Taschen, 1990), 140–43.

39. See the reference to *Tastkultur* ("tactile culture") in the second footnote on page

24 of *Von Material*: "Es scheint ein paradoxon zu sein, aber die praxis beweist es als wahr, daß neben den direkten tasterlebnissen das auftreten der fotografie—also eines optischen verfahrens—die tastkultur gefördert hat. Die dokumentarisch-exakten fotos von material- (tast-)werten, ihre vergrößerten bisher kaum wahrgenommenen erscheinungsformen regen fast jeden—nicht etwa nur den handwerker—zur erprobung seiner tastfunktionen an" (*Von Material* 24; in quoting from *Von Material* I retain the typographical choices made by Moholy, including the elimination of uppercase letters.). See also: "It may seem to be a paradox but our praxis shows it to be true, that alongside the direct tactile experiences photography—that is, an optic procedure—has fostered the culture of tactility. The documentary-exact photos of material and tactile values, of their enlarged, heretofore barely perceived formal appearance, stimulate almost anyone—not just the craftsman—to test their tactile functions" (my translation). The first footnote on that page references Marinetti's manifesto on tactilism. Both footnotes were dropped from the English version.

40. See also: "Die von einem ausdruckswunsch her erfolgte zusammenstellung der tastwerte ergibt einen neuen ausdruckswert ebenso wie farben oder töne nicht mehr als einzelne farb- oder tonwirkungen da sind, wenn sie in eine bewußte (oder im unbewußten zielsichere) beziehungsgemeinschaft gesetzt werden: sie werden umgeschaltet zu einem sinnvollen etwas, zu einem organismus, der aus sich die kraft ausstrahlt, die ein neues lebensgefühl auszulösen vermag" (*Von Material* 24).

41. My translation. See also: "So schafft z.b. der film—das montageprinzip überhaupt—eine übung in blitzschneller beobachtung simultaner existenzen auf allen gestaltungsgebieten" (*Von Material* 15–16). This passage was dropped from the English version.

42. For instance, the pedagogical work of the present-day sculptor lies in training the eye to new forms so that they become part of the available arsenal of experiential phenomena and thus become habitual (*Von Material* 158).

43. As Moholy succinctly puts it: "the mastery of the surface, not for plastic but for clearly spatial ends" (*New Vision* 86). See also: "Überwindung der Fläche nicht zur Plastik sondern zum Raum" (*Von Material* 90).

44. See also: "raumgestaltung ist heute vielmehr ein verwobensein von raumteilen, die meist in unsichtbaren, aber deutlich spürbaren bewegungsbeziehungen aller dimensionsrichtungen und in fluktuierenden kräfteverhältnissen verankert sind" (*Von Material* 211).

45. This section does not appear in *The New Vision*.

46. See also: "Plastik gleich *der weg vom material-volumen zum virtuellen volumen*; von der tasterfassung zur visuellen, beziehungsmäßigen erfassung" (*Von Material* 167).

47. See also: "Das innen und das außen, das oben und das unten verschmelzen zu einer einheit" (*Von Material* 222).

Chapter 5

1. For a contemporary's account of these debates, see Walter Benjamin's "Little History of Photography" ("Kleine Geschichte der Photographie," 1931) and "The Author as Producer" ("Der Autor als Produzent," 1934), in *GS* 2.1:368–85 and 2.2:683–701; see also *SW* 2:507–30 and 768–82. For scholarly discussions drawing on media studies and art

history, see Hanno Hardt, "Negotiated Images: The Rise of Photojournalism in Weimar Germany," in *In the Company of Media* 60–88; Bernd Stiegler, "Photographie und Presse in den 1920er und 1930s Jahre," in *Theoriegeschichte der Photographie* (Munich: Fink, 2006), 279–308; Matthias Uecker, "The Face of the Weimar Republic: Photography, Physiognomics, and Propaganda in Weimar Germany," *Monatshefte* 99.4 (2007): 469–84; Bernd Weise, "Fotojournalismus: Erster Weltkrieg—Weimarer Republik," in *Deutsche Fotografie: Macht eines Mediums 1870–1970*, ed. Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse, and Karin Thomas (Cologne: Dumont, 1997), 72–87; Christopher Phillips, "From Word to Image," in *Künstlerischer Austausch / Artistic Exchange*, ed. Thomas W. Gaehtgens (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 117–28; Michael Jennings, "Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic," *October* 93 (Summer 2000): 23–56; and Carl Gelderloos, "Simply Reproducing Reality: Brecht, Benjamin, and Renger-Patzsch on Photography," *German Studies Review* 37.3 (2014): 549–73. For a historical overview of Weimar Germany's vibrant news media landscape, see Bernhard Fulda's *Press and Poltics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

2. Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," in *The Mass Ornament* 54; see also "Die Photographie," *Das Ornament der Masse: Essays* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 29.

3. Kracauer, *Mass Ornament* 56; see also "die räumliche Konfiguration eines Augenblicks," *Das Ornament* 32.

4. Kracauer, *Mass Ornament* 58–59; see also *Das Ornament* 33–35.

5. "Der Photographenapparat kann ebenso lügen wie die Setzmaschine," in Brecht, *Werke* 21:515. My translation. See also Brecht's remarks in "No Insight through Photography," in *Brecht on Film* 144.

6. Clive Scott, *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 23–25. Scott draws here on Barthes's discussion of the traumatic image in "The Photographic Message" and of "obtuse meaning" in "The Third Meaning: Research Notes on Some Eisenstein Stills," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 15–31 and 52–68, as well as on Barthes's later distinction between *punctum* and *studium* in *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

7. Benjamin, *SW* 2:775; see also *GS* 2.2:693.

8. Benjamin, *SW* 2:527; see also *GS* 2.1:385. Benjamin used the phrase "literarization of the circumstances of life" ("Literarisierung der Lebensverhältnisse)" in "The Author as Producer"; see *SW* 2:772; see also *GS* 2.2:688.

9. Kracauer glimpsed this possibility of reversal in the groping for a new order epitomized by film's oneiric play of associations; Kracauer, *Mass Ornament* 62–63 and *Das Ornament* 38–39.

10. As Franz Roh remarked in appraising photomontage practices of the late 1920s, contemporary (photo)montage no longer served as the means for investigating the formal properties of a medium or challenging the traditional canons of representation, but rather for rearranging the given into complex accounts. This entailed an imaginative operation that charted a path between the illusionistic rendering of appearances, on the one hand, and the freewheeling concoction of a fantasy world, on the other (Roh, *Foto-Auge* 17–18). This echoes Moholy's brief assessment of the development of montage toward more structured compositions in *Painting Photography Film* (35–37). Roh's and Moholy's remarks are consistent with Benjamin Buchloh's appraisal of the development of avant-garde montage practices in the Soviet Union, which initially enlisted abstraction in the

effort to scrutinize a medium's formal constraints and challenge traditional conventions of representation but soon returned to iconic functions and to harnessing the power of new technologies in serving the needs of mass society and ideological agitation. According to Buchloh, photomontage thus made it possible to reintroduce figuration and mimetic representation while jettisoning the canons of illusionism. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography." On the renewed concerned with the human figure in the arts of Weimar Germany see Fore, *Realism after Modernism*.

11. For an overview of the development of the modernist photobook in the interwar period, see Martin Parr, "Photo Eye: The Modernist Photobook, in" *The Photobook: A History*, ed. Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, vol. 1 (London: Phaidon, 2005), 82–115.

12. Hanne Bergius, "Die neue visuelle Realität: Das Fotobuch der zwanziger Jahre," in *Deutsche Fotografie: Macht eines Mediums 1870–1970*, ed. Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse, and Karin Thomas (Cologne: Dumont, 1997), 88.

13. For a discussion of Moholy's narrative strategies in *Painting Photography Film*, see Nelson, "László Moholy-Nagy."

14. My translation. See also: "Hier wurde dementsprechend ein ganzer Film in ein Bild gebannt. Wichtige Standpunkte aus dem 'Film' sind in räumliche Beziehung zueinander gestellt, sodaß das blitzartig wandernde Auge des Beschauers einen absoluten plastischen Eindruck gewinnt. Er wird in Bewegung versetzt und befindet sich mitten unter den Dingen." *Gefesselter Blick* 45.

15. For a discussion of the advantages and perils of exploiting the ambiguity of photomontage as documented by the advertising strategies of commercial designers in the United States and Germany during the interwar period see Stein, "Good Fences."

16. See the classic text of New Typography in Germany, *Die neue Typographie*, published by Jan Tschichold in 1928. See also Jan Tschichold, *The New Typography*.

17. Stafford, *Visual Analogy* 9–10.

18. Stafford, *Visual Analogy* 29.

19. See Renger-Patzsch's remarks in his essay "Meister der Kamera," here quoted in *Albert Renger-Patzsch: Photographer of Objectivity*, ed. Ann Wilde, Jürgen Wilde, and Thomas Weski (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 167–68.

20. Thomas Janzen, "Photographing the 'Essence of Things,'" in Wilde, Wilde, and Weski, *Albert Renger-Patzsch* 13.

21. The sequence of four images encompasses plates 32–35; the dead Christ is featured on plate 90. The woman looking to the side on plate 33 is identified on the list of images that follows the introduction as Miss Johannsen from Hallig Langeneß.

22. In a letter to Franz Roh, Renger-Patzsch sought to distance himself from the title's tackiness, complaining about the commercial pressure that had prompted his publisher Kurt Wolff to impose it over the title Renger-Patzsch had originally chosen, namely, "Die Dinge" ("Things"). Renger-Patzsch's attempt to retroactively blame Wolff's title for the negative critique the book elicited in some quarters seems implausible and opportunistic given the extent to which Heise's introduction seizes on and amplifies its aesthetic claim, strongly suggesting a symbolic reading of the images that could only confirm the critics' misgivings. Quoted in Donald Kuspit, "Albert Renger-Patzsch: A Critical-Biographical Profile," *Aperture*, special issue on Renger-Patzsch, 131 (Spring 1993), 7. See also Kuspit 5 and 66–67 for an overview of contemporary reactions to Renger-Patzsch's photobook. For a discussion of Renger-Patzsch's project that stresses the convergence between his formalism and a realist epistemology of vision, see Berndt Stiegler, "Die Ordnung der

Dinge und das Amorphe: von der Neuen Sachlichkeit zur surrealistischen Photographie," in *Theoriegeschichte der Photographie* (Munich: Fink, 2006), 218–54, especially 226–38. For a discussion of *Die Welt ist schön* that stresses the importance of treating the work as a formally construed whole, thus emphasizing its function as an instrument for schooling a new seeing all the while acknowledging its tendency to romanticize the experiential world, see Michael Jennings, "Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic," *October* 93 (2000): 23–56, especially 46–56.

23. Quoted in *Aperture*, 48. Donald Kuspit compellingly places the photographic formalism of *Die Welt ist schön* within a phenomenological framework by pointing to the estrangement the photographs achieve through their emphasis on details: "But the photograph does more for him: it offers an empathic rapport, fusion, and finally complete identification with the thing. His photographs suggest his deep, extraordinary experience of objects by way of their details, which turns the object into an uncanny process, in turn suggesting the uncanniness of one's perceptual relationship with it. . . . The phenomenological transformation of the thing is inseparable from the symbiotic transformation of the self, and has the same result: intuition of the self-sustaining process of immanence that the self is, whether as object or subject" ("Albert Renger-Patzsch" 68).

24. For Renger-Patzsch's statements on photography's realism as a means for revealing the "thingness" of things, see his essays in *Die Freude am Gegenstand*, ed. Bernd Stiegler, Ann Wilde, and Jürgen Wilde (Munich: Fink, 2009), especially "Die Natur als Künstlerin" (87–89); "Ziele" (91–92); "Die Freude am Gegenstand" (107–8); and the facsimile reproduction of the essay he published in 1928 in the magazine *Uhu*, "Neue Blickpunkte der Kamera" (97–105). In his introduction to *Foto-Auge* Roh directly references the aesthetic program of *Die Welt ist schön*, which in *Foto-Auge* is exemplified by an iconic image of Renger-Patzsch. Roh both acknowledged the accomplishments of Renger-Patzsch's photography and rejected the narrowness of his approach, pleading for a more encompassing photographic practice that could also include photograms, photomontage, and the combination of photographic material with graphic (painting, drawing) and typographic techniques. Roh, *Foto-Auge* 5–6.

25. My translation. See also: "Sie [die letzten Aufnahmen des Buches] sind echte Sinnbilder. Wenn wir es auch gewiß nicht vergessen dürfen, daß es im Grunde die Natur und das gestaltete Leben selber sind, die solche Symbolkraft für jeden Schauenden in sich tragen, daß die Arbeit des Photographen die Sinnbilder nicht erschaffen, sondern sie nur sichtbar machen kann!" Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt ist schön* 16.

26. The work, generally referred to as an archive book or scrapbook, is part of the considerable Höch holdings of the Berlinische Galerie, which has also overseen its publication in a facsimile volume edited by Gunda Luyken, *Hannah Höch Album* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004); henceforth quoted in the text as *Album*.

27. In comparing the scrapbook to the archive book of Karl Blossfeldt, who organized his contact sheets based on thematic subjects, Gunda Luyken notes that Höch's organizational principles are not systematic but rather associative. *Album* iv. Benjamin Buchloh briefly discusses Höch's *Album* in the context of the notion of a photographic archive theorized by Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin. Benjamin Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's Atlas: The Anomic Archive," *October* 88 (Spring 1999): 117–45, especially 118–19.

28. Maud Lavin derives her primary criterion for assessing the scrapbook from Höch's famed photomontages, which she sees as informed by a mix of pleasure and anger that endows them with a unique critical edge. In her view, the images in the scrapbook lack

this incongruous motivation and rather indulge in a naive utopianism, when they do not altogether revel in capitalism's guilty pleasures. Maud Lavin, "Hannah Höch's Mass Media Scrapbook: Utopias of the Twenties," in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 71–121. In her dissertation, Melissa Johnson also chooses to read the scrapbook as Höch's personal response to contemporary events and an instrument for working through a difficult phase in her personal life marked by illness, professional setbacks, and increasing isolation due to the rise of National Socialism). Johnson sees the scrapbook's highly personal quality confirmed by Höch's habit of making scrapbooks as a young girl. Melissa Johnson, *"On the Strength of My Imagination": Visions of Weimar Culture in the Scrapbook of Hannah Höch* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2001), 99 and 102. As Gunda Luyken notes in her introduction to Höch's *Album*, there is ample thematic overlap between the subjects addressed in the scrapbook and those of the biting photomontages that have cemented Höch's reputation as one of the most incisive visual artists of the Weimar era. In several instances Höch even used the same images in the photomontages and in the scrapbook. The scrapbook cannot however be considered as preparatory work for the photomontages because it was clearly composed at a later date than most of them. *Album* vi.

29. Several factors speak for reading the scrapbook as a commentary on the contemporary photobook. Though the images it comprises date from the years 1919–33, scholars agree that it was not assembled gradually as a repository for images collected over time but is rather a tightly structured project that Höch executed within a short time span by drawing on her extensive picture collection. In addition, the work includes photos featured prominently in other photobooks, a circumstance that suggests an intertextual dialogue with the genre. Like the images of a photobook, Höch's pictures cover a spectrum of schools and styles ranging from the conventional genres of traditional photography (the portrait, the snapshot, the panoramic image) to examples of both realist and abstract New Vision photography. In their lack of reference to specific historical events, the images recall the kind of pictures characteristic of the photobook, which placed a premium on images exhibiting exemplary formal features while shunning the merely anecdotal and time-bound. Finally, Höch's associative arrangement of popular themes and subjects, albeit idiosyncratic, is devoid of overt personal accents and instead recalls the exploration of seeing and the photographic medium that unfolds in many Weimar-era photobooks. To my knowledge, Hanne Bergius is the only critic who discusses Höch's scrapbook in the context of the modernist photobook. Höch was well familiar with the genre, having published her photos in Moholy-Nagy's *Painting Photography Film* and in Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold's *Foto-Auge*, among others.

30. The visual layout of Höch's *Album* recalls at times the analogical arrangement of contemporary art and leisure magazines like *Der Querschnitt*. For an exemplary discussion of the analogical ties that govern the relation of images to text in this magazine see Kai Marcel Sicks, "'Der Querschnitt' oder die Kunst des Sporttreibens," in *Leibhaftige Moderne: Körper in Kunst und Massenmedien 1918 bis 1933*, ed. Karl Marcel Sicks and Michael Cowan (Bielefeld: transcript, 2005), 33–47. See also Cowan, "Cutting through the Archive," for a discussion of the deployment of analogy in Weimar-era illustrated press and nonfictional film that pivots on the multifaceted epistemology of the cross-section or *Querschnitt*.

31. Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* 123.

32. This impression is further reinforced by Höch's care in covering up the magazine's

pages. As Melissa Johnson notes, except for a handful of cases Höch pasted white paper in the interstices between images, thus creating self-effacing frames. Johnson, *Strength of My Imagination* 112.

33. Since the scrapbook lacks page numbers, references in this article are based on a sequential count of pages as they appear in the scrapbook's facsimile edition. The only exception is the page at issue here, which in the *Album* erroneously appears as p. 1, whereas it figures on p. 60 in the original. The facing page (p. 59 in the original) also appears out of sequence on p. 2 of the facsimile *Album*. Both misattributions occurred during production; the facsimile *Album* is otherwise a faithful reproduction of the original.

34. The scrapbook contains several animal depictions captioned by statements that emphasize the anthropomorphic nature of the portrayal—see, for instance, the "eccentric," "phlegmatic" frog on p. 6.

35. The image bears the caption "Starke Geste im modernen Ausdruckstanz [Die Wigmanschülerin Vera Skoronel] Phot. Suse Byk" ("strong gesture in the modern expressive dance [the Wigman student Vera Skoronel] Phot. Suse Byk"). Palucca was a student of acclaimed dancer Mary Wigman.

36. The photo of the Bali child dancer is used two other times in the scrapbook, on pp. 29 and 34, in contexts that highlight other aspects of the image, thus engendering different kinds of associations.

37. The title under the photograph's lower-right corner, "Der Potsdamer Platz, Berlin vom Dach des neuen Columbus Hochhauses gesehen" ("Berlin's Potsdamer Platz. Viewed from the rooftop of the new Columbus House") readily discloses the identity of the displayed site and spares the reader any guess work.

Chapter 6

1. Born in Hanover in 1887, Schwitters collaborated with some of the most innovative artists of Dada, De Stijl, and Constructivism throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. In 1937 he was forced to flee Nazi Germany and emigrate to Norway and later to Britain, where he died in 1948. In the 1950s, avant-garde artists in Europe and the United States discovered in his work a formidable model for blending visual and verbal art forms that opened the way for pop and conceptual art. For a discussion of Schwitters's impact on post–World War II art, see Gwendolen Webster, *Kurt Merz Schwitters: A Biographical Study* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997). See also the essays in the volume by Susanne Meyer-Büser and Karin Orchard, *In the Beginning Was Merz: From Kurt Schwitters to the Present Day* (Ostfildern Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2000).

2. Leah Dickerman points to the incongruous relation between Schwitters's occasional recourse to a "rhetoric of purity" in reference to his collages and "the radicalism of [his] formal procedures—its wholesale openness to stuff of the modern world, its assault on traditional concepts of medium, and it reconfiguration of the terms of distribution." Dickerman notes that Schwitters's scholarship has in various degrees subscribed to the assessment of fellow Dadaists like Richard Huelsenbeck, who dismissed him as "someone insufficiently political and overly bourgeois," thereby lending credence to the image of Schwitters as an artist whose practices were revolutionary, but whose naive, childlike attitude fueled a propensity for escapist, uncommitted play. Leah Dickerman, "*Merz* and Memory: On Kurt Schwitters," in Dickerman and Witkovsky, *The Dada Seminars* 105;

see also 123 n. 12. A case in point is Werner Schmalenbach's monograph, the first comprehensive study of the post–World War II period, which portrays Schwitters as an innocent, childlike genius. Werner Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters* (Cologne: DuMont, 1967). This image has become especially ingrained in the Anglophone reception of Schwitters's oeuvre. For instance, Huelsenbeck's emphasis on Schwitters's apolitical attitude reemerges in Benjamin Buchloh's assessment of his collage practices as marked by "a meditative contemplation of reification," which Buchloh contrasts with the activist model of "mass agitation" exemplified by John Heartfield's photomontages. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," *Artforum* 21 (September 1982): 43–56, here 43. John Elderfield also endorses the evaluation of Schwitters as indebted to a nostalgic late romanticism, an assessment he, however, embeds in a complex, wide-ranging analysis of both his visual and literary oeuvre that remains an unsurpassed resource for Schwitters's scholarship to date. John Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985). Compared to the reception of his visual work, Schwitters's literary oeuvre has received much less attention. Interest flourished in Germany in the 1970s, when Schwitters was seen as a forerunner of experimental literature and concrete poetry. See the 1972 issue of *Text + Kritik* dedicated to his literary work, as well as the monograph by Bernd Scheffer, *Anfänge experimenteller Literatur: Das literarische Werk von Kurt Schwitters* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1978). For Anglophone scholarship dealing with Schwitters's literary output, see E. S. Shaffer, "Kurt Schwitters, Merzkünstler Art and Word-Art," in *Word & Image* 6.1 (January–March 1990): 100–118; D. A. Steel, "Kurt Schwitters, Poetry, Collage, Typography," *Words & Image* 6.2 (April–June 1990): 198–209; and Michael Webster, *Reading Visual Poetry after Futurism: Marinetti, Apollinaire, Schwitters, Cummings* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

3. Schwitters used *Merz* as a modifier connoting the common principle underlying the wide range of artistic practices in which he engaged: *Merz* poetry, *Merz* sculpture, *Merz* stage, *Merz* architecture. The term first appears as a word fragment in a collage from 1919 that is known today from photographic reproductions of the original, which has gone missing. Schwitters's use of the term grew increasingly infrequent in the 1930s, in part because it had been forged as part of his contentious engagement with Dada, which made it a relic of past battles. Because the relative eclipse of the term does not reflect a change in direction in Schwitters's discourse on art, I deploy it as a general concept for discussing Schwitters's practice of abstract montage.

4. The broader context for the feud is the political and cultural turmoil that accompanied the collapse of Wilhelmine Germany at the end of World War I and the establishment of a representative democracy after the suppression of the revolutionary uprisings. Schwitters's essay functions as a belated rejoinder to the manifesto Huelsenbeck delivered at the first soirée of Berlin Dada in April 1918. Huelsenbeck's address was framed by an attack on Expressionism that recapitulated the Dadaists' disenchantment with the prewar avant-garde. In denouncing the escapism and covert commercial mind-set of Expressionism, Huelsenbeck championed Dada as an activist practice that transgressed the safe confines of bourgeois art in order to embrace and shape the cacophony of contemporary urban life. Huelsenbeck was determined to keep Berlin Dada free from the affirmative, petit bourgeois aestheticism he saw epitomized by Schwitters. In Huelsenbeck's eyes, Schwitters had compromised himself by establishing ties to Herwarth Walden's journal *Der Sturm* upon arriving in Berlin from Hannover in 1918. Huelsenbeck was es-

pecially harsh in his criticism of Walden, whom he faulted for promoting what he considered to be the fraudulent commercialization of the avant-garde. See the reprint of Huelsenbeck's manifesto in the *Dada Almanach* from 1920 (English ed. and trans. Malcolm Green; London: Atlas Press, 1993), 44–49. See also Huelsenbeck's personal attack against Schwitters in the closing paragraph of the *Almanach*'s introduction, 14.

5. Kurt Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, ed. Friedhelm Lach, 5 vols. (Cologne: DuMont, 1973–81), 5:76. Henceforth cited in the text as *Werk*. Excerpts of this essay have appeared under the heading "From *Merz*" in the collection of Schwitters texts edited and translated by Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris, *pppppp: Kurt Schwitters Poems Performance Pieces Proses Plays Poetics* (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 2002), 215–21; texts from this collection are henceforth quoted in the text as *pppppp*. English translations that are not drawn from this collection are my own.

6. See Greenberg's arguments in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture*, especially 3–7.

7. See also:

> Das Material ist so unwesentlich, wie ich selbst. Wesentlich ist das Formen. Weil das Material unwesentlich ist, nehme ich jedes beliebige Material, wenn es das Bild verlangt. Indem ich verschiedenartige Materialien gegeneinander abstimme, habe ich gegenüber der nur-Ölmalerei ein Plus, da ich außer Farbe gegen Farbe, Linie gegen Linie, Form gegen Form usw. noch Material gegen Material, etwa Holz gegen Sackleinen werte. Ich nenne die Weltanschauung, aus der diese Art Kunstgestaltung wurde, "Merz." (*Werk* 5:76–77)

8. "Alle Werte [bestehen] nur durch Beziehungen untereinander" (*Werk* 5:84). This passage appears in an essay by Schwitters quoted at length by Otto Nebel in his preface to the *Sturm-Bilderbuch* 4, from 1921.

9. As Schwitters states in an essay from 1923: "The painting is a self-contained artwork. It does not relate to the outside. . . . Only in reverse can someone on the outside relate to the artwork: the onlooker" ("Das Bild ist ein in sich ruhendes Kunstwerk. Es bezieht sich nicht nach außen hin. . . . Nur umgekehrt kann sich jemand von außen auf das Kunstwerk beziehen: der Beschauer"; *Werk* 5:13). For Schwitters's discussion of "rhythm," see also his essays from 1922 and 1926 (*Werk* 5:99 and 236–40).

10. See also *Werk* 5:78–79.

11. The story first appeared in Schwitters's own collection *Anna Blume Dichtungen* in 1919, and was reprinted that same year in the Berlin avant-garde journal *Der Sturm*.

12. The story was published in *Der Sturm* in 1922. Hans Arp, who was a close friend of Schwitters in the 1920s, claims to have been involved in drafting parts of the narrative (*Werk* 2:391).

13. Unlike "The Onion," "Franz Müller's Wire Springtime" has not been translated into English.

14. See especially sections I–III in Lethen's *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte*.

15. For Lethen's discussion of Plessner in *Verhaltenslehren*, see 75–95, 111–15; see also the essays in Plessner's *Ausdruck und menschliche Natur* ("Deutung des mimischen Ausdrucks"; *Lachen und Weinen*).

16. As it turns out, Müller's *sprechender Name* is not related to the word for mill, *Mühle*, as one would expect based on the etymology of this common German family

name, but rather to *Müll*, garbage. In other words, Schwitters's wordplay seizes on the quasi homophone "Müll" to semantically refunctionalize the term as "Müll-er," which in the context of his story acquires the meaning of "garbage man."

17. Numerous statements in Schwitters's theoretical texts make clear that the practice of incorporating refuse in his art is not meant as a polemical debasement of art and the artwork aimed at foregrounding the defilement of the contemporary world. Rather, Schwitters pleads for an expansion of artistic practice beyond the stifling constraints of academic art; the artist is thus free to include all possible materials from everyday experience. By this logic refuse too is admissible material in the creation of art. See Schwitters's 1919 essay "*Merz* Painting" ("Die Merzmalerei") in *Werk* 5:37.

18. The political harangue held by Bäsenstiel in "Franz Müller's Wire Springtime" parodically echoes the discourse of Dadaist activists like Richard Huelsenbeck. Schwitters draws a shrewd analogy between Dada's militant discourse and Expressionism's ineffectual activist pathos by having Bäsenstiel recycle Expressionist clichés against the war and for a hackneyed humanitarianism in the form of the acerbic word games perfected by Zurich Dada (*Werk* 2:39).

19. For an extended reading of the two stories that treats montage as a means for confronting the role violence played in shaping models of subjectivity after the trauma of World War I, see Patrizia McBride, "Montage and Violence in Weimar Culture: Kurt Schwitters' Reassembled Individuals," in *Violence, Culture, Aesthetics: Germany 1789–1938,* ed. Carl Niekerk and Stefani Engelstein (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 245–65.

20. Phillips talks specifically of the photographic fragment. Roh's remark, however, refers more broadly to montage practices; Teitelbaum, *Montage and Modern Life* 26, 28.

21. This argument draws on Greenberg's discussion in his famed essay "Collage," in *Art and Culture* 70–83. Greenberg's analysis foregrounds the layered play with illusionism that is engendered by Picasso's and Braque's incorporation of trompe l'oeil elements in their collages. Rosalind Krauss builds on this argument in describing Picasso's collage practice as dramatizing "the representation of representation." Rosalind Krauss, "In the Name of Picasso," in *Originality of the Avant-Garde* 23–40, here 37. For a historical contextualization of Picasso's and Braque's inquiry into illusionism, see Christine Poggi's "The Invention of Collage, Papier Collé, Constructed Sculpture, and Free-Word Poetry," in *In Defiance of Painting* 1–29.

22. See Marjorie Perloff's discussion in "Collage and Poetry," in Kelly, *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* 384–87, especially 384–85. See also Ulmer's discussion of the philosophical implications of the semiotic processes that drive collage and montage practices in his "Object of Post-criticism," especially 83–94.

23. In later texts Schwitters drew on the Constructivist trope of a calibrated play of opposites suspended in a state of equilibrium to describe the artwork's self-containment. *Werk* 5:134.

24. On the possibility of dematerializing collage elements, see Schwitters's 1923 essay "Holland Dada" (*Werk* 5:133–34.) See also D. A. Steel's discussion of this question in "Kurt Schwitters," especially 206–8.

25. This claim is sustained by drawing on Schwitters's occasional invocation of a secularized religious terminology in his discussion of art. To be sure, Schwitters did at times describe art as a sacred realm in his efforts to emphasize art's autonomy with respect to extra-artistic domains. These tropes are generally not used to describe artistic practice or the art object per se, for which Schwitters deploys matter-of-fact character-

izations, but are rather deployed in attempts to characterize the sphere of art more generally. In other contexts Schwitters takes recourse to a Darwinian terminology of drives and impulses to connote the naturalness and spontaneity of artistic practice, which forms a stark contrast to the mystical/religious register of the example above (*Werk* 5:239 and 272). One can conclude that Schwitters's occasional invocation of religious imagery is not meant to suggest a specific understanding of art's ontological status. Rather, these images function as analogies that allow Schwitters to describe art as a medium whose operational logic renders it autonomous from other realms and that should not be deployed instrumentally.

26. See also:

> 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. (*Werk* 5:77)

27. As Schwitters states in an essay from 1922: "Merz bedeutet bekanntlich die Verwendung von gegebenem Alten als Material für das neue Kunstwerk" ("As is generally known, Merz entails the use of available old elements as material for the new artwork"; *Werk* 5:96). John Elderfield finds in Baudelaire's ragpicker, as discussed by Benjamin, a frame for understanding Schwitters's recycling of material and linguistic refuse. For the ragpicker's activity of collecting is fundamentally elegiac; it takes stock of the reality's transience while attempting to rescue its used-up fragments from oblivion by reusing them in the abstract, narcissistic realm of art. Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters* 168. This characterization of Schwitters's practice seems to be at variance with his utterly unsentimental, matter-of-fact understanding of refuse as artistic material. It is remarkable, for instance, that Schwitters never used the word "Fragment" to describe the building blocks of his *Merz* works, but rather talked of "Elemente" or "Teile" (elements and parts).

28. See also:

> So wollen wir uns heute einmal Herrn Felix Neumann "ergreifen." "Nichts tötet schneller als Lächerlichkeit," schreibt er. Aber mein Herr, Sie begehen ja Selbstmord! Haben Sie denn Ihren Artikel in der Post vom 6. Januar 1920 nicht gelesen? Der reinste Selbstmord! (Nichts tötet schneller als Lächerlichkeit.) . . . Sie sagen, ich nagte mit tausend Gesinnungsgenossen an den Wurzeln unserer Kraft. (Ein schönes Bild.) Sie meinen wohl: Ihrer Kraft? Nein, millionenmal nein, ich nage nicht, seien Sie unbesorgt, ich bin keine Ratte und Sie sind kein Baum. Ich wüßte auch garnicht die Wurzeln ihrer Kraft zu finden. Außerdem würde ich auch meinen Weg allein nagen, ohne tausend Mitnager. Aber ich bin kein Nagetier, sondern man nagt mich an. Wollen Sie wohl gleich aufhören, mich anzunagen, sonst mache ich Sie lächerlich, jawohl! Ich mache Sie sonst lächerlich. Sie wissen doch, das tötet. . . . Ich brauche bloß abzuschreiben, was Sie selbst geschrieben haben, das genügt. (*Werk* 5:49)

29. This is a strategy Schwitters adopts very deliberately, as he makes clear in a polemical essay from 1920, "Berliner BörsenKukukunst," where he claims the right to recycle just any material for his *Merz* compositions, including the critic himself. In the text's final section he humorously juxtaposes his own abstract "use" of the critic Kurt Glaser,

which qualifies as "'real" art, to a more conventional, mimetic portrayal of the critic. *Werk* 5:51.

30. For Schwitters's notion of nonsense, see Scheffer, *Anfänge experimenteller Literatur* 75.

31. In this regard, Schwitters's playful use of nonsense is also different from Marinetti's poetic practice of "parole in libertà" ("words in freedom"), which oscillates ambiguously between abstraction and onomatopoeic rendering of the bustling cacophony of the modern urban environment. See chapter 7 in Poggi's *In Defiance of Painting*.

32. Lethen, *Verhaltenslehren* 23–26.

33. "An Anna Blume," *Werk* 1:58–59. For the rhetorical and formal strategies that animate the text, as well as an overview of its reception in Germany from its original publication to the 1970s, see Scheffer, *Anfänge experimenteller Literatur* 74–90. The poem's sensational success was due to Schwitters's ingenious publicity stunt, which involved plastering Hanover's advertising columns with anonymous copies of the poem. This shrewd variation on Dadaist strategies of cultural guerrilla-dom enabled Schwitters to address a far broader audience than the one normally interested in Dadaist events, catapulting him to the fore of public debate and bringing him the mix of celebrity and notoriety he was after. See *pppppp* 15–17 for the original German version of "An Anna Blume" and the translation from 1942, "Anna Blossom Has Wheels."

34. For instance, "Augusta Bolte," the protagonist of an homonymous story from 1922, makes a brief appearance in "He" ("Er"), from 1923 (*Werk* 5:100); the fairy tale "Der Hahnepeter" (1924) is referenced at the beginning of another fairy tale, "Merfüsermär" (1924–25), that humorously thematizes Schwitters's relations to his friends El Lissitzky and Hans Arp (*Werk* 2:140–46); Revon, a partial palindrome of Hanover first used in the story "Franz Müller's Wire Springtime" (Franz Müllers Drahtfrühling," published in 1922) comes up again in a story from 1926, "Horizontal Story" ("Horizontale Geschichte"; *Werk* 5:260–65). Finally, the text of Anna Blume is collaged in a 1921 text printed in Der Sturm, titled "Appeal" ("Aufruf"; *Werk* 1:60–63).

35. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 6.

36. The story was first published in the twenty-first issue of Schwitters's journal *Merz* in 1931. It was subsequently reprinted in 1933 in the Stuttgart magazine *Der Zirkel*.

37. See also:

> Es ist in der Literatur schwer möglich, die Abstraktion durchzuführen. . . . Bei **"Schacko"** möchte ich auf den Aufbau hinweisen, auf das abstrakte Gesetz in der **Komposition.** Ich selbst habe die Geschichte des Schacko von einer Frau erzählen hören, **Wort für Wort—die ganze Dichtung** . . . das brachte mir den Stoff menschlich näher; aber es war **so** noch durchaus kein Kunstwerk. **Zum Kunstwerk wurde die Angelegenheit erst durch die Form**: wie die Aussagen der Frau einander gegenübergestellt sind, wie sie sich wiederholen, einander ergänzen, wie sie vorwegnehmen oder bestätigen, wie sie in ihrer Gesamtheit zusammenstehen, um immer deutlicher die Liebe der Frau zu ihrem Manne, **einen abstrakten Begriff**, und ihre Verzweiflung, **wiederum einen abstrakten Begriff**, immer klarer werden zu lassen, und das ist **der Inhalt dieser Dichtung**. Sie können in dieser Weise alle meine Dichtungen analysieren, und Sie werden

mir zugegeben, daß in diesem Sinne ihre Form immer abstrakt ist: Aussagen sind gewertet. *Werk* 2:431–32.

The introductory comments are recycled, or "merzed," from a section of the manifesto "Ich und meine Ziele," which appeared in *Merz* 21, the issue that also carried the first printing of the story (*Werk* 5:342–43).

38. Benjamin, *GS* 2.2:438–65.

39. The use of bold typeface, quite common in Schwitters's fiction and essays, possibly mocks and thus thematizes the use of this typographical device. In the first place, it quotes the typographical convention of foregrounding specific words and phrases and thus signaling important junctures in the story—though in Schwitters's text one would try to identify their special meaning in vain. Second, it creates visual patterns that disrupt the linear unfolding of silent reading, prompting the reader to skim the text along the emphasized segments while moving back and forth from phrase to phrase to make sense of the pattern created by the boldface segments. Here again there seems to be no particular meaning to the direction of the skimming. The fact that this common typographical device of boldfacing runs idle calls attention to its deployment in the text.

40. The Société anonyme, founded in 1920 in New York by Katherine Dreier, Marcel Duchamp, and Francis Picabia, exhibited works by Schwitters throughout the 1920s. Dreier and Duchamp visited Schwitters in Hannover in 1928. For Schwitters's reception in the United States, see Karin Orchard, "The Eloquence of Waste: Kurt Schwitters' Work and Its Reception in America," in Meyer-Büser and Orchard, *In the Beginning Was Merz* 280–89.

41. Yair Guttman (1998) quoted in Marjorie Perloff's "The Conceptual Poetics of Marcel Duchamp," in *21st-Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 83. For a discussion of Duchamp's exploration of the conditions of possibility of art, see also Martha Buskirk, "Thoroughly Modern Marcel," *October* 70 (Autumn 1994): 113–25.

42. Marjorie Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 52.

43. See in particular the introduction and chapter 2 in her *Wittgenstein's Ladder*.

44. *The Philosophical Investigations*, published posthumously in 1952, unfold an open-ended, aphoristic mode of inquiry that refrains from offering hard definitions of basic concepts such as the language game, but rather probes their viability within the performative domain of the text. Drawing on the readings of Wittgenstein's later philosophy developed by Jacques Bouveresse and Stanley Cavell, Perloff highlights the social and cultural basis of the modes of communication connoted by the concept of the language game, what Wittgenstein elliptically alludes to as "forms of life." As Perloff notes in discussing an excerpt from a 1932 Cambridge lecture, "The language game . . . is neither a genre nor even a particular form of discourse; rather, it is a paradigm, a set of sentences, let us say, selected from the language we actually use so as to describe how communication of meaning works in specific circumstances" (*Wittgenstein's Ladder* 60). For Wittgenstein's discussion of the ways meaning is engendered and traded through the varied modes of behavior he terms language games, see especially sections 23–54 in the *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953).

45. In this context, see Henry Staten's discussion of the status of the rules that govern

the language games. Staten analyzes the *Philosophical Investigations* as a deconstructive inquiry into philosophical method that questions the assumption of presence and essentially given meaning ostensibly guaranteed by self-identical forms. This leads him to emphasize the utterly singular status of the rules that enable the language games. As he notes, rules in Wittgenstein's understanding of language do not function as an atemporal, universally shared system of coordinates that is instantiated in particular cases. This is because Wittgenstein's understanding of rules does away with the assumption of a "self-identical form that marks their boundaries and makes their varying manifestations instances of the same. Wittgenstein's account runs counter to those views that see human activities as structured by 'implicit rules'; for him the actual instances of usage are our 'rules.' The instances of usage are spatiotemporal phenomena, and are to be 'applied' to the understanding of new cases, not as a rule conceived as logos or intelligible form is applied, but rather as an actual physical ruler is applied to a swatch of material for purposes of comparison." Henry Staten, *Wittgenstein and Derrida* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 14.

46. See also:

> Was war nun zu tun? Ein unerhörter Reim! Nun reimte sich auf zu tun. Es war Fräulein Auguste darüber hinaus noch insbesondere auffällig, daß sowohl nun sich auf zu tun, als auch zu tun sich anderseits auf nun reimte. . . . Der Reim stieß ihr auf. Wie Lebertran. . . . Wenn nämlich etwas los ist, dann passieren die ungereimtesten Dinge. Dann reimt sich plötzlich, was sich sonst nicht reimt. Resümieren wir! 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 Menschen gingen in einer und derselben Richtung, nun reimte sich auf zu tun. Also mußte etwas los sein. Wie sollte es nun Auguste erfahren? (*Werk* 2:72–73)

47. For an insightful analysis of the story that highlights the linguistic logic along which it unfolds see Scheffer, *Anfänge experimenteller Literatur* 137–47.

48. See also:

> Der Leser denkt nun, hier würde sich etwas ereignen. . . . Jedenfalls glaubt der Leser, hier würde es Frl. Dr. Leb erfahren, wer oder was los wäre, aber sie erfährt es nicht. Der Leser glaubt ein Recht darauf zu haben, es zu erfahren, aber der Leser hat kein Recht, jedenfalls nicht das Recht, im Kunstwerk irgend etwas zu erfahren. . . . Is nich.
>
> Sondern die Geschichte ist aus, einfach aus, so leid es mir auch tut, so brutal es auch klingen mag, ich kann nicht anders. (*Werk* 2:93)

49. See Rosalind Krauss's discussion in "In the Name of Picasso," especially 38–39; see also her arguments on the modernist grid in "Grids" (9–22) and "The Originality of the Avant-Garde" (151–70) in *Originality of the Avant-Garde*.

Conclusion

1. Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*; see especially the section "Transition: Berlin, Functions in Hollow Space," 195–208. Bloch's anguished look at the Weimar years comprises texts and glosses written both before and after 1933. However the retrospective, evaluative

frame that guides the text selection places the book squarely in the Nazi period. In seeking a term that would serve as the cultural and ideological signature of the by-gone republic, Bloch significantly avoided the much-debated label "New Objectivity" and instead settled on the term "montage."

2. Georg Lukács, "Realism in the Balance," trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Aesthetics and Politics: Theodor Adorno. Walter Benjamin. Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht. Georg Lukács*, ed. Ronald Taylor (London: Verso, 1977), 28–59. Lukács's essay first appeared in *Das Wort* in 1938. It constituted a response to an essay Ernst Bloch had also published in *Das Wort* in 1938, titled "Discussing Expressionism" (*Aesthetics and Politics*, 16–27). Bloch's 1938 essay became part of the 1962 edition of *Heritage of Our Times*.

3. Adorno's most comprehensive retort to Lukács in his essay "Reconciliation under Duress" appeared in the journal *Der Monat* in 1958, exactly two decades after the debates around Expressionism played out in *Das Wort*—the journal ceased publication in 1939 after a three-year run. This is why the English translation of Adorno's essay has been included in *Aesthetics and Politics* as integral to a historical understanding of the debates (151–76). At the same time Adorno's arguments are also a commentary on the geopolitical situation of the 1950s, marked by the Cold War, the process of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union, and the suppression of the 1953 workers' uprising in East Germany.

4. Gerald Bruns, introduction to Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), x.

5. Bruns in Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose* x. Bruns sees this understanding of structure clearly at play in Shklovsky's concern with "the historicality of forms rather than . . . the rules of how formal objects work," which in turn relates to his attempt at grasping "the historical tension between prose and form." Bruns xii.

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory*. Edited and translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Adorno, Theodor W. *Gesammelte Schriften in zwanzig Bänden*. Edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003.

Adorno, Theodor W. *Noten zur Literatur*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1954.

Adorno, Theodor W. "Reconciliation under Duress." Translated by Rodney Livingstone. In *Aesthetics and Politics: Theodor Adorno. Walter Benjamin. Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht. Georg Lukács*, edited by Ronald Taylor, 151–76. London: Verso, 1977.

Arnheim, Rudolf. *Film als Kunst*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

Becker, Sabina. *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Cologne: Böhlau, 2000.

Behne, Adolf. "Die Stellung des Publikums zur modernen deutschen Literatur." *Die Weltbühne* 22 (1926): 774–77. Reprinted in *Kino-Debatte: Texte zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Film 1909–1929*, edited by Anton Kaes, 160–63. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag; Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1978.

Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften*. 7 vols. Edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974–89.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Translated by John Osborne. London: NLB, 1977.

Benjamin, Walter. *Radio Benjamin*. Edited by Lecia Rosenthal. London: Verso, 2014.

Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone et al., edited by Michael Jennings. 4 vols. to date. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996–.

Berger, John. "The Political Uses of Photomontage." In *Selected Essays*, edited by Geoff Dyer, 219–23. New York: Pantheon Books, 2001.

Bergius, Hanne. "Die neue visuelle Realität: Das Fotobuch der zwanziger Jahre." In *Deutsche Fotografie: Macht eines Mediums 1870–1970*, edited by Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse, and Karin Thomas, 88–102. Cologne: Dumont, 1997.

Bergius, Hanne. *Montage und Metamechanik. Dada Berlin: Artistik von Polaritäten*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2000.

Biro, Matthew. *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
Bloch, Ernst. *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*. 1935. *Werkausgabe*, vol. 4. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985.
Bloch, Ernst. *Heritage of Our Times*. Translated by Neville Plaice and Stephen Plaice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.
Blumenberg, Hans. *Ästhetische und metaphorologische Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001.
Blumenberg, Hans. *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*. Translated by Robert M. Wallace. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983.
Blumenberg, Hans. *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981.
Bohde, Daniela. *Kunstgeschichte als physiognomische Wissenschaft: Kritik einer Denkfigur der 1920er bis 1940er Jahre*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012.
Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Film and Radio*. Edited and translated by Marc Silberman. London: Methuen, 2000.
Brecht, Bertolt. *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*. Edited by Werner Hecht. Berlin: Aufbau; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988.
Bruns, Gerald. Introduction to Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, translated by Benjamin Sher, ix–xiv. Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990.
Buchloh, Benjamin H. D. "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art." *Artforum* 21 (September 1982): 43–56.
Buchloh, Benjamin H. D. "From Faktura to Factography." *October* 30 (Autumn 1984): 82–119.
Buchloh, Benjamin H. D. "Gerhard Richter's Atlas: The Anomic Archive." *October* 88 (Spring 1999): 117–45.
Buck-Morss, Susan. "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered." *October* 62 (Fall 1992): 3–41.
Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.
Buijtendijk, F. J. J., and Helmuth Plessner. *Die Deutung des mimischen Ausdrucks: Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom Bewusstsein des anderen Ichs*. Bonn: Cohen, 1925.
Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
Buskirk, Martha. "Thoroughly Modern Marcel." *October* 70 (Autumn 1994): 113–25.
Caillois, Roger. *Man and the Sacred*. Translated by Meyer Barash. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980.
Caillois, Roger. "Mimicry and Legendary Psychaesthenia." *October* 31 (Winter 1984): 16–32.
Caygill, Howard. *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience*. London: Routledge, 1998.
Cowan, Michael. "Cutting Through the Archive: *Querschnitt* Montage and Images of the World in Weimar Visual Culture." *New German Critique* 40.3 (2013): 1–40.
Dickerman, Leah. "Dada Gambits." *October* 105 (Summer 2003): 3–12.
Dickerman, Leah. "*Merz* and Memory: On Kurt Schwitters." In *The Dada Seminars*, edited by Leah Dickerman and Matthew S. Witkovsky, 103–25. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2005.
Dickerman, Leah, and Matthew S. Witkovsky, eds. *The Dada Seminars*. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2005.

Dimendberg, Edward. "Transfiguring the Urban Gray: László Moholy-Nagy's Film Scenario 'Dynamic of the Metropolis.'" In *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida: Essays in Honor of Annette Michelson*, edited by Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey, 109–26. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003.

Döblin, Alfred. "An Romanautoren und ihre Kritiker: Berliner Programm." *Der Sturm* 4 (1913): 158–59. Reprinted in *Aufsätze zur Literatur*, edited by Walter Muschg, 15–19. Olten: Walter, 1963.

Döblin, Alfred. "Der Bau des epischen Werks." In Döblin, *Aufsätze zur Literatur*, edited by Walter Muschg, 215–45. Olten: Walter, 1963.

Doherty, Brigid. "Figures of Pseudorevolution." *October* 84 (Spring 1998): 64–89.

Doherty, Brigid. "See: *We are All Neurasthenics!*" or, The Trauma of Dada Montage." *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1997): 82–132.

Doherty, Brigid. "The Work of Art and the Problem of Politics in Berlin Dada." *October* 105 (Summer 2003): 73–92.

Droste, Magdalena. *Bauhaus 1919–1933*. Berlin: Taschen, 1990.

Drucker, Johanna. "Graphic Devices: Narration and Navigation." *Narrative* 16.2 (2008): 121–39.

Drucker, Johanna. *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909–1923*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Durus [Alfred Kémeny]. "Fotomontage, Fotogramm." *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* 5.7 (1931): 166–68.

Eiland, Howard, and Michael Jennings. *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Einstein, Carl. "Über den Roman." *Die Aktion* 1 (1912): 1264–69. Reprinted in *Romantheorie: Dokumentation ihrer Geschichte in Deutschland seit 1880*, vol. 2, edited by Eberhard Lämmert et al., 109–11. Königstein im Taunus: Athenäum, 1984.

Eisenstein, Sergei. *The Eisenstein Reader*. Edited by Richard Taylor. London: British Film Institute, 1998.

Elderfield, John. *Kurt Schwitters*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1985.

Fludernik, Monika. *Towards a "Natural" Narratology*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* New York: Random House, 1971.

Fore, Devin. *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012.

Frascina, Francis. "Collage: Conceptual and Historical Overview." In *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, edited by Michael Kelly, 1:382–84. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Fulda, Bernhard. *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Gebauer, Gunter, and Wulf, Christoph. *Mimesis: Culture Art Society*. Translated by Don Reneau. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Gelderloos, Carl. "Simply Reproducing Reality: Brecht, Benjamin, and Renger-Patzsch on Photography." *German Studies Review* 37.3 (2014): 549–73.

Gräff, Werner. "Here Comes the New Engineer." In *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film*, edited by Hans Richter, translated Steven Lindberg with Margareta Ingrid Christian; English edition by Detlef Mertins and Michael W. Jennings. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010.

Gray, Richard. *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004.

Greenberg, Clement. *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*. Boston: Beacon, 1961.

Guillory, John. "Genesis of the Media Concept." *Critical Inquiry* 36.2 (Winter 2010): 321–62.

Guttsman, Wilhelm L. *Art for the Workers: Ideology and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.

Hake, Sabine. "Zur Wiederkehr des Physiognomischen in der modernen Photographie." In *Geschichten der Physiognomik: Text, Bild, Wissen*, edited by Rüdiger Campe and Manfred Schneider, 475–513. Freiburg: Rombach, 1996.

Hansen, Miriam Bratu. "Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street." *Critical Inquiry* 25.2 (Winter 1999): 306–43.

Hansen, Miriam Bratu. "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: 'The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology.'" *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 179–224.

Hansen, Miriam Bratu. *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Hansen, Miriam Bratu. "Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?" *New German Critique* 29 (Spring–Summer 1983): 147–84.

Hansen, Miriam Bratu. "Room-for-Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema." *October* 109 (2004): 3–45.

Hanssen, Beatrice. *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings, and Angels*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Hardt, Hanno. *In The Company of Media: Cultural Constructions of Communication, 1920s–1930s*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.

Hausmann, Raoul. "Fotomontage." In *Bilanz der Feierlichkeit: Texte bis 1933*, 2:130–33. Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1982.

Hausmann, Raoul. "Photomontage." 1931. Translated by Joel Agee. In *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940*, edited by Christopher Phillips, 178–79. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Herzfelde, Wieland. "Zur Einführung." In *Erste internationale Dada-Messe: Katalog: Ausstellung und Verkauf dadaistischer Erzeugnisse*, edited by George Grosz, Raoul Hausmann, and John Heartfield. Berlin: Kunsthandlung Dr. Otto Burchard, 1920; http://sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/Dada_Messe/pages/002.htm. Accessed September 28, 2014.

Herzfelde, Wieland. "Zur Einführung." In *Die zwanziger Jahre: Manifeste und Dokumente deutscher Künstler*, edited by Uwe M. Schneede, 31–34. Cologne: Dumont, 1979.

Hight, Eleanor M. *Moholy-Nagy: Photography and Film in Weimar Germany*. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Museum, 1985.

Höch, Hannah. *Album*. Edited by Gunda Luyken. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004.

Honold, Alexander. "Erzählen." In *Benjamins Begriffe*, edited by Michael Opitz and Erdmut Wizisla, 1:363–98. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000.

Huelsenbeck, Richard. "Manifesto." In *Dada Almanac*, edited by Richard Huelsenbeck and Malcolm Green, 44–49. London: Atlas Press, 1993.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. New York: Methuen, 1985.

Janzen, Thomas. "Photographing the 'Essence of Things.'" In *Albert Renger-Patzsch*, edited by Ann Wilde, Jürgen Wilde, and Thomas Weski, 7–24. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997.

Jay, Martin. *Cultural Semantics: Keywords of Our Time*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998.

Jennings, Michael William. "Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic." *October* 93 (Summer, 2000): 23–56.

Jennings, Michael William. *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Jennings, Michael William. "Walter Benjamin and the European Avant-Garde." In *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, edited by David S. Ferris, 18–34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Johnson, Melissa. *"On the Strength of My Imagination": Visions of Weimar Culture in the Scrapbook of Hannah Höch*. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2001.

Kablitz, Andreas. "Die Unvermeidlichkeit der Natur: Das aristotelische Konzept der Mimesis im Wandel der Zeiten." In *Die Mimesis und ihre Künste*, edited by Gertrud Koch, Martin Vöhler, and Christiane Voss, 189–211. Munich: Fink, 2010.

Kaes, Anton. "Introduction." In *Kino-Debatte: Texte zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Film 1909–1929*, 1–35. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1978.

Kaes, Anton. *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art.* Translated by M. T. H. Sadler. Toronto: Dover, 1977.

Kandinsky, Wassily. *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*. Bern: Benteli Verlag, 1973.

Koepnick, Lutz. *Framing Attention: Windows on Modern German Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *The Mass Ornament*. Translated by Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *Das Ornament der Masse: Essays*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *Werke.* Edited by Inka Mülder-Bach and Ingrid Belke. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004.

Krauss, Rosalind. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985.

Kriebel, Sabine, *Revolutionary Beauty: The Radical Photomontages of John Heartfield.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Kuspit, Donald. "Albert Renger-Patzsch: A Critical-Biographical Profile." *Aperture: Albert Renger-Patzsch* 131 (Spring 1993): 4–7, 66–75.

Lämmert, Eberhard, et al., eds. *Romantheorie: Dokumentation ihrer Geschichte in Deutschland seit 1880*. Königstein im Taunus: Athenäum, 1984.

Lavin, Maud. *Cut with a Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Lavin, Maud. "Photomontage, Mass Culture, and Modernity: Utopianism in the Circle of New Advertising Designers." In *Montage and Modern Life, 1919–1942*, edited by Matthew Teitelbaum, 40–41. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.

Lethen, Helmut. *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*. Translated by Don Reneau. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Lethen, Helmut. *Neue Sachlichkeit: 1924–1932. Studien zur Literatur des "weissen Sozialismus"*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1970.

Lethen, Helmut. *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte: Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994.

Lindner, Burckhardt. "Natur-Geschichte: Geschichtsphilosophie und Welterfahrung in Benjamins Schriften." *Text + Kritik: Walter Benjamin* 31–32 (October 1971): 41–58.

Lukács, Georg. "Es geht um den Realismus." In *Essays über Realismus*. Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971.

Lukács, Georg. "Realism in the Balance." Translated by Rodney Livingstone. In *Aesthetics and Politics: Theodor Adorno. Walter Benjamin. Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht. Georg Lukács*, edited by Ronald Taylor, 28–59. London: Verso, 1977.

Lukács, Georg. *Die Theorie des Romans: Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch über die Formen der großen Epik*. 3rd ed. Neuwield: Luchterhand, 1965.

Lukács, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel*. Translated by Anna Bostock. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971.

Luyken, Gunda. *Hannah Höch Album*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004.

Makela, Maria. "Notes to Plate 10." In *Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, edited by Janet Jenkins. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1996.

Margolin, Victor: *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

McBride, Patrizia C. "Montage and Violence in Weimar Culture: Kurt Schwitters' Reassembled Individuals." In *Violence, Culture, Aesthetics: Germany, 1789–1938*, edited by Carl Niekerk and Stefani Engelstein, 245–65. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011.

Mertins, Detlef, and Michael W. Jennings, eds. *G: An Avant-garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film, 1923–1926*. Translated by Steven Lindberg and Margareta Ingrid Christian. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010.

Meyer-Büser, Susanne, and Karin Orchard, eds. *In the Beginning Was Merz: From Kurt Schwitters to the Present Day*. Ostfildern Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2000.

Möbius, Hanno. *Montage und Collage: Literatur, bildende Künste, Film, Fotografie, Musik, Theater bis 1933.* Munich: Fink, 2000.

Moholy-Nagy, László. *Malerei Fotografie Film*. Mainz: F. Kupferberg, 1967.

Moholy-Nagy, László. *Moholy-Nagy: An Anthology*. Edited by Richard Kostelanetz. New York: DaCapo, 1970.

Moholy-Nagy, László. "Die neue Typographie." *Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar 1919–1923*. Weimar: Bauhausverlag, 1923; Munich: Kraus-Reprint, 1980.

Moholy-Nagy, László. *The New Vision: Fundamentals of Design, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. Translated by Daphne M. Hoffman. New York: W. W. Norton, 1938.

Moholy-Nagy, László. *Painting Photography Film*. Translated by Janet Seligman. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969.

Moholy-Nagy, László. "Die Photographie in der Reklame." *Photographische Korrespondenz* 9 (September 1927): 257–60.

Moholy-Nagy, László. "Photography in Advertising." In *Photography in the Modern Era*, edited by Christopher Phillips, 86–93. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.

Moholy-Nagy, László. *Von Material zu Architektur*. Munich: Albert Langen, 1929.

Molesworth, Helen. "From Dada to Neo-Dada and Back Again." *October* 105 (Summer 2003): 177–81.

Mosès, Stéphane. *The Angel of History: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Musil, Robert. *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. 2 vols. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978.

Musil, Robert. *The Man without Qualities*. 2 vols. Translated by Sophie Wilkins. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1995.

Nebel, Otto. "Vorwort." In *Kurt Schwitters* (*Sturm Bilderbücher* IV), 2–3. Berlin: Verlag der Sturm, 1921.

Nelson, Andrea. "László Moholy-Nagy and 'Painting Photography Film': A Guide to Narrative Montage." *History of Photography* 30 (October 2006): 258–69.

Opitz, Michael, and Erdmut Wizisla. *Benjamins Begriffe*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000.

Ottwalt, Ernst. "'Tatsachenroman' und Formexperiment: Eine Entgegnung an Georg Lukács." *Die Linkskurve* 4.10 (October 1932): 21–26.

Parr, Martin. "Photo Eye: The Modernist Photobook." In *The Photobook: A History*, edited by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, 1:82–115. London: Phaidon, 2005.

Pachnicke, Peter. "Morally Rigorous and Visually Voracious." In *John Heartfield*, edited by Peter Pachnicke and Klaus Honnef, 44–45. New York: Abrams, 1991.

Perloff, Marjorie. "Collage and Poetry." In *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, edited by Michael Kelly, 1:384–87. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Perloff, Marjorie. *21st-Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002.

Perloff, Marjorie. *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Phillips, Christopher. "From Word to Image." In *Künstlerischer Austausch/Artistic Exchange*, edited by Thomas W. Gaehtgens, 117–28. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993.

Phillips, Christopher. Introduction to *Montage and Modern Life: 1919–1942*, edited by Maud Lavin et al., 21–35. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1992.

Phillips, Christopher. *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.

Phillips, Christopher. "Resurrecting Vision: The New Photography in Europe between the Wars." In Maria Morris Hambourg and Christopher Phillips, *The New Vision: Photography between the World Wars*, 65–108. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.

Plessner, Helmuth. "Die Deutung des mimischen Ausdrucks: Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom Bewußtsein des anderen Ichs." 1925. In *Ausdruck und menschliche Natur*, *Gesammelte Schriften* 7:112–13. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982.

Plessner, Helmuth. *Grenzen Der Gemeinschaft: Eine Kritik des Sozialen Radikalismus.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002.

Plessner, Helmuth. *Lachen und Weinen: Eine Untersuchung nach den Grenzen Menschlichen Verhaltens*. Bern: A. Francke, 1950.

Plessner, Helmuth. *The Limits of Community: A Critique of Social Radicalism.* Translated by Andrew Wallace. New York: Humanity Books, 1999.

Plessner, Helmuth. *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch: Einleitung in die Philosophische Anthropologie.* 2nd ed. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1965.

Plumb, Steve. *Neue Sachlichkeit, 1918–33: Unity and Diversity of an Art Movement.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006.

Poggi, Christine. *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Poggi, Christine. "The 'Pasted-Paper Revolution' Revisited." In *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, edited by Michael Kelly, 1:384–87. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Future of the Image*. Translated by Gregory Elliott. New York: Verso, 2007.

Rasch, Heinz, and Bodo Rasch, eds. *Gefesselter Blick: 25 kurze Monografien und Beiträge über neue Werbegestaltung*. Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller, 1996.

Renger-Patzsch, Albert. *Die Freude am Gegenstand: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Photographie*. Edited by Bernd Stiegler, Ann Wilde, and Jürgen Wilde. Munich: Fink, 2009.

Renger-Patzsch, Albert. *Photographer of Objectivity*. Edited by Ann Wilde, Jürgen Wilde, and Thomas Weski. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Rohdie, Sam. *Montage*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.

Rose, Mark. *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Roh, Franz. *Nach-Expressionismus—Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei*. Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925.

Roh, Franz, and Jan Tschichold, eds. *Foto-Auge: 76 Fotos der Zeit*. Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag F. Wedekind, 1929.

Roh, Franz, and Jan Tschichold, eds. *Photo-eye: 76 Photos of the Period*. New York: Arno, 1973.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. "Narrative." In *Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, edited by David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, 344–48. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Santner, Eric L. *On Creaturely Life: Rilke Benjamin Sebald.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Santner, Eric L. *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Scheffer, Bernd. *Anfänge experimenteller Literatur: Das literarische Werk von Kurt Schwitters*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1978.

Schirokauer, Arno. "Bedeutungswandel des Romans." *Mass und Wert* 3 (1939–40): 575–90. Reprinted in *Zur Poetik des Romans*, edited by V. Klotz, 15–31. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965.

Schlemmer, Oskar, László Moholy-Nagy, and Farkas Molnar, eds. *Die Bühne im Bauhaus*. 1925. Facsimile reprint edited by Hans Wingler. Berlin: Kupferberg, 1965.

Schlüpmann, Heide. *The Uncanny Gaze: The Drama of Early German Cinema*. Translated by Inga Pollmann. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

Schlüpmann, Heide. *Unheimlichkeit Des Blicks: Das Drama des Frühen Deutschen Kinos.* Basel: Stroemfeld / Roter Stern, 1990.

Schmalenbach, Werner. *Kurt Schwitters*. Cologne: DuMont, 1967.

Schöttker, Detlev. "Der Erzähler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows." In *Benjamin Handbuch: Leben, Werk, Wirkung*, edited by Burckhardt Lindner, 557–66. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2006.

Scholz, Oliver R. *Bild, Darstellung, Zeichen: Philosophische Theorien bildhafter Darstellung*. Freiburg: Alber, 1991; 3rd ed., Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2009.

Schöttker, Detlev. *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus: Form und Rezeption der Schriften Walter Benjamins*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999.
Schwartz, Frederick J. *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
Schweiker, William. *Mimetic Reflections: A Study in Hermeneutics, Theology, and Ethics*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1990.
Schwitters, Kurt. *Das literarische Werk*. 5 vols. Edited by Friedhelm Lach. Cologne: DuMont, 1973–81.
Schwitters, Kurt. *Pppppp kurt schwitters poems performance pieces proses plays poetics*. Edited and translated by Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris. Cambridge: exact change, 2002.
Scott, Clive. *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language*. London: Reaktion Books, 1999.
Shaffer, E. S. "Kurt Schwitters, Merzkünstler Art and Word-Art." *Word & Image* 6.1 (January–March 1990): 100–118.
Sicks, Kai Marcel. "'Der Querschnitt' oder die Kunst des Sporttreibens." In *Leibhaftige Moderne: Körper in Kunst und Massenmedien 1918 bis 1933*, edited by Karl Marcel Sicks and Michael Cowan, 33–47. Bielefeld: transcript, 2005.
Sieburth, Richard. "Benjamin the Scrivener." *Assemblage* 6 (1988): 6–23.
Simmons, Sherwin. "Advertising Seizes Control of Life: Berlin Dada and the Power of Advertising." *Oxford Art Journal* 22.1 (1999): 121–46.
Stafford, Barbara Maria. *Echo Objects: The Cognitive Work of Images.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
Stafford, Barbara Maria. *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.
Staten, Henry. *Wittgenstein and Derrida*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
Steel, D. A. "Kurt Schwitters, Poetry, Collage, Typography." *Words & Image* 6.2 (April–June 1990): 198–209.
Stein, Sally. "'Good Fences Make Good Neighbors': American Resistance to Photomontage between the Wars." In *Montage and Modern Life, 1919–1942*, edited by Matthew Teitelbaum, 128–89. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.
Steiner, Uwe. *Walter Benjamin: An Introduction to His Work and Thought*. Translated by Michael Winkler. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
Stiegler, Berndt. "Jan Tschichold und die epistemologischen Grundlangen des Typofotos." *Fotogeschichte: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie* 28.108 (2008): 38–46.
Stiegler, Berndt. *Montagen des Realen: Photographie als Reflexionsmedium und Kulturtechnik*. Paderborn: Fink, 2009.
Stiegler, Berndt. *Theoriegeschichte der Photographie*. Munich: Fink, 2006.
Taussig, Michael. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
Taylor, Brandon. *Collage: The Making of Modern Art.* London: Thames & Hudson, 2004.
Teitelbaum, Matthew, ed. *Montage and Modern Life, 1919–1942*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.
Tschichold, Jan. *Die neue Typographie: ein Handbuch für zeitgemäß Schaffende*. Berlin: Bildungsverband der deutschen Buchdrucker, 1928.

Tschichold, Jan. *The New Typography: A Handbook for Modern Designers.* Translated by Ruari McLean. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Uecker, Matthias. "The Face of the Weimar Republic: Photography, Physiognomics, and Propaganda in Weimar Germany." *Monatshefte* 99.4 (2007): 469–84.

Ulmer, Gregory Leland. "The Object of Post-criticism." In *Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster, 83–110. Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983.

van Doesburg, Theo. *Principles of Neo-plastic Art*. Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1968.

Wagner, Gerhard. *Walter Benjamin: Die Medien der Moderne*. Berlin: Vistas, 1992.

Wassermann, Jakob. "Kolportage und Entfabelung." *Wissen und Leben, Neue Schweizer Rundschau* 19 (1926): 362–64. Reprinted in *Romantheorie: Dokumentation ihrer Geschichte in Deutschland seit 1880*, edited by Eberhard Lämmert et al., 140–43. Königstein im Taunus: Athenäum, 1984.

Weber, Samuel. *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Webster, Gwendolen. *Kurt Merz Schwitters: A Biographical Study*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997.

Webster, Michael. *Reading Visual Poetry after Futurism: Marinetti, Apollinaire, Schwitters, Cummings*. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.

Wehde, Susanne. *Typographische Kultur. Eine zeichentheoretische und kulturgeschichtliche Studie zur Typographie und ihrer Entwicklung*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000.

Weise, Bernd. "Fotojournalismus: Erster Weltkrieg—Weimarer Republik." In *Deutsche Fotografie: Macht eines Mediums 1870–1970*, edited by Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse, and Karin Thomas, 72–87. Cologne: Dumont, 1997.

Weiskopf, Franz Carl, and Kurt Hirschfeld. "Um den proletarischen Roman." In *Romantheorie: Dokumentation ihrer Geschichte in Deutschland seit 1880*, edited by Eberhard Lämmert et al., 185–88. Königstein im Taunus: Athenäum, 1984.

White, Michael. *Generation Dada: The Berlin Avant-Garde and the First World War*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.

Wiesing, Lambert. *Artifizielle Präsenz: Studien zur Philosophie des Bildes*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005.

Wilke, Tobias. *Medien der Unmittelbarkeit: Dingkonzepte und Wahrnehmungstechniken 1918–1939*. Munich: Fink, 2010.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan, 1953.

Wohlfahrt, Irving. "Re-fusing Theology: Some First Responses to Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project." *New German Critique* 39 (Fall 1986): 3–24.

Zervigón, Andrés Mario. *John Heartfield and the Agitated Image: Photography, Persuasion, and the Rise of Avant-Garde Photomontage.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Žmegač, Viktor. "Montage/Collage." In *Moderne Literatur in Grundbegriffen*, edited by Dieter Borchmeyer and Viktor Žmegač, 259–64. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994.

Index