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**Envisaging Alternatives: Representations of Women in
Kurt Schwitters' Collages**

Cole Collins

Doctor of Philosophy
The University of Edinburgh

2018



Abstract of Thesis

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In the existing literature on Kurt Schwitters, many excellent discoveries about process, materiality, and his life have been made. The careful reconstruction of these narratives by scholars such as Werner Schmalenbach, John Elderfield, Isabel Schulz, Gwendolen Webster, Marc Dachy, Roger Cardinal, Karin Orchard and Megan Luke, have given invaluable insights into the ways in which Schwitters' work has influenced and been integral to the development of the various avant-garde movements of the twentieth century. However, while these studies have laid the foundations to examine the biographical and aesthetic qualities of Schwitters' work, it has often denied readings that allow for an understanding of the political aspects which confront the viewer.

Schwitters was the creator of Merz, a hybrid art form which borrowed from Expressionism, Dada, and Constructivism, but was never singularly committed to any of these movements/groups. Schwitters had had too much training to be a serious Expressionist, the movement denied academic and formal training, too bourgeois and not political enough for Dadaism, and not abstract or 'clean' enough to be considered a Constructivist. Merz was his and only his to be practiced and led him to be included in exhibitions of Dadaist, Constructivist and Surrealist artworks. His hybrid aesthetic, coupled with his own illusive remarks about his own practice, have produced readings of Schwitters' work as only concerned with aesthetics; in some cases entirely ignoring the implications and connotations of the compositions themselves and the meanings behind the fragments used in his works. The idea often floated is that once the fragment has been detached from its original form, it no longer holds its original meaning. However, my thesis seeks to argue that this is entirely untrue and that contemporary audiences would have been unable to ignore these connections. As such, the collage takes on new meanings and we, the audience, must examine these connotations.

My thesis argues for a political reading of the works which feature women. Images of women, taken from fashion magazines and clothing catalogs, are cut up and re-arranged in Schwitters' abstract and hectic compositions. He then pairs these images with fragments of text, images of animals, or in odd compositions which causes a significant shift in perspective for the viewer. In most cases, these pairings are paradoxical or presented so

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that the two components juxtapose one another. My thesis argues that these works might be discussed in the context of the social and political goings on in the world in which Schwitters creates his artworks. This approach to his work has heretofore remained unexplored and as I show in my research by examining these images, new and revealing details about the artist's work are uncovered.

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The work of German artist Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) has often been examined through his use of found materials and in the broader context of collage as an art form, in most cases ignoring the political intent to be found in these fragments. My thesis examines this political intent and specifically focuses on his representation of women, proposing that the works can be understood as feminist. I discuss this through an analysis of his famous collage poem, 'An Anna Blume' (1919); his collages featuring women, works that were made in his hometown of Hannover; those collages made while in exile (1939-1948). In each case I explore the political and social environments in which he created his body of work, with a focus on the prevailing women's movements as context in those particular periods. In the final chapter, I consider his large installation-like collage, his *Merzbauten* (Merz-constructions), which he made in Hannover, Lysaker and Hjertøya (in Norway), the first of which was installed in his family home. I make a comparison with the German conceptual artist Anna Oppermann's large-scale installations, which she called *Ensembles*, and in this way discuss his *Merzbau* as a manipulation of the traditional domestic space, analysing this using feminist and queer theories.

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INTRODUCTION

Kurt Schwitters' oeuvre comprises three volumes of catalogue raisonné, and has been distinctly broken into three categories: his early works, from his days as a student in Dresden to the beginning of his Merz works (1905-1922)¹; his most active years, (1923-1936),² in which his Merz practice was honed and shaped; and his works created in exile (1937-1948)³ – this third period has been the topic of much of the most recent scholarship on the artist. Most notably, the exhibition catalogue for the 2013 Tate show, *Kurt Schwitters in Britain*, curated by Karin Orchard and Emma Chambers, and Megan Luke's in-depth study, *Kurt Schwitters: Space, Image, Exile* (2014) have provided detailed explorations of the artist's late work.

There have been innumerable essays, monographs, exhibition catalogues written exploring the life and work of Kurt Schwitters. His essays, art writing, manifestos poetry, prose, plays, etc., were collated and reproduced by Friedhelm Lach in a five-volume collection, serving as a form of literary catalogue raisonné.⁴ In his 1920 essay, 'Merz' Schwitters writes: 'The personal grasp of nature now seemed to me the most important thing. The picture became an intermediary between myself and the spectator.'⁵ In these short statements, a relationship between the artist and viewer is implied, however, one must interrogate Schwitters' definition of nature. It is not necessarily that of the natural world (flora and fauna) but rather of one's natural surroundings, and it is here that this thesis argues against the reliance on any singular reading of Schwitters' oeuvre, particularly that which relies solely on biography. Schwitters contradicts himself in this regard, writing only a few lines after the above correlation between himself and spectator: 'The medium is as unimportant as I myself. Essential is only the forming. Because the medium is unimportant, I take any material

¹ Karin Orchard and Isabel Schulz, eds. *Kurt Schwitters: Catalogue Raisonné*, Vol. 1: 1905-1922 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2000).

² Karin Orchard and Isabel Schulz, eds. *Kurt Schwitters: Catalogue Raisonné*, Vol. 2: 1923-1936 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2003).

³ Karin Orchard and Isabel Schulz, eds. *Kurt Schwitters: Catalogue Raisonné*, Vol. 3: 1937-1948 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006).

⁴ Kurt Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, ed. Friedhelm Lach, 5 Vols. (Cologne: DuMont, 1973-1981).

⁵ Kurt Schwitters, 'Merz' (1920), in Robert Motherwell, ed. *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1951), pp. 57-65; p. 59.

whatsoever if the picture demands it.’ Again, such statements, which reveal a disregard for the thing itself, and instead call attention to the much more abstract, conceptual, even, reduction of the work to “forming” [Formung] may have contributed to scholarly focus on the biography and locality of Schwitters’ work. However, as this thesis will contend, Schwitters’ use of the fragment never wholly conceals its original source.

Some explore the late work made in Britain, and, most recently, scholars have dedicated their attention to his short but industrious period of exile in Norway.⁶ Monographs, essays and exhibition catalogues have also dealt with his poetry, sculpture, performances, his only libretto, typography, children’s stories, and his biography. Schwitters is particularly difficult to define due to his use of multiple genres and practices, and his participation in various movements/groups. His investment in visual art, poetry, poetics, art theory, sculpture, architecture, typography, printing practices, and lack of subscription to any singular modernist movement except one of his own creation, *Merz*, places the art historian in a difficult position in terms of any attempt to classify or characterise. Schwitters gives his aesthetic style its definition in writing:

When I adjust materials of different kinds to another, I have taken a step in advance of mere oil painting, for in addition to playing off color against color, line against line, form against form, etc., I play off material against material, for example, wood against sackcloth. I call the *weltanschauung* [sic] from which this mode of artistic creation arose “Merz”.⁷

Schwitters knowingly creates dissonances and discord within his work: he relies on the interplay and contrasting compositions between materials, colour, forms, and lines. He also advocates for an egalitarian practice of the arts; any man can be an artist (however, there are caveats). Again, in his 1920 manifesto, he writes:

⁶ Megan Luke’s *Kurt Schwitters: Space, Image, Exile* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014) and Karin Hellandsjø’s *Ultima Thule: Kurt Schwitters and Norway* (Oslo: Orfeus, 2016) are the most recent and key texts which examine Schwitters’ time in Britain (Luke) and Norway (Luke and Hellandsjø).

⁷ Schwitters, ‘*Merz*’, in Motherwell, p.59. The translator leaves ‘*weltanschauung*’ untranslated – and has “Anglicised” it by changing the traditional noun form in German signified by an upper case first letter, to a lower case first letter. It may also have been left untranslated on account of its crossing into English, much like ‘*Zeitgeist*’, ‘*ersatz*’, etc.

The word ‘Merz’ had no meaning when I formed it. Now it has the meaning which I gave it. The meaning of the concept of “Merz” changes with the change in the insight of those who continue to work with it.

Merz Stands for freedom from all fetters, for the sake of artistic creation. Freedom is not lack of restraint, but the product of strict artistic discipline. Merz also means tolerance towards any artistically motivated limitation. Every artist must be allowed to mold a picture out of nothing but blotting paper for example, provided he is capable of molding a picture.⁸

Schwitters’ vision for his aesthetic espouses some of the same tenets proposed by the Dadaist Tristan Tzara only a few short years before the publication of Schwitters’ *Merz* manifesto. In 1918 he wrote:

Some learned journalists regard it [Dada] as an art for babies, other holy jesucallingthechildren of our day, as a relapse into noisy, noisy and monotonous primitivism. ... I speak only of myself since I do not wish to convince, I have not right to drag others into my river, I oblige no one to follow me and everybody practice his art in his own way...⁹

The echoes of Dadaism in *Merz* are often the subject of debate. Schwitters was influenced by Dadaist practices, even collaborating with some of its many protagonists: Hans Arp and Hannah Höch to name just two. He performed in their Dada soirées and was instrumental in the Dada Tour in Holland of 1923 with the Constructivist artist Theo van Doesburg. Despite this quite active role in (predominantly) Berlin Dada, Schwitters himself did not self-prescribe as a Dada, and, as legend has it, he was not permitted to join the Berlin Dadaists.

Huelsenbeck found Schwitters’ writing too Romantic and the artist himself to be bourgeois and conservative—he was not political enough, and this did not align with Huelsenbeck’s Dada vision.¹⁰ Despite this exclusion, Schwitters utilised the publicity afforded by the Dada name. The front cover for his first book of poetry *Anna Blume Dichtungen* (1919) is emblazoned with the word “dada” in large, red writing set at an angle across the page, almost bisecting the front cover (Fig. 1). He also wrote in his *Merz* essay that he sympathised with Tristan Tzara’s vision of Dada, was against the

⁸ Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 59.

⁹ Tristan Tzara, ‘Dada Manifesto 1918’, in Motherwell, p. 77.

¹⁰ Raoul Hausmann, *Courrier Dada* (Paris: Losfeld, 1958), pp. 109-10.

Dada espoused by Huelsenbeck, but still did not consider himself part of the larger movement (irrespective of his favouring of one faction over the other).¹¹ These connections made by the artist himself may explain why some scholars have tended to conflate *Merz* with Dada.¹² Werner Schmalenbach's and John Elderfield's monographs (both of which accompanied exhibitions), both titled *Kurt Schwitters*, note the nuances, and so begin the unpicking of this problematic conflation.¹³

Both Schmalenbach's and Elderfield's texts, and their respective accompanying exhibitions, significantly enhanced the scholarship surrounding Schwitters' vast oeuvre and somewhat enigmatic practice, however, they give too much attention to biographical details, and to form over substance. Dorothea Dietrich's doctoral thesis, completed in 1986, attempts to retrace the parts of the whole seeking connections in various works, and uses the allusive figure of Schwitters' most famous poem, 'An Anna Blume' (1919) to do so.¹⁴ In 1990, the shift from a focus on biographical and formal analysis was continued by Annegreth Nill. Her doctoral thesis, *Decoding Merz: An interpretive study of Kurt Schwitters' early work, 1918-1922*, examines the intrinsic and extrinsic qualities of Schwitters' collages.¹⁵ Nill defines the 'intrinsic' as those qualities which occur inside the work and do not pertain to outside influence or reference. That is an analysis focusing on the connections between each fragment within the frame, and how these relate formally to one another. She understands 'extrinsic' as the relationship of each fragment to a context without the frame: that is, their original context or connotations which explore the potential for politically or

¹¹ Schwitters, 'Merz', in Motherwell, p. 60. He writes: 'Here I must mention Dada, which like me cultivates nonsense. ... I wish to state that Merz maintains a close friendship with kernel Dadaism [Tzara's notion of Dadaism]...'

¹² See volumes such as Motherwell's *Dada Painters and Poets* (1965); Lucy Lippard, ed. *Dadas on Art: Tzara, Arp, Duchamp and Others* (Mineola, NY: Dover Books, 1971); and Dawn Ades, ed. *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology* (London: Tate Publishing, 2006) which quote and place Schwitters within the context of Dada.

¹³ Werner Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters* (Cologne: DuMont-Schauberg, 1967); John Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters* (London and New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1985).

¹⁴ Dorothea Dietrich, *The Fragment Reformed: The Early Collages of Kurt Schwitters* (unpublished dissertation, Yale University, 1986).

¹⁵ Annegreth Nill, *Decoding Merz: An interpretive study of Kurt Schwitters' early work, 1918-1922* (unpublished PhD dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1990).

socially engaged readings of the work.¹⁶ She limits her focus to the early collages, as they coincide with the politically, socially, and culturally turbulent years of the Weimar Era (1919-1933).

Schwitters' works are born of revolution, and while Nill stops before the crippling period of hyperinflation (1923), she begins a new discourse of looking for clues as to how Schwitters might be commenting on the world around him. Nill's arguments are not entirely convincing: while her research begins to unpick the problematic insistence on only reading Schwitters' works using their intrinsic values, it often complicates these readings by making tenuous connections through suppositions of meanings of fragmented words. The most prominent example of this, which occurs at various points throughout her thesis, is her reading of all appearances of the fragment 'ade' as the last syllable of "Schokolade" [chocolate], an assumption substantiated through Schwitters' apparent love for chocolate. She provides some external context for this through historical narratives of chocolate's social worth, particularly during times of poverty and food rationing; but she ultimately links it to biographical details. Moreover, some of her analysis takes long detours through complex explanations of how one pictorial element might connect to a German idiom, and relies often on substantiation through assumption.

Later, in 1993, Dietrich published her monograph on Schwitters, examining ideas of tradition and innovation in Schwitters' collages, a paradox central to Schwitters scholarship.¹⁷ Dietrich's acknowledges the innovative qualities in Schwitters' works, but at points focuses too heavily on what she deems traditional, which could be perceived as conservative. Dietrich writes in her introduction, 'I focus on the work of the Hannover artist Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) in order to demonstrate the survival of tradition within the avantgarde innovation and the multi-faceted character of innovation itself.'¹⁸ She continues this examination of traditionalism within

¹⁶ Nill, p. 3.

¹⁷ Dorothea Dietrich, *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters: Tradition and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Dietrich, *Tradition and Innovation*, p. 3.

innovation, aligning Schwitters with the Expressionists as examples of traditional innovators, claiming that his most experimental work, the Hannover *Merzbau* (Fig. 15a and 15b), is the ‘coexistence of the contradictory projects of the avant-garde and those of more traditional artists.’¹⁹

In Schwitters, Dietrich does not find innovation and conservatism as recurring tropes or practices within his work; rather she identifies ‘innovative tendencies’ and ‘conservative tendencies’ in his work, signifying the impermanency of his status as either a conservative artist or an innovative one. While this paradox may suit the image of Schwitters presented by other scholars and contemporaries (the specifics of which I will discuss later in this thesis), these notions of traditionalism are superficial, sartorial even, and improperly characterise his oeuvre and hinder more open readings of Schwitters’ works as radical statements with political intent. One example of Dietrich’s understanding of the artist as a traditional innovator is in her chapter on ‘An Anna Blume’. In this she renders the character of Anna helpless and the figure of repressed sexual desire, a totemic symbol of male erotic fantasy.²⁰ This positioning of male objectification of the female form in his poem is not uncommon in literature on the female body and is closely connected to negative designation of the ‘male gaze’. Dietrich’s ideas about the artist significantly undermine the potential for Schwitters’ character Anna Blume, who permeates his oeuvre and is a stark figure in his early works, to be understood as a radical and revolutionary figure. The aforementioned texts begin to unsettle and expand the field of study by opening discussions surrounding the potential for extrinsic meaning in Schwitters’ collages and poetry. However, the biographical approach in exploring Schwitters and his work persists in these analyses.

While this thesis calls into question the overreliance on biographical details, it does not dismiss such details. The fragments included in Schwitters’ collages were largely

¹⁹ Dietrich, *Tradition and Innovation*, p. 3.

²⁰ I will discuss Dietrich’s appraisal of Anna Blume in Chapter 2.

collected through personal experience from his walks around the city, or collected on his vacations and visits to friends' and colleagues' homes; or from the floor of his publishing house company. Moreover, that Schwitters (unconventionally) lived and worked in the provincial, yet industrial, city of Hannover until his exile in his fifties, means that often the works are closely related to his *Heimat*. Schwitters' life is a fascinating story, with various hardships and success throughout, and his far-reaching network of artists, poets, writers, academics, gallerists and collectors is unrivalled. It is easy, when an account of these feats and triumphs is taken, to be hagiographic; yet, one such study avoids this and presents a biography which critically examines the life of the artist, simultaneously telling his story. Gwendolen Webster's biography *Kurt Merz Schwitters: A Biographical Study* is a comprehensive account of the artist's life.²¹ It is meticulously researched and founded on a solid mix of interviews and historical/archival materials. Webster's biographical study, like the artist's own work, crosses the boundary of mere biography and instead offers insight and critical responses to the life of the artist. She is critical not only of his critics, but of the artist too: documenting and analysing his relationships with his wife, his son, other artists, and the affairs he conducted.

For later studies of Schwitters' work, Webster's biography of the artist has been a foundational text. Her influential study may be the reason that this biographical focus on his art seems to have prevailed in too much of the existing scholarship. While I agree with some assertions that his life and the circumstances that he endured were critical in influencing his practice, this biographical approach seems to overlook the form, and often quite visual poetics evoked by his work. There is a tendency to sentimentalise the hardships faced by the artist and this somewhat clouds the judgement of the critic, but this tendency is also given some credence by the role Schwitters played in the creation of his own persona as a dedicated outsider.²²

²¹ Gwendolen Webster, *Kurt Merz Schwitters* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997). Hereafter *KMS*.

²² In many of the discussions pertaining to Schwitters' period in exile, the narrative is of one of abject poverty and solitude. While this is, to a certain extent, true, I will come to suggest the idea is part mythology in Chapter 4.

Despite this ‘self-made’ status, he was involved with many of the avant-garde groups of the early twentieth century. An active participant within the Expressionist movement (at least on the Berlin scene), he published in Herwarth Walden’s *Der Sturm* (the preeminent magazine of Expressionism), and exhibited in his gallery of the same name. He was also involved in Dada circles, in contact with Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch, and he reportedly asked to join the Berlin Dada circle.²³ In addition, he had connections to the Constructivists (he collaborated with El Lissitzky), and was involved with *De Stijl* (Theo van Doesburg was his close friend and collaborator) at points even proclaiming he belonged to one or many of these movements, all the while promoting his new one-man movement, *Merz*.²⁴ It is important to note these unfixed affiliations because cumulatively it acts as evidence for what I believe has been the impetus not to discuss Schwitters as a political artist. This thesis will explore Schwitters not only in terms of the political climate within which he created his work, but will also examine the collages in which women are featured, using both feminist and queer critical frameworks.

As outlined above, there has been a tendency within Schwitters scholarship to take account of the intrinsic value of the work over the extrinsic. This has led to the omission of discussions which explore the political potentiality in Schwitters’ collages. I suggest that this may be for two reasons: firstly, his subject matter scrutinises and critiques multiple facets of society, labour movements, government, and culture. Unlike the protagonists of Berlin Dada, in its various forms, whose core message was anti-bourgeois, anti-war and often focused on negative portrayals of society and culture, one might take Höch’s *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany* as emblematic of this critique, which focuses on negative imagery, even in its title. Schwitters’ art is subtler. The subtlety of his politics is undermined by the seemingly aggressive manipulation of the dadaistic collage form. This aggressivity of the subject matter of the various

²³ See: Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, pp. 9-10.

²⁴ See: Kurt Schwitters, ‘*Merz*’ (1920), in Motherwell, pp. 57-65.

branches of Dada is situated within the discourse of masculinity, and may even be categorised as ‘machismo’.²⁵ However, Schwitters’ position as a simultaneous outsider and participant within the Dada movements, his status as heterosexual, white, bourgeois, Hanoverian male and his complicated relationship with women, as well as the changing landscape of women’s rights (in particular women’s rights to vote, to work, contraceptives, and sexuality, all of which Schwitters would have been made aware of through the media’s coverage of these issues),²⁶ leads to a digression from the ‘tradition’ of Dada.²⁷

Accordingly, this thesis undertakes a reading of Schwitters’ aesthetic—which seems less intent on propagandising, but rather subtly exploring the social, political and economic conditions faced by Germany wrought by revolution and war—positioning him as an artist with strong politics, critically analysing these subtleties and nuances, and offering readings which explore the impact these works had in their own time and in the present. I will suggest throughout this thesis that the inability or difficulty to pigeonhole and find clear allegiances to one movement or another is helpful in reading his work as it allows the viewer to dispel any prejudices. That is to say, his tendency toward polyvocality, executed through word-play, and the recycling of images and other fragments from the detritus of the mass cultural spectrum, allow for a reading completely separate from the concurrent critical perspectives on his compatriots.

²⁵ David Hopkins discusses Dada and machismo, and the movement’s tendency to be dominated by male figures (although alludes to homosociality within the movement, at points, I believe conflating it with queerness and homosexuality) in his book *Dada’s Boys: Masculinity after Duchamp* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press: 2008)

²⁶ Many little magazines and newspapers would have published on the subject of emancipation. Christian Weikop notes that one magazine *Die freie Strasse* [The Open Road] openly published about these issues. Christian Weikop, ‘Transitions: From Expressionism to Dada,’ *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, Vol. III: Europe 1880-1940, eds. Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker, and Christian Weikop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 798-815; p. 806.

²⁷ I am aware of the controversial nature of stating that Dada might have traditions. However, in the convention of art history, this tradition refers to the use of collage. While often highlighted as a Cubist innovation, beginning in 1912 with Picasso, the collage as a form was most radically utilised by the Dadaists. For further explorations of the collage see: Herta Wescher, *Collage*, trans. Robert E. Wolf (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1968); and Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

Secondly, there may be a resistance to consider Schwitters within any framework of political discourse because of a statement made in his *Merz* manifesto of 1920:

Huelsendadaism is oriented towards politics and against art and culture. I am tolerant and allow every man his own opinions, but I am compelled to state that such an outlook is alien to Merz. As a matter, of principle, Merz aims only at art, because no man can serve two masters.²⁸

In this statement, Schwitters orients *Merz* away from the overtly political leanings of Dadaism as espoused by Richard Huelsenbeck ('Huelsendadaism') which I believe has been understood as a conservative viewpoint, leading to a reserved position within the scholarship exploring these themes in Schwitters' work. Yet, we must consider the phrase 'Merz aims only at art'. This phrase is somewhat unstable in terms of meaning. He does not say he aims to 'create' art; he does not write 'to take aim at', thus avoiding invoking language of warfare or overt political leanings. However, Schwitters' collages, by their very nature, are entrenched in political language: his practice of composing with rubbish, scraps of paper, cut-outs from newspapers and magazines, and general waste, binds each fragment to its source material, and to the places they were found. Given the parameters of the composition, the work cannot exist without any context, and thus cannot aim purely at art. By looking at and considering the fragments as individual pieces, and then considering the deliberate composition on the canvas, the viewer is already complicit in the act of reading—linguistic and visual stimulation which uncovers the truth of the world outside the frame—not passively 'looking'.

I have selected ten collages to discuss in-depth to illustrate Schwitters' process of composing and how it inflects with the changing positions of women in political, social and cultural spheres throughout his oeuvre. I have chosen six from his time in Germany, pre-exile, two from his time in Norway and a further two from his late period in England. This is not a complete survey of all of the works which contain references to women or present women in an interesting way. Instead, these works

²⁸ Motherwell, p.60.

present women in the most interesting compositions; juxtaposing them with fragments from contemporary advertisements relating to fashion, household items, propaganda, film, travel, as well as controversial and divisive topics of the moment. In addition to these ten collages, I will examine his poem ‘An Anna Blume’ as it has garnered critical attention as a work which portrays women negatively. I discuss its potential as a feminist poem with reference to its translation into English, a rendering of the poem which has eluded critical attention as an important factor in the reception of the work outside of Germany, and, importantly, highlighting that it was translated by a woman, another overlooked detail. I have also chosen to discuss his *Merzbauten*, his ‘Merz-constructions’ built in Hannover and Norway, in the context of queer and feminist understandings of domestic space. An examination of Schwitters’ use of the domestic space as a studio, gallery, and his conversion of the home into an art work, has heretofore been unexplored. It is also in thinking about his commitment to portraying the shifting positions of women in collage and how this practice extends to his experimentations with space.

I will discuss politics through quite distinct points in Schwitters’ work. The first chapter will focus on the use of collage as a political tool, and how we might consider it most effective for the expression of a feminist aesthetic. The term ‘feminist’, here, however, is complicated. It relies on the reader’s understanding of the genealogy of feminist thought and theory in a European context, and requires them to simultaneously dispel those understandings. That is to say that by invoking anachronistic theoretical frameworks through feminist (as well as queer) scholarship, one is compelled to dissociate any definitions of the first, second, third, and any other, wave as understood till now. The sustained position of women as subservient and oppressed members of society is critical in understanding the importance of the fragmented body. Going beyond mere historical classification of the frameworks set out by feminist theorists throughout the twentieth-century is essential to understanding Schwitters’ subjects. By including a male artist and proposing his representations of women are positive we may provide evidence for the success of the women’s movement outside of their intended target audience. As such, this thesis takes a local

example of feminist activism and organisation in Hannover to suggest that their messages and struggle did not go unnoticed, and that through his art, Schwitters represents and supports the fight for emancipation.

In the time and space in which Schwitters made his work, the beginning of the Weimar era through to the end of the Second World War, meant that he was reacting to (and with) a multitude of attitudinal changes. The women's movement in the UK, US and Europe throughout the first half of the twentieth century is well documented, but it takes a slightly different form in Germany, and has been acknowledged by art historians including Shulamith Behr,²⁹ Marsha Meskimmon, and Shearer West; as well as historians such as Richard J. Evans and Nancy R. Reagin, as almost a movement.³⁰ The important publication *Visions of the Neue Frau: Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, edited by West and Meskimmon, focuses on the New Woman, with a particular interest in *Neue Sachlichkeit* [New Objectivity], and has defined the role of women artists within the women's movement and their invaluable contributions to the cause more generally in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century.³¹ West's and Meskimmon's study deals exclusively with women in the arts (dancers, collectors, and photographers are also taken account), exploring both self-representation, and in one chapter, representations of women in famous Weimar films.³² Their edited volume highlights and begins to remedy the scholarly overlooking of female artists who have received much less attention than male artists.

²⁹ Shulamith Behr, 'Künstlergruppe Brücke and the Public Sphere: Bridging the Divide,' in *New Perspectives on Brücke Expressionism: Bridging History*, ed. Christian Weikop (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 99-124.

³⁰ Scholarship on the Women's Movement in Germany: Richard J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1894-1933* (London: Sage Publishing, 1976); Nancy A. Reagin, *A German Women's Movement: Class and Gender in Hanover, 1880-1933* (Chapel Hill, NC, and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Reagin's *Sweeping the German Nation: Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

³¹ *Visions of the Neue Frau: Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, eds. Marsha Meskimmon and Shearer West, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995).

³² Stephen Lamb, 'Women's nature?: Images of women in 'The Blue Angel', 'Pandora's Box', 'Kuhle Wampe' and 'Girls in Uniform', in *Visions of the Neue Frau*, pp. 124-142.

While this thesis focuses on a male artist, it deploys feminist theory to analyse feminine imagery in a selection of Schwitters' works. It takes the position that Schwitters uses these images of women in a way that is antithetical to that of his fellow male artists. Such an engagement with feminist theory might be criticised as problematic or counterproductive, however, this criticism leads to narrowed analyses of Schwitters' radical aesthetic. Therefore, using queer theory in tandem with feminist theories will expose the issues at play. This is not to say that Schwitters himself identified as 'queer' or to effeminise the artist in any way. It is not my intention to insert Schwitters into a gay or queer history, nor is it to claim that his work is queer. Instead it is to expose the need to consider the importance of images outside of a heteronormative visual economy, and how these can be made, with relative comfort, from within the patriarchal matrix.³³ This thesis takes its lead from Eve Sedgwick Kosofsky, who noted that

one of the things that 'queer' can refer to [is] the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically.³⁴

Queer as a term and as a concept defies singularity (the monolithic signifier in Sedgwick's discourse); it extends beyond the in-between and instead offers a reading which allows for (self-)definitions which traverse, blur, or dissolve boundaries altogether. Queerness is often cited in conjunction with gay and lesbian studies, a point Sedgwick notes in the same essay from which the above quotation is taken. While I am not so much interested in Schwitters' sexuality or his gender (both are binary and fixed in conventional senses: he is a white, middle-class, Protestant male; married with one child), Sedgwick's positing that the application of 'queer' allows for an interrogation of liminal spaces, or can destabilise traditional or fixed definitions of self, identity, or more simply, meaning, is particularly useful in consideration of the collage, especially the use of the female form in Schwitters' collages. She continues, offering a definition of 'queer' which is positioned outside of paradigms concerned with same-sex relations, and examines what she terms 'the fractal intricacies of

³³ Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, p.9.

³⁴ Eve Sedgwick Kosofsky, 'Queer and Now,' in *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.8.

language.³⁵ Sedgewick proposes that ““Queer” seems to hinge much more radially and explicitly on a person’s undertaking particular, performative acts of experimental self-perception and filiation.”³⁶ This performative act can be seen in Schwitters’ adopting of both Merz and Anna Blume as alternative personae, more than pseudonyms, and the enacting of these personae as alter-egos can be read as a queer act. Therefore, I will discuss Schwitters’ collage practice, which I read as fractal visual intricacies (borrowing from Sedgewick), his adopting of alternative identities, and his redefinition of the domestic space through queer lenses and frameworks allowing for a broader understanding of the artist’s work.

In addition to this queer reading, I will consider Schwitters’ work in relation to feminist studies—historically and critically. In particular, I am concerned with feminist discussion that seeks to ascertain how women have become women: either through patriarchal definition, through cycles of abuse, via class struggles, and by ways of sociological, anthropological, and biological discussions of the female body as it pertains to its male counterpart.³⁷ Such philosophers as Julia Kristeva, Monique Wittig, and Simone De Beauvoir, have charted the domination and subjugation of female identity, offering counteractions to these positions through ideas of revolt via the body (Kristeva’s notion of abjection), by sexuality (Wittig’s exploration of a lesbian existence) and all three have challenged the language of patriarchal and phallogocentric discourses.³⁸ This is understood, for the most part, in binary definitions of sex (that which is defined between the biologically male and female), and instead queer theory interjects and displaces a binary notion of self and sex, offering multiplicitous and endless possibilities of identifying, replacing this idea of a binary.³⁹

³⁵ Sedgewick, *Tendencies*, p. 9.

³⁶ Sedgewick, *Tendencies*, p. 9.

³⁷ A prominent example of such an approach, inter- and multi-disciplinary to explore issues facing women, is Simone De Beauvoir’s *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949) [The Second Sex].

³⁸ For explorations of these subjects see: Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982); Monique Wittig’s *The Straight Mind* (1985), ‘One is not born a woman’ (1985), and her novel, *The Lesbian Body* (1973); also, Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949).

³⁹ It should be noted that Wittig challenges the notion that ‘biological sex’ is a condition of womanhood. Wittig is interested in the breakdown of boundaries, however, as I read it, not so interested in the crossing of them.

The collage as a form of thinking through ‘becoming’ woman is useful; but instead I would like to suggest, in the vein of Jack Halberstam, the notion of ‘unbecoming’ woman. Halberstam writes:

While Virginia Woolf’s famous line about women from *A Room of One’s Own*, ‘We think back through our mothers if we are women’, has been widely interpreted as the founding statement of a new aesthetic lineage that passes through the mother and not the father, the crucial point of the formulation is the conditional phrase (1929: 87). In fact ‘if we are women’ implies that if we do not think back through our mothers, then we are not women, and this broken line of thinking and unbeing one of the woman unexpectedly offers a way out of the reproduction of woman as other to man from one generation to the next.⁴⁰

The implication is thus, that one need not use the totemic woman to think through womanhood, femininity, feminism and even the plight of women. Schwitters’ interpretation of women through fragmented bodies and their amalgamations with cultural detritus complements Halberstam’s representation of a feminist creativity. Laura Mulvey’s now famous essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1975), proposes that images of women (particularly in film and specifically by male directors) are created to appeal to the male gaze (specifically a heterosexual, masculine perspective). She writes: ‘In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male gaze and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly.’⁴¹ I argue, on the other hand, that it is possible to represent women in a positive fashion as a male artist, and to suggest that this assemblage of the female image is potentially executed with feminist intent.

Moreover, in suggesting a “queer” aesthetic in Schwitters’ oeuvre, this thesis exposes unexplored themes present in the artist’s artworks, and opens new discourses with

⁴⁰ Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p.125; quoting Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), p.89. Halberstam is known by both Jack and Judith, I will use Jack. For more information, I refer the reader to Halberstam’s text: ‘On Pronouns’ published on his website: <http://www.jackhalberstam.com/on-pronouns/>. All subsequent references in text will refer to Halberstam using male pronouns.

⁴¹ Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,’ in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, eds. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 803-816; p. 808.

which to discuss Schwitters' work. Therefore, repositioning him within the radical contexts in which he created, exploring Schwitters' oeuvre as part of the political landscape of the time, rather than ignoring it as has been suggested by critics such as Elderfield. In making such a claim—one based on Schwitters' own suggestion about his work (and possibly an extension of Tzara's musings on Dada's aesthetic)—it ignores *a priori* the fragments featured in the collages he created. That is, favouring the intrinsic values of Schwitters' work over the extra-aesthetic ones.⁴² Also, Schwitters' use of the collage to create and recreate images of women who stand outside of normative definitions is directly in dialogue with the radical aesthetics that many scholars have argued for in Höch's work. Evidence for her queerness is to be found in details of her life, but also in her reworking of ideals of the feminine form: cutting and pasting together western and non-western images (as in her *Ethnographisches Museum* series, 1924-1930), and her exploration of the naked female form and her shifting of the widely interpreted male gaze, have made queer and feminist analyses of Höch's work easily and readily available.

The same can be said of other female artists of the time: take Ruth Hemus' monograph, *Dada's Women*, in which she dedicates a chapter each to five women of Dada. She explores the importance of these figures in the Dada circles of Zürich (Emmy Hennings and Sophie Taeuber-Arp), Paris (Suzanne Duchamp and Céline Arnaud) and Berlin (Hannah Höch). Hemus establishes their positions as integral to the successes and creation of Dada in its variant forms, and provides an alternative history of the Dada movements and its groupings.⁴³ The clearing of space allowing for discussion of women in the context of Dada is important, but as chapter three of this thesis will show, Schwitters encouraged and supported the likes of Hannah Höch and

⁴² John Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985). Elderfield discusses this idea throughout his detailed monograph. This idea is an expansion of Schwitters' claim in his essay "Die Merzmalerei" [Merzpainting], published in July 1919 issue of *Der Sturm*, in which he describes the technique and gives a definition of his artistic process. He writes: 'Merzmalerei makes use not only of paint and canvas, brush and palette, but of all materials perceptible to the eye and all of required implements. Moreover, it is unimportant whether or not the material used was already formed for some purpose or other. A perambulator when wire-netting, string and cotton wool are factors having equal rights with paint the artist creates through the choice, distribution and metamorphosis of the materials.' (Translated in Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, p. 50.)

⁴³ Ruth Hemus, *Dada's Women* (New Haven, MA and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

Sophie Taeuber(-Arp) not only as friends, but also as artists. In ‘queering’ Schwitters, I acknowledge gender and self-definition however, as to do otherwise would be anachronistic and to provide misinformation regarding the artist. It is thus I will discuss women, real and imagined, and their relationships to Schwitters’ life, art, and own thinking.

Schwitters thought and acted through a woman in his own work. His most famous creation, *Anna Blume*, is the subject of a drawing, multiple poems and appears in various forms throughout his work. Her presence in his *oeuvre* is spectre-like, but occasionally she gains autonomy and flesh and appears as the signatory to an art work. She is the protagonist of his poem, and is therefore entirely fictional, however, on occasion she is brought to life. Schwitters signs letters with her name; and he even creates a political party in her name, the *Kaiserliche Anna Blume Partei Deutschlands* [The Imperial Anna Blume Party for Germany, KAPD]. As a result, she has been referred to by Webster and Luke as his ‘alter-ego’.⁴⁴ I will discuss the issues of the term ‘alter-ego’ with particular reference to how this relates to other artists who used feminine identities with which to express their work. It seems the use of the totemic Anna has been understood in different ways. I will return to fully explore these interpretations in Chapter 2 but would first like to consider Anna as a symbol (and ultimately the beginning) of Schwitters’ sympathies toward feminism and indeed his support for women artists.⁴⁵

Anna Blume is eventually ‘killed off’, however, women remain a stalwart feature in Schwitters’ early and late works. In the early works, those before his exile, many of the ‘gendered’ materials used comprise the subject matter for his collages.⁴⁶ However,

⁴⁴ Webster, *Kurt Merz Schwitters*, pp. 58-60.; Luke, *Space, Image, Exile*, p.28.

⁴⁵ I would like to note here that I make two distinctions in my reference to the figure of Anna Blume: when referring to the poem, I write ‘An Anna Blume’, or to the collection of poems, I write: *Anna Blume/Anna Blume. Dichtungen*. When I use ‘Anna’ or ‘Anna Blume’ (represented in-text without quotation marks) I refer to the concept of Anna as a figure throughout his oeuvre. I also employ this distinction in order to discuss Anna’s existence outside of the text/off the canvas, and so to further explore the idea of Anna Blume as Schwitters’ alter-ego.

⁴⁶ Kurt Schwitters, ‘Call It Killing You Off’, *PPPPPP: Poems Performance Pieces Proses Plays Poetics*, eds. Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 2002), p.17.

in exile as money for supplies and materials was scarce, his output deviates from the usual collage format. Instead watercolours and sculptures crafted from natural and raw materials are made, many of them small enough to fit in the palm of one's hand. In the third chapter of this thesis I look at the early representations of women in order to reveal particular sympathies with the women's movement in Germany, and suggest that these women are complicit with the understanding of the *Neue Frau* as defined within the Weimar era. The later collages approach the subject of women with a different intent: they are not so sympathetic to the feminist movements in Norway and Britain, but instead seem to critique media depictions of women. Schwitters' women appear in the form of pasting and painting over classical depictions of women by Romantic and Renaissance painters; or as proto-Pop Art figures of highly-glossed media magazines which resemble the early works of Eduardo Paolozzi, Richard Hamilton, and David Hockney.⁴⁷

A comparison between styles and forms produced in the early works and the later works will evidence my proposal that Schwitters' aesthetic might be considered as feminist. While my thesis thus far alludes to a geographical interpretation of the women presented, there are caveats to this approach. It is difficult to assert that the early collage works are specifically German in their depictions of women; likewise the same is true of his later works made in exile. Yet it should be noted that the majority of his vast *oeuvre* was produced in Hannover, and it is here that his most treasured work (what he called his '*Lebenswerk*,' "life work" or "key work") his *Merzbau* was constructed.⁴⁸ This form is often discussed within the context of installation art, as it was specifically created within the confines of the artist's home at Waldhausenstrasse 5.⁴⁹ The *Merzbau* has attracted a great deal of attention due to

⁴⁷ This has been acknowledged by Susanne Meyer-Büser and Karin Orchard in their edited volume *In the Beginning was Merz—From Kurt Schwitters to the Present Day* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2000), as well as multiple other artists who they believe inhabit the spirit of *Merz*.

⁴⁸ Webster, *Kurt Merz Schwitters*, p.5.

⁴⁹ See: Gwendolen Webster, 'Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Milton Keynes, Open University, 2007); and Elizabeth Burns Gamard, *Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau: The Cathedral of Erotic Misery* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000) are the two most comprehensive studies of the Hannover *Merzbau* for discussions of how to contextualise and categorise it within a wider art historical discourse.

its history being somewhat elusive. It exists only in the form of photographs by Wilhelm Redemann taken in 1933, as it was destroyed in 1943; and much of what we know of its construction is a result of testimonies from its visitors.⁵⁰ His architectural and installatory experimentation continued during his exile, he created another two in Norway (only one is extant) and began a fourth in England. The *Merz Barn*, his little hut in Ambleside, which stands today in the Cylinders Estate, constantly undergoing repairs and renovations, is merely a shell, a historical relic of a building that once housed a piece of work by the *Merz* artist. The *Merz Barn Wall* which is now held in the Hatton Gallery, Newcastle, is in poor condition, but is on show to the public in a room with little light—partly for conservation purposes—and seems to stand almost as a mausoleum to the artist.⁵¹

What has been of more recent interest to Schwitters scholars is his cross-cultural exchanges, particularly those explored in his exile from Nazi Germany.⁵² In 1936, Schwitters set off with his son Ernst to Norway in retreat from the Nazi regime. He arrived in Hjertøya (near Molde), where he had vacationed many times with his family since 1930. At this juncture in his career, he seems to have made fewer collages, and focused on more abstract forms such as small sculptures made with objects acquired from his natural surroundings. The case has been argued by John Elderfield, Sarah Wilson and Megan Luke that this shift has been a result of his geographical location and access to natural resources rather than manufactured ones.⁵³ Examples of this

⁵⁰ Very few accounts of the Merzbau exist, and fewer of them give a full account of the work as a whole. It was ever-changing and continually developing and appears to have been unfinished (at least insofar as Schwitters viewed it) and, as Megan Luke has explored, such testimonies are somewhat tainted by the visitors' recollections, mis-rememberings or occlusion of details due to preference of one section or another.

⁵¹ During the writing of this thesis, the Hatton Gallery underwent a 3.8 million renovation and as part of this conservation reports were carried out on the Merz Barn Wall (these have not been released to the public as yet) and has been installed so that it can be better studied; new lights which can be dimmed or brightened for different purposes are now in place. It remains separate from the rest of the exhibition spaces and here issues remain in terms of space for study.

⁵² In particular, Megan Luke's *Space, Image, Exile*, and a PhD thesis by Joseph Hawkins 'The Merzbarn: the Architectural Imagination of Kurt Schwitters' (London, University of East London, 2014).

⁵³ Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*; Sarah Wilson, 'Kurt Schwitters in England', Tate Online, 2013; Luke, 2014.

shift in material will be explored in later chapters, particularly how we might read his use of natural materials over manufactured ones in relation to the object itself to explore a feminist ideology present in his work of this period. He also continued his Merzbau project in a small hut near his house, and another a little further out which recessed into the landscape. The small hut [*hytta* in Norwegian] is extant and its interior has been carefully reconstructed and is on display in The Kurt Schwitters Room at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter (Henie Onstad Art Centre), Høvikodden in Norway. This room has an extensive collection of the artist's abstract and naturalistic works on show in permanent exhibition, and gives a snapshot of his oeuvre. Karin Hellandsjø's publication *Ultima Thule: Kurt Schwitters in Norway* (which accompanied and details the reconstruction of the *Merzhytta* (Fig. 16.2) explores extensively Schwitters' creative output whilst in the country.

These works and many of the collages and sculptures he made in the years spanning 1940 to 1948 were the subject of the 2013 Tate Britain exhibition, *Kurt Schwitters in Britain*, co-curated by Emma Chambers and Karin Orchard. This exhibition explored the artist's creative output in Britain, from his years in internment to his final years in Ambleside, as well as providing contemporary takes on his work, namely an installation piece from Laure Provost, and another from Adam Chodzko.⁵⁴ Provost claims that her grandfather was a very close friend of Kurt Schwitters, and she created a space within her grandparents' living room in which we the viewer may dwell (mentally and physically), and made to feel we are intruding. In the same way that the installation of the Merzbau is an intrusion on an existing space and its purposes, Provost seems to tap into this idea, by inviting the viewer to participate in the art work. It seems appropriate that Provost would use the personal and the domestic space as the setting for her homage to Schwitters. Schwitters lived, slept and worked in his installation in Hannover, and despite not finishing his little hut in Ambleside, he

⁵⁴ See: Katherine Stout's interviews with both Laure Prouvost and Adam Chodzko in *Kurt Schwitters in Britain*, eds. Emma Chambers and Karin Orchard (London: Tate Publishing, 2013), pp. 137-139. And for an interesting review of these works with specific reference to the construction of the Merzbau see: Wood Robereau, 'Kurt Schwitters and 27 Senses: Resonances in Norway, England, and Time,' *Dada/Surrealism*, No. 21 (2017), unpaginated.

worked until his death on it, as if compelled to complete this extension of his *Lebenswerk*.

Provost's intervention and quasi-continuation of the *Merzbau*, an installatory, experiential, and interactive space created within a domestic setting, exposes the politics of homelife and questions the definition of home. By taking the domestic space, imbued already with personal memories as Provost's grandparents' home and its own personal politics, and presenting them in a museum context presents these politics in a public sphere, simulating the way Schwitters' home became a museum/gallery through his invitation of visitors. It is interesting to consider Provost's response to *Merz*, the *Merzbauten*, and Schwitters' radical recontextualization of domestic space. As a woman artist, she would surely find Schwitters' redefining of the home as artwork-cum-museum an interesting commentary on the historical function of the home.

Schwitters' redefining of the domestic space is integral to this thesis, and as such will be explored in detail in the final chapter of this thesis in which I examine the *Ensembles* of Anna Oppermann, whose installations have been compared with Schwitters' assemblages, collages, and his *Merzbauten*, and her creation of space which redefines and manipulates the traditional museum or gallery which alters the experience of the viewer. Oppermann is an interesting example because she refuted these comparison of her works with Schwitters' *Merz* aesthetic and so my chapter on Oppermann will also consider the problems inherent in contextualising Oppermann's innovations in a masculine lineage. Furthermore, I will explore the similarities and differences between the two artists' work, and situate this discussion within discourses of domesticity, feminism, and lineage (both patriarchal and matriarchal).

Chodzko's work is much more static, it is, in his words, exhibited as a collage, in a kind of 'cubist, fragmented form.'⁵⁵ This seems appropriate given the highly

⁵⁵ Adam Chodzko, 'Contemporary responses to Kurt Schwitters,' *TateShots*, 1st March 2013.

geometric and abstracted forms of Schwitters' *Merzbauten* (or at least as we know them to exist today). The term "abstracted" is particularly compelling here. It not only signals the deviant or divergent forms of Schwitters' *Merz* production, but allows us to consider the abstraction of the work from its surroundings, and indeed how the surroundings are somehow abstracted from their usual function. His *Merzbau* at Waldhausenstrasse 5 was the family home, in which Schwitters took over some of the rooms and modified their function as living areas to work spaces and studios, and eventually to static art pieces. His home becomes a work of art, and thus he shifts the boundaries of space, as well as seemingly alluding to the issues incurred by artists with families, an area of study which, to this point, has been largely associated as being explored through the work of women artists. It seems that (within these discourses) one destabilises the other, and thus cannot co-exist. Yet, Schwitters' defiance towards a domestic space might be interpreted as deconstruction of the familial home, and by doing so may be considered as a deconstruction of the heteronormative ideal of the family, a notion which I will explore in Chapter 5.

Schwitters' deconstruction of the heteronormative home/house in its changing of function, might be considered within a feminist framework. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* posits that men and women ultimately function on different levels, and she asserts that one 'becomes' a woman, as opposed to being born one.⁵⁶ This notion is taken up by Monique Wittig in her essay 'One Is Not Born a Woman' (1965), in which she claims:

[L]esbian society destroys the artificial (social) fact constituting woman as a "natural group". A lesbian society pragmatically reveals that the division from men of which women have been the object is a political one and shows that we have been ideologically rebuilt into a "natural group".⁵⁷

Wittig's distinction between natural and socially constructed is pertinent to my discussion as she invokes the lesbian as an antidote. The assembled body of the

⁵⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Picador, 1988), p.295.

⁵⁷ Monique Wittig, 'One is Not Born Woman,' in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2013), p.246

woman is represented in the collage form; and in her creation of a society without men, she presents a context which stands in stark contradistinction to heteronormative society. These first-wave notions have been built upon and, in some cases, refuted by those historically categorised as second-wave feminists. Such examples include Adrienne Rich's 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' (1980). She argued:

I do not assume that mothering by women is a 'sufficient cause' of lesbian existence. But the issue of mothering by women has been much in the air of late, usually accompanied by the view that increased parenting by men would minimize antagonism between the sexes and equalize the sexual imbalance of power of males over females. These discussions are carried on without reference to compulsory heterosexuality as a phenomenon, let alone as an ideology. ... I believe large numbers of men could, in fact, undertake child care on a large scale without radically altering the balance of male power in a male-identified society.⁵⁸

This second-wave idea reveals a co-existence of women (hetero- and homo-defining alike) in societal and domestic settings and suggests they can find parity with their male counterparts, at least within a heteronormative (domestic) setting. It also exposes an important dynamic/dichotomy dictated by notions of heteronormative domesticity, questioning the role of the male, and by using the term 'mothering' to describe child-rearing by males (which, more logically, should be referred to as "fathering") and by lesbians, she contravenes the linguistic notions of heterosexuality as defined by the mutually exclusive terms mother and father, and thus redefines ideologies of domesticity.

As I will argue in Chapter 5, it does not require a singular definition of gender or sexuality to consider the re-contextualisation of societal norms. The primary social functions of heteronormative activity occur within the home—and are present and dominant in social, public life too. We might view Schwitters' Hannover Merzbau and his practice as a burden which his wife and child were forced to endure; though this requires us less to focus on the work itself, but merely the circumstances in which it

⁵⁸ Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,' in *The Norton Anthology of Critical Theory* (New York, NY and London: Norton, 2010), pp. 1591-1609; p. 1594.

was created. If we remove ourselves from the notion that a home is a place for family, and instead consider the function of the home in much more utilitarian contexts, we might assert that the home is merely a place of shelter. If we strip the home back to its fundamental function, we therefore remove any connection to family, instead we might discover the artist community that often functions without the normative parameters of the domestic sphere (consider for instance the Bloomsbury group's promiscuous living arrangements, particularly at Charleston House).⁵⁹ If we remove family from the domestic space we can then remove the heteronormative function of the familial home; and if we can remove the familial function of the home, we can perhaps remove the notions and ideologies of gendered difference which function within the sphere of the domestic.

Through a comparison with the conceptual/installation artist Oppermann, I will provide insight into the (re-)construction of the domestic space. I assert that Schwitters' anti-designation of this space allows him to be considered as an artist without gender, or perhaps an artist who rejects binary notions of gender. If we can sustain this thinking, then using a queer-feminist understanding of gender is helpful in pursuing the potential for feminist readings in his *oeuvre*. That is to say that queer and feminist theory are often at odds with each other—they present different definitions of gender and gender definition; and in some cases, opposing positions on gendered readings of the body. My aim is to collage together aspects of both theories, which I feel are complementary to understanding the production of a female form which might be considered a positive representation of women.

Due to the nature of his personality and his work—its inclusion of multiple sources, fragments, techniques, influences and languages—Schwitters is most tricky to consider in singular perspectives, therefore making him so interesting to consider within a queer context. He was very much a man and artist of multiple perspectives himself – he was a man of '*sowohl... als auch...*' [both... and also...]. Yet this I

⁵⁹ See: Christopher Reed's *Bloomsbury Rooms* (New Haven, MA: Yale, 2004), and his *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996). See also Brenda S. Helt and Madelyn Detloff, eds. *Queer Bloomsbury* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

believe is the failing of assessments of his work in some scholarship. It takes his point of view to be literal, or even to be true. Truth is not at the centre of what Schwitters says or does; in fact, if we were to take a purely autobiographical account, and used it to analyse his work, my entire case might be dissolved within this introduction.

By including a discussion of biography and applying queer and feminist theoretical frameworks, it allows for analysis of the text which is reliant on the weaving of fragmented matter to make new meanings and when transferred to an analysis of collages, allows for a critique of older approaches to Schwitters' work. Such an approach grants an examination of some of the more conventional methodologies which have led to shortcomings in some interpretations of his works which feature women. His personal relationships with women were indeed somewhat morally dubious. However, to counteract stories of adultery and womanising are stories of strong support for women artists such as Hannah Höch and Käthe Steinitz, with whom he also collaborated, as well as Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Given these personal and professional relationships and his artistic practice, it should be noted that to interpret his work through a framework which allows for fluidity and changeability, among other things, is most beneficial for analysing Schwitters' attention to the women's movement in the early to mid-twentieth century.

It is such that this author contends that a more fruitful reading of Schwitters' collages might be achieved through a framework which places less emphasis on the personal and instead considers the politics of the external factors which have led him to select these fragments and to collage them together in the ways he does. This is not to argue for a complete erasure of the artist's biography or its influence on his artworks. Moreover, to dismiss the biographical would not produce a fruitful discussion of Schwitters' collages, which rely on the artist's piecing together of disparate components or fragments drawn from both his personal life and the world around him. Rather, it is more useful to consider the ways in which this twofold methodology of examining the collage allows for multivocality and multivalent perspectives to be explored in Schwitters' collages. Furthermore, analysis of the collage fragments in Schwitters' works, both textual and visual, requires the viewer to adapt their viewing

technique and to adopt one which is more akin to the act of reading a text: a physical and systematic methodology dictated by the formulation of words on the page; a system which the collage disrupts, particularly with the inclusion of text in visual art.

In considering these relationships and his inclusion of women in his work, I pose two theories. The first is in his professional and personal relationships with artist women. It is my intention to position Schwitters outside of the conventional discourse which contends that he was a misogynist. Unlike many of his male colleagues, Schwitters openly and actively supported his female colleagues. It is through these actions I suggest that Schwitters can be considered methodology and that this is unconventional for male artists in the early twentieth century. The second position is a consideration of the work as feminist. This is not to anachronistically apply feminist theory to Schwitters' work, but to posit that we might read in Schwitters' use of various depictions of women and their, in some examples, paradoxical placement alongside other media, and therefore understand his reactions and documentation of the changing attitudes towards women, emancipation, and the tracking of shifts in ideas of identity. These two positions are differentiated by interpretations henceforth denoted using the terms 'proto-feminist' to describe the artist and his personal relationships and interpretations of Schwitters' work as 'feminist', describing the latter position.

The latter position allows for a consideration of the natural progression for artists that would come who actively protested and documented social change and changing attitudes to gender, sexuality, and identity, in the latter half of the twentieth century. Among others, it has been acknowledged by Leah Dickerman that Schwitters was the inspiration for artists such as Joseph Cornell, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns—stating in one instance that Johns claimed Schwitters was 'the first Dada figure to have significant impact on his thinking, preceding even Duchamp.'⁶⁰ I will suggest that the practice of these post-45 figures is in many ways indebted to Schwitters' collages, in particular considering their works which feature women, or

⁶⁰ Leah Dickerman, 'Schwitters, Fec.', *Kurt Schwitters: Color and Collage*, ed. Isabel Schulz (New Haven, MA and London: The Menil Collection, 2010), p. 88.

present situations where ambiguity is highlighted as part of a social norm. Schwitters' non-commitment to any singular movement of the avant-garde, and his complicated, ambiguous, and playful politics, places him near the beginning of a queer lineage, particularly when considered with artists like Rauschenberg and Johns whose works are so often read within a queer theoretical context. Scholars such as Amelia Jones have claimed modernist artists are at the end of a queer lineage. In her monograph, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, she explores the queer aesthetics of Duchamp's oeuvre.⁶¹ Duchamp was, like Schwitters, a white, heterosexual, middle-class male, who played with, subverted, and in some cases, exploited the boundaries between the two genders. This is most prominently displayed in his 'self-portrait' as *Rose Sélavy* (1920) created just one year after Schwitters' illusive Anna Blume.

The purpose of this project is to consider two things, one a new methodology for thinking about the collage works Schwitters produced, as well as exploring and positing the notion that Schwitters' work can be read with feminist intent. Each chapter will seek to explore and analyse the issues at stake using this methodology, as well as teasing out the feminist perspectives evident in his work. Chapter 1 will focus first on the use of the collage more generally as a political tool, and how it might function within the creation of a feminist aesthetic, all the while comparing it to other art forms, media and styles used by women and (in a slightly anachronistic discourse) queer male artists to represent women. This chapter examines the close relationship between Höch and Schwitters in order to understand the feminist aesthetic in his works by comparing each artist's practices and how they might be understood as having influenced one another. It also takes account of collage artists such as John Heartfield and Hans Arp, both of who utilised the collage in completely different ways. Heartfield's overtly political collages show the Dadaist utilisation of contemporary media to exploit and highlight the political and social unrest which immediately followed the First World War.

⁶¹ Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Chapter 2 will explore Schwitters' most famous female protagonist, Anna Blume as central to my interpretation of his work as feminist. It examines both the German and English translations of the poem, and considers the notable changes which were made in the first translation of 1922, 'Ann Blossom has Wheels' and then in a later translation (ca. 1942-47) titled, 'To eve Blossom' [sic]. I examine the contemporary reviews of the work and scholarly critiques to consider how, to this point, the poem and its protagonist may have been misunderstood. I suggest that his assignment of Anna Blume as his 'alter-ego' might be read (as has been done with Marcel Duchamp's exploration of his own female alter-ego) as a feminist icon and as such an expression of Schwitters' proto-feminist sympathies. Moreover, this chapter will examine the life of Anna Blume off the canvas and the page, using letters sent to his friends and fellow artists he signed as his alter-ego. This amalgamation of the female (Anna Blume the character) and male (Schwitters the artist) personas is read as a queer performance, and as such I suggest that Schwitters is subverting traditional notions of masculine and feminine identities, which is further explored in his application of the collage.

Then, in Chapter 3, I discuss his works in Hannover, and the relationship to women in the Weimar and German contexts of the interwar period. I focus particularly on the history of the women's movements in Germany and make specific reference to the groups active in Hannover before and during Schwitters' time. By illustrating how the women's groups in Hannover challenged and reinforced the issues faced by women in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and how publicly these issues were discussed, I suggest that Schwitters would have been aware of the political and social inequalities faced by women and their fight for emancipation—that these groups were fragmented and disjointed, and therefore might be explored through his representations of women in collage.

Expanding on his use of collage in Germany, I consider in Chapter 4 how his shift in geography has affected his representations of women, given his relatively short exiles in Norway and Britain, and here will consider works which are not simply in collage form, but landscapes and portraiture also. In this chapter, I discuss the use of women

differently. I consider portraiture as well as collage. This is due to Schwitters' exile and while in Norway, he painted more, and made less collages. I explore Schwitters' portraits of his wife and compare them with a portrait of a young woman, Mabel Elliot Taylor, a commissioned painting, with his early portraits of his wife, Helma. Building on this naturalistic representation of women, I explore three collages made while in Norway, and focus on the large collage which filled the entrance way to his Hjertøya Merz hut. His reinvestment in collage is largely caused by the material poverty suffered in his second exile in Britain, and as such the use of women in his collages surges once again. This time, the women are not German in nationality, but American and British, derived from propaganda posters and lifestyle magazines. I discuss the changing attitudes towards women represented in these collages.

And in the final chapter I examine the role of the domestic in his life, and here an exploration and focus on his Hannover *Merzbau*, specifically, comparing his restructuring of the family home with the conceptual installations of Anna Oppermann and her endeavours to reconfigure ideas and representations of domesticity. The final chapter will consider Schwitters' aesthetic as a prototype for feminist and queer-feminist artists, and discuss the legacies of *Merz* in the works of Rauschenberg, with particular focus on Oppermann. I discuss ideas of legacy and anti-legacy through delineations and definitions of patriarchy, invoking Mira Schor's notion of the matrilinear to understand shared female and personal histories, as well as historical perspectives on art history. I interrogate the critical assignation of Oppermann's work as an heir to Schwitters' *Merzbauten*, an interpretation that Oppermann refuted. I examine the similarities and differences between Schwitters' and Oppermann's installations and experiential works of art, and consider a positive legacy that does not undermine the innovation of either artists' works.

Throughout my thesis, I will approach Schwitters' work using both visual and literary critical frameworks, and in some cases adapting or manipulating these theories to cross the boundaries between the arts. I believe that this ekphrastic cross-over between the two (often distinct) disciplines is key to much of Schwitters' implicit political expression, and as such he relies on the marrying of word and image to explore the challenges of the unstable environments in which he lives, the transient and unfixed

status of his geography, which in turn creates an undetermined sense of identity, and as I will evidence, is explored and expressed most effectively in his application of collage.

1: COLLAGE: FORM, FEMINISM AND FEMININITY

Collage as a practice has long gained art historical and critical attention. The accepted date of its creation is 1912 and is indebted to Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. However, it might be argued that this technique was most successfully and prominently utilised by the Dadaists (across its many factions); expanding upon the technique and creating terms and practices such as photomontage. While collage had been invented by Picasso and Braque in 1912, it has largely been noted as form most successfully deployed by Dadaist artists. In her 1968 study, *Collage*, Herta Wescher explores a history of the form, including in her analysis tenth-century Japanese poetry, art from the Middle Ages, spanning the globe. In her section on Dada, she quotes Hausmann (one-time lover of Höch): ‘L’Art Dada will offer them [‘jackasses who wish to transplant themselves for all eternity in oil paints into an endless number of front parlors’] a fabulous rejuvenation, an impulse toward the true experience of all relationships.’ Hausmann continues, ‘[i]n Dada you will recognize your true state: wonderful constellations in real materials, wire, glass, cardboard, cloth, organically matching your own consummate, inherent unsoundness, your own shoddiness.’ She writes that Höch and Heartfield were examples of two artists who worked in this ‘spirit’ and notes they exhibited together at Galerie J. B. Neumann in April, 1920.⁶² Both artists are engaged with the practices of Dada; both use photomontage as their medium; both are expressively aggressive in their use of the cutting technique; both use images of public and famous figures, and disfigure, maim, or recompose them to effect; both explore the cultural, political and social issues of the early Weimar (and later) period; and both were friends of Schwitters. The parallels are extensive, and yet

⁶² Wescher, *Collage*, p. 136.

much of the discussion of Höch's work seems most interested in the so-called femininity of her work.⁶³

Schwitters used collage continually throughout his career from the years 1919 (first exhibited at *Der Sturm*) until his death in 1948. Even in his exile and moments of material poverty, he produced collages using the fragments he collected from his new surroundings, as well as including materials which reflect the changing social and cultural positions of his changing geographies. Megan Luke has argued most convincingly why Schwitters' collages should be separated from those made by Picasso and Braque (and arguably Hans Arp's, with whom Schwitters was friends and met in 1918). She writes that 'his material choices and compositional decisions highlight just how different *Merz* was from cubist collage, despite [Daniel Henry] Kahnweiler's claim to the contrary.'⁶⁴ Luke explains the material and compositional difference between cubist collages and *Merz*, quoting Picasso's muse and one-time partner, Françoise Gilot,

The sheet of newspaper was never used in order to make a newspaper. It was used to become a bottle or something like that. It was never used literally but always as an element displaced from its habitual meaning into another meaning to produce a shock between the usual definition at the point of departure and its new definition at the point of arrival ... This displaced object has entered a new universe for which it was not made and where it retains, in a measure, its strangeness.⁶⁵

In Gilot's introduction to Picasso's collage technique, the extrinsic qualities of the fragments are all but ignored; instead, the artistic manipulation of the materials and his desired outcome are favoured. Schwitters had a similar vision for his work,

⁶³ Much attention has also been given the postcolonial aspects of her work. This thesis is less concerned with this aspect as the women represented by Höch, when racialised as they are, particularly in her series *From an Ethnographic Museum*, are not comparable with the women Schwitters' represents (predominantly white and European).

⁶⁴ Luke, *Space, Image, Exile*, p. 17. Kahnweiler was Picasso's dealer and in 1919 wrote a piece entitled '*Die Merzmalerei*' [Merz Paintings], reprinted in Friedhelm Lach's *Das literarische Werk*, Vol. 5, (Cologne: DuMont Verlag, 1981), p. 37.

⁶⁵ Luke, *Space, Image, Exile*, p. 18. Quoting Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso*, (New York: Ed McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 77.

however, in Schwitters' application of found materials, we see a slightly different outcome. In 1923, Schwitters published a summary of his technique in his journal *Merz*:

These objects are inserted into the image as they are or altered, as the image requires. Through valuation [*Wertung*] against each other, they lose their individual character, their *Eigengift*, and become dematerialized [entmaterialisiert] and material for the image. The image is an artwork that rests in itself. It refers to nothing outside of the work. An artwork can never refer outside itself without losing its relationship to art. Only the inverse is possible, that someone from the outside can refer to the artwork: the beholder.⁶⁶

In this, Schwitters sees the work and its many fragments only gaining meaning through the person looking in on the work, it is here that Picasso's conception of collage (vis-à-vis Gilot's analysis) differs from Schwitters'. However, I contest this position and posit instead that these works, despite being altered or removed from their source, cannot be fully separated from their material past. This is especially true of the images of women which are taken from magazines with a specific political perspective, or from fashion magazines and catalogues which are already endowed with their own aesthetic point of view.

Schwitters' inclusion in this history is complicated by collage having had precedence set by an altogether different aesthetic. The history of collage has long focused on Picasso, Braque and the year 1912 and since Herta and Paul Amirson's 1968 study of collage, many volumes (edited and single authored) have been produced and have posited various histories and methodologies through which we can analyse collage. These methodologies have been divided by two main readings. The first is a consideration of the fragments included in the final work of art as detached from their original sources

⁶⁶ Luke, *Space, Image, Exile*, pp. 18-19. This is Luke's translation and as such she leaves the German for terms which are particularly difficult to translate (and in some cases contested) in German and in square brackets. She also leaves 'Eigengift' untranslated, Schwitters' own term for an image's special character, which might be translated as its 'own poison' – this is a revealing term as it suggests Schwitters' preconceptions of the images before and after inclusion in the work of art.

and bases its analysis on the formal function of the composites within the work. The other framework analyses the collage using semiological methodologies to understand how each fragment and the composition in its entirety might be understood through its relationship to external sources.

Examples of the former methodology can be found in the works of Christine Poggi and David Cottington, and the latter in the works of Rosalind Krauss, among others.⁶⁷ This thesis is concerned with a semiological approach to Schwitters' collages and posits that there is a relationship between the composition of the fragments, with particular reference to the works by Schwitters and Hannah Höch which present hybridised and fragmented images of women, and feminist representations of selfhood and identities. Furthermore, interpolating these observations with accounts of the historical moments in the time period in which each collage was created and presenting an alternative perspective for considering these works. This chapter focuses on a consideration of the collage form as a mode of feminist expression. In the final discussion in this chapter, I approach the composition of collages through queer theory. I propose the technique of cutting and pasting—and the results producing spaces of liminality and hybridity—read through queer theory, produces an analysis and fosters a framework within which to discuss the production of feminist ideas by a male artist, particularly in a moment and movement that limits the potential of women in the arts and discussions which have often excluded or reduced the importance of their role within the avant-garde.

In the first chapter of this thesis, Hannah Höch is used to expose the negative images of femininity which are challenged by her own androgyny and queer politics; alongside a consideration of the work of Marta Hegemann. I explore the problematic discourses which emerge in presenting women's issues for and by women only, and thus consider how Schwitters himself might begin to be inserted into this framework.

⁶⁷ For comparisons of these methodologies, see: *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. Lynn Zelevansky (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992) and David Cottington, 'Cubism and Decoration' in *Cubism in the Shadow of War: The Avant-Garde and Politics in Paris, 1905-1914* (New Haven, MA and London: Yale UP, 1998).

Women and men in Dada discourses

There are volumes of work dedicated to the role of women working in the avant-garde, among them Shulamith Behr's *Women Expressionists* (1988), Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (1985; 1991), Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli and Gwen Raaberg's *Surrealism and Women* (1991), and John E Bowlt and Matthew Drutt, *Amazons of the Avant-Garde* (2000). As well as these broad studies, there have been more specific studies of women in Dada. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse's edited volume of essays, *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender and Identity* (1999), spans the breadth and depth of Dada and the women (artists, writers, and others) involved in the movement and its various factions. It collects essays on the women who were central to the Dada movement and its groups. It also examines the theme of women in the Dada groups—considering the subversions of gender in figures such as Marcel Duchamp and Georgia O'Keefe, as well as examining magazine culture, artist couples, and collectors and patrons like Katherine S. Dreier and Juliette Roche. It also contains an essay which examines the image of women in Schwitters' collages, and which this chapter will consider directly. Sawelson-Gorse's collection exposes lesser known figures and debunks some of the myths which have perpetuated around the position of women in Dada, and begins to reposition women artists and their essential roles in Dada. Yet, still too much importance is given to figures such as Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, and whose inclusion is led by an exploration of the Duchamp's "feminine" identity *Rose Sélavy*, of whom Man Ray was the chosen photographer.

While this collection of essays exposes the many complications of gender in Dada and examines often overlooked figures in the movements, a more effective study of the role of female artists in Dada is Ruth Hemus' *Dada's Women*, published in 2009. Although it does not cover the same range of participants as Sawelson-Gorse's edited volume, it focuses on and gives in-depth analysis of five women artists: Hannah Höch, Sophie Taeuber, Suzanne Duchamp, Céline Arnould and Emmy Hennings, whose influence and resonance can be seen throughout the Dada movements. These publications are crucial in re-defining our understanding of Dada and its many branches. To a point Dada is saturated by masculine tropes and visions, and like most

artistic movements, and much of the attention from scholars and critics is most often paid to male artists (not to mention many of the critics and scholars were also male, and so reinforcing the patriarchal systems which have characterised much of Dada's histories). Recognising this masculinist tradition (and at points arguing for its validity and seeking an unapologetic analysis of it) in Dada, David Hopkins writes about the 'paternalistic role for a lineage of predominantly male artists concerned with developing themes of male identity.'⁶⁸ What these themes of male identity are not exactly defined. Hopkins proposes that male Dadaists have been almost exclusively examined within a discourse of hypermasculinity, machismo, and generally negative terms. Hopkins's approach to exploring Dada artists' male identities and his discussion privileges heterosexuality and heteronormativity in these discussions. He uses troubling phrases such as 'the politically correct protocols of feminism or queer theory basically allow little agency to straight men' which illuminates the position which gave the impetus to this thesis. Hopkins proposes a study of male identity which is 'less apologetic' and while his monograph deals with the queering of male identity which is found in Dada practice, it does not expose the vital differences and problems in appropriating feminine aesthetic and lived/experienced femininity.⁶⁹ Hopkins proposes some interesting counteractions to feminist theorisation of the male and female bodies, however, his study promotes the heterosexual and patriarchal lineages with which this thesis contends.

In contrast to Hopkins' point of view, Hemus points to the reinforcing of masculinist ideologies in Dada, and the critical approach to Dada as phallogocentric, and states that:

Women do not fare well in most Dada histories. Often, where their names appear, they are accompanied by nothing more than a few scant details. [...] Many women [...] were involved in personal relationships with men in the group and they are generally referred to in relation to their more famous male counterparts.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ David Hopkins, 'Dada's Boys: Identity and Play in Contemporary Art,' *Dada's Boys*, ed. Fiona Bradley (Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery, 2006), pp. 14-93; p. 15.

⁶⁹ David Hopkins, *Dada's Boys: Masculinity after Duchamp* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 2.

⁷⁰ Hemus, *Dada's Women*, p.3.

Hemus takes Suzanne Duchamp as an ‘acute example’ of a figure who did ‘not fare well’ in this kind of historicisation of female Dadaists. She writes that Duchamp was not only the wife of fellow artist Jean Crotti, but also the sister of Marcel Duchamp, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, and Jacques Villon—all of whom were also artists—and indignantly points to the double-standard in art historical representation of Suzanne Duchamp who is often referred to as wife or sister of another famous artist, yet none of these protagonists is ‘generally referred to as the husband or brother of Suzanne Duchamp.’⁷¹

In the case of Sophie Taeuber, she is consistently referred to as the wife of Hans Arp. Yet, her own art was sophisticated and challenged the traditional notions of arts and crafts, she was a teacher of textiles at the Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich, and she also designed (in collaboration with Hans Arp and Theo van Doesburg) the interior for L’Aubette a complex consisting of a restaurant, cinema and dance halls in Strasbourg.⁷² Taeuber and Arp collaborated on collage works which became known as the ‘Duo-Collages’. In the instance of Emmy Hennings, she is often discussed as a background figure to the Cabaret Voltaire and sometimes overshadowed by her husband, Hugo Ball.⁷³ In truth, Hennings was a dancer, poet, singer and piano player, and integral to the Cabaret Voltaire’s effervescent and diverse programme.⁷⁴ Hannah Höch has been written on extensively as a forerunner in the Dada movement.⁷⁵ Her works have been compared and contrasted with many of her male compatriots; she was a close friend and critic of Kurt Schwitters, and they were most supportive of each

⁷¹ Hemus, *Dada’s Women*, p. 3.

⁷² Hemus takes care to detach Taeuber from her husband by only referring to her as Taeuber and not as Taeuber-Arp as other scholars have done.

⁷³ Hemus, *Dada’s Women*, pp. 19-22.

⁷⁴ For more on Hennings as an influential member of the Cabaret Voltaire, see: Hubert van den Berg, ‘The Star of the Cabaret Voltaire: The Other Life of Emmy Hennings,’ *Dada Zurich: A Clown’s Game from Nothing*, eds. Brigitte Pichon and Karl Riha (New York: G.K. Hall, 1996), pp. 69-88; Thomas F. Rugh, ‘Emmy Hennings and Zurich Dada,’ *Dada/Surrealism*, Vol. 10/11 (1982), eds. Mary Ann Caws and Rudolf E. Kuenzli, pp. 5-28.

⁷⁵ Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, (1993); Peter Boswell, Maria Makela, and Carolyn Lanchner, eds. *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1996); see also, Dawn Ades, Emily Butler, and Daniel F. Hermann, *Hannah Höch* (London and New York, NY: Prestel, 2014), accompanying the exhibition of Höch’s work at The Whitechapel Gallery.

other.⁷⁶ Höch's photomontage style is compared with that of John Heartfield.⁷⁷ Their aesthetics are similar, both are explicit in their statements and intent, but Höch is largely concerned with contemporary ideas regarding the status of women; she is also concerned with ideologies of race that were beginning to take shape during the first half of the twentieth century. One only has to consider the title of her most celebrated work: *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschland* (*Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany*), 1919-1920.⁷⁸ The place in which the violence occurs is the kitchen, and it is through the presumably male body (indicated by the beer-belly) that her knife splices. One can make assumptions based on the setting of this seemingly emancipatory act, the kitchen is the home of the domesticated woman, and might be viewed as her socially prescribed territory. It is also a location given notoriety as a place of power and autonomy in Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky's redesigning of the kitchen in her *Die Frankfurter Küche* [The Frankfurt Kitchen, 1925]. The old and often repeated trope of the woman chained to the kitchen sink, imprisoned in a master-slave dynamic through her subservience in the home, has long been criticised and examined by feminists and historians alike, and as such I do not wish to dwell too long on the subject. Instead, what I wish to consider is Höch's revelatory action with her domestic tool to allow for a comparison of Schwitters' remodelling of the domestic space later in this thesis.

In her *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, Höch features men and women of public notoriety, faces that would have been very well-known to the Weimar citizen. Matthew Biro has identified such figures in Höch's photomontage: Kaiser Wilhelm, Raoul Hausmann,

⁷⁶ Multiple letters were sent between the two in which they discuss their work. I will return to a lengthier discussion of these letters in a later chapter.

⁷⁷ See: Hemus, *Dada's Women*, pp. 91-128, and Wendy Ann Parker, 'Political Photomontage Transformation, Revelation and "Truth"' (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Iowa, 2011).

⁷⁸ It is interesting to note that in the list of exhibited works for the *First International Dada Fair* (5 July-25 August 1920), Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* is listed as *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte [sic] Kulturepoche Deutschlands*, omitting the "Bierbauch" part of the title. (See: *Hannah Höch. Eine Lebenscollage*, ed. Berlinische Galerie (Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1989), pp. 668-669.)

Dr Wolfgang Kapp ('who unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow the Social Democratic Party (SPD) government in March 1920'), Paul von Hindenburg, dancer Sent M'ahesa, Austro-Hungarian General Karl von Pflanzer-Baltin; he notes Ulrich Graf von Brockdorff-Ratzau (the Red Count), Gustav Noske, the SPD's minister of defence from 1919 to 1920, 'Bolsheviks' Karl Radek, Johannes Baader, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin; as well as poet Else Lasker-Schüler, theatre director Max Reinhardt, and Karl Marx.⁷⁹ Those featured are public figures, generals, politicians, many of whom held positions of power during the Wilhelmine era, celebrities of stage and film, and her fellow Dadaists. They appear disfigured and re-configured in multiple forms: some have been decapitated, others had their legs chopped off; some have been sliced so very specifically at the belly-button, as though she were literally cutting through their beer-bellies. In this cutting action, there is a greater anxiety at play: First World War had just ended, and many men came home dismembered, disfigured. Unlike Otto Dix and George Grosz, Schwitters does not show these bodily atrocities caused by the outbreak of war, instead he presents the detritus and fragments of the city—the environmental damage—and I believe this is another reason for his exclusion in discourses which figure him as a politically active artist.⁸⁰

Schwitters the political artist

Schwitters' utilisation of the collage form can only be discussed in terms of the political genealogy of its fragments, appropriated to convey new meanings. This practice is, however, not limited to Schwitters. There is little scholarly precedence which attempts to reconcile Kurt Schwitters' *oeuvre* with a positive representation of women let alone with feminism. One of the major (and only) essays which begins to wrestle with the complicated presence of women in Kurt Schwitters' collages is

⁷⁹ Matthew Biro, *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 69-70.

⁸⁰ While this is an interesting point of study, it lies outside the scope of this thesis. Essays that address this subject include, but are not limited to: Irene Gammel and John Wrighton, 'Arabesque Grotesque': Toward a Theory of Dada Eco-Poetics,' *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies on Literature and Environment*, Vol. 20, Iss. 4, (Dec. 2013), pp. 795-816; and Colin Riordan, 'The Green Alternative in German 1900-1930,' *Counter-Cultures in Germany and Central Europe: From Sturm und Drang to Baader-Meinhof*, eds. Steve Giles and Maike Orgel (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 155-170.

Dorothea Dietrich's 'Love as a Commodity: Kurt Schwitters's Collages of Women' (1998). In this essay Dietrich takes the view that Schwitters represented women in keeping with a somewhat obstinate, prevalent point of view during this period. She writes:

Schwitters used [*Zeichnung 16, Mode I*] again as the support for a collage in 1920: *Mz 158, Das Kotsbild (The Vomit Picture)*.⁸¹ In this work, however, the focus shifts to the relationship between the sexes and reveals in rich complexity how Schwitters perpetuated politically conservative views on women.⁸²

Dietrich's critical response to Schwitters seems to be entangled in the artist's biography. The trouble is in Dietrich's choice of works which she uses in her analysis. She chooses the small piece, *Zeichnung 16, Mode I* which shows a woman dressed in the typically 'Victorian' standards of dress, accompanied by her husband who appears in similarly dated fashion; the illustration is then collaged over by text. She uses this as evidence of his perpetuation of politically conservative views; however, in the pages preceding this discussion she refers to the *Mz. Figurine 180*, a lady who has been fashioned from torn pieces of newspaper, and is featured wearing stylish clothing. It seems that Dietrich takes umbrage with the matter of Schwitters 'dressing' this woman in such a way.

Schwitters' *Mz. Figurine 180* is a particularly important example of his figuration of women—the young woman in this work is the only character who has been presented in her entirety. And despite Dietrich's distaste for how he has dressed his "figurine" it is productive to consider the length of his model's skirt, rather than the material

⁸¹ There are varying discussions on the problematic translation of 'Kots': arguments which rely mainly on the phonetic sounding out of "Kots". Here it has been translated as "vomit", however, the homonymic "Kotze" translates as "puke" [kotzen = to puke]. Throughout this thesis, I chose to leave it untranslated.

⁸² Dorothea Dietrich, 'Love as a Commodity: Kurt Schwitters's Collages of Women', *Women in Dada: Essays on Gender, Sex, and Identity*, ed. Naomi Sawleson-Gorse (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 206-239; p. 213. This essay first appeared as a chapter in Dietrich's monograph *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters: Tradition and Innovation* (Cambridge, and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

itself. Maria Makela, in an unpublished paper, has cited *Zeichnung 16* as a political statement about the *Ersatzkultur* of post-World War I in Germany. She writes:

the entire aesthetic enterprise of Merz can be productively contextualized by way of reference to the *Ersatzkultur* (the culture of substitute materials) that developed in Germany at the end of the war and during the inflation as a result of widespread shortages.⁸³

Makela's assertion is interesting as Schwitters' collages have often been framed within discourses of waste. Schwitters, in his own writing, notes that his works are composed of 'Müllabfällen' [garbage or trash] and that he 'pasted and nailed' [leimte und nagelte] it together in his Merz endeavour.⁸⁴

The images of the depoliticised artist (as Schwitters was considered within his own time and by later critics) and the one who uses trash to create seem disparate. The stuff of his surroundings made up his *Weltanschauung*: his world view and his art were one and the same. And while Schwitters may have claimed he had departed from realist depictions, his work was no less connected to the world outside of the frame. In 1964, Hans Richter wrote his history of Dada, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*. His history, like many others of the movement and its many factions, is divided by its geographical breakdown: Zurich, New York, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, Paris, are all featured. In his 'Hanover Dada' chapter, he writes about Kurt Schwitters, saying:

While Baader, Hausmann and Huelsenbeck in Berlin were taking the Globe itself under Dada's wing, each member playing his own part in keeping the prevailing anarchy alive, two less influential German cities, Hanover and Cologne, possessed independent Dadaism of their own, which were less noisy, perhaps, but no less important.⁸⁵

Richter's characterisation of Schwitters on the periphery of the Berlin group (here exemplified by Johannes Baader, Raoul Hausmann and Richard Huelsenbeck) separates the politically aggressive Berlin group and Richter suggests that Schwitters

⁸³ Maria Makela, 'Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Merz and Material Poverty', delivered at the AAH Conference 2015 (April 2015); and forthcoming in Dorothy Rowe and Camilla Price, eds., 'Weimar's 'Other': Visual Culture in Germany after 1918', Special Issue *Art History*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (June 1919). [Unpublished manuscript, to which I have been given access by the author.]

⁸⁴ Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters*, p. 32. Translations my own.

⁸⁵ Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti Art*, trans. David Britt (London and New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p. 137.

remained in Hannover because Huelsenbeck ‘rebuff[ed]’ him.⁸⁶ Moreover, by claiming he was less noisy than his compatriots in Dada, Richter perpetuates the notion that Schwitters was not so outspoken and thus implies he had a much less critical voice. Richter writes: ‘His genius had no time for transforming the world, or values, or the present, or the future, or the past; no time in fact for any of the thing that were heralded by blasts of Berlin’s Trump of Doom.’⁸⁷ Huelsenbeck found Schwitters to be ‘bourgeois’, according to Richter; whereas, Richter, in the entire chapter, discusses Schwitters only in positive terms: as entertaining, witty, intelligent, astute, organised, canny, amiable, but never political.⁸⁸

Both John Elderfield and Werner Schmalenbach focus on the connection between Schwitters’ life and his art. In the opening chapter of Schmalenbach’s monograph, he divides his discussion according to important moments or years in Schwitters life. This was most likely necessitated by the artist’s need to be reintroduced to German art history.⁸⁹ In the 1960s, Schmalenbach directly contacted the one-time Dadaists for his research, interviewing many of Schwitters’ friends in aid of his study.⁹⁰ Elderfield’s important study quotes Schwitters’ political side, and posits that he left his full-time job at the Wülfel Ironworks, just outside Hannover, to devote himself to art, in 1919, inspired by the wake of the Weimar Republic and because “[e]verything had broken down [...] new things had to be made from fragments.”⁹¹ Schwitters literally takes from the broken world around him to reconstruct the world around him. Elderfield also refers to his work as ‘purely formal’.⁹² However, before Elderfield’s retrospective catalogue, in 1971, the Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf held its own

⁸⁶ Richter, *Dada*, p. 138.

⁸⁷ Richter, *Dada*, p. 138.

⁸⁸ ‘Huelsenbeck had taken an aversion to him. He refused to admit every Tom, Dick or Harry to the club. In short, he did not like Schwitters. Even forty years later, although he had long ago been reconciled with the now dead Schwitters, he dealt him a passing blow in one of his books, on the grounds that he could not bear Schwitters’ “bourgeois face”.’ (Richter, *Dada*, p. 138.)

⁸⁹ Richter notes that Schwitters died ‘unrecognised in poverty and exile ... I wanted to set Schwitters, and his work, in the perspective in which history will see him.’ (*Dada*, p. 138.)

⁹⁰ Hannah Höch had written a note in pencil in the margin of a letter from Helma Schwitters to Höch, dated 27.1.1934. Höch’s note reads: ‘Dieses Stück wörtlich an Dr. Schmalenbach abgeschrieben’ [This part is to be copied verbatim to Dr Schmalenbach] (Berlinische Gallery Künstler-Archive, BG HHC K 444/79).

⁹¹ Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, p. 12.

⁹² Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, p 12.

exhibition of Schwitters' work. The catalogue includes contributions from Schmalenbach, director Marcel Broodthaers, the artist's son Ernst, and Schwitters' friend, supporter and art historian, Carola Gideon-Welcker. Schmalenbach's contribution is titled: 'Kurt Schwitters—Kunst und Politik' and opens with the line: 'Kurt Schwitters was not a political artist. Was he though?' [Kurt Schwitters wollte kein politischer Künstler sein. War er es dennoch?].⁹³ The essay at first seems promising, however, it ends on the note that Schwitters' art was not political, but he was certainly interested in politics.⁹⁴

As can be seen, scholars and artists alike have lauded and been critical about his fondness for using the materials no-one else wanted. It also seems important to consider the use and lack of material in Schwitters' collages given that it has been well documented that such practices as embroidery, tapestry, quilting, and arts and crafts more generally have been sanctioned and designated as acceptable artistic practices for women.⁹⁵ The focus on the materials both used and not used might suggest protest by Schwitters, as well as a move towards parity: the 'feminine' media of cloth, silk, satin, cotton, are all used in the masculinist traditions (e.g. sculpture and collage); pinned and glued to the hard wood, and as such it might be suggested blurring the boundaries between painting, plastic arts, and decorative arts.⁹⁶ This is not to essentialise craft as feminine and classical arts as masculine, but rather to expose the critical and scholarly receptions of craft and classical arts as they have been

⁹³ Werner Schmalenbach, 'Kurt Schwitters—Kunst und Politik,' *Kurt Schwitters*, ed. Peter Beyer (Cologne: DuMont-Schauberg Verlag, 1971), pp. 5-8; p. 5.

⁹⁴ Schmalenbach, 'Kunst und Politik', p. 8. [Seine Kunst war unpolitisch, aber sie war voller politischer Implikation und voller gesellschaftlicher Brisanz.] My translation.

⁹⁵ See: Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock, eds. *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2013); Gillian Elinor, ed. *Women and Craft* (London: Virago, 1987); and T'ai Smith, *Bauhaus Weaving Theory: From Feminine Craft to Mode of Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

⁹⁶ When Kurt Schwitters met Raoul Hausmann at the Café des Westens in Berlin, it is claimed Schwitters introduced himself, saying: 'I am a painter and I nail my pictures together.' [Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, pp. 109–10.] Maria Makela has picked up on this as a signal towards material poverty, and claims it is a deliberate choice by Schwitters to use wood (and cheap plywood in some cases) 'canvases' instead of cloth ones to construct his collages. (p.1) It seems this quote, while oft-quoted and somewhat tired, in Makela's terms is a most useful tool for thinking through Schwitters' engagement with Ersatzkultur broadly, but also the effect it would inevitably have had on artistic practice.

understood to-date. Of course, women worked in the classical media such as painting and sculpture, and men in textiles, embroidery and other crafts; however, due to the existing gender imbalances in the arts, those who did work in these mediums were often overlooked or not given the same critical attention. Moreover, Makela's offering alludes to a politically aware and politically-active artist, another contention within Schwitters scholarship. As outlined previously, there is a great deal of simplification of Schwitters' aesthetic caused by viewing Schwitters as either apolitical or politically inactive: that is to say that he is either without any political alignment or sentiment whatsoever; or that he chooses not to declare those political ideas in his personal life and his artworks. I would argue this to be a false assumption of Schwitters' *oeuvre*.

Firstly, there are multiple collages that include fragments which allude to key political events in the history of the Western world. *Mai 191* (Fig. 2) features a piece of paper inscribed with the same words as the picture's title. 'Mai 191' we assume is a date even though it does not follow conventional date formatting. The viewer can logically decipher 'Mai' as a month (May in German), but the '191' could be any year between 1910 and 1919; it could also be a completely random number, a number to which might be impossible to assign any meaning. However, if we consider that *Mai 191* was created in 1920, it seems plausible to suggest that it relates to the breach of Communist defences and the city of Munich being taken by force in May of 1919.⁹⁷ John Elderfield notes:

Mai 191 resembles a section of a wall with fragments of torn posters. Its mention of electrical- and metal-workers' strikes, and so on, must be alluding to the same disturbances of spring 1919 to which *Das Arbeiterbild* also refers. Both of these works, in fact, admit interpretation as sympathetic reactions by

⁹⁷ Christian Weikop notes the politically-charged small magazine *Jedermann sein eigener Fussball* (1919) considered the Munich Revolution in its pages. (Christian Weikop, 'Berlin Dada and the Carnavalesque,' *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, Vol. 3: Europe 1880-1940, eds. Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker, and Christian Weikop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 816-834.

the pacifist Schwitters to the brutal suppression of the workers' Soviet in Bavaria on May 1, 1919.⁹⁸

Elderfield seems surprised that the 'pacifist' Schwitters would be sympathetic to the workers' revolt and the savage treatment they received. However, Elderfield makes a mistake in assuming that pacifist means apolitical. In fact, I would argue that it is less surprising that Schwitters the pacifist would side with the workers' unions exactly because of their appalling treatment by officials. Schwitters as a citizen, as an ex-iron worker himself, would not doubt have felt outrage at the harsh and unnecessary force use during the workers' revolt of 1919. Elderfield might not explicitly state that Schwitters' work lacks political perspective, however, by identifying and contrasting Schwitters' position as pacifist with the politics of the moment, he undermines the artwork's political potential.

In a second collage, a singular piece of text appears in the centre of the canvas which reads 'Versailles'; the colour and composition is not used as radical as in *Mai 191*, and so we might mistake this piece as purely documentary. Yet, the word appears in bold black *Fraktur* typeface, it is reminiscent of a newspaper headline, and so by extension becomes political. The reader might consider the context of the fragment, and ask what kind of newspaper did Schwitters take it from? What was the political impulse of the writer who wrote the article? Why only the word 'Versailles'? The first two of these questions is difficult to answer without first identifying the source—a task I did not undertake and is not the concern of this thesis. However, the third might be answered, if we consider it in the same context as *Mai 191*; it signals a monumental political moment which changed the course of European history and a moment motivated by political and social change. By including this fragment in his collage, removed from its original context, Schwitters does not merely present this event as a moment in modern history (actually in his immediate moment) but one that is politically charged and, moreover, a moment which he has engaged with through his art. The fragment's displacement from its original source and appropriation might, on the surface, appear as an enactment of Schwitters' aesthetic ideology expressed in his

⁹⁸ Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, p. 73.

‘Merz’ essay and in the section quoted above. However, to select a textual reference to a moment which changed European (and arguably world) history so significantly, evades being aestheticized in the way Schwitters imagines for his work. What is striking in both the collages I have mentioned is that the-political connotations come not from the composition, nor the ‘visual’ aspects of the collage, as one might expect from visual art; instead the political content is executed through the use of textual clippings.

Of course Schwitters was not the only artist to play with the media in his visual works; much of the Dadaist ideology was spread through little magazines, as with movements such as Verism, Futurism, Expressionism, among others. *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* (Volume 3) explores the widespread magazine culture throughout Europe in the early twentieth century. Chapters by Christian Weikop, Sabine Kriebel and Dorothea Dietrich focus on the Expressionist, Dada and Merz magazines, and discuss each movement’s use of the little magazine to disseminate their message and their art. Weikop discusses the magazines *Die freie Strasse* [The Open Road] and *Neue Jugend* [New Youth] as examples of the ‘two factions of Berlin Dada’, stating:

[*Die freie Strasse* is an example of] the Hausmann-Baader concern, which through the magazines at least, propagated a distinctive form of anarcho-communism (a fusion of revolutionary politics and psychoanalysis); and in the case of [*Neue Jugend* we see] the Herzfelde-Heartfield-Grosz alliance (the Malik-Verlag group), which was more clearly oriented towards a Marxist agenda, and appropriated the language of advertising in order to satirically critique bourgeois capitalism.⁹⁹

The editors of these magazines were all accomplished photomonteurs or collagists, Baader and Hausmann enthusiastically experimenting with the form, using paper, photography, and clippings from newspapers, magazines, scraps of coloured paper, and so on. And Herzfelde, Heartfield and Grosz, all experts in photomontage (Herzfelde a film-maker, made films which cut together filmic and illustration materials), edited their magazines using a similar practice.

⁹⁹ Christian Weikop, ‘Transitions: From Expressionism to Dada,’ in *History of Modernist Magazines*, Vol. 3, pp. 798-815; p. 798.

Schwitters' collages are simultaneously (inter)textual as well as visual. His writing too plays with boundaries in form; one such example is 'From the Back and from the Front to Start' (1919):

Labor volunteers.
Sabotage *strike* hand grenades.
Strike upheaves man.
Teeth bark forth teeth.
Infringements strike dismissals.
Bark—bark—bark—bang—Fear culminates silverstrings.
Drips stone on stone.
The upper echelons!
The upper echelons!
Hand grenades fly by themselves. But you be endlessly cool-headed.
Streetcars go forth from the back & the front. Who rides on tourist buses?
Easy—easy—you people all stand up—in line!—Head under foot: that's what I mean by a strike! Once & for all the tip money bends—it bends—the streetcars bent out of shape are gaping all over. Crooked hours. Hand back that young herring. But the upper echelons must act (this one walks on his hands 21/31)& must hold firm in the face of this illegal strike by a disgruntled & inefficient professional class (*German Daily News*), & especially here where its present behaviour, not without effect on upcoming strikes in Berlin and the rest of the Reich, cranks out head laughs. Lootings rob riots. (I say the opposite, viz. Only not always.) The upper echelons!
The upper echelons!
The upper echelons & very.
Culminates silverstrings stone on stone.
Drips fear expulsion bang.
Sabotage *strike* infringements.
Drop silverstrings fear.
Provisionally there exists no prospect to bring the thing together, the situation has no board of supervisors. (That our lovely platt-deutsch never be forgotten!) And an absolutely binding heat to strike your momma's feet. Four thousand, forty thousand cheap, this got a long ways still to go.—The Jews—the Jews!¹⁰⁰

It is made from what reads like propaganda slogans, workers' songs, protesters' chants and is structured in such a way that the lines resemble erratic movements and sounds the reader/listener might see/hear were they present at a protest, or march. It seems

¹⁰⁰ Kurt Schwitters, 'From the Back and From the Front to Start,' trans. Jerome Rothenberg, *PPPPPPP: Poems Performance Pieces Proses Plays Poetics*, eds. Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris (Cambridge, MA: Exact Press, 2002), p.28.

natural, then, to suggest that collage as an art form is inherently political. Collage uses media which exist within a discourse, context or has meaning *a priori*. The materials Schwitters sourced were often from newspapers, his own work, images taken from magazines (particularly in the later ones where fashion shots are included of young women), and from advertisements. Some of the fragments, of course, contain no political meaning at all, but the fragments which are political reveal the mind of a critical and intellectually astute artist. The materiality of the collage is an important feature in determining how it is read. It suggests not only a focus on the commodity, but also on the history of material cultures. That Schwitters moves away from the canvas is not only a result of *Ersatzkultur*, but also a sign of the shift in the ways that the art world is responding to its surroundings: engaging with the political, social and cultural issues during the early years of the Weimar period.

The suggestion that Schwitters' works are crossing boundaries into the plastic arts from 'painting' is somewhat radical—and while this might not be immediately obvious in the collages presented to us in catalogues and images in books, it does highlight the need to interact with the materials used. This ambivalence of dimensionality is important in relation to the body. The transference of materiality between three- and two-dimensional representation is often lost in collage and photomontage; however, Schwitters' hybrid compositions (straddling two-dimensional collage and three-dimensional assemblage) have the potential to redefine our understandings of materiality and the body. I would now like to consider Höch's represented bodies as a template for which to begin to understand Schwitters' use of the images of women and their political potential through decontextualisation and reassembling them as part of a larger visual narrative.

Höch's photomontage is another example whereby the appropriation of bodies is indicative of the kind of re-politicisation of material I will argue Schwitters also enacts. Similarly, John Heartfield's compositions display interesting and highly politicised perspectives of the period. Where these artists can be differentiated is in their subject matter: Höch's artistic play with gender and bodies is and has been discussed within the context of queer politics. Her feminine forms are often presented

in somewhat mutilated arrangements; Jennifer Blessing's essay in her edited volume *Rose is a Rose is a Rose: Gender Performance in Photography* develops a discussion of Höch's queer politics in her collaged depictions of women and in particular the collaged formation of her lover, Til Brugman.¹⁰¹ The repositioning of gender boundaries is central to Höch's aesthetic: she herself is a collaged form of femininity. Her self-imaging is based on contradictions and shifts within the binarised boundaries of gender in early twentieth-century Germany—she plays with fashion, crossing men's and women's clothing, representing the new and hybridised feminine aesthetic evident in the figure of the *neue Frau*. Schwitters responds to these changes also, however, in a different fashion. Schwitters' own fashion choices are anti-modernist, yet his artistic approach is wholly avant-garde. Raoul Hausmann remembers Schwitters introducing himself at the Café des Westens in Berlin, and recalls him being sartorially bourgeois.¹⁰² There had been radical shifts in women's fashion in the late 1910s and early 1920s and men's fashion had changed, although in somewhat less radical ways. Schwitters showed an interest in fashion in his art (cutting from fashion magazines and catalogues), in his personal life (his mother and father owned a women's fashion store), and he even attempted to write a book about fashion (now lost). However, Schwitters continued to wear the fashion of the past and in doing so flouted the changing conventions of his own time.

Before considering the depiction of women by a male artist, it is pertinent to consider the role women have played in shaping their own images throughout this period. I will focus on two female artists and their depictions of themselves in two quite different ways. I would first like to consider the potential use for collage as a political form of art, then how this might be implemented to benefit feminist causes.

The New Woman, *Ersatzkultur* and the collage

The new Weimar Constitution proposed equality between men and women. Marsha Meskimmon has written extensively on the *Neue Sachlichkeit* [New Objectivity]

¹⁰¹Jennifer Blessing, 'Rose is a Rose is Rose: Gender Performance in Photography', in *Rose is a Rose is a Rose: Gender Performance in Photography*, ed. Jennifer Blessing (New York, NY: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997), p.23

¹⁰² See footnote 8, p. 5.

movement. In the edited volume *Vision of the Neue Frau: Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, she writes:

One very significant way in which existing theories are lacking is in the consideration of the role of women in Weimar politics and, hence in the art of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Women realists could, and did, relate to the ‘political’ in their art in the [same] ways [as male artists...]; they joined political parties, produced political satires, social criticisms and positive representations of the working classes. However, they did more than just those things; their work had political dimensions outside the boundaries of the traditional definitions, just as women in Weimar generally acted politically in ways which defied traditional party politics and ideology. Masculine-normative concepts dominate the definitions of ‘politics’ and the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, hence new criteria are required in order to understand more fully the political implications of the art produced by women associated with the *Neue Sachlichkeit*.¹⁰³

Meskimmon’s observation that the women artists of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* have been excluded from discussions of political activism, despite contradictory evidence, is similar to the way that Schwitters has been dismissed in such discussions, and thus considering women’s history in parallel with Schwitters’ tracing of this period in his art offers an enlightening analysis.

As Richard Evans has documented, the women’s movements in Germany were vast and varying in their political views and alignments.¹⁰⁴ They existed as parts of and outsiders to societal norms. Some were conservative, others radical, but all were politically active. Hannover, Kurt Schwitters’ hometown, was the hub for the *Deutsche-Evangelischer Frauenbund* (The German Protestant Women’s League, or DEF), a point I have previously argued suggests that Schwitters would have been very aware of the politics of the women’s movement, and given the more conservative politics of the DEF and Hannover’s tradition as a Protestant ‘strong-hold’, it might explain Dietrich’s above reading of Schwitters’ so-called conservative women.¹⁰⁵

While I agree with Meskimmon’s assertion that political definitions are dominated by masculinist concepts, in this discussion I will shift those definitions outside of the

¹⁰³ Marsha Meskimmon, ‘Politics, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and Women Artists’, *Visions of the Neue Frau*, p.15.

¹⁰⁴ See, Evans, 1976.

¹⁰⁵ Cole Collins, ‘From the Front, as From the Back’: Feminist Perspectives in Kurt Schwitters’ ‘Anna Blossom has Wheels’ (unpublished MLitt thesis, University of Glasgow, 2014).

boundaries of a binary understanding of gender. I begin by considering images of women artists as fashioned by their colleagues and by themselves. There was a seismic shift in the way some women dressed and presented themselves. In light of mutilated male bodies, changed forever by the scars of war, the role of the male changed in both society and the workplace. As such, women began to take up more masculine representations and to participate in more masculine roles. This led many to begin to alter their own image. This change began by shortening their hair and the hemlines of their skirts. As Dorothy Rowe has suggested, the change in hemlines on ladies' dresses and skirts was quite possibly a product of the *Ersatzkultur* that Germany experienced, building on Makela's contextualisation of Schwitters' collages and the culture of substitution.¹⁰⁶ All excess was to be offered towards helping to support the government's efforts to replenish provisions in the country.

In addition to changing hemlines, the *Bubikopf*, or pageboy haircut, became *en vogue* in this time for women. Women played a vital role in replacing men in work places; and as the Weimar Constitution seemingly offered emancipation for women, it would suggest that with a change in cultural consciousness comes a change in outward appearances. This focus on shifting aesthetic changes in fashion might suggest the reason that so many of the images of women that appeared in Schwitters' collages were of young models, once featured in fashion magazines. Annegreth Nill's 1990 doctoral thesis identifies the sources of some of these fragments, so too have Karen Orchard, Emma Chambers and Jenny Powell in their 2013 exhibition catalogue, and in one essay published as part of the Tate Blog series, also in 2013.¹⁰⁷ What is most interesting, and the reason for this perambulatory stroll with Hegemann and Höch, is

¹⁰⁶ Dorothy Rowe and Camilla Smith co-convoked a panel entitled 'Weimar's 'Others': Art History, Visual Culture and Germany after 1918 (April 2015) at the, then, Association of Art Historians (AAH) annual conference. The proceedings from this session will be published as a special issue of *Art History* magazine in June 2019. For more on the shortening of hemlines in Weimar Germany, see Alice Rühle-Gerstel, 'Back to the Good Old Days?,' in *The Weimar Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 218-219.

¹⁰⁷ Some work has been done to identify the sources of the fragments presented in Schwitters' work. Annegreth Nill's PhD thesis (1990). See also: Karin Orchard and Emma Chambers, *Schwitters in Britain*, 2013; and 'Schwitters in Britain: a mystery collaged figure revealed,' *Tate Blog* (26 March 2013) [<http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/schwitters-britain-mystery-collaged-figure-revealed>]. There is still work to be done in finding the original materials, but given his access to clothing catalogues through his parents' small business, and his own background as the owner of a publishing house, fashion magazines seem the most plausible source for the women he presents in his works.

that they represent another version of the 'New Woman'. It seems that Schwitters' focus on the 'femme' couture of the time (and indeed the 'femme' representations of the body) is quite the opposite to the redaction of feminine physicality as exhibited by Hegemann, Höch, and, most pointedly, Brugman. Furthermore, this separation of self-representation and the representation of women by others is important to consider. Which narrative is truer to the reality of how women viewed themselves? Brugman and Höch's art was deeply concerned with this question, and so Höch's application of the collage form exposes the anxieties of shifting identities and images occurring during the first half of the twentieth century. Caroline Potter notes:

In 1926, Brugman met the German artist and Dadaist, Hannah Höch. Previously the long-term mistress of Raoul Hausmann, an Austrian artist and writer known as the 'warhorse of the Dada polemics,' Höch was nevertheless intensely drawn to Brugman. The friendship between them quickly became romantic, and Brugman ended her involvement with Masthoff. Höch was initially apprehensive, telling Brugman, 'To be closely connected with another woman for me is totally new, since it means being taken by the spirit of my own spirit, confronted by a close relative.'

Residing in The Hague until 1929, the pair then settled in Berlin. In the German capital, Brugman resumed her teaching, earning enough for Höch to devote herself entirely to her art. They also adopted Ninn, a cat whom both women adored. Brugman's confidence and ease with her own sexual identity clearly had a profound effect on Höch, and many of her famous photomontages, completed whilst they were together, portray same-sex intimacy. In 1935, they embarked on a joint venture, the book *Scheingehacktes*, with text by Brugman and illustrations by Höch.¹⁰⁸

Höch's and Brugman's personal and professional intermingling is also interesting to consider in this context. Höch was influenced by Brugman and as such there seems to have been a blurring of the aforementioned separation of self-representation and representation by another.

While this interpretation of Hegemann and Höch as gender-bending radicals offers interesting points of discussion, it situates men and women in binary opposition to each other, maintaining a discourse of binarized genders. However, despite this limiting categorisation of the body, these representations were radical within their

¹⁰⁸ Caroline Potter, 'So Far and Beyond: The Style of Til Brugman' (2014).
<http://asketchofthepast.com/2014/12/14/so-far-and-beyond-the-style-of-til-brugman/>

time, and one must be careful not to anachronistically apply theories and therefore mischaracterise these representations. In spite of the terms ‘queer’ not gaining academic significance until the early 1990s, expressions of ‘queerness’ have a long history, and figures of the early nineteenth century were studying these expressions (exploring the chemical and hormonal, anatomical, and psychological effects). Havelock Ellis, based in London, was exploring theories of sexuality and trans-ness¹⁰⁹ as early as 1905; Sigmund Freud, in Vienna, was writing on (often pathologizing) bisexuality and homosexuality in the 1910s; and Magnus Hirschfeld had established the *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sexual Science) and the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* (The Scientific-Humanitarian Committee, or WhK) and, homosexual himself, was a vocal advocate for homosexual and (what we would now understand as) trans rights. In total contrast to these ground-breaking studies and forward-thinking movements within the academic and medical communities, Otto Weininger, another Austrian, wrote a treatise on the difference between men and women. *Geschlecht und Charakter: Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung* (1903) [Sex and Character: A Principal Investigation] is, at points, misogynistic, and takes traditional models of femininity and masculinity, maleness and femaleness, and sexist configurations of dichotomies between men and women (strong/weak, caregiver/breadwinner, stoicism/emotion, and so on).

In using queer theory, I suggest we do not read this as an anachronistic application of twenty-first century gender definitions, but rather as a more effective methodology for discussing the portrayals evident in Schwitters’ collages. While the above studies had their own discourses, these are not adequate to discuss notions of liminality, which I argue throughout this thesis is an integral part of collage practice, as they are entrenched in the discourses and semantics of their time, these discourses were limited by their attachment to binarised notions of gender. I discuss these theories throughout the thesis in connection with Schwitters’ traditional and non-traditional representations of women.

¹⁰⁹ This term applies to notions connected to transgenderism and gender dysphoria (taking in, particularly in the time of Ellis, Freud, and Hirschfeld, transvestitism and the “invert” (homosexual)).

Two female artists in particular seemed to speak to this shift in consciousness: Höch and Hegemann. Höch, as has been discussed, was politically astute and more than capable of supporting and promoting herself within the boys' club of Berlin Dada. Hegemann poses a problem when contextualised or contrasted with Höch. She and her husband, Anton Räderscheidt, exhibited collaboratively, as a *Künstlerehepaar* [artist couple]. Yet Hegemann's image and works are stark and technically skilled (and in some cases more nuanced than those of her husband) that one might consider them even without validation from her collaborator.

In August Sander's portrait of the artist, from 1925, (Fig. 2) we can see Hegemann's sharp and neatly cut bob, she appears at once feminine and masculine: her loose clothing hides but does not erase her femininity; her averted gaze avoids the male gaze. The photographer August Sander has not named the 'sitter', he has merely called her 'Painter' (Fig. 3). In doing so, she is defined by her gender and her craft. It is listed in Rowe's monograph on Hegemann as 'Painter'.¹¹⁰ The original work was titled *Malerin* [Marta Hegemann]. Sander's naming of the 'female painter' (which is how we might effectively translate the German *Malerin*) is, I argue, an important distinction. In spite of the arbitrary and ancient grammatical formulae established in German (gendered nouns and corresponding articles) the distinction made between professions has been created. There are terms which are solely connected with one gender or another, particularly female roles, which do not have a distinct opposite. For example, *die Hausfrau* [the housewife] does not have an accepted opposite. One could, by laws of logic and language, create *der Hausmann* [the house husband]. This word exists in archaic [*veraltet*] German and was once used to mean *Hausmeister* [lit. house master] (in English the equivalent might be a building manager or in the US, superintendent).¹¹¹ However, as gendered social constructions have changed the meaning has also changed, and thus, we can see how the construction of language can be politicised, and so the designation of genders to nouns can be understood

¹¹⁰See Duden entry for 'Hausmann': <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Hausmann#Bedeutung>

¹¹¹ Dorothy Price, *After Dada: Marta Hegemann and the Cologne Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 2. For more on Sander, see also Dorothy C. Rowe, 'August Sander and the Artists: Locating the Subjects of New Objectivity,' *Tate Papers* No. 19, Spring 2013.

differently. The distinction in the German language between male and female painter is important. It signals recognition of parity between the sexes, and their ability to do the same job and thus, the politics that have become inherent between the two terms.

Moreover, German also has a third linguistic device which can be used to refer to groups of mixed genders. Instead of writing ‘Lehrer/Lehrerinnen’ [teachers] one would write ‘Lehrende’ (although somewhat problematically both of these words would still be preceded by the plural (also the female) article ‘die’). This is an initiation which observes ‘political correctness’. However, other attempts to intervene in the overtly gendered nature of the German language have attempted to create a new way of referring to those who define as non-binary. Lann Hornscheidt conceived of titles which replace the conventional masculine or feminine ending “-/in” or “-er/innen” with “-x”:¹¹² for example, they use the title “Professx” (pronounced “Professiks”) rather than ‘Professor’ or ‘Professorin’ to denote their non-binary definition.¹¹³ While there are clear disadvantages to a “gendered” language—the grammatical functioning of words based on their (elected) gender—English does not have a gendered language system in the same way as German or French, for example; instead it is the *connotations* of words that are gendered. Connotations created via the consciousness of culture: words are given meaning through their usage and application; often these inferences are created because of cultural and societal norms being upheld and perpetuated by linguistic devices. Literature, speeches delivered to the masses, and newspaper reports are all means of creating and maintaining those ideologies through language and carrying forward to the general consciousness.

Höch’s self-image is stark and androgynous, more so than Hegemann’s. In a photograph from ca. 1930, Höch is pictured with her lover, and fellow artist, Til Brugman. She can clearly be seen wearing the short (much shorter than Hegemann’s)

¹¹² I use “they” as the third person singular pronoun to refer to Lann Hornscheidt.

¹¹³ For a further exploration of this language see: Lann Hornscheidt’s books: *Die sprachliche Benennung von Personen aus konstruktivistischer Sicht. Genderspezifisierung und ihre diskursive Verhandlung im heutigen Schwedisch.* (Berlin and New York, NY: De Gruyter, 2006); also, *feministische w_orte. ein lern-, denk- und handlungsbuch zu sprache und diskriminierung, gender studies und feministischer linguistik* (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes and Apsel, 2012). Such steps have recently been taken in Spanish offering a third option, also using the ‘-x’ suffix to replace the masculine ‘-o’ and feminine ‘-a’ endings (as in ‘Latina’ and ‘Latino’ becoming ‘Latinx’).

bob, along with the dark jacket, white floppy-collared shirt and loose bow-tie. She instantly appears masculine, and this is only accentuated by Brugman's suit-jacket, stiff-collared shirt and tie, along with her stark short cut hair. The gender-bending pair represented the *Neue Frau*: they experimented in dress, they were politically active, they were working artists and they were discovering new sexualities, no longer required to make their hand fit the heterosexual glove. In both of these images there has to be an outsider to the scene who has taken the photograph. In the first instance, we are aware of Stieglitz's positioning of the sitter, however, we must remember that the fashioning of her image outside of the photographic frame is entirely autonomous from the male conception of femininity.

These representations of Höch, Brugman and Hegemann show their self-fashioning as the new woman. Their appearances are based on fashion; dressed in clothes with masculine lines and shapes which are antithetical to early twentieth-century German conceptions of women's apparel as they show women almost completely crossing the boundaries of gendered fashion and adopting typically male fashions. In the 1920s, we can see the shift in political and cultural parameters reflected in the fashion of the day. In her book, *History of 20th Century Fashion*, Elizabeth Ewing includes images of various length hem-lined skirts, she includes images of *garçonnes* fashions: short (below the knee) skirts, with rounded neck tops to match; dresses with short hemlines too, and the iconic *cloche* [bell] hat made for the lady with bobbed hair (according to the advertisement for the hat).¹¹⁴ This re-dressing of feminine attire somehow makes Höch's and Brugman's images seem conventional. However, it was not merely in their attire that Höch, Brugman and Hegemann, had represented their alternative femininity: it was through their art they represented the *Neue Frau* and made clear her break from traditions past. Schwitters' collage practice is a hybrid form unlike other collage in that it simultaneously engages and disengages the intrinsic and extrinsic, and as such it is imperative to understand the bodies he represents in his works specifically within this context. Feminine bodies cross-dressing, and boundaries of

¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Ewing, *History of Twentieth Century Fashion* (London: Batsford, 1974), pp. 99-118.

identities are crossed by this undermining of traditional dress codes. Moreover, Schwitters further codifies the bodies he presents in his use of text and image in cooperation with and/or opposition to one another. Given this clear shift in representation of feminine attire, I will now focus on one of Schwitters' collages which stand in contention to these assertions of a "new femininity".

Schwitters' images of women are rarely mutilated and re-assembled to the extents they are in Höch's collages. Höch assembles bodies composed from fragments of male and female anatomy, often complicated by ethnic bodies or artefacts, thus further subverting traditional notions of the feminine body in a German (and wider western) context. Schwitters deconstructs the bodies he uses and often scatters them across the canvas (*Das Kotsbild* (1920) is exemplary of this and will be discussed in Chapter 3), often flipping them upside-down, and presenting them as wholly disassembled. It is with this positioning of women on the canvas that I would suggest that he is providing a commentary on the portrayal of women in art and the media; and by leaving the women he features in fragments, he allows for them to be pieced back together independently of the artist—and as such, they can be reassembled multiple times and in a range of configurations.

Höch's re-assembly of the feminine form shows a newly constructed female identity, one constructed by a woman, whose work embodies all the ideas of the new woman. Höch's images of women go beyond simply presenting to the world the New Woman; she is envisaging a multitude of new women. Höch's figuration of woman traverses racial boundaries and so she constructs multiracial bodies and identities: her othering of the already othered body. Höch's hybridisation of the body unsettles conventional representations of femininity and racialised bodies in ways that offend or trouble the conservative mind (and would particularly worry the future National Socialist regime). Her collaged bodies are mutilated, dismembered, fragmented, and often discernibly so, creating Frankensteinian figures with accentuated features, oversized limbs attached to regular-sized ones, removed from dancers, actresses, classical and ethnographic sculptures, all the while leaving the "stitches" bare. Unlike Schwitters' collaged forms which are so often left un-reconstructed, and who are products (both

literally and figuratively) of the chaos and destruction of Germany and its culture. In a time when other artists are creating newly formed identities and forms from the detritus around them, Schwitters chooses to leave these identities in bits and pieces. Instead of connecting these bodies in the way that Höch does, through juxtaposition, Schwitters connects the body parts through texts, and so the word connects the visual; or they are at least bound up together in the creation of these new identities, for example, *Das Kotsbild* which will be the focus of Chapter 3.

One exception to this pattern of leaving the bodies disassembled, in multiple fragments across the canvas, is *Mz. 180 Figurine* (1920) (Fig. 4). Furthermore, he incorporates text as part of her form, and so emphasises the relationship between word and image, language and identity. In *Mz. 180 Figurine*, the model in this collage is constructed from images cut from a fashion magazine, and text from newspapers which is redacted by orange/brown and white geometrical scraps of paper. The woman in the image is dressed in black, her hair is neatly wrapped up in a sort of elevated bun, she tilts her head coyly to gaze out at the viewer; she plays with her necklace with one long slender hand, extending from an equally slender arm which is tucked in tightly as though to accentuate her quite square upper body. She is dressed in a skirt made from newspaper print cut roughly so as to resemble a skirt, however it is buttressed by the original black hem of the skirt to reveal the lady's calves, ankles and sharply pointed high-heeled shoes. The model at first glance exemplifies a young fashion-forward woman; her inviting and coy gaze suggests she is aware of her beauty, and aware of how striking she looks. Yet, despite this illustration being clearly staged (the angle of the model's neck seems anatomically impossible), Schwitters goes further to highlight her unrealistic portrayal. He layers white and black triangles at her shoulders as though to accentuate the uncomfortable angles that the model's body makes. And then in stark contrast replaces the consciously shaped torso of the model with a wider piece of newspaper, cut with much softer and rounded lines. It creates the effect of a garment of clothing akin to a skirt; yet as I have already mentioned, it does not cover the entirety of the original skirt. The insufficient covering up of the original garment which lies beneath the newspaper clipping is, I would suggest, wholly deliberate. It focuses the viewer's attention on the length of her skirt, reminding the viewer that this

fashion choice is symbolic of change. By layering it with newspapers, it alludes to a focus on change and information on the events of the day. Schwitters draws attention to the political implications inherent in cloth(ing).

As aforementioned, Maria Makela's discussion of Schwitters' exclusion of cloth from his canvas (at least as the material he paints directly on to) offers new scholarship exploring the materiality of his work. Furthermore, she also makes apparent the political implications of cloth in the early Weimar period. She writes:

By 1918 the lack of cloth was so acute that the government not only confiscated all the curtains in Berlin's public buildings so as to make use of them for military purposes, it instituted a program to encourage private citizens to exchange their cloth curtains for ones made out of woven paper.

She continues:

paper clothing fulfilled many of the military and civilian needs towards the end of the war and on into the inflationary era, when Germany had access again to the international market but little purchase power. Treated with a solution that made it water-resistant, paper cloth could be washed a number of times without disintegrating, and, though somewhat stiff and scratchy, was used for everything from children's clothing and uniforms, to underwear and women's dresses.¹¹⁵

It is clear, given Makela's evidence, that Schwitters is referring to this trend for woven paper clothing. He shows not only the progressive and resourceful appropriation of the ready-made for practical uses, but I want to suggest highlights the importance of the apparently female crafts. Embroidery, stitching, dress-making, are all vital in the revitalisation of Germany: the need to repurpose materials for a better use. That the focus of the piece is not on the illustration of the woman, but on the newspaper skirt points to the positive role of women in this crisis. Schwitters is making a clear statement: that women should be included in the political, social and cultural discourses of the time.

Women were making efforts to have their voices heard in these contexts

¹¹⁵ Makela, 'Making Lemonade', p. 5.

(through women's social and cultural groups, as well as magazines). However, it is particularly pertinent that a male artist should value them and present them as protagonists of their own destiny: not allowing themselves to be defined by their male counterparts, but rather to consider ways that positively influence the perception of women and particularly representations which contravene the conventional ideas shared by other artists in the first half of the twentieth century. And that Schwitters creates a discord between the male-dominated field of journalism (particularly in *Mz. 180. Figurine*) and feminine fashion creates a space for the redefinition of traditional roles.

It should also be noted that Makela suggests Schwitters has an interest in fashion because his mother was a talented seamstress, and that she and Schwitters' father opened their own ladies' fashion store in Hannover;¹¹⁶ she also notes that Hannover was the largest producer of wool,¹¹⁷ and suggests that these circumstances might have been the impetus for creating such a collage as *Mz. 180 Figurine*. While I agree with Makela's assertion, I wish to distance this discussion a little from these points: it detracts from his own political autonomy, and suggests he makes his little doll for his mother, or for Hannover. I am arguing for a more global approach to Schwitters, which does not remove him entirely from Hannover, and his outsider status, but perhaps allows for a discussion to be opened which connects Schwitters to more global issues as is the case with many of his compatriots.

This global perspective is referenced in the text which makes up the figurine's skirt. The text is somewhat fragmented and redacted, but if we consider what is legible the translation might read as follows:

Each simple ... and ... When you ... to use ... You [could also be 'she'] ... to give [therefore] ... instruction [inserted]... Price[/Prize/Award] Sole Supplier ... Memming[en].¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Makela, 'Making Lemonade', p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Makela, 'Making Lemonade', p. 1.

¹¹⁸ Jedes ... Einfach ... und ros ... Wenn Sie ... verwenden. Sie ... Geben Sie desh[alb] ... Anweisung füg[bar/en] ... Preis ... Alleiniger Lie[ferant] ... Memming[en] erster. [My own translation above.]

While this text reads unconventionally, the vocabulary used is suggestive of marketing and commerce [*Kommerz*], and the reference to ‘sole supplier’ connects this collage to fashion: the reader is prompted to think of shoes, as well as market monopoly. It is also interesting to note that Memmingen is a town in Bavaria which has a long history stretching into medieval times of strong trade around Europe, reinforcing Schwitters’ references to trade, commerce and marketing. It was also visited by the artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), and the printer and publisher, Johannes Gutenberg (ca. 1398-1468), the former symbolising the archetypal German artist (which Schwitters was firmly not), the latter, a printing revolution, and reflects yet another paradigmatic shift in German culture. The text printed on the skirt is a story which mentions (of what can be read, at least) burning grain, storms, a thatched roof, among other banal details.¹¹⁹ It directs the viewer to consider the everyday, and points to both the shifts in local and those in a much wider context: one of the most significant, the changes in women’s attire (and clothing more generally).

As evidenced by the aforementioned collage, I propose that through Schwitters’ use of the collage technique one can assume an immediate subversion of any norms. The collage form is by its very nature politically charged. It seeks to denounce normality, and when we consider the artists who have most effectively utilised the collage, we can prove this theory. We might also look more closely at Schwitters’ methodology: one must consider the finest detail; from the materials used, to the cut of the paper, to the mark on the “canvas”, and to the (deliberate) arrangement of the images. As well as this methodology, it is also useful to consider that photographs and illustrations are not the only mediums to enter his collages. Many of his works are constructed from found sweet wrappers, cuts of cloth, paper, and also print. The inclusion of text in his collages skews the notion of a purely visual culture. It invites the viewer to literally *read* his collages. Much like the reading of text, there are allusions and blanks from which the reader must draw their own conclusions. In the same way, Schwitters’ viewers are invited to reconstruct their own narratives. Annegreth Nill writes that

¹¹⁹ My own translation.

Zeichnung A2 Haus, 1918, raises ‘the issue of the “extrinsic” versus “intrinsic” form and content inherent in the collage medium.’¹²⁰ She continues:

The materials the artist uses to compose his pictures already have for and meaning (here called “extrinsic”) deriving from their function in the real world. In the process of creation, as Kurt Schwitters never tired of pointing out, the artist chooses, evaluates, and transforms each piece according to the requirements of the picture. The extrinsic form and content are only retained if the artist decides that the intrinsic form and content of the work demand it.¹²¹

Nil’s analysis not only excludes the political commentary in the works, but removes the viewer from the process of finding meaning in the works, by giving value only to the intrinsic form and content. This insistence (compounded by the pervading rhetoric that ‘Schwitters never tired of pointing this out’) from scholars (Elderfield also argues against extrinsic content) has contributed to the depoliticization of Schwitters’ work, and the problematic decontextualization of Schwitters’ work as part of a much larger, socially aware history of the collage.

Diane Waldman, in her study of the history of the collage and assemblage provides an archive of the evolution of the collage form, from the scrapbook and papier collé to the collage and assemblage in their various manifestations from the twenties to the present day. Schwitters is made a focus in one section, and then mentioned multiple times throughout this book, but the focus of his influence is on technique. In fact, Waldman states: ‘In many respects, Schwitters’ interests paralleled those of other Dada artists. But while his work is occasionally satiric, it is too personal and autobiographical to be compared with the more political Dadaists.’¹²² It seems that her assertion, whilst not a novel one, is a contributory factor in the understanding of Schwitters as non-political: the personal (or it might be read as introspective) nature of his work has been favoured over an interpretation of their interaction with the world around them. The fragments used are collected from the world(s) around him, and as such are imbued with the cultures and politics of the time and thus are inherently

¹²⁰ Nil, *Decoding Merz*, p. 30.

¹²¹ Nil, *Decoding Merz*, pp. 30-31.

¹²² Diane Waldman, *Collage, Assemblage and the Found Object* (London: Phaidon, 1992), p.118.

political.¹²³ Moreover, she fails to explore the personal as political. This has been the subject of other artists who invoke collage as their medium: Hannah Höch's personal relationship with Til Brugman is understood to be represented in her queer formulations of female forms; later, the likes of Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Kenneth Halliwell and Joe Orton's collages have been read as expressions of homosexuality and queer lives in their application of collage and use of content which makes explicit reference to the changing social and political situations regarding gay rights in the 1970s and 1980s in America.

Queering the collage: re-assembling identities

If we can read the personal as political in the works of these artists, whose practice is connected to Schwitters' through a legacy of collage, why has it not been done with Schwitters? It may be that there is a reliance on Schwitters' own interpretations of his work, and as I will explore later in this thesis, the personal and political are inextricably entwined, in part as a result of Schwitters' working life being spent in his hometown, Hannover, but also because politics is innately personal. Waldman at least acknowledges that Schwitters has moments of satire in his work, however, I would argue that these are more than occasional. I will argue for the emergence of a feminine aesthetic, and then prove that this extends to (proto-)feminist politics.

Firstly, the notion of a feminine aesthetic is a contentious issue and might seem to contradict my previous notion of using non-gendered ideology to think through Schwitters' works. The notion of a feminine aesthetic maintains a discourse which is situated within a binary understanding of gender. It classifies the body and its performativity (or ability to perform) between two points, and risks removing the possibility of fluid or multiple interpretations of identity. Judith Butler writes:

¹²³ I make reference to plural 'cultures' and 'politics', because the works are not always site-specific. He may have lived and worked in Hannover for the largest part of his life, but his work has an internationality in its appraisal of politics which were not purely German. There are fragments which appear in his works which are without the German consciousness, and are understood more universally, which will be returned to later in this essay.

The phallus as signifier within lesbian sexuality will engage the spectre of shame and repudiation delivered by that feminist theory which would secure a feminine morphology in its radical distinctness from the masculine (a binarism that is secured through heterosexual presumption), a spectre delivered in a more pervasive way by the masculinist theory which would insist on the male morphology as the only possible figure for the human body.¹²⁴

In Butler's discourse, the lesbian does not conform to the feminine, because this relies on a heterosexual positioning of the two sexes. It also insists on the separation of male and female (and therefore masculine and feminine). In thinking about the collagistic approach to Schwitters' identity, his incorporation of Anna Blume as the expression of his alter-ego is an utterance, rather than a performance. Unlike Duchamp's dressing up as Rose Sélavy which might be understood in terms of drag, Schwitters' enacting of his feminine alter-ego (borrowing from Luke, who makes this distinction of the 'feminine') is linguistic. However, to consider it, like drag, as a complication of the traditional notions of gender, might be useful in expanding upon my proposal for understanding the feminist aspects of Schwitters' work. Turning to Butler again, she writes:

What drag exposes [...] is the 'normal' constitution of gender representation in which gender performed is in many ways constituted by a set of disavowed attachments or identifications that constitute a different domain of the 'unperformable'. ... What is 'performed' in drag is, of course, the *sign* of gender, a sign that is not the same as the body that it figures, but that cannot be read without it.¹²⁵

This consideration of gender (and its multiple bodies, acted, enacted, or performed) is helpful in repositioning the traditional gendered notions prevalent in many of the scholarly engagements with women in Schwitters' artistic output (which will be further discussed in later chapters).

Furthermore, to consider the differences between a masculine and feminine aesthetic is useful to realise the dichotomy in which Schwitters (and other male artists) are prefigured. What presents itself in his work is a re-presentation of masculinist

¹²⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 53.

¹²⁵ Butler, *Bodies*, pp. 180-81.

perspectives on the feminine form. Images of women are cut and rearranged with other 'feminine' forms: cloth, images from fashion magazines, etc. This rearrangement of female forms is not uncommon in the practice of collage, or in Dada; and while I disagree with Waldman's claim that Schwitters' political engagement differs entirely from that of his Dada companions, it is clear that some of his colleagues shared this view. For example, Richard Huelsenbeck thought Schwitters conservative and found his living arrangements in Hannover to be provincial:

To Richard Huelsenbeck, one look at Schwitters's home confirmed that the author of 'An Anna Blume' was unfit for the revolutionary ranks of the Berlin Dadaists and an unsuitable candidate to join them in their favoured pastime of getting drunk and insulting people. Coming from the footloose world of Berlin's bohemians, he could not comprehend how any artist could live and work in such surroundings as Waldhausenstrasse. 'Here,' he sneered, 'we had the German forest and a wooden bench complete with hearts carved on it.' He found Schwitters irritable and distrustful and his studio—like the man himself—'a mixture of hopeless disorder and meticulous order.' [... and] calling him 'one of the oddest people I have ever met.'¹²⁶

Huelsenbeck's idea of Hannover represents the contrast between his own surroundings and those of Schwitters, and further exemplifies why Schwitters was not admitted to the Berlin group. It is just one of the main points that separated Schwitters and his Dada colleagues.

Beyond this geographical distinction, Schwitters' aesthetic departs from the aggressive approach of Dada artists such as John Heartfield and Hannah Höch.¹²⁷ While Heartfield and Höch are not strictly collagists on account of their experimentation with photomontage as a form, their use of second-hand materials, the deliberateness of the composition and slicing technique they both apply are beneficial as comparisons, as well as contrasts given their overt politically-charged content. Using Höch and Heartfield as comparisons and contrasts of one another is also useful

¹²⁶ Webster, 1997, pp. 103-4; quoting Richard Huelsenbeck, 'Dada and Existentialism,' in Willy Verkauf, ed. *Dada: Monograph of a Movement* (London: Academy Editions, 1975), p. 36; and Richard Huelsenbeck, *Reise bis ans Ende der Freiheit* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1984), p. 169.

¹²⁷ This is not to say that the aesthetics of Höch and Heartfield are to be conflated, or are even remotely similar. I will explore a little later in the chapter why I believe Höch's aesthetic is equally aggressive as Heartfield's; and suggest that Höch's personal presentation skews a reading of aggressiveness being a masculine trait.

because it provides examples of artists who were central to the Dada movements and simultaneously lay at the periphery in other ways.

As Linda Anderson has written, quoting Trev Broughton, ‘the idea that women’s self-construction might be distinguished solely, or even mainly, on the basis of sexual difference—as the ‘other’ of some putative universal ‘man’— may be both ‘reifying and essentialist’.’¹²⁸ During much of the time in which Höch’s and Schwitters’ collages are made, the distinction between the sexes is essentialist as Anderson suggests. In some of her depictions of women, one can see that Höch in the simplest sense ‘others’ herself through her connections and disconnections with male bodies. She was also bisexual, another ‘othering’ rejecting heteronormativity, and this can be sensed in her work. Most recently, in the exhibition catalogue to accompany the Whitechapel Gallery’s show on Höch, Dawn Ades writes that women were at the ‘centre of Höch’s collages’ (Ades does not call them photomontages, here), and she lists the famous women of the arts world who appear in her work.¹²⁹ By focusing on the so-called femaleness in Höch’s work, Ades reads her aesthetic as queer, thus allowing for the appearance of these celebrities to be read through a lens of empowerment. The inclusion of these women who are in the public eye, and repositioned as household names, also subverts normative understandings of domestic space.

Also, by drawing attention to the reclaiming of images of women by a female artist, Ades alludes to Höch’s bisexuality, and more overtly her engagement in lesbian relations with Til Brugman. Höch’s attention to female form and the subsequent reconfiguration of these bodies undermines the male gaze by making it for women. The bodies of the females included in Höch’s collages are no longer objects only to be scrutinised or appreciated by men: the female gaze (from and on the canvas) has been initiated. Given the overtly political and technically aggressive compositions of Höch (and while not discussed in depth here, Heartfield’s might also be considered in

¹²⁸ Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), pp. 10210-3.

¹²⁹ Ades, *Hannah Höch*, p.19.

the same context), Schwitters' aesthetic might be considered 'soft', and as such read as apolitical; it may also be read as feminine. This however, is problematic as it reveals a discourse which perpetuates the positioning of men and women, feminine and masculine, aggressive and passive, art made by male artists and art made by female artists, form and meaning, all in binary opposition. It also focuses the positive and negative factions that divide men and women respectively. It is thus that my intervention—representations of female bodies by Schwitters in alternative configurations and mediums—will allow for the essentialising ideologies behind the terms 'male' and 'female' to be further interrogated, and interpolated, by notions of queerness without appropriating cultural anachronisms, or, in the case of Schwitters, biographical inaccuracies. That is, my analysis does not appropriate Schwitters as representing a queer identity, but rather seeks to understand his representations of women, his support for emancipation and his female artist compatriots, and his, at times, complicated relationships with women using queer theories.

Male artists have used photomontage to subvert cultural norms, in the case of Heartfield's and Raoul Hausmann's they often appropriated images of political figures to criticise their behaviours and rearranged to undermine their authority. John Berger's essay on John Heartfield is useful in considering the fragmentary nature and re-assembling of the photomontage technique. He writes:

The peculiar advantage of photomontage lies in the fact that everything that has been cut out keeps its familiar photographic appearance. We are still looking at *things* and only afterwards at symbols. But because these things have been shifted [...] we are made conscious of the arbitrariness of their continuous normal message [...] Appearances themselves are suddenly showing us how they deceive us.¹³⁰

Berger's acknowledgement of the original context and 'message' of the photographic fragment focuses on its materiality—the 'thing' in Berger's discourse—and how they manifest as symbols seemingly through the gaze of the viewer. The realness and truth of the photograph that Susan Sontag wrote about is somehow compromised by the

¹³⁰ John Berger, 'The Political Uses of Photomontage', in *Selected Essays and Articles: The Look of Things* (Hammondsworth and Victoria, Australia: Penguin, 1972), pp. 185-186.

photomonteur and his practice of rearranging these seemingly truthful acts of representation.¹³¹ It is my assertion that collage functions in the same way.

The processes I have outlined thus far have shown that collage can be used as a tool for feminist expression. The collage is inherently political as it uses materials which have had context, meaning, political and cultural significance and even sentiment before they have been recycled and re-purposed by individual artists. I have also demonstrated that scholars have thought about collage in far too restrictive and narrow parameters. James Martin Harding's book provides a broadening of scope by including in his study performance pieces, but is simultaneously restrictive. Despite my reservations about whether or not the acts themselves are collage (particularly Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964) and Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto* (1967), which for me have more to do with simply cutting than collaging; and particularly violence) I think his approach is most useful to negotiate those boundaries. Harding includes performance pieces in his definition of collage, he discusses works by Ono and Carolee Schneemann, among others. Yet, I want to think about collage's function, and less the mechanical process through which it comes into being. Höch saw collage to be a far greater experiment than simply the cutting and pasting together of images and text. She wrote:

it was necessary to find an all-embracing word for all these things [dancing, music, literature, photography]. Perhaps even a word with some give in it. It came from France, after 1945 – the word 'collage'. In the visual arts it predominantly refers to a newly created entity, made from alienating components.¹³²

Her inclusion of physical arts and visual arts in this translates the term "collage" as a collective act. Not only is this interdisciplinary approach considering it as a term

¹³¹ 'Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we're shown a photograph of it. In one version of its utility, the camera record incriminates ... In another version of its utility, the camera record justifies. A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture. Whatever the limitations (through amateurism) or pretensions (through artistry) of the individual photographer, a photograph—any photograph—seems to have a more innocent, and therefore more accurate, relation to visible reality than do other mimetic objects.' Susan Sontag, 'In Plato's Cave', *On Photography* (London and New York, NY: Penguin, 2002), p.6.

¹³² Hannah Höch, 'On Collage', in Ades, *Hannah Höch*, p.16.

which denotes plurality and constellatory connections important for the examination of Schwitters' collages, but also for my argument that supposes women are agglomerations of ideologies projected by patriarchy. Simone de Beauvoir, in her germinal essay *The Second Sex* writes:

One is not born, but becomes woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society: it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.¹³³

Monique Wittig expands on De Beauvoir's theorem and offers an antidote to escape oppression. Wittig offers the solutions of lesbianism, as the lesbian is entirely un-heterosexual. She cannot be defined by domesticity, nor can she function as a matriarch because matriarchy ultimately remains oppressive given its situation within heterosexuality.¹³⁴ Wittig's claim that lesbianism is situated without the parameters of heterosexuality lends itself to my approach to using a queer-feminist theory to investigate the oddly formed and recycled women presented in Schwitters' collages. For me, Wittig's assertion is still problematic, though, as it still gives preference to women over men, and still dichotomises the two sexes. It is thus I wish to suggest that the feminist position of the artist is not as important as the process with which they seek to depict their feminist perspective. The execution of collage in and of itself is a feminist act, it collects, collates and rearranges fragments all appropriated from media which is inherently political.

There are artists who also believe that collage might be considered as a feminist methodology. Miriam Shapiro (1923-2015) and Melissa Meyer (b.1946) pioneered the term 'femmage', an inherently feminist collage practice. In an article published in *Heresies* notes the complicated and masculine history of collage. Shapiro and Meyer open their essay with a discussion of Virginia Woolf's statement about the 'loose, drifting material life, describing how she would like to see it sorted and coalesced into a mold transparent enough to reflect the light of our life and yet aloof as a work of

¹³³ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p.249.

¹³⁴ Monique Wittig, 'One Is Not Born a Woman', *Feminist Theory Reader: Global and Local Perspectives*, 3rd edition, eds. Carol R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), p.246.

art.’¹³⁵ In this, the authors believe this rumination on the ‘material of life’ reminds us of the materials ‘which inspired the visual imaginations of the women we write about.’¹³⁶ They then recount stories of women who made collages (many of these works are made before the definition of the collage, a twentieth-century conception, is in popular usage). Beginning with a German nun in the eighteenth century who used lace to decorate paintings of saints, an Iroquois (Haudenosaunee, Native American) woman also from the 1700s who worked in quillwork,¹³⁷ a New Jersey woman working in 1830 using scraps to appliqué her quilt,¹³⁸ the Lady Filmer who photographed the Prince of Wales (Prince Edward) in 1860 later cut these out and produced her own private ‘photocollage’,¹³⁹ and finally they tell us about Rita Reynolds who ‘during World War II [...] glue[d] birthday cards, valentines and clippings from her local newspaper which record the progress of the war. As the world situation worsens, the scrapbook reflects its gravity.’¹⁴⁰ They then give brief definitions of the terminology associated with collage: listing three for collage, two for assemblage, one for decoupage, one for photomontage, and then finally the definition for their term ‘femmeage’. ‘[A] word invented by us to include all of the above activities [that is, the definitions of collage they detail in the essay] as they were practiced by women using traditional women’s techniques to achieve their art—sewing, piecing, hooking, cutting, appliquéing, cooking and the like—activities also engaged in by men but assigned in history to women.’¹⁴¹

Following the logic of their terminology, they propose that the current definitions of collage as conceived and published by art historians are ‘misleading’. The authors claim that art historical accounts of collage have excluded on-Western artists, artist women and what they call ‘anonymous folk artists’. They propose that ‘woman’s art

¹³⁵ Miriam Schapiro and Melissa Meyer, ‘Waste Not Want Not: An Inquiry into What Women Saved and Assembled – FEMMAGE (1977-78)’, *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics*, Iss. 1, No. 4, Winter 1977-78, pp. 66-69; p. 66.

¹³⁶ Schapiro, ‘Waste Not Want Not’, p. 66.

¹³⁷ This is the use of porcupine quills and occasionally quills from bird feathers as a decorative technique.

¹³⁸ Appliqué: ornamental needlework whereby fragments of fabric in different shapes are sewn onto a larger piece of fabric to produce a picture or pattern.

¹³⁹ Schapiro and Meyer claim this is the first photocollage, but do not proffer any proof other than these details.

¹⁴⁰ Schapiro, p. 66.

¹⁴¹ Schapiro, p. 77.

invites a methodology of its own. Women have always collected things and saved and recycled them because leftovers yielded nourishment in new forms.’ Women’s work, as Schapiro and Meyer outline elsewhere in their essay, is defined by its connection to the domestic. Moreover, they point to needlework and sewing as these new forms of making—they are restorative and piece fragments back together, as in mending clothing, or create the new from the old as in quilt-making, in spite of its utilitarian functionalism. This resonates with Makela’s argument outlined at the beginning of this chapter. *Ersatzkultur* and understanding women’s art as a methodology of its own as proposed by Schapiro and Meyer, are innately connected and therefore, it is plausible to suggest these ideas of making, re-making, re-use, and restoration in moments of cultural, social, political or artistic crisis have been rendered feminine in social and art historical contexts. However, this thesis seeks to argue that it might be understood as *feminist*, and therefore can be employed as a means to re-evaluate the definitions of objecthood, otherness, and subjecthood and to understand these terms in relation to the practice of collage and as it is employed by Schwitters.

However, Schapiro and Meyer’s term ‘femmage’ cannot be applied to Schwitters’ aesthetic. They have fourteen criteria with which a femmage must comply, at least twelve of which can be applied to Schwitters’ work, however there are two essential points which means Schwitters’ work could not be considered as femmage. They state that the work must be made by a woman, and that the work should have a ‘functional as well as an aesthetic life.’¹⁴² Schwitters’ sex cannot be changed and the feminist condition of binarizing sex in this way is common in much of the feminist literature which will be explored throughout this thesis. The second criteria could be applied to Schwitters’ work if we consider the projects of his lived-in environments (the Merzbau and Merzhytta) and even the collaging of the interior of his travel trunk as having aesthetic and functional lives. However, it is not the aim of this thesis to claim that the term ‘femmage’ should be applied to Schwitters’ collages, but is instead intended to illustrate that my assertion that collage and feminism/feminist ideologies can be connected and to understand there has been an artistic precedence set, even if this has been largely overlooked in art historical terms. As such, I will examine how

¹⁴² Schapiro, ‘Waste not want not’, p. 68.

each fragmentary female form functions in Schwitters' work independently and collectively in the collage, and consider the cultural, societal and political connotations enacted by his assemblage of these materials.

The use of collage rather than painting, or any other medium, as a feminist strategy or method of expression is more effective because it better captures cultural, societal, artistic, and gendered hybridity through its suturing of varied images and ideologies to represent the changing expressions of gender during the early 1920s. This chapter has explored the applications of collage as a feminist strategy, aided by queer and feminist analyses and has considered how we might think of Schwitters' collages as deploying the same methodologies to explore the shifting representation of gender and particularly female identity in the early years of the Weimar Republic. Moreover, it has explored Schwitters and his work in a heretofore examined context and offered a new perspective on the artist's work and aesthetic. In the next chapter, I take this further and explore Schwitters the artist and his work in response to the historical and political shifts of Hannover in the period 1919-1923.

2: 'WHO ON EARTH IS THIS ANNA BLUME?': ANNA BLUME, IDENTITY AND FEMINISM

The title of this chapter derives from a hypothetical question posed by a hypothetical critic in anticipation of the incredulity with which Anna Blume might be met.¹⁴³ In this question, Anna Blume might be mistaken for a real person— only she was not. She is, however, quite possibly Schwitters' most famous creation, appearing in five languages, published in volumes of work produced by the artist himself, and in magazines and newspapers in and outside Germany. The name would become a recurring feature in many of his early collages, and she would even be entered as a candidate in local elections.¹⁴⁴ The poem was met with both praise and criticism when it was first published, with some proclaiming Schwitters to be just as mad as his protagonist.¹⁴⁵ Georges Hugnet, in his *The Dada Spirit in Painting*, writes about the history of Dada in Cologne and Hannover. In writing about Schwitters, Hugnet states: 'The Berlin group [of Dadaists], concerned only with revolutionary effectiveness, had disapproved of his hesitant attitude and kept him at a distance [...] on several occasions, Huelsenbeck and Hassmann [*sic*] came out openly against him.' Hugnet suggests that his Dada compatriots found Schwitters to be conservative, and suggests that '[p]erhaps Schwitters was also criticized for having in him something of the traditional German poet.'¹⁴⁶ It seems, then, that like Schwitters, Anna Blume was a misfit: she did not belong, and could not identify with any particular group. It seems thus pertinent that one would question her identity. Therefore, this chapter seeks to discuss the identity of 'Anna Blume' and to ascertain the importance of this singular

¹⁴³ In a letter to Christoph Spengemann of 25.6.1919, 'anticipating the cutting response of the critics: 'Such nonsense! Does he want to make fun of us? Who on earth is this Anna Blume? Twisted mind!' in Gwendolen Webster, *Kurt Merz Schwitters*, p.56. Originally quoted in Ernst Nündel, *Kurt Schwitters. Wir spielen bis den Tod uns abholt* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1974), p.21. Webster also offers a cautionary footnote which states that at this point, when Schwitters and Spengemann speak about „Anna Blume“ they mean the drawing, which had been published in *Der Zeltweg* under an incorrect title (see Webster, fn 40, on p. 406.)

¹⁴⁴ Anna Blume did not actually stand for election, but Schwitters made small labels which read: 'Wählt Anna Blume', "Vote for Anna Blume".

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Dr G. Praetorius to Paul Steegemann, Hannover, 25.12.1919. Reproduced in *Kurt Schwitters Almanach 1982*, ed. Michael Erlhoff (Hannover: Postskriptum Verlag, 1982), pp. 90-91.

¹⁴⁶ Georges Hugnet, *The Spirit of Dada in Painting*, trans. Ralph Manheim, in Robert Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1951), pp. 123-96; pp. 162-63.

character in Schwitters' oeuvre as a feminist icon, but also to discuss the queer implications on Anna through Schwitters' assimilation of her as his 'alter-ego'.

Manifestations of Anna Blume

Before engaging with the poems and Anna's visual representations, it may be useful to gain a sense of the multiplicitous publications of Anna Blume, and also to highlight the relatively short period in which 'An Anna Blume' became a success, furthermore to ascertain the extent to which Anna Blume penetrates his oeuvre. In 1919, the figure of "Anna Blume" was conceived of as a watercolour titled *Anna Blume und ich*. In the same year, a drawing titled *Konstruktion* appears in *Der Sturm*, in which the name "Anna Blume" can be seen in Schwitters' distinctive Sütterlin script and presented alongside drawings of wheels.¹⁴⁷ In volume 10, issue 4 of Walden's *Der Sturm* publication, 'An Anna Blume' was published.¹⁴⁸ It was also published as a poem in *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* (published by Paul Steegemann), and accompanied by a drawing which constitutes the front cover for the book. The poem was then published in full, in 1920, in *Fraktur* typography as a *Plakat* [poster, or placard] and was posted around Hannover (Fig. 6). In 1922, a new edition of *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* was released, also published by Paul Steegemann. Alongside the German original, 'An Anna Blume,' translations of Schwitters' first *Merzpoem* appear in this 1922 edition.

In the 1922 publication of *Anna Blume. Dichtungen*, the poem was translated into English, French and Magyar. The English translation was carried out by Myrtle Klein, as 'Ann Blossom has Wheels'.¹⁴⁹ It was translated into Magyar (Hungarian) by Káhana Mózes as 'ANNAVIRÁGNAK: „ANNA BLUME” Kötetéböl'.¹⁵⁰ And translated into French by Roland Schacht as 'A Eve MaFleur'.¹⁵¹ It is interesting to consider the multilingualism of this collection of poems, and perhaps question why he

¹⁴⁷ Kurt Schwitters, "Konstruktion," in *Der Sturm*, Vol. 10, Iss. 4 (7 June 1919), p. 53.

¹⁴⁸ Kurt Schwitters, 'An Anna Blume,' in *Der Sturm*, Vol.10, Iss. 5 (10 August 1919), p. 72.

¹⁴⁹ Kurt Schwitters, *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* (Hannover: Paul Steegemann Verlag, 1922). This edition is denoted hereafter by *Anna Blume* [2]. This is to distinguish the 1919 edition from the 1922 edition, which despite their identical titles, contain different poems.

¹⁵⁰ Schwitters, *Anna Blume* [2], pp. 18-19.

¹⁵¹ Schwitters, *Anna Blume* [2], pp. 8-9.

chose these three languages. There are no resources which discuss this, and none elucidates any concrete answers as to why Schwitters chose these languages, however, it reflects the spirit of internationalism and inclusivity which *Merz* promoted. We can surmise that it was possibly reflective of his large network of artist colleagues and friends (Tristan Tzara in Paris, Hans Arp was bilingual and worked in German and French); he knew the constructivist Lázló Moholy-Nagy and De Stijl member Vilmos Huzár (both of whom were Hungarian natives). His choice to publish in English may have been influenced by his wife (she had trained as a teacher of Latin, English and History),¹⁵² or perhaps by Hannover's history: Lower Saxony shared its ruler, by personal union, with the Monarch of Britain for more than one hundred years. The year 1922 was a productive one for Schwitters: he published another two volumes which bore, in their titles, the name of his beloved protagonist, however, unlike the other two collections of poetry, these did not contain the 1919 poem, 'An Anna Blume.'¹⁵³ One year later, in 1923, 'An Anna Blume' was translated into Dutch by Theo van Doesburg and published in his and Schwitters' collaborative publication, *Merz 1: Holland Dada* as 'Aan Anna Bloeme.'¹⁵⁴

In 1925, a recording of 'An Anna Blume' is made by Schwitters. Schwitters' heroine begins to travel outside Germany and so the English rendering is published in *transition* magazine, exactly as it appears in *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* (1922).¹⁵⁵ The Franco-American magazine, *transition*, was circulated among the Paris artistic elite, and suffered various moments of success and failure throughout its fragmented history. Its editor, Eugene Jolas was a noted translator, writer and literary critic, he was fluent in English, French and German.¹⁵⁶ Jolas viewed *transition* as 'a

¹⁵² Webster, *KMS*, p. 10.

¹⁵³ Kurt Schwitters, *Memoiren Anna Blumes in Bleie* (Freiburg: Verlag Walter Heinrich, 1922) and Kurt Merz Schwitters, *Die Blume Anna. Die neue Anna Blume* (Berlin: Verlag Sturm, 1922)

¹⁵⁴ Kurt Schwitters, 'Aan Anna Bloeme,' trans. Theo van Doesburg, *Merz 1: Holland Dada* (Hannover: Kurt Schwitters, 1923), p. 12.

¹⁵⁵ Kurt Schwitters, 'Ann Blossom has Wheels', *transition*, (Vol. 3, June 1927), pp. 144-145.

¹⁵⁶ See Céline Mansanti, 'Between Modernisms: transition (1927-1938),' in *The Oxford Cultural and Critical History of Modernist Magazines*, Vol. II, eds., Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Robert Kiely's book review, 'Lost Man of the Lost Generation' in *The New York Times* (3 January 1999) for a brief overview of the editor's life. This review is of Jolas' unfinished memoirs *Man from Babel* which scholars Andreas Kramer and Rainer

documentary organ, [it] began by bringing to the attention of the Anglo-Saxon readers translated stories, and poems from various camps, including expressionism, post-expressionism, dadaism, surrealism': a vessel for disseminating the avantgarde of the time in translation.¹⁵⁷ It thus seems apt that they should publish Schwitters' poem in translation, perhaps offering an alternative perspective on the artist, compared to the existing one of him that was being promulgated in his own country by critics and scholars.

Then in 1932, another recording of Anna Blume is made by Kurt Schwitters. In the 1940s, 'Anna' is removed from the title. Anna Blossom becomes 'eve Blossom has Wheels', in a translation supposedly carried out by Kurt Schwitters, however it seems to have been transcribed by his son, Ernst. In addition to the 1925 or 1932 recordings of 'An Anna Blume' a third is made in 1958, this time by Ernst and Philip and Ursula Granville, along with a "complete" version of Schwitters' 'Ursonate.' This recording was made available as a limited release and was to be sold at a literary evening hosted by the Lord's Gallery London, of which Philip Granville was director. The evening featured readings of Schwitters' poems in German and English (the translations for which were taken from Stefan Themerson's book *Kurt Schwitters in England, 1940-1948*, published by the Themersons' Gaberbocchus Press in 1958¹⁵⁸) and was opened by a lecture by Ernst Schwitters. In this same year, Lord's Gallery also held an exhibition of Schwitters' work titled *100 Merz*.

There is a slight discrepancy in the dating of 'To Eve Blossom.' Archival documents are not dated by the artist; however, they are among the collection of works which have been dated to the 1940s. Only one draft of 'To Eve Blossom', held in the Kurt Schwitters Archive, Hannover, is dated to 1942; the other two drafts are undated and

Rumold edited and published. (<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/03/books/lost-man-of-the-lost-generation.html>)

¹⁵⁷ Eugene Jolas, 'Frontierless Decades,' *transition*, Vol. 27 (April/May 1938), p. 7, quoted in Craig Monk, 'The Weight of Forty Four Pounds: Commercial Publishing Houses and *transition* Magazine in the 1930s,' *American Periodicals*, Vol. 25, Issue 1 (2015), pp. 80-93; p. 91.

¹⁵⁸ The Gaberbocchus Press was owned and operated by Stefan and Franciszka Themerson in 1948. The couple worked collaboratively on films and illustrated children's books.

have been labelled “1940s”.¹⁵⁹ However, to complicate matters further, in 1965 Ernst Schwitters published a volume called *Anna Blume und ich. Die gesammelten Anna Blume-Texte*.¹⁶⁰ In this volume, he collates all of the publications of Anna Blume, a collection comprising *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* (1919), *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* (1922), *Memoiren Anna Blumes in Bleie* (1922), and *Die Anna Blume. Die neue Anna Blume. Gedichte 1918-1922* (1922). In this collection, Ernst has substituted “Ann Blossom has Wheels” for “To Eve Blossom”, which did not appear in the original publication of *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* in 1922. Myrtle Klein’s translation of 1922 has been ousted from the volume, and instead been replaced by a version which Ernst translated.

The French translation was first completed in 1920, and Gwendolen Webster has noted:

‘An Anna Blume’ was translated into French at the end of 1920 for Tzara’s new Dadaist magazine. Roland Schacht, the translator, was an art critic who had already declared himself an admirer of Kurt’s works ... Schacht, like most who contributed in one way or another to Merz, was not paid for his translation. Kurt informed him regretfully that he could only reward him with thanks and a collage.¹⁶¹

Schacht changed the name of Schwitters’ protagonist, retaining the palindromic nature of her name, but perhaps adapting it to better accommodate the sounds of the French language – “A Anna MaFleur” is odd sounding even to an English ear. Schwitters approved of this change, and in a letter to Roland Schacht, Schwitters thanks Schacht for his translation:

Thank you for your willingness to translate my dada contributions. Please allow me to write something about them beforehand. First I’d like to have the Anna Blume poem you’ve already received. Of course, you have all the freedom to translate as you see fit. I would also translate the name and think that Eve-MaFleur is very good.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Kurt Schwitters Archiv, Hannover, Box Gedichte, KSA 1993, 163a-b.

¹⁶⁰ Kurt Schwitters, *Anna Blume und ich. Die gesammelten Anna Blume-Texte*, ed. Ernst Schwitters (Zurich and Hamburg: Arche Verlag, 1965).

¹⁶¹ Webster, *KMS*, p. 77.

¹⁶² [Ich danke Dir für Deine Bereitwilligkeit zur Übersetzung meiner Dadabeiträge. Bitte erlaube mir, zuerst davon zu schreiben. Ich möchte als erstes das Annablumegedicht haben, das Du ja dort hast. Natürlich hast Du alle Freiheiten beim Übersetzen, mach es wie Du es für richtig hältst. Ich würde den

Schwitters' 'An Anna Blume' in its original German seems sentimental and sweet, it is filled with deliberate grammatical errors (for example, 'Ich liebe dir' instead of 'Ich liebe dich' and 'Anna Blume hat ein Vogel' instead of 'hat einen Vogel'), and has been read by some as a love poem. Elizabeth Burns Gamard suggests that the poem is '[d]edicated to his ideal mistress', and '[i]n the first version, and continuing in the poem's subsequent renditions, a women [sic] of unknown age, performs an illicit, if ambiguous repartée with a narrator (Schwitters) who is pleading in a flirtatious, if tenderly obscene, manner.'¹⁶³ She then goes on to read all women in Schwitters' imagination as creations of longing (*Sehnsucht*).

Anna Blume: love, sex and autonomy

This positioning of Schwitters as predatory male who lusts after women is not uncommon in analyses of the poem. However, one might argue this reading is somewhat reductive of Schwitters' relationship to women. Most significantly, Dorothea Dietrich's essay 'Love as Commodity: Kurt Schwitters's Collages of Women', in which she reads all representations of women in his collages as subjects of lust or through a conservative lens, rendering them icons of tradition rather than of radical politics.¹⁶⁴ This reading is further laboured by the inclusion of biographical details such as his relationship with his wife, Helma, whose occupation was listed as a 'Haustochter'.¹⁶⁵ Helma stayed in Hannover to look after the properties they owned, and to tend to her elderly parents and Schwitters' mother, while Kurt and their son Ernst left for Norway and later England to escape impending persecution. In a recent essay, entitled, "'I feel wretchedly depressed here in Waldhausen.": The sad fate of Helma Schwitters', Götz-Lothar Darsow explores the deep depression Helma felt while alone in Hannover through her various letter exchanges with Kurt, Ernst and a few other friends. Her language is evocative, jarring at points, and fraught with deep emotional pain.¹⁶⁶ The story of the woman left at home alone to shoulder the

Namen auch übersetzen und finde Eve-Mafleur sehr gut], Letter Kurt Schwitters to Roland Schacht, 27.11.1920.

¹⁶³ Gamard, *Kurt Schwitters'* Merzbau, pp. 53-54.

¹⁶⁴ Dietrich, 'Love as Commodity,' in Sawelson-Gorse, pp. 206-239.

¹⁶⁵ *Haustochter* literally translates as 'house daughter', but is a 'lady's help.'

¹⁶⁶ Götz-Lothar Darsow, "'I feel wretchedly depressed here in Waldhausen.'" The sad fate of Helma Schwitters,' *Sch... The Journal of the Kurt Schwitters Society*, No. 2, 2012, pp. 25-29.

struggles, and to take care of what remains during wartime is not an uncommon one. It is also not exclusive to artists nor to Schwitters. Yet, still, this reading has further perpetrated the mythology of the lack of care Kurt showed for his wife, and has been proposed as an abandonment of his family; and therefore, could be (and has been) read as an act of misogyny.¹⁶⁷

In this chapter, I wish to do more than merely debunk myths and misperceptions about the artist's work based on biographical details. I will engage with Anna Blume's significance on and off the page. Anna's identity is somewhat uncertain, and that she was based on a real person is possible. It has been suggested by Gwendolen Webster that she was created in the image of his first love, a family maid.¹⁶⁸ However, in the Waldhausenstraße 5 *Hausbuch*, listing all of the residents from 1907 until its end in 1943, there are a significant number of maids named Anna.¹⁶⁹ Though interesting, these details are too reductive: to simply state that 'An Anna Blume' is an ode to an unrequited love is facile. If one is to accept that this is an ode, then one must ask why an ode? Why Anna? This notion is further weakened when one considers the grammatical errors and the seemingly uncouth metaphors he uses to describe his feelings for Anna, at points calling her 'Liebes grünes Tier' ['Dear green animal'] and he goes on to say that her name is like 'Rindertalg träufelt STREICHELN über meinen Rücken' [Beef tallow drips to strike over my back].¹⁷⁰ These animalistic connections and imagery may be considered representative of carnal and erotic desire, as expressions of the narrator's lust for the protagonist. Schwitters describes a woman with sexual autonomy and it is she who lusts after the narrator; it is she who strikes him with her name (her identity marks him, her name has been left upon him). In doing this, Schwitters inverts the traditional positions of women as passive observers of sexual experience, or as the object of male desire. John Elderfield notes, in his study

¹⁶⁷ Darsow's entire essay paints Schwitters as a womanising chauvinist.

¹⁶⁸ Webster, *KMS*, p.58.

¹⁶⁹ Between 1925 and 1933, the Schwitters family employed five maids with the name Anna. There was one Anna whose surname was either Belume or Behme (most likely the latter, but the handwriting was particularly difficult to discern); the former phonetically resembles "Blume"—a happy coincidence, I would surmise.

¹⁷⁰ Translations are my own. In 1922, Myrtle Klein translated these lines, respectively: 'thou dear green animal'; and 'tallow trickles [*sic.*] to strike over my back' in *Dichtungen*, pp. 16-17.

of Kurt Schwitters, the significant influence of the German Romantic tradition, and furthermore hypothesizing that the Expressionist interpretation of this tradition was the most significant,¹⁷¹ perhaps reinforcing the title given to Schwitters by Huelsenbeck as ‘the Kasper [sic] David Friedrich of the Dadaist revolution.’¹⁷² Huelsenbeck saw Schwitters as a conservative and bourgeois character; he was too tame for Huelsenbeck’s vision of Dada. It seems these perceptions by his contemporaries, and the future interpretations by scholars and critics would sustain such images of Schwitters. That Anna is figured as a green animal, and that she is written into a mode perceived to be conservative, a Romantic poem or ode, does not necessarily render Anna unorthodox. Moreover, without parsing each sentence to find meaning, or to correct grammar, one can ascertain clearly and with ease that Anna is an unconventional character.

If Anna is synonymous with her form, which I suggest she is, then, one must consider that the poem itself is unconventional in its construction and also note the inability to easily define its genre or style. It was published and promoted by proponents of *Der Sturm* and Expressionism; it was labelled by one newspaper as his ‘Merzgedicht 1’ [first Merzpoem or Merzpoem 1]; and Schwitters himself thought of it as his Dadaistic work. In *Merz 20*, he writes: ‘I began to write poetry in 1917 with a creation outwardly similar to Stramm’s in its form; soon I acquired my own form in my Dadaist period. You all know my poem “An Anna Blume.”’¹⁷³ Schwitters’ ruminations on his own stylings from 1927, by which time his poem ‘An Anna Blume’ was well known—and had subsequently been published in the Franco-American magazine *transition* alongside such names as Gertrude Stein and James Joyce—show a distinctive reflexivity in Schwitters’ approach to his work, as well as a confused outlook to its place within the avant-garde, much like his own. For Schwitters, the collage was changeable and could be corrected or revised, and he treated his poetry with exactly the same respect. There are multiple drafts of Anna Blume, each with only very slight

¹⁷¹ Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, p. 92.

¹⁷² Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, p. 40.

¹⁷³ ‘Ich begann in der Dichtung im Jahre 1917 mit einer Gestaltung ähnlich der äußeren Form August Stramms: Bald gewann ich eine eigene Form in meiner dadaistischen Zeit, Sie kennen ja alle mein Gedicht an Anna Blume [sic].’ in Kurt Schwitters, *Merz 20*, 1927, pp.103-4. (Webster’s translation.)

differences, including his own translations in Dutch and English. On one draft of the English version, the title has been changed from ‘Anna Blossom is nuts’ to ‘To Eve Blossom’ (dated 1940s) where ‘Anna’ has been scored out and replaced by ‘Eve’, and ‘is nuts’ has been erased.¹⁷⁴ The very connotations of the first draft of this heading, which are taken from an interpretation of the line ‘Anna Blume hat ein Vogel’, are problematic.¹⁷⁵ It frames Anna negatively, and predisposes the reader to make assumptions about Anna’s character, firstly, and secondly, her status in relation to the narrator. Many of the translations have locked onto this description of a mad woman.

Anna Blume and the New Woman

This negative framing of Anna is highlighted by Dorothea Dietrich in her 1993 monograph, *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters: Tradition and Innovation*. In her discussion of ‘An Anna Blume,’ she focuses on Anna’s representation in the poem and almost exclusively in its German form. To begin with it seems that Dietrich may be offering an interesting reading of Anna Blume, by exploring the problems and contradictions explored between the juxtaposition of both the traditional and modern woman that can be found in Anna’s characterization.¹⁷⁶ Yet she continues convinced that Schwitters favours the traditional version to her modern self. Her argument is compelling, but flawed in her choice to ignore its translations. In 1922, Anna Blume was translated into English by Myrtle Klein; although nothing is known of this woman, it is important to acknowledge and to stress that it was translated by a woman, particularly in light of the other translations all having been carried out by men. In her English version, she completely transforms Anna from the seemingly passive character that Dietrich identifies, to a being with mobility and freedom. She literally

¹⁷⁴ Typescript. KSA 1993, Box Gedichte, 64

¹⁷⁵ ‘Anna Blume hat ein Vogel’ translates literally as ‘Anna Blume has a bird’. However, in German, this phrase is used (almost exclusively with regards to women) to denote madness; and so, the translation into English, as with this title, has been changed to ‘Anna Blossom is nuts’. I do not write here about the framing of the translation itself, nor do I conduct any analysis because this was the subject of my Master’s thesis, and since 2014, I have written two articles which have been published specifically on the English translation. Moreover, Anna Blume does not exist in an English geographical context until after the main period with which this chapter is concerned, and even then, as will be shown, the connotations of the most shocking lines are radically altered in the translation.

¹⁷⁶ Dorothea Dietrich, *Tradition and Innovation*, p.80.

gives Anna wheels, and replaces the line ‘Anna Blume hat ein Vogel’ with ‘Ann Blossom has wheels’.

The mechanisation of the human body is not uncommon in Dadaist representations of this period, consider Grosz’s or Dix’s depictions of soldiers returning from the front, but these representations are mainly of men, and very few are of women. I have previously explored the relationship of the wheel (namely the bicycle wheel) to emancipation.¹⁷⁷ On the subject of the bicycle as an emancipatory vehicle, Sarah Wintle has written:

At the very end of the nineteenth century, both the actual uses of the horse itself and its symbolic literary history encounter first the bicycle and then the automobile as rival modes of locomotion. The modern bicycle, as opposed to the fixed-wheel penny-farthing type, quickly became associated with new female freedoms.¹⁷⁸

Therefore, this invocation of the wheel by a woman translator about a female protagonist who was so poorly treated by male critics, deepens Anna Blume’s significance as a feminist icon.¹⁷⁹

Furthermore, the mentions of mental instability are removed, at least explicitly, and Anna is represented as a new woman/New Woman (Neue Frau). She defies the laws of conformity by walking on her hands. And like Anna’s defiance, Klein (and Schwitters in agreeing to the translation) defy and subvert the norms of expectations of women. There is a long history of women gaining creative autonomy through the sanctioned act of translation; it was understood that the process of translation was merely laborious and measured. This is untrue: it may appear simple to write a literal translation of a person’s work, however, it takes skill and creativity to ensure the

¹⁷⁷ Collins, ‘Thing about *PIN*,’ p. 42 and pp. 48-49.

¹⁷⁸ Sarah Wintle, ‘Horses, Bikes and Automobiles: New Woman on the Move,’ *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, eds. Angélique Richardson and Chris Willis (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 66-78; p. 68.

¹⁷⁹ It should be noted that there has been little critical attention paid to the translation of Schwitters’ poem. The work that has been done has focused primarily on the untranslatability of the work

writing sounds right to a native speaker of that language; and here women were able to be creative under the guise of a seemingly mundane task.¹⁸⁰

Yet in spite of this insistence on the importance of the female translator, for a moment, I wish to take a Barthesian detour, and consider that it does not matter who has written the poem, ‘An Anna Blume.’ In all of the translations, with the exception of the French and Ernst’s later translation, one feature remains unchanged: the palindromic name of the protagonist.¹⁸¹ ‘Man kann dich auch von hinten lesen, und du, du Herrlichste von allen, du bist von hinten wie von vorne: „a-n-n-a“; ‘On peut te lire aussi par derrière, et toi, la plus magnifique de toutes, tu es par derrière aussi bien que par devant: e-v-e’; ‘Hátulról is alyasható vagy és te, te mindenképp remekebb, hátulról olyan vagy mint előlről: „a-n-n-a“;’¹⁸² ‘men kan je ook van achteren naar voren lezen, en gij, gij heerlijkste van allen, je beut van achteren als van voren: A—N—N—A’;¹⁸³ ‘One can also read thee from behind, and thou, thou most glorious of all, thou art from the back, as from the front: A—N—N—A’.¹⁸⁴ Whether read in German, French, Magyar, Dutch or English, the name appears universally as a palindrome. And in each translation, the translator takes particular care to draw our attention to this fact. One can read the palindrome as a way of being seen from more than one perspective and therefore we can also understand Anna as a multifaceted being who can be seen and has multiple perspectives. It suggests modernity, that she is multifaceted and changeable. Dietrich,

¹⁸⁰ For more on the role of women as translators and its emancipatory function, see: Deborah Uman, *Women as Translators in Early Modern England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2012); Margaret P. Hannay, *Silent but for the word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985); Gillian Dow, *Translators, Interpreters, Mediators: Women Writers, 1700-1900* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007); Caroline brand and Hilary Brown, ‘Women as Cultural Mediators and Translators,’ *Oxford German Studies*, Vol. 42, Iss. 2 (Aug. 2013), pp. 111-118.

¹⁸¹ There is the exception of the re-written version ‘To Eve Blossom’, which for the purpose of this discussion I would like to consider as a different poem. In this version it does not draw attention to the palindrome, and I will return to it later in this chapter. ‘A Eve Mafleur’ is also an exception as ‘Anna’ is renamed ‘Eve’; however, in this translation, the translator maintains the focus on the palindrome, drawing out the letters with long dashes, and replicating the original form and so has been included in this discussion.

¹⁸² These three versions (German, French and Magyar) are all taken from the *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* (1922) reproduced in *Anna Blume und ich. Die gesammelten Anne Blume-Texte*, ed. Ernst Schwitters (Zurich and Hamburg: Arche, 1965), pp. 46; 99; 107.

¹⁸³ This translation was produced by Theo van Doesburg, and was transcribed from *Merz 1* (Hannover, January 1923), p.12.

¹⁸⁴ Kurt Schwitters, *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* (Hannover: Paul Steegemann Verlag, 1922), p. 19.

however, sees the work of the palindrome undone by the connotations and history of assimilating woman with flowers (the Blume of Anna's name). She writes:

Her full name therefore not only stands simultaneously for a traditional and modern vision of women but in its linking of mechanical motion and organic form (the palindrome and the flower), it is also the abstract representation of her body and the enunciation of his [Schwitters'] sexual desires (mechanical motion and penetration).¹⁸⁵

Anna's body is now mechanised through the palindrome, and we are once again led to believe that Schwitters is being obscene in his sexualisation of the female protagonist. Dietrich's reading positions Schwitters and Anna in a unidirectional dynamic: Anna is looked at and Schwitters looks, the inverse of this dynamic is not possible nor is it explored in the existing literature. I wish to reframe this narrative and suggest two things. First, it is the conservative critic who compromises Anna Blume's potential, not the author. And secondly, that Anna is sexually autonomous. Conservatism can be found in much of the analysis concerning Schwitters. He was seen, even in his own time, as careful, stoic and reserved; tales of him being a shy boy, especially with the opposite sex, only compound this whitewashing of his character. There may be an issue, a contradiction even, in the suggestion that a male author is making feminist statements or implying such notions in his work. Yet, the man at the forefront of the sexual revolution in early twentieth-century Berlin (and Germany more largely) was a cross-dressing, gay, male psychiatrist: his name was Magnus Hirschfeld. Hirschfeld's Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (The Institute for Sexual Science), in Berlin, ran from 1919 until 1933, and served as a safe haven for many young gay and what might be termed today as queer individuals.

Hirschfeld's work was pioneering, and challenged the boundaries of acceptable and obscene behaviours socially, politically and sexually. It is also in these early years of the Weimar Republic and beyond that attitudes shift towards women and sexuality. Brassai famously captured images of women in lesbian bars in Paris; meanwhile, in

¹⁸⁵ Dietrich, *Tradition and Innovation*, p. 80. There is a fundamental issue in much of Dietrich's reading, and it is that she ascribes the poetic 'I' to Schwitters – instead of considering the poetic I as an altogether fictional being, she envelopes her reading in an understanding of his biography.

Germany, one of Schwitters' closest friends was in a lesbian relationship. Radical redefinitions of gender and sexuality were commonplace in the early twentieth century and there was a distinct shift, at least in the vernacular, which disentangled female sexuality from heteronormative strictures. Hannah Höch, as aforementioned, was one such radical artist woman. Many of Höch's images are interpreted as being influenced by a feminist perspective, they are often layered with political and ethnographic imagery too. Despite these readings, questions have been asked of Höch's feminist politics: she did not, after all, write or even sign manifestoes like her Dada compatriots, but rather allowed her art to speak for her. As Ades writes:

She approved totally of the Rights of Woman, but denies that she sought to glorify modern woman in her work. She was, she says, more concerned in her collages with the suffering of women. When, on the other hand, she wished to give a face to the epoch, she would then include what she called the contribution of women. She frequently insisted on this point that she was working with the images of things that were around her.¹⁸⁶

In highlighting suffering, and claiming that she was not seeking to highlight modern women, one can begin to understand why feminist theory could be a complicated angle from which to read her work. Instead, in the 2014 exhibition catalogue for *Hannah Höch*, curated by Ades, Emily Butler and Daniel F. Hermann, the curators attempt to explore the queer aspects of her work, which include those in the series *From an Ethnographic Museum*, in order to give a better understanding of her oeuvre.¹⁸⁷

Anna Blume and queer politics: language and sexuality

It is then with this line of enquiry I wish to consider Schwitters' highlighting of feminine/female sexuality/ies (and him seemingly doing nothing about it) in 'An Anna Blume' as a subversion of acceptable behaviours. Dietrich engages in a deconstruction of the language used, claiming that Anna has actions done to her, never of her own accord, and that 'Schwitters expresses this foremost in the striking and memorable ungrammatical dative case of "ich liebe *dir*" instead of the grammatically accusative,

¹⁸⁶ Dawn Ades, 'Hannah Höch and the 'New Woman,' (2014), in *Dawn Ades: Writing on Art and Anti-Art*, ed. Doro Globus (London: Ridinghouse, 2015), pp.415-426; p.426. The author includes a footnote which states: 'A point she insisted on in an interview with the author, Berlin, 1976.'

¹⁸⁷ There are multiple essays which attempt this in the catalogue: *Hannah Höch*, eds. Dawn Ades, Emily Butler and Daniel F. Hermann (London: Whitechapel and Prestel, 2014).

“*dich*,”.’¹⁸⁸ In contradiction to Dietrich’s (and Gamard’s) readings of the domineering male lusting after the helpless woman, which are reductive as they do not consider the nuanced implications inherent in the multiple renditions, and instead focus only on the German original, I suggest that Anna is in fact the dominant character. She is a revolutionary woman, created in a revolutionary time. Her birth is simultaneous with the birth of the Weimar Republic, a revolution which radically altered the German way of life, and initiated new and interesting social structures through both necessity and for ideological reasons. As stated previously, there was a clause in the Weimar Constitution (The Constitution of the German Reich [*Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reichs*] or *Die Weimarer Verfassung*) which proposed equality between the sexes. Although it may be argued that this article was not effectively practiced, its ideological significance is important. Anna is born in this shifting and chaotic time, and the chaos of Schwitters’ poem reflects something of the period.

The constant shift in pronouns, the unsureness of his relationship to Anna, exemplified in his questioning of the plural pronoun ‘We?’ could be read as a commentary on the shifting relationships between men and women, the changing in roles and responsibilities expected and accepted of both sexes, as a notable change occurs. No longer are women merely domestic slaves, they are forced by the devastation of war to seek employment and to earn money. The *Ersatzkultur* of the Weimar Republic causes changes in fashion, to hemlines and to haircuts; and it seems Schwitters’ poetry was in sympathy with the *Ersatz* mentality. His poem shifts and moves erratically; words are chopped in and out of sentences, in some cases making sense, in others making none. It is rambling, and due to its uneven line lengths is rhythmically irregular and lacks a measured pace. This then is not merely the uncounted woman, the one who got away, but rather a highly irregular individual who is being celebrated in text for her mercurial ways. Anna is a being of fantasy, but not of Schwitters’ fantasy. Instead she represents a delusion that was proclaimed by the doctrine of the Weimar Constitution: a person without gendered boundaries, created equal and free.

¹⁸⁸ Dietrich, *Tradition and Innovation*, p. 81.

Despite the changes in law or constitution, social conventions driven by the newspapers and the journals of the day may still prevail. The opinions and traditions of peoples and cultures cannot dramatically change in one night. Therefore, the renegade Anna would still have been perceived as anomalous and her lack of convention most likely obscene – she walks on her hands, wears her hat on her feet, looks the same from the front as she does from behind, and is desired or lusted after publicly. In newspaper articles of the time Schwitters' work was denounced and rejected. In the *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, one critic called 'An Anna Blume' 'the most revolting piece of writing in our time.'¹⁸⁹ Others who commented on the work were a little kinder. The author of one letter sent to Paul Steegemann begins by thanking the publisher for the work. However, the letter then descends into questioning Schwitters' mental stability, hypothesising that Herr Schwitters was suffering from *dementia praecox* (premature dementia).¹⁹⁰ Another, from an anonymous sender, addresses the writer—presumably Schwitters—as 'Idiot!!' and closes with the recommendation that the artist consider seeking help in a 'clinic.'¹⁹¹

It was not only the newspaper critics who found both Schwitters and his character Anna Blume to be particularly troubling individuals. Around the time of the publication of 'An Anna Blume,' many medical professionals were proposing links between the avant-garde and mental illness. In many of these studies, Schwitters came under fire, and in one particular report by a Dr Jansen, 'An Anna Blume' was propagated as a text book example of schizophrenic writing.¹⁹² This was an idea that was expanded upon by Hamburg-based Professor Weygandt who attacked Schwitters' collage, *Construction for Noble Ladies* [*Konstrucktion für edle Frauen*, 1919].¹⁹³ A reading of schizophrenic expression in this work might be understood in the seeming

¹⁸⁹ Webster, *KMS*, p. 65.

¹⁹⁰ Letter from Dr G. Praetorius to Paul Steegemann, 25.12.19, in *Der Marstall. Zeit- und Steit-Schrift des Verlages*, ed. Paul Steegemann (Hannover, Leipzig, Wein & Zürich: Paul Steegemann Verlag, 1920), pp. 11-12.

¹⁹¹ The quote reads: 'Gehen Sie ins Luftbad und heilen Sie Ihren defekten Gehirnkasten', which is not easily translated however, might be: 'Get to a sanatorium and fix your broken head.' There is no direct translation for 'Luftbad', it is an open-air place where one might be (usually nude) exposed to lots of air and sunshine, perhaps akin to a sanitorium. (*Der Marstall*, p.13, letter dated 21.6.20)

¹⁹² Webster, *KMS*, p. 66.

¹⁹³ Webster, *KMS*, p. 66.

contradiction between the Merzed materials (paint, scraps of material, metal, wood, wheels, etc.) and their arrangement on the canvas. The Merz-ing of materials only adds to the perception of Schwitters as the strange or mad-man; his collecting of refuse from the streets, and the recycling of scraps, in particular, is juxtaposed by the seemingly calculated, and constructivist placement of the materials on the canvas. Each piece is placed with geometric precision creating logical and angular forms on the canvas, cementing the *Sinn und Unsinn* of Schwitters' work. Schwitters was rejected, ridiculed and criticised by professional people; equally the ordinary (wo)man on the street was not best pleased with Anna Blume. Webster writes: 'Some found Anna Blume grossly offensive; Kurt once was forced to flee a wrathful woman in Hildesheim who had taken umbrage at his portrayal of the female sex.'¹⁹⁴

Yet Schwitters remained undeterred by the critics' views, and Anna Blume continued to appear throughout his oeuvre; she even crossed into reality and into his personal life. She was already in the public domain: first printed as a poster and hung around the city. She was brought into reality when Schwitters decided to 'enter' Anna Blume as a candidate in local government elections. He created stickers, posters, and banners for her; he placed them around the city, as if she were really running in the election. It seems, despite the protestations of some critics, scholars and his contemporaries, that Schwitters was socially and politically aware. By inserting a female candidate, and one of such absurdity, into the running for local council, it is my suggestion that we might consider this as an act of feminism. The year 1919 saw Louise Schroeder elected to the Weimar National Assembly, and a total of thirty-four women members of parliament. That Anna Blume and her party are fictional is irrelevant: the ideology that a woman can (and as evidenced) and did make her way into politics is key to my argument. The creation of the KAPD and the unconventional protagonist of his poem suggest that Schwitters believes in women who break convention, who defy the norm, and suggests he was publicly showing his support of the women's movement. It seems though that this poking of fun at the establishment was not Anna's only purpose. She

¹⁹⁴ Webster, *KMS*, p.65.

was utilised not only as an artistic tool, not merely as a political marker, but she becomes an extension of the artist's personality.

In an undated letter, addressed to Hans Arp, Schwitters signs his name: 'Kurt Anna Schwitters.'¹⁹⁵ By replacing his own middle names with Anna, he assumes her as part of his identity. She is the product of his creativity, but also spurs his creativity on—extending beyond the role of muse, she is part of his artistic and, it would seem, personal identity. He and Anna have become synonymous in the press, to the audiences who turn out to see the Dada soirees, and to him. In another letter to Christof Spengemann, the publisher of *Die Wahrheit über Anna Blume* (1920) [The Truth about Anna Blume], he signs: 'Anna Blume,' using a cutting from one of the stickers he had made,¹⁹⁶ this time completely omitting his own name from the letter (Fig. 7). It suggests the letter has come from Anna herself. Furthermore, Schwitters' adoption of a female alter-ego is a difficult subject to approach. His performance is not *of* a female persona like Marcel Duchamp's Rose Sélavy, where Duchamp dresses in drag and is photographed by Man Ray. The homoerotic implications of this picture are not comparable to what Schwitters does with his appropriation of Anna's identity. Instead, I believe there is a two-tiered way of considering the use of Anna as an alter-ego. The first is through an aesthetic consideration, and the second is by considering this as a queer act.

In order to explore this queer act, I want to think through the appropriation of one English Romantic writer by another Modernist one. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was appropriated by Virginia Woolf to express the functioning of the creative mind as androgynous. She writes:

¹⁹⁵ Nündel, *Wir spielen*, pp. 48-50.

¹⁹⁶ Nündel, *Wir spielen*, pp. 50-51. Letter dated: 27.5.21. This letter is also signed 'I. A. MERZ' possibly meaning 'I am Merz'. Or possibly from the Latin abbreviation of 'inter alia' which means 'among other things'. This might be read as 'Anna Blume is, among other things, MERZ.' 'I. A.' is also used in official, bureaucratic capacities and is an abbreviation for 'im Auftrag', or 'on behalf of'. In this, Anna Blume is the representative for Merz, she stands in for Merz in Schwitters' absence. An interesting conflation of his and her identities. Another suggestion has been made, that we might also read it as 'I AM ERsatZ' which would also be a fitting signature for Schwitters and his practice. My thanks to Prof. Eric Robertson for this suggestion.

The normal and the comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties.¹⁹⁷

Woolf's analysis of the creative brain is intended to give women autonomy over, and credit for, their creative abilities; it belittles the notion that only men can write, a prevailing opinion of Woolf's time, and arguably still one faced by many female writers today. It is the insistence on one's influence over the other that is most intriguing in Woolf's appropriation of Coleridge. She goes on to write, '[p]erhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine.'¹⁹⁸ It is thus that Anna Blume is the feminine part of Schwitters' brain. She allows his creativity to flow, and it might be argued (in a pragmatic sense at least) that this was true. It is in writing Anna Blume and establishing Merz that his creativity begins to shift in a new direction; it breaks from the Expressionist tradition. It is no longer focused on colour and instead becomes solely interested in form (at least as is understood through his writing; his poetry also begins to become more abstract and less like the poems he wrote before 1919) and he experiments with Dada and Constructivism to create Merz. It gains him acclaim, criticism and recognition among his peers and in the public.¹⁹⁹

It seems Anna was more than merely a stimulant for his creativity. In several of his self-portraits, printed on postcards and sent to friends, 'Anna Blume' consumes his face, so as only to reveal his body (for an example see Fig. 5). The choice to hide or augment his identity with a piece of text is an interesting choice. Firstly, because Anna was never drawn as a person or character—we cannot 'see' what Anna looked like, not pictorially, at least—she is in the purest sense conceptual; and secondly, her name is

¹⁹⁷ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* [1928], (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p.97.

¹⁹⁸ Woolf, *AROO*, p.97.

¹⁹⁹ For full explorations of Anna Blume's success and failure see Christoph Spengemann's *Die Wahrheit über Anna Blume* (Hannover: Zweemann Verlag, 1920) and Hans-Jürgen Hereth, *Die Rezeptions- und Wirkungsgeschichte von Kurt Schwitters, dargestellt anhand seines Gedichts „An Anna Blume“* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1996).

the most interesting thing about her for the author. There is an obvious signalling from Schwitters to his recipients that he and Anna are synonymous with each other, and while I think it is interesting to explore the idea of an alter-ego, the term is in and of itself complicated.²⁰⁰

Schwitters' alter-ego

The use of the alter-ego is not uncommon in the avant-garde. Many artists re-created their identities for various reasons, and some had political reasons to do so; for others it was a means of expressing themselves outside of notions of prescribed identities. Marcel Duchamp's creation *Rose Sélavy*, as will be discussed, is a noted example of an alter-ego which manifests across genders. Another prominent example is Salomo Friedlaender whose alter-ego was Mynona. In one essay on Friedlaender, Ludwig Frambach writes that 'Mynona, the reverse of anonym, is the pseudonym of his alter-ego.'²⁰¹ This statement confuses Friedlaender's identity, separating the pseudonym and the alter-ego, emphasising the convergence of the two selves, and their co-dependency on a naming system which pertains to a single entity: that is, both the pseudonym and the alter-ego denote the same person.

In psychology/psychiatry, it is a term that is synonymous with schizophrenia, or dissociative identity disorder; certainly in psychological/psychiatric terms, it is understood and associated with mental health issues. It is widely debated as to whether or not it is the correct term to use, and how this impacts patients' understanding of their self. Furthermore, it is a term which is used in other fields of study. For example, in Philosophy, it is a term which means: 'A second self; the way in which a friend is to be regarded, according to Aristotle.'²⁰² In the Oxford Guide to Latin in International Law, it is literally translated as 'Another I', and further defined in terms of 'A second

²⁰⁰ Luke writes that Anna was Kurt's 'feminine alter-ego' (Luke, *Space, Image, Exile*, p. 28).

²⁰¹ Ludwig Frambach, 'Das weltenschwangere Nichts Salomo Friedlaenders „Schöpferische Indifferenz“,' in *Die Kunst der Gestalttherapie: Eine Schöpferische Wechselbeziehung*, eds. Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb and Nancy Amendt-Lyon (Vienna: Springer, 2006), pp. 129-44. [Mynona, die Umkehrung von anonym, ist das Pseudonym seines *Alter Ego*.] (Original emphasis, my translation.)

²⁰² *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Simon Blackburn (Oxford University Press Online, 2008)

name or identity of a legal or national person, or a state.’²⁰³ In both cases the self is understood through perception: in philosophy of another; in law, of one’s self. Linguistically, the Latin roots of the word point to the pronominal singular form divided or multiplied – ‘*another* I’ – whereby ‘I’ is understood to stand for one’s perception of self. In his essay, ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience’ (1949), Jacques Lacan writes:

It suffices to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image—an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytical theory of antiquity’s term, ‘*imago*’.²⁰⁴

Imago, a term which can be translated as image, relates understanding of self to pictorial evidence. That is to say that in ‘The Mirror Stage’, Lacan discusses a baby’s initial perception of their image in the mirror and learns to recognise itself by way of difference. This elaborated upon by Butler when she writes:

This process of psychic projection or elaboration implies as well that the sense of one’s own body is not (only) achieved through differentiating from another body (the maternal body), but that any sense of bodily contour, as projected, is articulated through a necessary self-division and self-estrangement.²⁰⁵

Schwitters’ sense of ‘I’ is lost in Merz and Anna Blume who acts as his own kind of self-division and -estrangement.²⁰⁶ His image cannot be differentiated from Merz and Anna, and thus the ‘self-portrait’ postcards he sent to people, were in a sense, ways of people getting to know his new/alternative identity.

Furthermore, Schwitters’ entangled sense of self is an ‘othering’ of sorts. Butler writes:

²⁰³ *Oxford Guide to Latin in International Law*, eds Aaron X. Fellmuth and Maurice Horwitz (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2011).

²⁰⁴ Jacques Lacan, ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytical Experience’ (1949), in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York, NY and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999), pp. 75-81; p. 76. Emphasis is author’s own. This text will be referred to as ‘The Mirror Stage’ in future citations.

²⁰⁵ Butler, ‘The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary’, *Bodies*, pp. 28-57; p. 40.

²⁰⁶ Lacan’s essay was originally published in French, therefore ‘I’ would have been represented as ‘je’; in German, ‘I’ is of course ‘ich’ and thus the ‘I.A. Merz’ as previously mentioned may make sense. Furthermore, only in its English form that the pronoun is capitalized. Note also, that I do not confuse ‘I’ with ‘self’; the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

In my view, the self only becomes a self on the condition that it has suffered a separation (grammar fails us here, for the 'it' only becomes differentiated through that separation), a loss which is suspended and provisionally resolved through a melancholic incorporation of some 'Other.' That 'Other' installed in the self thus establishes the permanent incapacity of that 'self' to achieve self-identity; it is as it were always already disrupted by that Other; the disruption of the Other at the heart of the self is the very condition of that self's possibility.²⁰⁷

This schism in selfhood is manifested literally in his use of collage, and that 'An Anna Blume' was the foundational *Merzgedicht* is representational of the break in his stylistic and formal practices which led to his inside-outsider status.

Merz, and its consumption of Schwitters' life, can be seen not only in his insistence of signing his name in different ways, incorporating Anna and Merz into it; but also in his *Merzbau* and its transformation/subversion of the domestic space which will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter. Yet, Lacan's theory is only useful insofar as it expresses the establishing of one's identity. Lacan's argument functions almost entirely on image; and is concerned with the linguistic function to a degree, but as he states, to focus only on the linguistic function of the 'I' would render his argument absolute.²⁰⁸ The I is not a fixed character of the self—the I is changeable and subjective. Thus, the I is queer. I functions universally as a pronoun devoid of gendered ideology: whether male or female, trans or cis, one can identify with the singular pronoun of 'I' (should one choose to). In other cases, some choose to identify using 'third person plural' pronouns as it suits their own identities.²⁰⁹ But it seems the 'I' is very important to Schwitters, and one may even argue, specifically in 'An Anna Blume', that pronominal determination is tricky and cumbersome.

This is particularly true in the German language. For the English 'you', which can be singular or plural, German has 'du' (informal singular nominative), 'dir' (informal

²⁰⁷ Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination,' in Diane Fuss, ed., *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (New York, NY, and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 13-31; p. 27.

²⁰⁸ Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage', p. 79.

²⁰⁹ Using 'we' accounts for the multiplicity of their sense of self. It should also be remembered that in English 'their' and 'they' can be used as a singular third person pronoun.

singular dative), 'dich' (informal singular accusative), 'Sie' (formal singular and plural nominative), 'Ihrer' (formal singular and plural, though genitive), as well as 'Ihnen' (formal singular and plural with indirect object dative). Thus, in Anna Blume, the rambling 'Du, deiner dich dir, ich dir, du mir. – Wir?' is not so easily translated. Literally it might read: 'You, your you you, I you, you me. – We?'. This is partly because the cases in English are not so distinguished as in German; instead when it was translated into English in 1922, it makes sense that Klein would revert to the language of the Romantic (even Renaissance) poets, using the old declinations: 'Thou thee thee thine, I thine, thou mine. – We?' In the same fashion, the nonsensical, 'Ich liebe dir!' is translated to 'I love thine!'—the question which should come from the 'dir' is: 'My what?' On one hand this might be understood as a parody of the traditional ode or love poem—it does after all begin 'O beloved...'—but we may also read this as a fumbling to find the correct terms with which to refer to the New Woman, which leads to the inevitable question if the seemingly stable 'Wir' can still exist. This sequence might suggest Schwitters' own shift in consciousness about the validity of 'love poetry' in the age of the autonomous woman.

What does it mean to be an autonomous woman? In the case of Anna, it might be argued that her autonomy comes through mechanization, but this is problematic. If we take Dietrich's reading of the female made mechanical, then mechanical, in her reading, symbolises penetration. This reading is problematic, as it undoes any autonomy reached by Anna in her representation. The second issue in Dietrich's reading lies in the connotations of penetration. In thinking about penetration, notions such as 'maleness', 'the phallus' and 'the penis' are conjured. For the argument in this thesis, maleness is irrelevant; and it is important to note that the penis and phallus should not be mistaken as synonyms. Instead to argue for what Judith Butler calls, 'the transferability of the phallus, the phallus as transferable or plastic property' makes the case for considering the phallus as representative not of the male sex organ, but of the seemingly fixed ideology of power it holds.²¹⁰ She continues that to consider the phallus as plastic 'is to destabilize the distinction between *being* and *having* the

²¹⁰ Butler, *Bodies*, p. 33.

phallus, and to suggest that a logic of noncontradiction does not necessarily hold between these two positions.’²¹¹ In saying that one term does not necessarily contradict the other, Butler creates the possibility for the phallus to exist in a ‘feminine’ form. Therefore, it inverts what she calls ‘conventional heterosexual polarities.’²¹² ‘These variable body surfaces or body egos,’ Butler writes, ‘may thus become sites of transfer for properties that no longer belong to any anatomy.’²¹³ Anna is this site for Schwitters. She is read both ways, perhaps to be understood as bisexual, or maybe even androgynous. She acts as an extension of his feminine ego which allows him to think through and express alternative positions to heteronormative ideologies. Therefore, she is not a representation of a splitting of his ego, but instead a multiplication of his ego, lived, mainly, through his artistic practice.

Given that Anna Blume was Schwitters’ most enduring character and she is possibly the most unconventional of all of the fictitious figures we meet in his work, it is essential to consider the ways in which this poem has been read by its contemporary audiences and scholars today. This chapter set out a discussion which contends that the poem has been read in a singular and limiting way and these readings, while wholly valid and interesting, do not offer the fullest representation of the work or the artist. As evidenced, scholars have read Schwitters’ faux love poem as a derogatory ‘cat call’, however, the woman in the poem continually eludes definition and representation by the artist. She is perceived as a madwoman, a clown, a harlot, an innocent, and is in the simplest sense an agglomeration of conflicting and paradoxical ideas. Schwitters was criticised, namely by Dietrich and Gamard, for sexualising the female body in his representation of Anna Blume, however, neither read the poem through a critical or theoretical lens other than examining the language, paying particular attention to its denotive work and ignoring entirely any of the translations. Instead, this chapter argues for a consideration of the poem through queer and feminist lens (namely Butler and Halberstam), also taking account of the translations, and in doing so examines how an alternative understanding of the poem might be reached. It

²¹¹ Butler, *Bodies*, p. 33.

²¹² Butler, *Bodies*, p. 34.

²¹³ Butler, *Bodies*, p. 34.

draws attention to Schwitters' hybridisation of the body and the formal qualities in his poetry and collages, and compares these aesthetics with Höch's. I contend, that while, perhaps, the body politic is not as prominent in Schwitters' work as in Höch's, he is still concerned with the treatment of and portrayal of women's bodies in varying media. These are seen less in his poetic works, but are very prominent in his collages. Of equal interest, is that Schwitters seems to keep up with the changing perceptions and portrayals of the feminine form, moving through the line-drawing, sketch-like, pictures of women in early fashion magazines, to depictions of holy women (in particular, the Madonna) and an intervention in the portrayal by traditional artists of women; through to his later collages which utilize photography and play with the mass media representation of women in the early- to mid-Forties. These images are far more political than one is initially led to believe, and this requires some problem solving in order to understand the reasoning behind his, mainly, very odd configurations of bodies so as to be able to reach some sort of conclusion, point, or meaning in the work, as the following chapters will show.

3: KURT SCHWITTERS, WOMEN AND HANNOVER

Local politics are pertinent to understanding the ways in which women's emancipation advanced, but simultaneously was hindered. Meskimmon considers the impact of local politics in relation to *Neue Sachlichkeit* and women artists in her essay in *Visions of the Neue Frau: Women and the Visual Arts in the Weimar Republic*. She writes:

The 'politics' of the Hanoverian artists associated with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* were bound up in regional issues and '*Kunstpolitik*'. Hanover, in this period, was a wealthy bourgeois city in which abstract art had been embraced by an upwardly mobile middle class. As made clear in their writings, the young artists interested in Weimar's realism eschewed the elitism of abstract art and its patrons and wished to undermine this with an art which spoke to the working classes. Thus, the assumption of a working-class identity, and anti-bourgeois stance, was very important to the Hanoverians.²¹⁴

Meskimmon's appraisal of Hanoverian artists and their outputs references *Neue Sachlichkeit* (a movement with which Schwitters did not align himself) and with particular reference to, as she goes on to discuss, the works of Grethe Jürgens and Gerta Overbeck. His practice does seem to defy the 'high art' positions of abstraction (at least to a degree) and instead uses the scraps found in and around the city. Schwitters was an artist of Hannover, and the city indelibly shaped his work, his use of materials, and his compositions. In practical terms, the streets of Hannover were the sources for the scraps which eventually comprised his collages and assemblages, but the city's history and the predomination of the Protestant faith, must also be considered as having an impact on his work. As I discuss in Chapter 5, the inclusion of religious iconography in his work, such as the use of the Virgin Mary throughout his oeuvre is of particular interest, as the Madonna represents an ideology which is antithetical to the teachings of Protestantism. However, there is an element of this Protestant concern which might be read in his defacement of these holy images. Leaving the Madonna aside, this chapter will consider Schwitters' treatment of the female subject during the period from 1919 to 1936, with close analysis of the works which feature women created in the years 1919-1922. This period is significant for Schwitters, it was the years in which *Anna Blume* was created and most prolifically

²¹⁴ Marsha Meskimmon, 'Politics, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and women artists', in *Visions of the Neue Frau*, pp. 9-27; p. 24.

publicised and published. It is a period in which he is most experimental with form. It also comes before two important events which happened in 1923: the beginning of his Merzbau and therefore another turn in his style; and the economic crisis in Germany which lead to hyperinflation and drastically changed the material culture of the country. As such, it will engage not only with how these women were portrayed, but also consider how his commentaries might be linked to the political discourses of the women's groups working in and around Hannover at this time. It will also seek to understand his position as a proto-feminist through evidence that he supported women artists, demonstrated in correspondence and publications.

Schwitters' women in the context of Hannover

Hannover is the epicentre of Germany's Protestant organisations. In 1910, 87 percent of Hannover's citizens were Protestant, and only 10.3 percent were Catholic.²¹⁵ Today, these organisations are situated around the *Marktkirche* (completed 1366) in the city's *Altstadt*. It was originally a Catholic Church, converting to Evangelical from the early 1500s and was later to align with Lutheran values in the late 1600s.²¹⁶ It was the hub of the Old Town, an area of the city, which during the Reformation years and beyond, was a walled-off area in which only Protestants could reside. This chapter is concerned with one of these organisations in particular, the *Deutsche Evangelische Frauenbund*, or DEF [German Protestant Women's Federation]. The DEF were instrumental in the women's liberation movement beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, and continue to work today. Organising and promoting women's rights was not their main concern, although many of their most prominent members were advocates for equality provided it was in keeping with the laws of the church. Nancy R. Reagin has written extensively on the history of women's movements in Hannover, and much of *A German Women's Movement: Class and Gender in Hannover*, her monograph on the subject, is dedicated to the role of Hanoverian religious women's organisations in promoting women's rights with a concerted effort in training women

²¹⁵ Nancy R. Reagin, *A German Women's Movement: Class and Gender in Hannover, 1880-1933* (Chapel Hill, NC and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 142.

²¹⁶ See: http://marktkirche-hannover.de/?page_id=9.

of status, and promoting good health among the lower classes.²¹⁷ Reagin's investigation explores and analyses the limited roles of women in relation not only to their standing in society, but their marital status, and suggests that these roles were dictated purely on the basis of their relationships to their husbands or fathers.²¹⁸ However, instead of being critical of this and problematising the issue, she offers an alternative chart.

Reagin shows that many of these women led their daughters into similar charitable work, and her evidence would suggest that the gap not only between the sexes was marginally reduced, but also that between the classes. She highlights that the groundwork was being undertaken by women, however, due to their status, women were not able to run the organisations which benefitted them most. Reagin writes:

The women's movement had always argued that the state should ultimately assume the responsibility of social services, but women leaders had intended that the new government welfare agencies should be run by women, a feminine jurisdiction. Instead, the new Hanover municipal welfare agencies were led by men, although women staffed the lower echelons.²¹⁹

These limitations placed on women were wholly problematic, and Reagin's characterisation of welfare as 'feminine jurisdiction' is equally disconcerting. This is not Reagin's judgement, but rather a reiteration of the contemporary views of women's roles in society. Such views were widely accepted during the early twentieth century. This notion also creates a dichotomy between men and women, and furthermore places greater pressures on women suggesting that social and moral behaviours were their responsibility, and not that of each member of society. However, women's groups at this time were as much concerned with occupations and service that were deemed women's responsibilities. Therefore, that women's roles might have changed had the less radical figures within these groups been in charge, would not necessarily have guaranteed emancipation any more quickly, or indeed, at

²¹⁷ Reagin explores the multiple groups and their dedications, most were concerned with the advancement of women as carers, mothers, etc. See: Chapter 4, 'Fighting the Spread of "Social Poisons": Domestic Science and Social Welfare Work for a full discussion of this topic (Reagin, *German Women's Movement*, pp. 71-97.)

²¹⁸ Reagin, *German Women's Movement*, p. 8.

²¹⁹ Reagin, *German Women's Movement*, p. 9.

all. In defence of these changes in constitution, Reagin states, ‘these social workers obtained their jobs on their own; previously individual women could only gain access to social welfare work through joining a women’s voluntary association.’²²⁰

In addition to religious organisations, which were usually affiliated with political and social groups, women could join clubs. Clubs were the support mechanisms for many of the movements and groups, and were instrumental in recruiting women to their causes, as well as providing support to the women who joined these clubs. Reagin notes that while these clubs were ‘seldom mentioned in the newsletters, correspondence, and pamphlets generated by local women’s associations; they were nevertheless essential.’²²¹ While there were many women who were actively involved in these groups, Reagin suggests that many were considered “‘passive” members’ who ‘paid their dues, occasionally attended a lecture, and lent use of their name to public appeals.’²²² Others were activists who took to the streets and/or canvassed politicians and local leaders. These were largely teachers, and so provided two precedents for young woman. Firstly, they proved that women’s education was essential, and that this should not only include so-called women’s education, which focused on women’s roles in society; but extended the learning experience to provide suitable equity, or at least attempting to bridge the gap in educational provisions for women. Organisations such as the Women’s Educational Association, the Women’s Patriotic Association and the Society for the Advancement of Female Education, all had alliances with the DEF. The public nature of these groups would suggest that Schwitters would have had at least a vague knowledge of these clubs and groups which advocated for women’s rights.

On the subject of revised domestic situations, Reagin notes that clubwomen were often single, and there were many cases of these clubwomen sharing homes, in effect

²²⁰ Reagin, *German Women’s Movement*, p. 122.

²²¹ Reagin, *German Women’s Movement*, p. 123.

²²² Reagin, *German Women’s Movement*, p. 125.

becoming co-dependent financially and socially. She quotes one DEF member writing in the association's magazine:

Where two women live together, in true comradeship, there is a real home. In it one can feel secure [...] warmth and harmony fill it. Female friendship— anyone who has experienced it, knows that he [*sic*] has drawn a good lot in life ... And — I add this, so that I will not be seen merely as an idealist —such female friendships are good also in a pecuniary sense. A lone woman may barely make ends meet, but if two pool their money, they have a quite serviceable income.²²³

That this statement was published in the association's newspaper attests to the normalcy of such cohabitation. However, I want to challenge two points that Reagin makes. The first is the inclusion of '*sic*' after 'he'. Reagin reads this as errata (which it very possibly is, after all the experience she is writing about is between two women), as though Krukenberg should have written 'she'. However, in this error, that is including the male pronoun, she highlights the equality proposed by such cohabitations as those between two single women. That even when one depends upon the other, and although the same dynamic is to be found in heterosexual relationships, they are somehow entering an impartial relationship, uninhibited by the conventions of patriarchal hierarchisation and heteronormative society.

The second issue comes in Reagin's insistence on pointing out that we cannot make assumptions that these relationships were anything other than platonic, an assumption based on a lack of evidence. She writes:

Some of these 'Boston marriages' were undoubtedly real marriages— sexual and romantic unions, as well as domestic partnerships. In the case of the Hanover clubwomen discussed here, it is impossible to say which, if any of these relationships between single women were romantic, or if they were sexually consummated.²²⁴

While this makes for a more historically neutral account of the situation, it undoes the radical potential and the subversiveness of the unknown acts which may or may not have occurred between these women. The very fact that these women are being spoken about, in hearsay fashion, in relation to each other and not their marital status—

²²³ Reagin, *German Women's Movement*, p.129, quoting Elsbeth Krukenberg, "Frauenfreundschaften," *Evangelische Frauenzeitung*, (1906-1907), pp.43-44.

²²⁴ Reagin, *German Women's Movement*, p. 129.

separate from their respective male counterparts—begins to set forth, and clear ground for, discourses developed by feminists in much later years, particularly Adrienne Rich and Monique Wittig. Naturally, Schwitters knew of a female, same-sex relationship which was not platonic, and one which benefitted greatly from the pair's shared experiences and support for one another: as discussed earlier, that of Hannah Höch and Til Brugman.

Reagin provides a list of the associations which admitted female members. She notes that there were 37 men's associations which focused on charitable or social services, countered by only 17 which admitted women in the same role, and zero which were mixed.²²⁵ A far more staggering figure occurs in the number of "professional associations": 120 admitted men, but only 10 catered to women, and again, none allowed mixed participation.²²⁶ This separation of men's and women's professions is not uncommon in this period across Europe, and the Hannover's associations were no different. Organisations such as the Association of Christian Women Teachers, the Association of Prussian Female Elementary School Teachers (divided into two local chapters), as well as the Association of Hannover and Linden Female Teachers and another for female music teachers, all continue the stereotypical and socially-accepted roles and positions offered to women. As teachers, they fulfil a pastoral role, as well as one as caretaker. However, there are two associations which are particularly interesting to consider as potentially sitting somewhere outside these compartmentalised roles dictated to women. The first is the Society for the Advancement for Female Education, established in 1892, and the other is the League of Academically Trained and University-Educated Female Teachers, founded in 1906.

This data provides evidence not only for the overarching importance of Protestantism to Hanoverians, but also the clear connection between women's groups and organisations and the church.²²⁷ Of course, there existed women's groups who were

²²⁵ Reagin, *German Women's Movement*, p. 144.

²²⁶ Reagin, *German Women's Movement*, p. 144. Source: *Adressbuch der königlichen Haupt- und Residenzstadt Hannover*, 1906 edition, part II, pp. 180-225.

²²⁷ As will later be discussed, Schwitters relationship to his religion is somewhat fraught, and in throughout his career, an obsession with the Madonna develops, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

not affiliated to the church. However, the most prominent groups in Hannover were connected in this regard. Moreover, Hannover as an example contradicts many instances of patriarchal systems hindering the emancipation of women entirely.²²⁸ Religion is less dominant in the newly formed Weimar Republic: Article 137 of its constitution states that '[t]here is no state church.'²¹⁶ With these contentious issues at play in society-at-large, and with these issues so publicly discussed, it seems odd that Schwitters would use images of the noted Catholic icon, the Virgin Mary. Schwitters dedicates more than one of his works to the Madonna, and as will be discussed in Chapter 5, this is yet more evidence of Schwitters' paradoxical and subversive (if not entirely mischievous) behaviour.

It is also important to note other social and legal representations of parity which coincide with Schwitters' creative output. The Weimar Republic established within its constitution the need to create a more equal society. Article 22 stated that men *and* women over the age of twenty could vote.²¹⁷ Article 109 states that: 'All Germans are equal in front of the law. In principle, men and women have the same rights and obligations. Legal privileges or disadvantages based on birth or social standing are to be abolished.'²²⁹ Another article, 119, states that:

Marriage, as the foundation of the family and the preservation and expansion of the nation, enjoys the special protection of the constitution. It is based on the equality of both genders. It is the task of both the state and the communities to strengthen and socially promote the family ... Motherhood is placed under state protection and welfare.²³⁰

To date scholars of Weimar women and the *Neue Frau* have documented, criticised and conducted analysis of the effectiveness of the instatement of such a clause on the progress of the women's liberation movements.²³¹

²²⁸ There is evidence which would contradict this statement, however, Reagin's findings present at least one example where the women's groups, despite being embedded still within a patriarchal system, made some progress toward parity. ²¹⁶ *The Weimar Constitution*, 1919, trans. A. Ganse (2001), http://www.zum.de/psm/weimar/weimar_vve.php#Composition. All subsequent references to the Weimar Constitution are taken from this translation. ²¹⁷ *The Weimar Constitution*, 2001.

²²⁹ *The Weimar Constitution*, 2001.

²³⁰ *The Weimar Constitution*, 2001.

²³¹ Meskimmon and West's edited volume, *Visions of the Neue Frau: Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany* covers a wide range of issues, with a particular slant, focused on women in the visual

Schwitters' own work undergoes changes at the same time as the country's political system begins to change. In 1918, Schwitters is publishing with the Expressionist magazine, *Der Sturm*. Anthologies of Dada poetry and other writings (such as Robert Motherwell's *Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (1951) and Lucy Lippard's *Dadas on Art* (1970) include Schwitters, and thus scholars have often defined him as a Dadaist. Schwitters gained recognition and exposure through his ties with Expressionist artists and publishers; and while he associated with and exhibited alongside the main protagonists of the Dada movements, he did not designate himself specifically as a participant of 'Dadaism'. He was yet to fully define Merz at this point, which occurs in an essay of 1919/1920 entitled 'Merz',²³² and in this essay, he writes about affiliations to Dada and Constructivism, and ends his essay with a selection of his works.

Forming *Merz* and the female body

I have discussed the genre-bending of his poem 'An Anna Blume' and its various places of publication in Chapter 2, but wish to note again that this change in his style, and also his publisher, occurs around the same time as his affiliation with Berlin Dada and the De Stijl movement become more notable. It is during this period that his visual art works begin to change: they become more experimental, and the use of collage becomes favoured over his previous style which might be more closely aligned with the Expressionist tradition. Before 1919 and his publication of his *Merz* manifesto, he worked almost exclusively in paint, these works are part academic and part Expressionist in style. However, in 1920, when he published his *Merz* essay, he concluded it with two short poems 'Herbst' [Autumn] (1909) and 'Gedicht Nr. 48' [Poem No. 48] (ca. 1920), the two poems are very different in style.²³³ 'Autumn' reads:

The forest is silent in grief.

arts. Meskimmon and West's contributions to this study are invaluable when considering the Weimar Republic's progresses as well as its failures in aiding the emancipation campaigns.

²³² First published in *Der Ararat*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Munich: Goltzverlag, 1921), pp. 3-11. The subtitle notes that it was 'written for *Der Ararat* in December 1920.'

²³³ See Motherwell, 1956, p. 65.

She must patiently suffer
Her dear betrothed,
The summer, to depart.

In grief and anguish still
She holds him in her arms.
You, my love, wept when I departed.
Could I now but rest my heart!

The romantic melancholy tones of the poem evoke all of the emotions of the end of summer, or the loss of love. 'Poem No. 48' which comes around the same time as the poem which would launch his literary career, reads:

Staggering. Earthworm.
Fishes.
Clocks.
The cow.
The forest leafs the leaves.
A drop of asphalt in the snow.
Cry, cry, cry, cry, cry.
A wise man burst without wages.

In this poem, things are what count, not the expression of subjective experience, as was characteristic of Expressionist poetry. His 'Anna Blume' poem has also been mischaracterised in its own time and by current scholars, as previously discussed, as Romantic and was also considered as part of this Expressionist phase in his oeuvre. However, Schwitters' 'An Anna Blume' is the first example of his 'Merz poetry' and is defined by its collagistic, non-narrative, nonsensical lyricism.

Furthermore, and as a distancing from his Expressionist poems, it is also in this period that he began to explore new methods of production, and here the collage becomes his main medium. The detritus of the world, the scraps from his printing press, and carefully selected cut-outs from magazines and newspapers of the day were melded together to create illuminating depictions of the turmoil experienced by the country. Moreover, recurring themes begin to appear: issues of femininity, femalehood, emancipation, women in the arts, women and advertising, among others. These themes

are clearly not limited to Schwitters, and their radical qualities have been more frequently discussed in female artists' use of the technique and theme.²³⁴

One need only look at the Dadaists' treatises and manifestos to realise the overly masculine environment they had created. Tristan Tzara's 1918 'Dada Manifesto' reads:

To fly into a rage and sharpen your wings to conquer and disseminate little abcs and big abcs, to sign, shout, swear, to organise prose into a form of absolute and irrefutable evidence... and maintain that novelty resembles life just as the latest appearance of some whore proves the essence of God.²³⁵

Tzara's call to arms against language and his derogatory terms against women are just one example of the Dadaists' masculinist expression. Johannes Baader's self-proclamation as '[Der] Oberdada als Präsident des Erdballs' [The Oberdada: President of the World]²³⁶ is an enforcement of Dadaist masculinity: firstly, by the gender of the 'President'—male, denoted by 'der'; and secondly, by his assertion as the President of the Globe evokes a position of power: dominating and domineering, presiding as overlord and master of control.²³⁷

In spite of this male dominance, Höch asserts her position among and against these Dadaistic masculinism, and instead asserts a violence of a different kind. In her use of collage and photomontage, by cutting up bodies and rearranging them she further

²³⁴ In December 1959, Edouard Roditi interviewed Hannah Höch, she said 'Poor Raoul [Hausmann] was always a restless spirit. He needed constant encouragement in order to be able to carry out his ideas and achieve anything at all lasting. If I hadn't devoted much of my time to looking after him and encouraging him, I might have achieved more myself. Ever since we parted, Hausmann has found it very difficult to create or to impose himself as an artist, though he still continued for many years to provide his friends and associates with an inexhaustible source of ideas.' This article first appeared in *Arts* (New York, December 1959); this excerpt was reproduced in translation in Lucy L. Lippard, *Dadas on Art: Tzara, Arp, Duchamp and Others* (New York: Dover Books, 1970), pp. 68-77; p.75.

²³⁵ Tristan Tzara, 'Dada Manifesto' (1918), trans. Ralph Manheim, in Motherwell, p. 76.

²³⁶ I have left "Oberdada" untranslated. "Ober" as a preposition is simply "over" or "above"; but as a prefix it can mean "upper" or "super", therefore a hierarchy within the bounds of an anarchist movement is imposed.

²³⁷ See also 'Dadaisten gegen Weimar' [Dadaists against Weimar] (1919) signed by Baader, Hausmann, Tzara, Grosz, Janco, Arp, Huelsenbeck, Franz Jung, Eugen Ernst, and A. R Meyer (reproduced in Motherwell, 1951, p. 145). Also, to counteract these linguistic expressions of dominance and appropriation of a language of control, Baader and Hausmann set up Christus GmbH in 1918 to protect war defectors, therefore putting into action the moral and philosophical ideologies set forth in their texts and artworks.

asserts her position among her male counterparts. Her process of cutting is bold and destructive, it can be perceived as an act of violence, defacing the images of many famous figures in the early days of the Weimar era. In Höch's collages, not only are women at the centre of her aesthetic, they appear as mutilated and reconfigured bodies; defaced by her cutting and pasting, and reassembled to provide in some cases grotesque bodies, and in others presenting beautiful and intriguing 'othered' bodies. By presenting bodies which defy, subvert or re-present traditional notions of beauty, Höch destroys these boundaries and thus shows how the destruction of out-moded ideas of women is a new construction of beauty. Consider *Das schöne Mädchen* [The Beautiful Girl] from 1919-20: in this collage, no whole body is presented. Instead, a filament lamp bulb replaces the head of a swimsuit wearing torso; hair adorns an advert for an automotive company, as though it were a wig presenting a second woman; and a third woman has had her eyes removed and part of her face covered by a BMW badge. These bodies presented to the viewer by Höch are far more overt than those presented by Schwitters. Schwitters' representation of the female form is often dependent on its pairing with textual fragments. Often these textual fragments present ideas which are in opposition to some of the images presented, in other cases the text is drawing attention to a particular political moment, and in other compositions, the text is entirely unconnected to the images presented and represents trite details found in the media. These connections, disconnections and misconnections are the subject of this next section.

First, the body politics of Höch's doll constructions should be considered. Her *Puppen* [Dolls] were made at various points in her career: the surviving examples, held at the Berlinische Galerie, were created in 1916. Her *Puppen* are made entirely of found textiles, they are at once ugly and enchanting, repulsive and inviting. Moreover, the doll features prominently in Höch's work. Ruth Hemus notes:

Fragments of dolls' faces and body parts, as well as those of tribal artefacts and figures, are interspersed with those of women in works including *Zerbrochen* (Broken; 1925), *Der Meister* (The Master; 1926), *Liebe* (Love; 1926) and *Zweigesichtig* (With Two Faces; 1927-1930) [...] here are instances where the doll was employed by a women Dadaist. The coincidence of doll- or puppet-making by three women protagonists – Emmy Hennings, Sophie

Taeuber and Hannah Höch [...] points compellingly to gender as a significant motivating factor.²³⁸

The doll, a childhood staple, is inherently gendered. Dolls usually appear as representations of young girls (although male dolls do exist) and typically are sold as tools for enforcing gender imbalance: promoting child-rearing, or beauty standards. In his important essay, “‘A suggestiveness that can make one crazy’”: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s Images of Marzella,’ Sherwin Simmons writes: ‘Doll play has commonly been associated with children’s acculturation, a motif seen as early as 1543 in *Charity*, a painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder.’²³⁹ The doll is the site of conventional female body standards, learned by children from a young age; as Simmons has also pointed out, ‘the majority of dolls began to resemble their playmates in age and appearance,’ i.e. children.²²⁹ They become ciphers for male anxieties about female bodies, particularly those changing images produced by the visibility of the New Woman.

This is particularly true of Höch’s dolls whose “breasts” are exposed. Hemus further explores the doll’s use as an ‘objectification of the female body’ and proposes that female Dadaists used these feminine representations as ways of subverting prescribed gender expectations. She writes:

Mimetic, figurative representations all but disappeared in Dada art with, in the main, a shift away from the objectification of the female body. This was more likely liberating for women artists. Their use of dolls, however, constituted an ongoing engagement with and exploration of representations of the female body, the doll being deeply entrenched as a cultural signifier for the female body.²⁴⁰

The doll also appears in Schwitters’ work. In *Mz. 180 Figurine* (1920), the collaged woman appears doll-like: small, petite, an image of ideal femininity.

Moreover, the title ‘figurine’ invokes notions of miniaturised bodies and forms, and this can be considered in the same way as the doll. Schwitters’ invocation of the

²³⁸ Hemus, *Dada’s Women*, p. 123.

²³⁹ Sherwin Simmons, “‘A suggestiveness that can make one crazy’”: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s Images of Marzella,’ *Modernism/Modernity* Vol. 22, No. 3 (2015), pp. 523-563; p 531. ²²⁹ Simmons, ‘A suggestiveness,’ p. 531.

²⁴⁰ Hemus, *Dada’s Women*. p. 123.

figurine is playful and as the term ‘figurine’ (in English it is the diminutive form of ‘figure’, and can also be translated, in German, to ‘*Figürchen*’, lit., ‘little figure’) is a household object, and evokes connotations of religious statuettes. That the figurine is a woman further complicates Schwitters’ representation of the woman in his collage. She is defined by her domestic connections (her designation as statuette) and yet her appearance is modern, with a short skirt made from a newspaper, the print-encapsulation of modern views. This contradiction in image and word is central to our understanding of Schwitters’ depiction of the new woman and furthermore the general contradictions occurring in the social and cultural spheres outside the collage.

Schwitters’ earliest depictions of women in collage are produced in 1920, with titles such as *Merzz. 52. Schönheitzfllege*, (Fig. 8) which has no direct translation, but is homonymic with ‘*Schönheitspflege*’ meaning ‘cosmetic’ or ‘beauty care’, even ‘beauty culture.’ The title of this has most likely been derived from not only the multiple references to beauty/cosmetics, apparent in both textual and pictorial elements within the collage, but also the assumed title of the magazine cover which has been the base image for this collage. At the centre of the collage two women can be seen, and one is having her hair done by another; they are dressed in clothes of centuries past. The sitter, who is having her hair coiffured, sits facing the viewer, holding a mirror, playing with a braided pony tail, which hangs down over her right shoulder. She is in typically French dress of the late nineteenth century, and the image is comparable with depictions by Renoir and Degas who chose to depict beautiful, young women having their hair combed. With exception of the German word ‘*Pflege*’ [care] all other textual fragments are in French. A large, entirely capitalised ‘AUX’ [of (plural)] has been pasted over *Pflege*, below which appears the ‘*Téléphérique du Salève (1150 m) à quelques minutes [de] Genève*’ [Salève cable car (1150m), located a few minutes [from] Geneva].²⁴¹

This fragment seemingly has nothing to do with the subject matter of the collage, until we notice that below the image of the women the word ‘Gauloise’ appears on a blue

²⁴¹ The word between “minutes” and “Genève” is illegible: it has been erased, although, I have made the assumption that it is “de” [from] given that the cable car which takes visitors to the top of Mont-Salève boasts views of Geneva.

background. This can be translated to 'Gaul woman.' Gaul was a region in Western Europe during the Iron Age which would have encompassed modern day France, Belgium, Switzerland and most of Northern Italy. Salève is a French town, in the French Prealps, which borders Switzerland, located near to Geneva. Moreover, Gaul was the home to Celtic tribes, thus making yet another allusion to the 'Frenchness' of the women depicted at the centre of Schwitters' collage. Gauloise was of course also a famous brand of cigarette produced in France, which featured black typeface on a blue background, and Hermes' helmet as its logo. This is most likely the source of this fragment. A further coincidence occurs in the renaming of the Belgian society of arts and letters, originally founded as the *Cercle de la Toison d'Or* (Circle of the Golden Fleece) and changed its name later to the *Cercle Gaulois* (Gallic Circle).²⁴² These connections to the Gaul people, within the context of other Francophone fragments, might seem the most obvious connection.

In Schwitters' use of old French fashion, he creates an obvious juxtaposition between the fashion worn by French women and the German fashion of the early Weimar period. As previously discussed, the ideals of beauty in the context of the new Germany radically and quite rapidly departed from older ideals of how women should dress. This critique of feminine ideals (as previously dictated by a patriarchal system) come with the change in cultural, social and political circumstances. However, these shifts in what constituted an accepted dress code had greater impacts on the real and everyday aspects of women's lives. This juxtaposition sets up an intriguing contradiction in Schwitters' own sartorial aesthetic. He dressed in "Victorian" clothing, despite men's fashion having moved on since the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. In the 1951 interview with Höch, Edouard Roditi asked, 'Monocles seem to have been very fashionable among the Dadaists. I've seen photographs of Raoul Hausmann, Tzara, Van Doesburg, and even Arp wearing monocles and looking for all the world like young aesthetes of the generation of Oscar Wilde.'²⁴³ Höch's

²⁴² There are no records of Schwitters having visited Salève or Geneva at this time, mainly because restrictions were placed on Germans travelling immediately after the Great War; his parents took him on a short trip to France when he was a child, and a little later in his life he made another to Paris. There is also no evidence that he visited Belgium.

²⁴³ Lippard, *Dadas on Art*, pp. 68-77; p. 77.

response was 'The very sight of a monocle in those days offended the stuffed shorts who claimed to be progressive. [...] People were particularly annoyed if a Dada dandy wearing a monocle appeared on a platform in a meeting of Communist workers.'²⁴⁴ Höch's understanding of the connection between fashion and politics may suggest part of the reason Schwitters was perceived as one of these stuffed collars by Huelsenbeck when he first met Schwitters in 1918;²⁴⁵ or perhaps this was exactly Schwitters' intention, to dress like a bourgeois gentleman from the past and in turn, entirely subverting such perceptions of the connections between politics and fashion.

Schwitters' 'othered' women

Another collage produced in this year, titled *Mz. 158 Das Kotsbild* (Fig. 9), features images of women, and the theme of women's struggle and emancipation is central to its composition. The title, which again has no direct translation, has homonymic resonance with '*Kotze*' (noun) or '*kotzen*' (verb) meaning 'puke' or 'vomit' and is a German colloquialism. Early translations of this title appear as 'The Vomit Picture,' however, taking account of the untranslatability of the nonsense word, later translations maintain the folly of the original title and have reproduced it as 'The Kots Picture.' This collage features fragments which attest most prominently to Schwitters' support of the women's movements' endeavours. At the centre of this picture is the word, fully capitalised and laid to a forty-five-degree angle: 'KOTS.' As aforementioned, this is not a real word in the German language but instead bears homonymic similarities with another.

It is, therefore, assumed that it must have come from another word. Given the nature of the fashion models who appear in the collage, it is most likely the middle syllable from the work 'TriKots' [j Jerseys or dresses] and in Schwitters' characteristically playful nature, he has manipulated the word.²⁴⁶ Under this fragment, the word '*Frauenberufe*' appears, which translates as 'women's professions.' Given the size of the fragment, it was most likely taken from a flyer or poster for one of the many

²⁴⁴ Lippard, *Dadas on Art*, p. 77.

²⁴⁵ See Hausmann in *Courier Dada*.

²⁴⁶ My sincere thanks to Prof. Eric Robertson for his suggestion that 'TriKots' and 'Kots' might be connected.

lectures held by the women's organisations on the subject.²⁴⁷ These lectures were designed to encourage women to seek out employment and voluntary positions, however, as its title would suggest, there were limitations placed on such opportunities. It was propagated that women would be granted the opportunity to work, however, these would still be within specific boundaries. Women could work within the remit of domestic services or within the confines of task or roles that were deemed "motherly": nursing, childcare and child rearing, domestic training, etc, as discussed previously in this chapter. This of course was not specific to the German climate, and was standard thinking across much of the world in this moment. Women were gaining some autonomy, yet they were still not recognised in parity with their male counterparts.

Below the word 'women's professions,' we read an advertisement for '*Hundehalsbände*'—dog collars. The advert reads:

Dog Collars / Special round and half-rounded chokers / Recommended
cheapest August Felle, Isny, Wttbg. [Württemberg] / Best supplier for
wholesalers and traders.²⁴⁸

Accompanying the advert, a little dog barks vigorously from the lower right corner of the canvas toward the coy model positioned at the top right of the canvas. The untamed little Spitz barks uncontrollably at the fashion magazine model; it is scruffy and dishevelled, it is without collar, a stray. The stray requires one of the collars advertised in this collage. Moreover, the dog collar symbolises domestication, as discussed above, in the tendency towards professionalisation of women's private lives through the bourgeois movements' insistence on training which focused on making women from poorer and lower-class backgrounds more like themselves. This shift can be

²⁴⁷ Reagin notes that 'Within the *Bürgertum* [Bourgeoisie/middle class/civil society], voluntary associations helped to fill members' leisure hours, and became one [of] the chief forums within which bourgeois culture was articulated. The increasing specialization of associations devoted to various arts and sciences led to the creation of an educated public ... Other bourgeois voluntary organizations, devoted to philanthropy or reform, acted as adjuncts to the state in supporting schools, public hygiene, and social welfare projects.' (1995, p. 17) The latter forum included topics such as women's professions. See also Reagin's list of magazines and journals dedicated to the women's movement (p. 304).

²⁴⁸ [Hundehalsbänder / Speziell runde und halbrunde Würger / empfiehlt billigst August Felle, Isny, Wttbg. / Beste Bezugsquelle für Großisten u. [und] Wiederverkäufer.] (Author's translation).

linked with capitalist ideologies, and as feminist scholars have posited, the home can be read as an extension of capitalism.²⁴⁹

Marxism and Feminism are often cited as bedfellows. Application of Marxist theory, in conjunction with feminism, allows for the subversion of the traditional roles of the woman which espouses the capitalist function of the home and so frees women from the capitalist restraints.²⁵⁰ Reagin proposes that this might have been possible were it not for hyperinflation in 1923. This saw the value of the Deutsche Mark plummet, to such levels as the paper the money was printed on was worth more than the value of the money itself. Reagin writes, ‘the members of the women’s movement, like other bourgeois Hanoverians, suffered materially during the Weimar period. The inflation of 1923 hit many clubwomen, dependent on pensions or fixed incomes, particularly hard.’²⁵¹ The material shortages caused by the First World War, and the worsening conditions caused by hyperinflation, as previously stated, gave Maria Makela the reasoning for her argument showing Schwitters’ use of materials in opposition to more traditional methods.

Also, that Schwitters connects women’s professions, alluding to prostitution, and dogs, suggests a common trope within the avant-garde of the early twentieth century. For a moment, I would like to consider the play on words possible through the inversion of women’s professions to give “professional women”. This invokes prostitution, and as such, the correlations drawn between prostitution and the stray dog are most prominent in the art of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Sherwin Simmons, in his essay, ‘Ernst Kirchner’s Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immorality in Berlin, 1913-16,’ documents censorship and public attitudes towards sexuality, in particular the female body. He writes about the change in the dressing of shop windows, using female mannequins in lingerie and nightgowns to help sell the products: equating the

²⁴⁹ One such example is Heidi I. Hartmann’s ‘The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Repressive Union’, *Capital and Class*, Vol. 3, Iss. 2 (1979), pp. 1-33.

²⁵⁰ For further explanation of Marxist Feminist, see Christine Di Stefano’s entry in *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought* (New York, NY: Wiley, 2014), pp. 2305-2310.

²⁵¹ Reagin, *German Women’s Movement*, p. 9.

selling of clothes with sexuality, and thus sex with capitalism.²⁵² He analyses one painting in particular which connects prostitution and dogs. Simmons writes:

One of the striking features of *Friedrichstrasse* is a greyhoundlike dog, strutting with haunches raised. Dogs are present throughout the street series, roaming the streets and sniffing the gutters. Even the dogs' free movement was an issue in 1914, since a recent police regulation required dogs to be leashed and muzzled on the street. When public protest forced the dropping of the regulation at the beginning of March, many saw it as a small victory over the increasingly repressive policies of Police President von Jagow. Willibald Krain's Jugend drawing in which dog, prostitute, and artistic nude are restrained under the same leash law thus also demonstrates the way the liberal press linked elements of the larger morality debate.²⁵³

Simmons' analysis equates the unruly dog with the unruly woman. This is, as I have suggested, how Schwitters also equates the two subjects. The connection between the unmuzzled and unleashed dog with the young women scattered across the canvas of *Das Kotsbild* suggests that even in the newly formed Weimar era—which promised progress—women's rights are not entirely changed. Such depictions of women can be further explored in a comparison with the images of animality in 'An Anna Blume', and taking account of descriptions of female prostitutes (the unknown, lady of the night, mysterious, etc.) one might consider a comparison with his description of the 'uncounted' [ungezählte] woman.²⁵⁴

Furthermore, one can extend this reading of the domesticated animal as one of a long tradition of human domination of the wild animal to serve as, what Donna Haraway calls, the 'dangerous and unethical projection in the Western world that makes domestic canines into furry children.'²⁵⁵ The danger for Haraway is not only the repressive nature of domestication – Haraway proposes that 'dog writing' is feminist writing²⁵⁶. Moreover, she writes:

²⁵² Sherwin Simmons, 'Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immorality in Berlin, 1913-16,' *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, Issue 1, (Mar. 2000), pp. 117-148.

²⁵³ Simmons, 'Kirchner's Streetwalkers,' pp. 130-31.

²⁵⁴ Simmons also notes that in Prussia, prostitution was illegal. However, it was 'permitted if prostitutes registered with the police.' (p. 131)

²⁵⁵ Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Others*, (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), p. 11.

²⁵⁶ Haraway, *Companion Species*, p. 3.

They [dogs] are not a projection, not the realization of an intention, nor the telos of anything. They are dogs; i.e., a species in obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean relationship with human beings. The relationship is not especially nice; it is full of waste, cruelty, indifference, ignorance, and loss, as well as of joy, invention, labor, intelligence, and pay.²⁵⁷

Haraway suggests that we project human relationships, and their qualities (good and bad), onto our relationships with dogs. Moreover, these relationships are connected with familial politics. Troubling, for Haraway, is the domesticated dog's links with heteronormativity and overt displays of masculinity. She writes:

Dogs are said to be the first domestic animals, displacing pigs for primal honors. Humanist technophiliacs depict domestication as the paradigmatic act of masculine, single-parent, self-birthing, whereby man makes himself repetitively as he invents (creates) his tools. The domestic animal is the epoch-changing tool, realizing human intention in the flesh, in a dogsbody version of onanism. Man took the (free) wolf and made the (servant) dog and so made civilization possible.²⁵⁸

Haraway suggests that dogs were the test subjects for how to domesticate other human beings: they are the site of domination of one species over another. Dogs' and women's positions in their hierarchical relationships with men are comparable but not identical—women were never given the freedom which the domesticated dog had, as they pre-existed humans and civilisation; woman is always already subject to patriarchy. In the instance of Schwitters' dog, it is not someone's pet: it is uncollared, unmuzzled, unleashed. It is a contravention not only of domesticity, but also of Weimar laws, which stated that all owners must muzzle their dogs in public.²⁵⁹ Therefore, Schwitters' subversion of the domestic subject through the unmuzzled dog, and by drawing attention to professions outside of the home (in spite of the subcategory of professions reliant on domestic roles and/or socially accepted roles for women), is focused by his collaged model and her dog. This is further drawn out and situated within a context of capitalism by including an advertisement for dog collars: the vendor uses the laws to his advantage and profits from it.

²⁵⁷ Haraway, *Companion Species*, pp. 11-12.

²⁵⁸ Haraway, *Companion Species*, p. 13.

²⁵⁹ Simmons, 'Kirchner's Streetwalkers,' p. 130.

Continuing the capitalist and feminist dichotomy, Schwitters uses the image of a young fashion model. Again, the fashion industry capitalises on changing hemlines, a by-product of *Ersatzkultur*, and thus, changes in political and social climates. In Schwitters' use of the fashion magazine model, her top half can be seen obscured by his sharp cutting of the page, and the overlay of a five Polish Marka bill (which also features images of women, further emphasising the connection of women, capitalism and economy). The figure appears with high, coiffured hair; her head is tilted and her gaze sideways, coyly looking off, admiring perhaps something happening off canvas. In line with the model's head, a pair of shoes can be seen, and the words '*Bezugsschein am*' can be distinctly read. This is an incomplete phrase, but what can clearly be read is the German word for 'ration coupon' -- offset by the pretty girls, the inclusion of currency (foreign and domestic), and a depiction of a genteel couple walking through a stately park-- it emphasises the state of the country post-World War I and the paradox of the aspirations many had for its recovery.²⁶⁰ It perhaps also references the state of flux during the intermediate period of the country at that moment, a snapshot of the country as it leaves its old ways of the Wilhelmine reign for the newly-born Weimar Republic.

Das Kotsbild is constructed from many images and found fragments on the page, along with textual scraps. The components, for the most part, slant upwards and to the right, with the exception of two composites. The larger of these reads: '*Sämischgares Rindleder / in Häuten und Kernstücken*' [Cowhide chamois / in full hide and double bend].²⁶¹ This seemingly random inclusion of an advertisement for leather products, in a collage which so far has been thematically arranged around ideas of femininity, is not so incongruous when one considers Schwitters' relationship to the clothing and fashion industries, as well as Hannover's ties with the wool industry. Leather, a hardy material, is quite the opposite of wool (although, both are products of animal pelage).

²⁶⁰ This image also appears in his *Zeichnung I 6 Mode I*, 1920.

²⁶¹ Cowhides, when being used for leather products have specific names for each section of the hide. 'Häuten' is skins, which in terms of leather is also 'full hide'. 'Kernstücke', which is also called '(der) Croupon' is a very specific part of the cowhide, it is located below the shoulders, and is either known as the 'double bends' or 'double butts'. (See: <https://leatheronline.it/en/content/32-full-cow-hide-division-leather-parts>.)

Hannover was a major producer of wool from the 1860s and throughout Schwitters' lifetime. The Döhrener Wollwäscherei und Kämmerei was Germany's largest wool processing plant, it was located less than a mile from his family home in the area of Döhren (today, Hannover-Döhren).²⁶² Schwitters' mother and father owned a ladies' fashion store in Hannover, and so it seems natural that he would have an interest in fashion broadly speaking. Moreover, as Maria Makela has identified, Schwitters attempted to write a book on fashion in 1924—however, this was never published.²⁶³ While Hannover's history might be more closely linked with wool and softer fabrics, the inclusion of leather, specifically of cowhide [Rindleder], relates directly to the second rogue fragment.

This fragment is a haunting presence of Schwitters' 'Anna Blume'. She appears as a small label, sitting at a right angle, slanting upwards toward the top left corner of the canvas, in red, block capitals. That both of these fragments are positioned in the same way connects them. This reminds viewers of the lines from his most famous poem: 'Dein Name tropft wie weiches Rindertalg' and 'Rindertalg träufelt streicheln über meinen Rücken.' References to leather [Rindleder] invoking the lines which compare Anna to cow fat/beef dripping [Rindertalg] not only connects the themes of Anna Blume with this collage, but provokes the viewer to consider the unorthodoxy and unconventionality of his most elusive female protagonist. The same unorthodoxy is expressed in Schwitters' use of young female models, and his apparent statements on notions of gender bias, or gendered professions/roles within society.

Many scholars have chosen to discuss the relationships between male and female artists within such discourses as the one outlined above, however, in doing so they tend to overshadow the work of the female artist with whom their analysis is concerned, and also run the risk of dislocating the artist from any credible discussion

²⁶² *Die 'Wolle' Besteht in Döhren nicht mehr. Nachforschungen zu einer großen Fabrik in Hannover–Döhren, die es nicht mehr gibt* (Hannover: n.p., 1987). My thanks to Maria Makela for pointing me toward this source.

²⁶³ Makela, 'Making Lemonade', p. 2. She includes a footnote which states that the book was claimed to be 'in production' in Schwitters' publication, *Die Märchen vom Paradies* [The Paradise Fairytales] (Hannover: Aposs-Verlag, 1924) [Footnote 6, p. 10].

as an artist within their own rights. It is thus that I have attempted throughout this thesis to conduct research which considers the much larger social and political factors being represented by Schwitters. To exclude personal testimonies and private issues from the discussion is not to ignore them, but instead is to attempt to shift the scholarly paradigms within which Schwitters is so often discussed.

Therefore, I will now consider an image which does not fit with the style and form of works from this period. Unlike Heartfield and Höch, Schwitters' collages use illustrations rather than photographs, and in doing so further exhibit his detachment from Dada. However, *Mz. 239 Frau-Uhr* [Mz. 239 Woman-Clock] of 1921 is not constructed in the same way as the previous two collages I have chosen to discuss. Instead of line drawings, and cut fragments from newspapers, magazines and advertisements, we find photographic materials presented in a similar fashion. I wish to consider this work as a collage, and not to discuss it in terms of photomontage. Although to do so would allow for clearer connections between Schwitters' and Höch's compositions, the unclean lines, and second-handedness of the works is more prevalent in this collage than in the much cleaner works by Höch. It is the emptiest of Schwitters' collages with only six or seven fragments, on an off-white background, framed by an ink-drawn border.

Schwitters and youthfulness

Frau-Uhr features a cut-out reclining nude on a chaise-longue; material is draped over the couch and accentuates her form. Her eyes are closed, head tilted upwards, with sharp features; her breasts are exposed and emphasised by her posture: the right angle made by her elbow, bent to support her back on the curve of the crest of the chair, pushes her chest out. She appears at ease with being looked upon, almost inviting the viewer to admire her. She is decadent, her hair adorned with gold beads which are twisted into the folds of her elaborately coiled locks—she represents idealised beauty, youth, and sexuality. Her youthfulness is emphasised by a lack of pubic hair—alluding to prepubescence.

This representation of youthful female sexuality is commonplace particularly in works produced by male artists, such as Kirchner's images of young women as discussed by Simmons in his essay on the artist's drawings of *Marzella*,²⁶⁴ however, I want to propose that Schwitters' introduction of a male's hand holding a pocket watch reveals a radical politics unfolding in his work. Unlike many of the artworks that had come before, where the female form was the main subject, particularly in classical depictions of the feminine form, the nude often shielded her modesty. The pubic area was often covered, either by the hand of the model, or by material draped in front of her. Lynda Nead writes:

For art history, the female nude is both at the center and at the margins of high culture. It is at the center because within art historical discourse paintings of the nude are seen as the visual culmination of Renaissance idealism and humanism.²⁶⁵

Nead asserts the marginal and central positions of the female body in art historical contexts as subject and object; not only as a point of contentious discussion, but one which transgresses these boundaries and confuses the lines between high art and pornography.²⁶⁶ Nead's analysis explores notions of gender, class and morality as expressed through the female nude, and is less concerned with the distinction between the male and female gazes (as other feminist writers have done) and instead proposes that the 'nude is always organized into a particular cultural industry and thus circulates new definitions of class, gender, and morality.'²⁶⁷ These definitions are further exposed by the female nude's reconfiguration of male and female sexuality, particularly those created by male artists.²⁶⁸

Moreover, Schwitters' (and other artists') use of the photographic fragment may be more transgressive than it first appears. Following Nead's proposal that the difference between photograph and painting is important to the understanding of the subject, I wish to propose that Schwitters' move away from painted and illustrated matter,

²⁶⁴ Simmons, 'A suggestiveness,' 2015.

²⁶⁵ Lynda Nead, 'The Female Nude: Pornography, Art, and Sexuality,' *Signs*, Vol. 15, Issue 2 (Winter 1990), pp. 323-335; p. 325.

²⁶⁶ Nead, 'Female Nude', p. 325.

²⁶⁷ Nead, 'Female Nude', p. 326.

²⁶⁸ Nead, 'Female Nude', p. 326.

particularly in the later years, may not only be a product of technological advances, and a shift in practice dictated by the material poverty experienced, but a commentary on the new depictions of the female form. The feminine form is changed by the reproducibility of the photograph, in the changes in printing processes, and as evidenced by the doll and the mass production of the children's toy. On the reproducibility of the photograph, Nead writes:

Within traditional aesthetics, the painting has a peculiar status. Valued as an authentic and unique object, the singular product of a special act of creativity, the painting is, as Victor Burgin writes, "part holy relic, part gilt-edged security." In contrast, the material and cultural value of the photograph is reduced by its reproducibility, and the photograph carries none of the connotations of human agency and cultural dignity. Unlike the connoisseur of high art, the consumer of photographic art does not possess a unique object, and within the polarity of high and low art, the photograph is devalued as the product of mass technology, popular and vulgar.²⁶⁹

Schwitters' entire aesthetic is dependent on the popular and mass produced (another point of differentiation from his Expressionist past). Even in his use of reproductions of paintings by Defregger and Caravaggio in later years, he vulgarises them by pasting onto these masterpieces used fragments, many of which have been printed in hundreds of issues, and so the mass cultural value of the print of the masterpiece (now a piece of highly reproduced culture) is offset and accentuated by the mass-produced fragments cut from magazines, newspapers, fashion catalogues, etc. which adorn it.

In the instances where the model protects her own modesty, there is a suggestion of her taking control of her own sexuality. That the model Schwitters has chosen does not shield any part of her body from the viewer's gaze would suggest not only that the model does not wish to control her sexuality, but rather that she shuns the expectations

²⁶⁹ Nead, 'Female Nude', p. 329. Quoting Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 42.

of societal boundaries. Firstly, that the watch is held by a man's hand points to male control. The model, here, evokes youth and beauty. This is offset by Schwitters' placing of the watch over the image of the girl, suggesting a focus on deterioration and ageing, and its importance, particularly in the political spheres of early twentieth-century Germany. Women were encouraged to marry young, become mothers, and serve their husband's needs from a young age. Thus, aging is central to many debates of women's rights and their general position within Weimar society. In her landmark feminist essay, *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone de Beauvoir discussed the many social positions of women and the various factors which hinder and help the progression towards parity. In the opening paragraph to the section titled, 'From Maturity to Old Age', she writes:

The individual life history of woman – because she is still bound up in her female functions – depends in much greater degree than that of man upon her physiological destiny; and the curve of this destiny is more uneven, more discontinuous, than the masculine curve. Each period in the life of woman is uniform and monotonous; but the transitions from one stage to another are dangerously abrupt; they are manifested in crises – puberty, sexual initiation, the menopause – which are much more decisive than in the male.²⁷⁰

In this excerpt, de Beauvoir is focused on time and ageing and how the process of this part of life differs greatly between men and women. This particular anxiety about the passage of time and tradition is not only to be found in the manifestos presented by feminist theorists and activists; as already demonstrated, the focus on young women group and club members, and the separation of the young and old, and the married and unmarried women were defining factors in many of the women's groups and organisations in Hannover. It was also a topic being wrangled with by many German artists and philosophers of the early twentieth century.

The Expressionists, a movement of artists, self-taught and railing against the German art academy, sought to redefine these methods in German painting: groups such as *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* were at once influenced by and rejected the methods taught to them by the institutions where they had trained. That Germany was obsessed

²⁷⁰ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p.587.

by youthfulness, particularly male youthfulness, was to be found in art and design movements such as *Jugendstil* (literally, Youth Style; its French equivalent is *Art Nouveau*); appearing and growing alongside this artistic practice was the weekly magazine *Jugend*. Established by Georg Hirth in 1896, the magazine produced many articles and letters, as well as reproductions of images by established and amateur artists—showcasing the works of pioneers such as Ernst Barlach. The magazine ran until 1925. *Jugendstil* and its followers produced many innovations in art and design, and arts and crafts, none more so than those in typography. Schwitters' work and *Jugendstil* are mainly disconnected by subject matter, however, Schwitters draws particular attention, albeit somewhat arbitrarily and via a somewhat circuitous route, to a typographical innovation influenced by *Jugendstil*. In one of Schwitters' polemical short texts, *Tran Nr. 30: Auguste Bolte. (Ein Lebertran.)* (1923), the infamous Anna Blume appears multiple times throughout. However, in one footnote he offers the suggestion that Auguste Bolte shares her initials with not only Anna Blume, but also with the Swiss Symbolist painter, Arnold Böcklin. He writes: 'Auguste Bolte, Anna Blume and Arnold Böcklin have the same first letters: A. B.' [Auguste Bolte, Anna Blume und Arnold Böcklin haben die gleichen Anfangsbuchstaben: A.B.], a coincidence that might seem wholly arbitrary and unimportant, were it not for Schwitters being the polymath he was.²⁷¹ In 1904, the typographer Otto Weisert created a new typeface which he named after the Swiss Symbolist, which was popularised by followers of Art Nouveau and *Jugendstil*. Schwitters is therefore interested in his own position within these movements which work with and against traditional art historical ideas.

In particular, the figure of the *Backfisch* is important in understanding the representation of young women in German literature and art at this time, and perhaps suggests another reason for Schwitters' signalling of the typographical appropriation of a style which connects the feminine form with typefaces and fonts as Schwitters does in his assimilation of Auguste Bolte, Anna Blume and Arnold Böcklin. In his

²⁷¹ Kurt Schwitters, *Tran Nr. 30. Auguste Bolte. (Ein Lebertran.)*, (Zurich: Verlags AG Die Arche, 1984 [1923]), p. 17.

essay, 'The Figure of the Backfisch: Representing Puberty in Wilhelmine Germany,' David Ehrenpreis notes that the 'shifting role of women in German society became an issue of fundamental importance.'²⁷² Bolstering this claim with evidence of Kaiserin August Viktoria's conservative statements about the ideal woman; and the contrasting views of social commentator August Bebel who believed in a much more socially progressive image of women.²⁷³ The figure of the Backfisch becomes synonymous with ideas surrounding puberty, virginity, sexuality, and the loss of innocence. Ehrenpreis writes:

In comparison with England and France, the process of modernization in Germany began considerably later and advanced with much more speed, peaking in the years round 1900. Representations of the Backfisch reflect this rapid industrialization and the ascendancy of a mass visual culture. By the turn-of-the-century, the image of the simple, virtuous virgin had become a commodity, appearing in poems, illustrations, and even songs.²⁷⁴

While Ehrenpreis explores the notion of the virgin as a commodified body, Schwitters' *Das Kotsbild* directly invokes this perspective and commodifies sex (and gender), connecting it directly through the inclusion of texts which reference marketing, to capitalist society.

Moreover, the body, and particularly women's bodies, in these movements becomes highly sexualised; the young body is particularly important, and the reclining nude in Schwitters' *Frau-Uhr* is, I would suggest, reminiscent of these bodies. This connection is particularly evident in the exposure of flesh, and the ornately decorated hair of the young woman. One is reminded of works by such artists as Alphonse Mucha, in which the model's hair and the ornate background or setting within which he places her become entangled or merged with each other; and in such examples the model and her surroundings become confused or muddled, a modernisation, perhaps, of the

²⁷² David Ehrenpreis, 'The Figure of the Backfisch: Representing Puberty in Weimar Germany,' *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, Vol. 67, Iss. 4 (2004), pp. 479-508; p. 479.

²⁷³ Ehrenpreis, 'Figure', p. 479.

²⁷⁴ Ehrenpreis, 'Figure', p. 482.

commonly reiterated comparison of the female form and the landscape.²⁷⁵ Schwitters' use of a non-traditional, bordering on pornographic, depiction of the feminine form, undermines the traditional representations of women, taps into the social anxiety set around the virgin, virginity, and sexualised female bodies as proposed by Ehrenpreis, and reiterates the aforementioned points proposed by Lynda Nead, especially those relating to the domestication of women's roles in society. It is with this notion, I wish to return to de Beauvoir. She proposes that

[w]hereas man grows old gradually, woman is suddenly deprived of her femininity; she is still relatively young when she loses her erotic attractiveness and the fertility which in the view of society and in her own, provide the justification of her existence and her opportunity for happiness.²⁷⁶

This observation points to the ongoing battle between men and women; and de Beauvoir's suggestion is that this all comes down to 'erotic attractiveness,' which is for de Beauvoir, the measure used by heteronormative and patriarchal societies to determine the value of women. This desirability is in-built in the woman's ability to reproduce: the insinuation being that an ugly woman cannot reproduce. Therefore, women are constantly subject to standards of physical beauty, and by extension artist beauty; here, I return to Schwitters' *Frau-Uhr* to suggest it draws attention to and criticises such discourses.

Schwitters has crudely cut round the watch, but carefully around the hand the white background behind the watch has been left, alluding to its foundness. Moreover, it has been deliberately placed, not to cover the model's breasts or pubic area on display, but rather directly on top of her stomach, it covers the part of her body where the uterus is located; thus, time limits her body, a visual representation of what de Beauvoir writes in her long essay. These fragments tell a story of their own, and they are most like the Dadaist photomontages created by John Heartfield or Hannah Höch; they

²⁷⁵ For discussions of female bodies and landscape metaphors see: J. Douglas Porteous, 'Bodyscape: The Body-Landscape Metaphor,' *The Canadian Geographer*, Vol. 30, Iss. 1, (Mar. 1986), pp. 2-12; Kerley, Erin J., "The Unseen Spaces: Landscape, the Female Body, and the Bildungsroman. Narrating the Transition Between Girlhood and Womanhood in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *The Dancers Dancing*" (2014). Research Papers. Paper 499. [http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_rp/499]; Catherine Nash, 'Reclaiming Vision: Looking at landscape and the body,' *Gender, Palace and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, Vol. 3, Iss. 2 (1996), pp. 149-70.

²⁷⁶ Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, p. 587.

represent the kind of aesthetic that Schwitters would come to work with in his later works. This shift was dictated by the change in materials available to him in his time abroad in exile. The materials here not only represent the political climate of 1920s Hannover, but also the ways in which women and men were exposed to particular images and ideologies through the media. It therefore prompts one to ask if we might consider access to materials as limitations on artistic and social understanding. This is not to dismiss the ignorance or misguidance of men and societal/patriarchal malfeasance, but rather to suggest that in the age of new media (collage, photomontage, film, photography) to represent women in a positive way becomes more difficult due to the long traditions and histories of portraying women in particular ways.

It is thus, that the collage and photomontage become imperative in repositioning the place of women in art history. Höch's collages depict women in unconventional ways, most often within an ethnographic context, or presenting them as hybrid beings. Schwitters' women are not so hybrid, but instead fragmented and placed within the context and in dialogue with the detritus alongside which they are displayed. These representations of women are feminist. They expose the consistent undermining of female empowerment through one-dimensional portrayals found in magazines, newspapers, advertisements, and film posters, among other media: always as objects. Moreover, that Schwitters, a male artist, explores these themes has been the impetus for this thesis, and exposes the contradictions and advances made within the avant-garde. Women artists were integral to movements such as Dada and Surrealism; and much of this success was in spite of abusive relationships, and/or dismissal by their male counterparts at the time. Using letters written between Schwitters and Höch, I will explore how despite the contradiction of the avant-garde's progressive politics with the undermining of female artistic success, Schwitters was a proponent of support for female artists like Hannah Höch and Sophie Taeuber-Arp.

Schwitters and Höch's friendship was long, they first met in late 1918 or early 1919.²⁷⁷ They met through Schwitters' connection to Dada and Hausmann, with whom Höch had a tumultuous affair. Gwendolen Webster documents the pair's relationship in her biography of the artist. She writes:

Kurt Schwitters was, she wrote, one of the few Dadaists who could treat a woman as a companion ... In one of Höch's collages there appears a phrase from 'An Anna Blume' scribbled in by Kurt: 'Lass sie sagen, sie wissen nicht, wie der Kirchturm steht.' ... It is an ambiguous phrase and people certainly were talking, for Kurt's relationship with Hannah looked suspiciously intimate.²⁷⁸

Webster refutes such claims that Höch's and Schwitters' relationship was anything more than platonic.²⁷⁹ Furthermore, in spite of the abusive relationship she had with another Dadaist, she trusted in Schwitters and the two clearly collaborated on works. Moreover, by adding a line from his female alter-ego, Anna Blume, to Höch's own work, Schwitters imbues the female spirit of Merz in his work.²⁸⁰

Gwendolen Webster discusses this further through the aid of a quotation from a letter Schwitters sent to Swiss art historian Carola Gideon-Welcker, who published some of Schwitters' poetry:

In 'An Anna Blume' Kurt has made a woman the embodiment of his art, and *Heilige Bekümmernis*, one of his first free-standing Merz works, is a continuation of this idea. That Kurt persisted in regarding his art in some obscure way as female is revealed by a half-joking passage written in later years to his patron Carola Giedion-Welcker: 'I'm very sorry that you are worried about the picture [Das Huth-bild] ... it developed these fissures practically as a young girl, as happens sometimes. Naturally I have been observing what is quasi my daughter a lot closer since I noticed this indiscretion and can only stress that in the time that she has under my eye, there have been no further lapses.

Nonetheless, she's a bit of a harlot, Fräulein Huth is ... I'll agree to any exchange if you'd rather have a different picture of mine, for although Fräulein

²⁷⁷ Webster, *KMS*, p. 91.

²⁷⁸ Webster, *KMS*, p. 91.

²⁷⁹ Webster, *KMS*, p. 92.

²⁸⁰ Webster, *KMS*, p. 82, quoting Carola Giedion-Welcker, *Gesammelte Schriften 1926-1971* (Cologne: DuMont, 1973), p. 503.

Hut has something of a loose character, she's my most stylish daughter. Really, you see, the lady is moral ... Just think—if a very young girl, so to speak, forgets herself just once and afterwards stands firm, that is actually the sign of a very strong character. I think the lady you want to retain, now middle-aged, will keep, or at least keep her promise.' On a personal level, the Heilige Bekümmernis referred to subjects that often perplexed Schwitters – women, religion, politics, music.²⁸¹

His designation of his art as female is at first unsettling, and his invocation of the family to represent his artistic output is equally intriguing. Upon first reading this section, one might consider the misogynistic handing-off of his daughter to his patron, however, this 'girl' of his—that is the collage—is giving him trouble, she stands firm against her supposed (societal) wrongdoing, and in the end he concludes this 'is actually a sign of a very strong character.' He does not punish the child for being unruly, but instead proposes a strong-willed girl is a positive attribute. Moreover, that this was sent to a female art historian, who was also one of his patrons, demonstrates Schwitters' consideration and recognition of professional women, particularly art historians and artists.

Again, returning to his closest female ally and supporter, Höch, Stina Barchan, who has extensively studied the pair's friendship, writes:

Kurt Schwitters figures large in Höch's archive, and is dedicated at least two files, *Schwitters Kasten* [Schwitters' Boxes], in which she kept documents, works and notes on and by her friend. Although we cannot today know the exact content of these files (and presumably the content would have changed over the years, some documents being added, others taken out), it could well have been his numerous postcards to Höch, flyers, posters, programmes and notes, if not also some of his collages and journals, for Höch had retained what seems like every piece of paper that carried their common history.²⁸²

Höch's archive was meticulously documented and catalogued: she had a full A-Z system, whereby *Kasten* were arranged by category, subject or theme, and by the first

²⁸¹ Webster, *KMS*, p. 82.

²⁸² Stina Barchan, 'Mime in the Archive: Hannah Höch and Kurt Schwitters,' *Sch... The Journal of the Kurt Schwitters Society*, Issue 3, 2013, pp. 3-18; p. 4. This essay is a revised extract from Barchan's PhD thesis *The House and the Archive: Hannah Höch and Kurt Schwitters* (University College London, 2009).

letter of these details. For example, one could consult her *A-Z Buch* [A-Z Book] and as Barchan notes:

If we wanted to find information on Höch, for example, we can search under eight different letters: *A: Arbeiten von Mir* [Works by me]; *B: Bilder von mir* [Pictures by me]; *D: Daten aus meinem Leben* [Dates from my life]; *H: Höch*; *I: Ich* [I]; *L: Lebensläufe* [Curricula Vitae]; *N: Notizen von Mir* [Notes by me] and *W: Wo sind Werke von Mir* [Where are works by me].²⁸³

She held boxes on many of her fellow artists, and on many of the movements which occurred in the early twentieth century. Höch's role as archivist to the Dada movement is important, particularly as it seems she did not allow personal politics or grudges held to dictate her collecting habits. She and Schwitters' professional relationship is just as important as their personal one; and in a manuscript for a lecture given in 1966 on Schwitters and Dada, she writes about how she was honoured to design a grotto in Schwitters' *Merzbau*. She also notes that 'there were guest caves by the Arps [Hans and Sophie Taeuber]—also two; one by Moholy [Nagy], [Piet] Mondrian and [Theo van] Doesburg had done one each.'²⁸⁴ Schwitters' and Höch's collaborations go beyond this one example, and they often supported and criticised one another in order to improve the other's career.

In a *Merzpostcard* from Helma Schwitters to Hannah Höch (the postcard was designed by Kurt, and written and sent on his behalf by Helma) dated October 20, 1923, Schwitters thanks Höch for her contributions to the next issue of his *Merz* journal.²⁸⁵ In another note to his friend, he tells her that there is one of her artworks for sale for 5 Dutch Gilder, and as if encouraging her to continue selling in Holland, tells her of his successful sales and the profits with which he would return.²⁸⁶ On another *Merzpostcard* also from 1923, Schwitters and Höch collaborate in a strange way. Schwitters has taken a print of one of Höch's works *Astronomie*, and around the

²⁸³ Barchan, 'Mime in the Archive,' p. 6.

²⁸⁴ Barchan, 'Mime in Archive,' p. 10.

²⁸⁵ *Merzpostcard* from Helma Schwitters to Hannah Höch. Hannover. Illustration: Kurt Schwitters. Posterharmonika. (Merzbild.) collaged with newspaper and magazine clippings (the stork holds a baby in its beak) 20.10.23. [Berlinische Galerie. BG-HHC K 499/79].

²⁸⁶ On the reverse of the *Merzpostkart* from Kurt Schwitters to Hannah Höch, 1923, [Berlinische Galerie BG-HHC II 23.36]: 'Du hast auch in Holland ein Aquarell [sic] für 5 Fl. verkauft.' [You also have, in Holland, a watercolour for sale at 5 Fl.]

image, Schwitters has written ‘Kaufen Sie den Saturnroten²⁸⁷ Führen durch das Hoechmuseum [sic] für alten und neuen Haus- und Un-Rat’²⁸⁸ [Buy the Saturn red guidebook through the Hoech Museum of old and new house contents and trash.].²⁸⁹ The Saturn red of the guidebook, and its connections to Zinnober (vermillion) is somewhat prophetic. Schwitters, with Kate Steinitz, organised a revue in 1927 which took place at the Hannover Konzerthaus. He called it the Zinnoberfest (Cinnabar or Vermillion Festival) and it occurred on January 7, 1928. Webster writes: ‘[t]he décor was in cinnabar red, and although the event ran at a loss, it proved extremely popular. Schwitters designed the brochure and wrote a special song for the festival, which had to be set to music.’²⁹⁰

This festival was largely a collaboration between Schwitters and Kate Steinitz. By 1927, Schwitters and Steinitz had collaborated on *Die Märchen vom Paradies* [Fairytale from Paradise] (1924), *Die Scheuche. Märchen* [The Scarecrow: Fairytale] (1925), a volume of *Musikblätter des Anbruch* (1928), and *Der Zusammenstoß* [The Collision] (1927/28). Kate, a fellow artist, was cofounder, with Schwitters, of the APOSS Verlag, which produced the above fairytales. Steinitz later wrote a memoir dedicated to her friend *Kurt Schwitters: Erinnerungen aus den Jahren 1918-30* [Kurt Schwitters: Memories from the Years 1918-1930], which was published in 1963; was then translated by Robert Haas in 1967 as *Kurt Schwitters: A Portrait from Life*. This volume included a short appendix of Merz poetry, and an introduction by John Coplans (photographer and curator of the Pasadena Art Museum, 1967-70) and Walter Hopps (Director of the Washington Gallery of Modern Art,

²⁸⁷ Saturnrot is a specific colour of paint. It is derived from Lead Oxide which was first discovered in Germany in Hannover in 1687. (Boris Paraškevov, *Wörter und Namen gleicher Herkunft und Struktur: Lexikon etymologische Dubletten im Deutschen* (Berlin: Walther de Gruyter, 2004), p. 217.) It is a bright red colour, and bears connection to ‚Zinnober‘, or vermillion. (My thanks to Gwendolen Webster for pointing to this connection.)

²⁸⁸ It is interesting to note firstly that ‘Hausrat’ [things around the house] relies on the pun with ‘Unrat’ [trash] which does not translate so well in English. Secondly, ‘Hausrat’ is an inversion of ‘Rathaus’ [town hall] and no doubt the doubling of politics within municipal government and the junk of a person’s house would have tickled the poet-Schwitters. Thirdly, it is interesting to note that Heinrich Mann’s eponymous novel *Professor Unrat (oder Das Ende Einen Tyrannen)* [Professor Trash (or the End of a Tyranny)], published in 1905, was a biting critique of the Establishment, and was later the basis for the film *Der blaue Engel* [The Blue Angel] (1930) starring Marlene Dietrich. (My thanks to Gwendolen Webster for drawing my attention to this connection.)

²⁸⁹ Merzpostcard from Kurt Schwitters to Hannah Höch, 1923, [Berlinische Galerie BG-HHC II 23.36].

²⁹⁰ Webster, *KMS*, p. 205.

Washington D.C., 1967-1972), and the first English printed copy of Schwitters' and Steinitz's opera *Collision*. Steinitz and Schwitters worked together to enhance and promote one another's careers. In an endearing introduction to her memoir on Schwitters she writes:

'Only Kurt Schwitters can write about Kurt Schwitters,' Kurt Schwitters told me whenever anybody asked me to write an article about him. His index finger went up warningly again when he heard that the great publishing house of Ullstein was about print such an article of mine. And I withdrew it at the last minute, to preserve our comradeship.²⁹¹

In the German text, Steinitz refers to Schwitters as '*Kamerad*', the best translation for this is comrade. This term is inherently bound up with Communism, and proposes a system without hierarchy, moreover it proposes a genderless distinction between the two.²⁹² Haas translates Steinitz's first use of the word to comradeship; however, in the second instance he translates it as 'pal', somehow undoing the sense of parity contained within the German, but reinforcing their deep and long friendship.

Schwitters and Steinitz, like he and Höch, were both friends and collaborators. He continued to support female artists such as Sophie Taeuber-Arp, when en route to Paris, he visited her while she was working on the design for Bar Aubette in Strasbourg. The music hall and dining complex's interior was designed by Sophie Taeuber-Arp in the constructivist style. The geometric shapes, clean lines and primary colours all presented a thoroughly modern place, in the otherwise, predominantly, Baroque- and Renaissance-style architecture of Strasbourg.²⁹³ Taeuber-Arp's bra was also preserved in plaster and featured in his *Merzbau* – a token of appreciation, along with various other objects owned by friends and colleagues whom he admired.²⁹⁴ In the 1939, Schwitters published a sketch (dated 1938) which shows a collaboration

²⁹¹ Kate Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters: A Portrait from Life*, trans. Robert Haas (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1965), p. 3. Steinitz own version is slightly different: "Nur Kurt Schwitters kann über Kurt Schwitters schreiben", sagte Kurt mit erhobenem Zeigefinger, sooft ich um einen Artikel über ihn gebeten wurde, und als ein Artikel vor mir bei Ullstein erscheinen sollte, zog ich ihn als guter Kamerad im letzten Augenblick zurück. Kurt nannte mich gern Kamerad. Das verpflichtet, auch über den Tod hinaus.' in *Kurt Schwitters – Erinnerungen aus den Jahren 1918-30* (Zurich: Verlag der Arche, 1963), p. 8.

²⁹² The German language, of course, does not allow for this as the feminine form 'Kameradin' exists.

²⁹³ Webster, *KMS*, p. 194.

²⁹⁴ Webster, *KMS*, p. 220.

between Schwitters and Hans Arp in the fourth issue of Taeuber-Arp's journal *Plastique* (1937-1939).²⁹⁵

In 1928, art historian Hans Hildebrandt published his monograph *Die Frau als Künstlerin* [Woman as Artist]. The pages of this book are simultaneously illuminating and contradictory. Schwitters contributed to the content and provided testimonies on women artists.²⁹⁶ Hildebrandt's objective was to promote a history of women's arts from Roman times to the present.²⁹⁷ Hildebrandt writes, 'the new female brings with her a new artist'—making reference not only to a change in subject matter and form, but also the shift in political and social climates which allowed for women to be this new kind of artist.²⁹⁸ Among the women featured, Hildebrandt reproduces Sophie Taeuber-Arp's plan for the design of the interior of a 'Café-Konditorei in Strasbourg,' the same one that Schwitters visited in 1927.²⁹⁹ Hildebrandt, regarding Bar Aubette writes:

S. H. Arp-Taeuber [sic] in the Constructivist style has, while maintaining the inherent talents of abstract design and managing, without female capriciousness, designed a sophisticated confectionery and tearooms.³⁰⁰

Hildebrandt's compliment is somewhat back-handed, but it is important to consider his consideration of her work on par with that of her male counterparts in the Constructivist style. Interestingly, he employs an odd naming system, whereby Taeuber's maiden name supersedes her husbands, he has inverted the usual Taeuber-Arp and made it Arp-Taeuber. This inversion signals a subversion of the normative naming system in which women take men's names. That Taeuber took Arp's name, but kept her own and joined their surnames together, is in itself an act of defiance against accepted codes of practice. By giving Taeuber's name the place that Arp's would usually occupy, Hildebrandt points to Taeuber's successes rather than Taeuber-

²⁹⁵ Webster, *KMS*, p. 289.

²⁹⁶ He features in the acknowledgements page at the end of the book.

²⁹⁷ Hans Hildebrandt, *Die Frau als Künstlerin* (Berlin: Rudolf Mosse Verlag, 1928), p. 7.

²⁹⁸ Hildebrandt, *Die Frau* p. 106. ['Das neue Weib bringt auch die neue Künstlerin.']

²⁹⁹ Hildebrandt, *Die Frau*, p. 15.

³⁰⁰ Hildebrandt, *Die Frau*, p. 143. [So hat S. H. Arp-Taeuber in folgerichtig konstruktivistischer Gestaltung, die ihrer herrnagenden Begabung zu abstraktem Schaffen sehr naheliegt und dennoch nicht des weiblich Kapriziösen entbehrt, eine Konditorei und Teestube in Straßburg bis ins Letzte durchgebildet.]

Arp's success which might be perceived to have come through her connections to her husband (the hyphen represents on the page this connection). Furthermore, the complete design of L'Aubette was actually a collaboration among Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, and Theo van Doesburg, and so in another sense, this inversion disrupts the reader's perception of the collaboration, signalling the dominant name to be Taeuber's, and Arp's secondarily attached.

Schwitters was connected to many women artists, and he alerted Hildebrandt to another of significance: his friend Ella Bergmann-Michel, a filmmaker and the husband of another of Schwitters' friends, architect Robert Michel. The Michels were instrumental in the Frankfurt avant-garde, and Robert Michel ran an architecture firm with Lucy Hillebrand,³⁰¹ a most unusual position for a woman in the early twentieth century.³⁰² Bergmann-Michel was also included in *Die Frau als Künstler* and in the short biography in the appendix of the book, he writes that Bergmann-Michel (although, again he calls her Michel-Bergmann, we assume inverting her name to the same end as Tauber-Arp's) was a painter, a Constructivist.³⁰³ He also notes, however, that she is the wife of painter and advertising artist Robert Michel.³⁰⁴ Schwitters and the Michels were friends, and in an article of 2017, Megan Luke notes that it was 'Schwitters [who] alerted Hildebrandt to her work' in a letter dated July 6, 1927.³⁰⁵

In this chapter, I have examined how Schwitters might be considered as proto-feminist in his personal life, as well as understanding the ways in which his work might be read as feminist. His contact with the women listed above in particular shows that Schwitters was able to separate his personal affection toward younger women, as the narrative has so frequently claimed was not the case, and instead to present, promote

³⁰¹ Isabel Schulz has written on the extent of Hillebrand's and Schwitters' relationship, she notes it was strictly professional, and unlike his colloquialism for young women (he called them "Arren") Lucy did not fall into this category. (See: Isabel Schulz, "Eine Art von Arbeit ..., die der Mann nicht leisten Kann." Künstlerinnen im Umfeld von Kurt Schwitters., 2007, pp. 11-14. http://www.sprengel-museum.de/bilderarchiv/sprengel_deutsch/downloaddokumente/pdf/ks2007_schulz_ks_und_seine_freundinnen.pdf.)

³⁰² My thanks to Megan Luke for this information.

³⁰³ Hildebrandt, *Die Frau*, p. 185. [Malerin (Konstruktivistin).]

³⁰⁴ Hildebrandt, *Die Frau*, p. 185. [Gattin des Malers, Werbekünstlers Michel.]

³⁰⁵ Megan R. Luke, 'Our Life Together: Collective Homemaking in the Films of Ella Bergmann-Michel,' *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 40, Iss. 1, 2017, pp. 27-48; p. 32.

and support his fellow artists regardless of their gender. Schwitters' letters to Hildebrandt (which were often intercepted and replied to by Lilly, Hans Hildebrandt's painter wife), his letters to and from Höch, and his dropping by Sophie Taeuber-Arpen route to Paris, as well as his collaborations with Steinitz, present an alternative and fascinating history of Schwitters' relationship to women—particularly those who were also artists, like him. This chapter demonstrates that Schwitters was supportive and well-connected to many of the most influential female artists of the Weimar period and beyond. His close friendships with artists and writers such as Höch and Steinitz, and their subsequent collaborations, evidence Schwitters' willingness to work with female artists. Furthermore, his reliance on female patrons (Katherine Dreier and Carola Gideon-Welcker, among others) meant that he willingly supported those who supported him: it was often the case that his female compatriots were kinder to him and about his art than his male colleagues. Moreover, setting him firmly among the women's movements and its history as it pertains specifically to Hannover, allows for an examination of this period within a historical context which has heretofore remained unexamined. The proliferation of the women's movement throughout Hannover, and its public presence, I have argued, could be used as a context for thinking through the feminist implications in Schwitters' collages which feature women. It also offers an alternative perspective on Schwitters which might contribute to future engagements with his work and the women present in these works. Schwitters' proto-feminist support of his female compatriots and a feminist reading of the works is not mutually exclusive, but the two have not been considered in tandem to date and reveal a most interesting perspective with which to examine Schwitters' collages which feature images of women.

4: SCHWITTERS' WOMEN IN EXILE: NORWAY AND BRITAIN

In 1937 Kurt Schwitters left for Norway fearing persecution from the Nazi regime. It was a country he had visited frequently on vacation. He and Helma first came to the country in 1929, touring the North Cape and Spitsbergen and then returned the following year with their twelve-year-old son, Ernst. They made several trips on holiday in the following years, before Kurt and Ernst eventually settled there.³⁰⁶ Schwitters only spent three years in Norway before being forced to move on to England. As the Nazis made their way across Norway, he felt that yet again his life was under threat. Norway was a complete contrast to Hannover. Hannover was a town of the middle-classes and professional people; Molde in Norway was more rural, and its industries were tourism and farming. Karin Hellandsjø, Karin Orchard, and Megan R. Luke have all noted that the landscape of Norway was important to the development of Schwitters' "Merz" aesthetic, particularly in the later years when his formal and stylistic approaches were going through changes, in part through necessity, but also in response to the political and aesthetic shifts of the avantgarde of early twentieth-century Germany.

Merz's disavowal of traditional modes of art and architecture, and their overt political engagement through slogans and publicity had been dampened, in Germany, by the oppressive Nazi regime. In the foundation of state-sanctioned literature and visual art, the avant-garde was all but wiped out, at least publicly, and while many prominent artists who had been pioneering figures in movements such as Dada, Expressionism, Constructivism and Surrealism had left the country, many stayed and worked, secretly, under restrictive circumstances. Schwitters was one such artist who left just as pressure was being placed on him and his family, and in times when the Gestapo were rooting out anyone who they deemed immoral or did not comply with their ideologies. The ever-resourceful Schwitters had always been an artist of commodities, capitalising on what was available to him; nothing was viewed as waste.

³⁰⁶ Karin Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule: Kurt Schwitters and Norway* (Oslo: Orfeus Publishing, 2016), pp. 20-21.

However, in the more rural, agriculturally driven cultures of Norway in the 1930s, it seems only reasonable that he would turn to the landscapes and the people who inhabited them for inspiration. It is during these years of exile, from 1937 to 1940, that Schwitters would make fewer of his characteristic Merz collages, and instead he would paint more naturalistically. Therefore, the first section of this chapter will consider his return to naturalism, focusing on his figurative works comparing three portraits: one of his wife from 1916/1917, one of a young woman Mabel Elliot Taylor, and the third his companion, Edith Thomas/Wantee, whom he met while in Britain. I will then continue to discuss representations women in the context of a pair of collages created between 1926 and 1937 as this shift from naturalistic painting back to collage demonstrates the adaptability and the need for ever-shifting representations of the women and subjects of femininity which encountered in exile. In the second section of this chapter I will discuss Schwitters' women in Britain, works made in severe poverty in England (experienced in the city and countryside) which would force his return to collage as a practice; once again, capturing the political and social climates of his locale.

Schwitters and landscape painting

There are three texts which have been significant in scholarly understanding of Schwitters' brief but important time in Norway. Karin Orchard's 2009 exhibition at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Oslo focused solely on this period, and explored not only the paintings undertaken while in Oslo, Molde and on Hjertøya, but also the few collages, photographs, and sculptures he produced in this time, as well as a consideration of the then dilapidated Merz Hut (Fig. 10a and 10b). In her essay in the accompanying exhibition catalogue, 'Kurt Schwitters: An Introduction', Orchard writes:

Schwitters spent three years in Norway, totally isolated both from the urban environment and from the stimulating intellectual way of life, which thanks to his many international contacts, he had been able to lead in Hannover. The

natural beauty of Norway overwhelmed him, and it was this which was to exert a strong influence on his work during this period of exile.³⁰⁷

Expanding on this notion, in her book *Kurt Schwitters: Space, Image, Exile*, Luke writes:

Throughout the 1930s [...] his production of oil paintings of the Norwegian landscape overwhelmed his creation of abstract images, whether in collage or in painted relief. He became increasingly preoccupied with the role that reproduction played in shaping his practice, and he used these pictures to return to the themes of imitation, kitsch, and the relationship of art to nature that had first defined his break from his academic training.³⁰⁸

Karin Hellandsjø argued for a similar impact on his work, but claims it stems from an earlier time in the artist's life:

Nature had always been important for Kurt Schwitters, ever since he was allowed as a child to have his own garden at the family's summer residence in Isernhagen, northeast of Hannover. [...] It was also [Norway's] nature that attracted him back to the country in 1930 after his first visit in 1929, the Norwegian landscape with its dramatic seasonal shifts never ceased to fascinate him.³⁰⁹

All three accounts convey the importance of nature and the Norwegian landscape's impact on the life and development of Schwitters' aesthetic, as well as that of the absence of city or town life. Orchard and Luke share the term 'overwhelmed' to describe how powerfully his new surroundings effected his oeuvre; while Hellandsjø makes the claim that his interest in nature stems from his childhood 'fascination' with the many flora he grew in his own little garden which would expand to include the Norwegian landscape.

It was not only his interest in the flora of his childhood garden that produced such interest in nature in Schwitters' work. Landscape painting was a long and enduring part of Schwitters' artistic history, Gwendolen Webster notes:

The first-year syllabus [at the Royal Academy of Art, Dresden] included landscape painting and perspective, though the latter was unfashionable and, like anatomy, regarded mainly as a chore. Landscape was more popular and

³⁰⁷ Karin Orchard, 'Kurt Schwitters: An Introduction,' *Kurt Schwitters in Norway*, eds. Karin Orchard and Henie Onstad Art Centre, Høvikodden, (Osterfild: Hatje Cantz, 2009), pp. 1019; p. 17.

³⁰⁸ Luke, *Space Image Exile*, pp. 205-6.

³⁰⁹ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p. 41.

here Kurt was greatly influenced by the lessons of Professor [Carl] Bantzer. In the summer of 1909 he attended Bantzer's landscape-painting course in Willingshausen, an artist's colony in Hesse. Willingshausen provided Kurt with the kind of surroundings he loved: good walking, country with extensive woodlands, rolling hills dotted with picturesque villages. Bantzer was a keen advocate of open-air painting and encouraged his students to regard workers and peasants with an unemotional eye. Under his tutelage Kurt learnt a new reverence for the work of Rembrandt and Franz Hals which was to remain with him all his life.³¹⁰

Given this interest, fascination even, with the Norwegian landscape, and his engagement with natural scenes early in his career, Norway would seem an obvious location for Schwitters, offering all these features and more in its geography. He was very much an adaptable artist, whose work flourished, not in spite of his surroundings, but as a result of them. This early interest in landscape sustained him in Norway, allowing him to make good and detailed studies of this new country, which he would sell to tourists, and subsequently gave him an income in his exile.

Schwitters' existence became increasingly isolated in the 1930s, as his large network of artists began to emigrate out of Germany. Gwendolen Webster shows how important his network was to Schwitters in her long list of those who removed themselves from Germany in this period:

[N]ow the Steinitzes [Käte and Ernst] were gone, the most recent in a succession of farewells that had started even before the Nazis came to power. [El] Lissitsky [sic] had left in 1929. Naum Gabo fled to Paris in the year 1932, the same year as Herwarth Walden emigrated to Russia. Many more followed after 1933. [Josef and Anni] Albers, [Ludwig] Hilbersheimer [sic]³¹¹ and Mies van der Rohe went to Chicago, [Hans] Richter and [Lionel] Feininger to New York, [Raoul] Hausmann to Ibiza, [Walter] Mehring and [Wassily] Kandinsky to Paris, [Jan] Tschichold to Basle [sic], [Paul] Klee to Berne [sic], [Walter] Gropius to London and Moholy [Nagy] to Amsterdam, although these were often no more than temporary stations in the search for a new home.³¹²

Webster's long list shows the huge number of collaborators with whom Schwitters had worked over the years. It also exposes the diversity of his network and style:

³¹⁰ Webster, *Kurt Merz Schwitters*, pp. 15-16. Professor Carl Bantzer was a lecturer at the Royal Academy of Art in Dresden. He produced paintings in the Impressionist style, two of which are now housed in the Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden.

³¹¹ "Hilbersheimer" refers to Ludwig Karl Hilberseimer (1885-1967), architect and urban planner, who was tied to the Bauhaus and colleague of Mies van der Rohe.

³¹² Webster, *KMS*, p. 273.

collaborating with many of these artists in the 1920s, he had a broad range of techniques which he could deploy, instead he chose to return to more conventional methods in his exile. Many of his friends and colleagues listed above continued to be members of the avant-garde communities in their new homes. Furthermore, Webster demonstrates how the ensuing Nazi regime had begun to push the avant-garde out of Germany. The Nazi artistic ideal called for a return to classicism and Romanticism: as such landscape paintings became part of their ideal.

Schwitters and 'degenerate' art

The Nazi return to landscape was evident in the staging of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (The Great German Art Exhibition, or GDK) of 1937, which was set up to showcase and celebrate two thousand years of German culture [Zwei Tausend Jahre deutsche Kultur].³¹³ Sculptures, landscapes, portraits (many of them were of Hitler), and still-lives were all submitted; all living artists were invited to submit, even those on the Degenerate list.³¹⁴ In her essay, 'Defining National Socialist Art: The First "Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung" in 1937', Ines Schenkler conducts in-depth analysis of the works presented at the GDK and presents statistics which show the distribution of genres and modes. She writes: 'The works in the GDK, made up of around 50% paintings, 30% sculptures and 20% graphic works, were [...] rooted in conservative academicism, without usually reaching the high technical quality of this tradition.'³¹⁵ The conservatism of this exhibition is not as exclusive as it might first suggest, most of the works presented were 'executed in a realistic or naturalistic manner', however as Schenkler notes, some bore resemblance to Impressionism and even Neue Sachlichkeit.³¹⁶ That these influences can be seen in some of the submissions is illuminating and suggests that while the 'genres firmly established in

³¹³ Ines Schlenker, 'Defining National Socialist Art: The First "Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung" in 1937,' in *Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany*, ed. Olaf Peters (Munich, London, and New York, NY: Prestel, 2014), pp. 90-105; p. 90.

³¹⁴ Schwitters' name appears thirteen times, from seven institutions, in the only existing complete list of Degenerate Artists. See: Victoria and Albert Museum's digital reproduction of the list: "*Entartete Kunst: digital reproduction of a typescript prepared by the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, ca. 1941/1942*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, January 2014. (V&A NAL MSL/1996/7). <http://www.vam.ac.uk/entartetekunst>.

³¹⁵ Schlenker, 'Defining National Socialist Art', p. 99.

³¹⁶ Schlenker, 'Defining National Socialist Art', p. 99.

the nineteenth century' were favoured, some styles of the avant-garde had managed to escape defamation. However, the predominant style was still (neo-)classical and naturalistic. It is interesting to consider the make-up of these works. Of the 50% which were paintings, 184 of the 884 works shown were landscapes (21%). As Schenkler notes, in 1938 this figure increased: some 366 out of 1,158 paintings (32%) exhibited were landscapes (a 35% increase on the year before). By 1942, this number had increased to 466 landscapes (26%, also a 26% increase since the first show).³¹⁷

This predilection toward landscape painting, is a product of Nazi censorship of artistic freedom, but as Schlenker also notes: 'many artists reacted to the horror of military conflict with the depiction of war in an unheroic and a "worrying flight" into an idyll," taking refuge in a different type of work: landscapes.'³¹⁸ The 'idyll' (a term with negative connotations in Schlenker's discussion) represented the antithesis to the ruined and exposed cityscape; the landscape allowed a visual and mental escape, but also represented hope that the country might be once again repaired. Schlenker also proposes that the popularity of this genre was, in part, because

...the public loved purchasing them as decorations for their living rooms, and artists faced with discrimination if they refused to paint as they were told, had found a way of seemingly complying with official guidelines, while the authorities had the chance to offer interpretations in accordance with the regime's *Blut und Boden* [blood and soil] ideology.³¹⁹

Furthermore, of the 2,465 artists who exhibited in the eight GDK exhibitions, held between 1937 and 1943, only 9.6% were women – that is only 237 artists of almost 2,500.³²⁰

Unlike many of his compatriots, who had moved around or away from Germany much earlier, Schwitters remained and continued to work in provincial Hannover, until 1937, under the increasingly oppressive climate created by the Nazi regime. A few years earlier, in 1933, Schwitters had witnessed the state sanctioned oppression of many of his colleagues in Germany. The demise of the Weimar Republic brought the

³¹⁷ Schlenker, 'Defining National Socialist Art', p. 104.

³¹⁸ Schlenker, 'Defining National Socialist Art', p.104.

³¹⁹ Schlenker, 'Defining National Socialist Art', p. 104.

³²⁰ Schlenker, 'Defining National Socialist Art', p. 102.

closure of the Bauhaus School in Dessau (and the subsequent demise of the institution's revival in Berlin later that year). The cultural ramifications extended beyond the closure of institutions to mass book burnings and to control of employment. Jan Tschichold, working at the *Meisterschule für Deutschlands Buchdrucker* (German Master Printers' School) in Munich, offered Schwitters a job at the school, but this offer was rescinded as Tschichold was fired by the President of the Printers' School, due to his being considered a degenerate artist. Furthermore, his first Merz picture *Das Merzbild* (1920) was included in an exhibition titled *The Decay of Art*, and in a subsequent newspaper article entitled 'The Betrayal of Art' in which he was made an example of degenerate art practice.³²¹ While Schwitters' artistic career began dwindling in Germany, it was in 1933 that it would find a slight revival in Norway. As Gwendolen Webster has written, in the autumn of 1933, Schwitters 'worked extremely hard to produce twenty naturalistic works for exhibition in the Blomquist Gallery in Oslo. It was to open in February 1934, and in January Kurt and Ernst sailed to Norway to make the final preparations.'³²² He had extended his already considerable network to Norway, possibly another reason for Schwitters' choice to emigrate there in 1937.³²³

Schwitters inclusion as an *entarteter* artist and in the touring exhibition of "degenerate art" of 1937 meant that he and his family had become a target for Gestapo interrogation. Four of Schwitters' collages were included in the exhibition, *Das Merzbild* (1920) and *Das Ringbild* (1920/22), and exhibited on the Dada wall among a melee of painted quotations, paintings hung at varying angles, and interspersed with sculptures, all heralded as examples of the nonsensical and 'unGerman' artists to whom the exhibition intended to draw attention, and to position as antithetical to the aims of the current regime. A further two collages were included in the graphic display, *Traum* [Dream] of 1917, and *Uneben* [Uneven] of 1920, both were

³²¹ Webster, *KMS*, pp. 250-53.

³²² Webster, *KMS*, p. 254.

³²³ On the subject 'choice'. Webster notes: 'In June [1934] ... [w]hile staying in Molde [he and Helma] became friendly with the landlord of the Alexandra Hotel, who told them of a picturesque island in Moldefjord [sic] named Hjertoya [sic]. Hjertoya was long, narrow, marshy and covered in pines, with a rocky shore line. It was indeed a place of extraordinary beauty. The only inhabitants were a fisherman and his wife, there were no facilities and the nineteenth-century Romantic in Kurt fell for it straight away.' (Webster, *KMS*, p. 259.)

subsequently destroyed.³²⁴ He is singled out in the exhibition catalogue for the *Entartete Kunst* show of 1937. On page 23 of the catalogue, an emboldened and large font read: ‘These were once taken seriously and highly paid!’, followed by ‘The titles: “*Der Gott der Fliegen*”, “*Am Strand*”, “*Merzbild*” and “*Familienbild*”. / The “artists” are: Molzahn, Metzinger and Schwitters.’³²⁵ The insertion of the word ‘artists’ into double quotation marks mocks their status as artist, and while each artist is named, the sequence in which their names appear is does not synchronise with order in which the artworks are shown on the page—authorship is removed—further suggesting that the distinction and ownership over the artwork is insignificant as all considered of equally poor quality.

His categorisation as 'degenerate' impacted on his wife's daily business. Götz Lothar Darsow writes: ‘The Gestapo were keeping [Helma Schwitters] under constant surveillance because of her contacts in enemy countries, but Helma must have been sufficiently far-sighted to evade their scrutiny, not least to prevent the destruction of the Merzbau.’³²⁶ Furthermore, Webster notes that ‘[i]t was Helma who dealt with a series of awkward enquiries about Kurt from the Gestapo.’³²⁷ These accounts of Nazi interest, particularly their questioning of Helma, came once Schwitters had fled the country. Norway was a haven to many Germans: at first as a tourist destination³²⁸, and later as one of safety from persecution, at least for a short period of time.³²⁹

Karin Hellandsjø discusses the role of tourism in Norway's development (and later, on Schwitters' practice), and writes that there were more German tourists in Norway in the early twentieth century than British. She proposes that these travellers were following in the footsteps of Kaiser Wilhelm II who first visited the country in

³²⁴ *Die “Kunststadt” München 1937. Nationalsozialismus und „Entartete Kunst“*, ed. Peter-Klaus Schuster (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987), p. 172. My translation.

³²⁵ Reproduction of *Führer durch die Ausstellung Entartete Kunst*, ed. Y. Fongi (no place, 1969), p. 23.

³²⁶ Darsow, ‘The sad fate of Helma Schwitters’, p. 27.

³²⁷ Webster, *KMS*, p. 286.

³²⁸ Schwitters visited frequently, Jules Verne and Claude Monet also vacationed in the country. (Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p. 19.)

³²⁹ Artist such as Naum Gabo and Ernst Wilhelm Nay took refuge in Norway, so too did the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. These are just a few examples of the famous face who spent time in Norway. (Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, pp. 34-38.)

1889.³³⁰ She believes also that tourism was the reason Schwitters repeatedly returned to Norway, between the years of 1929 and 1936, that it was the ‘basis of [his] existence and the main reason why he returned to the country every year for increasing periods,’ to sell his portraits and landscape paintings to tourists: a practice that would become essential to his survival in exile.³³¹ Before Schwitters left for Norway in 1937, he had been forced to close his small design business, the *Merzwerbezentrale*,³³² after the City of Hannover withdrew its contract in 1934.³³³ He was also forced to cease production of his *Merz* magazine (in the same year Herwarth Walden stopped the publication of *Der Sturm*, 1932), thus further reducing his income—left only with the profits from the rental properties left to him by his parents to maintain. In a letter to Käthe Kramer, Helma wrote about her obligations and that her decision to remain in Hannover while Schwitters and Ernst made their way to Norway was due to their property, ‘consisting of four houses with land, an extremely valuable studio [i.e. the Merzbau] that cost my husband ten years of continual work, and which was perhaps one of the great sights of the world and almost 500 pictures, a valuable library and many other things.’ She continues: ‘Quite apart from this, I couldn’t leave my elderly mother-in-law and both my parents alone.’³³⁴

From this short statement, and from the title of Darsow’s essay, it may seem that Schwitters was uncaring in his fleeing to Norway without his wife. However, were it not for Helma remaining in Hannover, Schwitters would not have survived, nor would much of his work. Webster writes:

[It was] Helma [... who] arranged the shipment of pictures, furniture and even Kurt’s grand piano to Oslo, Helma who (often in the company of her elderly mother-in-law) bore the inconvenience of travelling to Norway several times a year and returning to Hanover with piles of dirty washing. Helma who paid the rent of the Spengemann’s flat after their arrest and imprisonment, Helma

³³⁰ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p. 18-19.

³³¹ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p. 25.

³³² It is also sometimes written as *Merzwerbe-Zentrale*.

³³³ Webster, *Kurt Merz Schwitters*, p. 254.

³³⁴ Darsow, p. 27; [um ihnen ihr Eigentum zu erhalten, das aus 4 Häusern mit Grund und Boden bestand, einem ganz wertvollen Atelier, das meinem Manne eigentlich 10 Jahre unaufhörlicher Arbeit gekostet hatte und vielleicht eins der Sehenswürdigkeiten dieser Welt war und annähernd 500 Bildern, einer wertvollen Bibliothek und was der Dinge mehr sind. Ausserdem kam hinzu, dass ich meine alte Schwiegermutter und meine beiden alten Eltern nicht vollkommen allein lassen konnte.]. (Letter to Käthe Kramer, 3 July 1944.)

who rescued the Spengemann's work and brought it to Oslo for safety, Helma who managed in spite of all this to nurse her ailing parents and administer the four houses owned by Henriette [Schwitters' mother]. During Kurt's exile in Norway Helma emerged as more the heroine than the housewife, with a strength of will that nothing seemed able to break.³³⁵

Webster identifies Helma as fundamental to Schwitters' and his art's survival, she champions the seeming role of the housewife in the background, and Schwitters was apparently appreciative of her efforts too. In a letter to Hans and Susanne Freudenthal³³⁶, he wrote:

It isn't easy to be separated from house and home but we do it. Through Helma we keep our connections with Hannover and get lots of things from Germany. We're now quite nicely installed in our three-room flat. My grand piano has arrived and in the wood on the slope I am building a studio [i.e. the *Haus am Bakken*] ... My most important pictures have been brought to Oslo in safety, thanks to Helma's prudence. My mother was in Oslo for nine months and Helma comes four times a year.³³⁷

While Schwitters' statements acknowledge his wife's role as keeper of his art and credits her with the assurance of its safety, this testimony elucidates something altogether different. It provides evidence that Schwitters did not begin his time in Norway in desperation or destitution; instead that he had transferred his bourgeois existence from the Hannover cityscape to the Lysaker mountainscape. Furthermore, Webster's documentation of Helma's role in Schwitters' move and initial survival in Norway, contests the somewhat gloomy outlook and slightly one-sided portrayal of Helma and Kurt's relationship, as outlined by Götz-Lothar. Moreover, it highlights the importance of women in Schwitters' life, presents an opposing view to the many stories of Schwitters' maltreatment of Helma, in explaining that she herself chose to stay in Hannover, and look after their elderly parents.

Schwitters' experience of Norway was broad. He travelled the country fairly extensively, going on different walking and cycling tours of the various regions, and

³³⁵ Webster, *KMS*, p. 286-7.

³³⁶ Hans Freudenthal (1905-1990) was Lecturer of Mathematics at the Mathematical Institute of the University of Amsterdam. His wife, Susanne Freudenthal (1908-1986) held a degree in German and Literature from the University of Amsterdam and was the founder and editor of *Pedomorfose* magazine.

³³⁷ Webster, *KMS*, p. 287. (Letter from Kurt Schwitters to Hans and Susanne Freudenthal, 22.7.1938.)

often wild camping.³³⁸ In later years, Ernst would come to document these expeditions, and the images have come to represent Schwitters' experience of nature. Schwitters, as Hellandsjø has identified, was a keen cyclist, and while he was still in Germany, he was making trips to Bremen and Berlin by bus or bike; and he continued this tradition throughout his tenure in Norway. He packed his easel and tent on the back of his bike wherever he would go, and so was always ready to capture a new landscape and, as ever, capitalising on the opportunity to produce a new work to sell on his return.³³⁹ Moreover, his experience of the new landscape, its beauty, and its stark contrast with his bourgeois lifestyle and the urban city experience of Hannover, may have influenced his re-investment in naturalistic painting, a style with which he had dabbled in early in his career, and which changed under the influence of Expressionism and would make its way into his collages.³⁴⁰

Hellandsjø notes other avant-garde artists had spent some time in Norway. She draws attention to Naum Gabo, with whom Schwitters was also friends, claiming he made some of his most progressive works while in the country. It seems Norway had its own avant-garde.³⁴¹ While others were returning to the figurative (as in examples by Neue Sachlichkeit artists in the 1920s/30s) Schwitters continued much later with his experimental *Merz* forms. Even when he himself returns to figurative and naturalistic painting, through portraiture and landscapes, he continues with his *Merzed* and abstracted forms, creating three extensions of his original *Merzbau*, and sculptures constructed from found objects, eventually returning to collage in the later years of his exiles.

Schwitters and portraiture

In his early depictions of Helma, which became more technically nuanced with practice, one can see his artistic career burgeoning. With the exception of one portrait, all of these depictions place Helma in classical poses, often reading, contemplating,

³³⁸ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, pp. 23-24 and pp. 39-54.

³³⁹ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, pp. 39-54.

³⁴⁰ Paint was continually a presence in his work, and he never stopped considering himself a painter ("I am a painter, and I nail my pictures together").

³⁴¹ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, pp. 34-38.

looking out of a window, holding a flower, or simply painting her in soft pastel lights. Isabel Schulz's research has shown that Schwitters was aware of the Old Masters, in particular Raphael and Correggio, through his training in Dresden.³⁴² *Vision (Bildnis Helma Schwitters)* [Vision (Portrait of Helma Schwitters)], 1916/1917, is one example where Schwitters deviates from his training, presenting an abstracted portrait, not of his young wife, but his muse. She looks up, eyes closed, as though basking in the sun: her beauty is captured in the stark contours and pronounced lines of her profile.

This work stands in stark contrast to another portrait painted in 1917. In *Bildnis Helma Schwitters* [Portrait of Helma Schwitters] Schwitters has dropped the prefix 'Vision', and instead presents Helma looking severely over her shoulder, her hair is tightly rolled in a bun, and her white collar is contrasted with her black cardigan. She appears older than her years, perhaps even in mourning.³⁴³ The light background accentuates Helma's mood: periorbital darkness might highlight stress, lack of sleep, or pain; pursed lips and the downward slant at the edge of her mouth might too suggest sadness; and her clothing represents funeral garb. These portraits, widely different in their depictions of the same woman, show not only Schwitters' range of techniques and his ability, but are biographical snapshots of his life between times of happiness (perhaps the 'vision' of his pregnant wife) and intense sadness (the picture of the grieving mother), also evident in his 1916 portrait of his wife *Trauernde (Bildnis Helma Schwitters)* [Mourning Woman (Portrait of Helma Schwitters)]. Again her darkness consumes her; highlighted again by the lightness of the background. Despite the overwhelming depression depicted in these works, Schwitters presents his wife lovingly and tenderly, capturing in near photographic realism her grief.

He painted many portraits of people in everyday situations between these early days and his exile to Norway. In a commissioned painting, *Untitled (Portrait of Mabel Elliot Taylor)* [Ohne Titel (Poträt Mabel Elliot Taylor)] from 1938, Schwitters depicts a beautiful young woman, who sits gazing out of the window (Fig. 11a and 11b). He

³⁴² Isabel Schulz, 'Old Masters, New Forms – the Merz Madonnas of Kurt Schwitters,' *Sch... the Journal of the Kurt Schwitters Society*, No. 5, 2015, pp. 19-25; p. 19.

³⁴³ It is interesting to note that this portrait was painted just one year after the death of their infant son Gerd.

highlights the blue of her eyes, the fleshiness and tautness of her skin, the red of her cheeks and her rouged lips. She wears a brightly multicoloured top, with blue-filled sleeves. She wears a coloured braid in her hair, in pastel colours. Karin Hellandsjø notes that Schwitters mostly painted those he knew,³⁴⁴ and continues, '[h]e strictly reserved the right to interpret the person he was portraying. If anyone protested, he or she was told to go to a photographer instead.'³⁴⁵ In truth, the likeness of Mabel to her portrait is not exact. Hellandsjø accompanies the reproduction of her portrait with three photographs: one of Schwitters painting her portrait, another of Schwitters leaning over his freshly painted portrait, and the third of Mabel kneeling in the grass, posed in front of a short tree, the undulating Norwegian hills and the sparsely populated shore of the fjord in the background. These photographs connect the artist more deeply with his sitter—it captures two kinds of portraiture, ironically one of which is the wholly realistic depiction that Schwitters was disdainful of, and offered as punishment to his unruly sitter. When compared with those of Helma, Mabel is neither happy nor sad; she is neither muse nor model; she is iconically beautiful, yet all the while understated; she is bright in demeanour and fashion, yet mysterious, and aloof. We know no more about her from her portraits in photograph or paint, than we do after analysis. She is unattainable to the viewer, and possibly to Schwitters too. The personal connection is harder to find than in the portraits of Helma, and it is most likely that this work was a commissioned piece; even so, Schwitters is careful to portray her beauty and does so using the traditional markers of commissioned portraiture.

Portraiture has a long and complex social, cultural and political history. Seen as a bourgeois mode, the portrait has served as method of representing not only true-likeness, but also as a way of manipulating representations of self. In this discussion of representation of self, gender is a distinct feature. In her book, *Portraiture*, Shearer West writes:

In considering the history of portraiture in relation to the subject of gender, the gender of both artist and sitter needs to be taken into account. In terms of the

³⁴⁴ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p. 57.

³⁴⁵ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p. 58.

gender of the artist, it is important to note that many women artists who made a living from the twentieth century were portraitists.³⁴⁶

West identifies the role and importance of portraiture in the development of the careers of female painters. The portrait allowed them to produce paintings and to make money from doing so, most likely because it could be controlled by the sitter or the benefactor who had commissioned the work. Therefore, the creativity of the artist was not entirely in their control: another measure of indirect misogyny. When the sitter was female, particularly in the case of the self-portrait, West notes that location is key:

Self-portraits or portraits of family or friends could be produced in the home: in periods in which idle-class women were expected to spend most of their time in a domestic environment, they could practise portraiture without breaching the rules of social decorum.³⁴⁷

In the portraits of the women produced by Kurt Schwitters there is often no identifiable setting. The backgrounds are often empty, and so we have no context for the setting. In the portraits of Helma, she is set against a plain backdrop; and similarly, in the portrait of Mabel Elliott Taylor, the background is also without a setting. Were it not for a photograph of Schwitters painting Mabel's portrait, the viewer would not be aware that it had not been painted in the sitter's home, rather in the hotel in which she was staying. Schwitters' portraits are traditional in that they represent young, attractive women, in traditional poses (for the most part, there are exceptions in his many sketches and portraits of Helma), and so might be misunderstood as conservative depictions of women. In the years he painted Helma, some of his compatriots were creating portraits of women as strong, distinguished, emancipated female characters. Again, West points to an interesting comparison in her monograph on the subject. Regarding German artists' depictions of women, she writes:

The German artists Otto Dix and Lotte Laserstein both painted portraits of women in the mid-1920s, and both artists practised the ostensibly detached obscuration of nature that characterized the 'New Objectivity' art movement of Weimar Germany.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Shearer West, *Portraiture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 145.

³⁴⁷ West, *Portraiture*, p. 145.

³⁴⁸ West, *Portraiture*, p. 147.

In comparing the depictions of women by both male and female artists, West draws important parallels from the differences between the sexes. She draws on Dix's portrait of the journalist Sylvia von Harden, with whom Dix was friends. In this portrait, von Harden is presented as an androgynous figure: her dark black hair is cut short and neat in the pageboy style of the day; her fingers are long and thin, elongated by her long cigarette and holder; she wears a monocle, a typically male fashion accessory (utilised also by the Dadaists, most famously Tzara), all the while wearing a red dress, which only accentuates her feminine form made slightly grotesque in their sharpened and elongated lines. She sits in a café, and so is presented as an intellectual by her setting, as a vision of the newly formed idea of femaleness.

Laserstein's self-portrait depicts a similar kind of woman, strong and antithetical to traditional notions of femininity. She presents herself, again, not in a domestic environment, but instead in her professional one—her studio. In this painting we see her wearing a painter's smock—in effect, her uniform—and with the characteristically short hair of the *Bubikopf*. Her self-depiction outside of the traditional environments for women, when considered alongside Dix's portrait of his friend, expose a trend in *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting, but also in shifting values of the Weimar era, and how these affected the representations of women. Schwitters' radical depictions of women are found in collage form, as fragmented or disassembled bodies; the women he paints are more conventional. This dissociation with the earlier figurations of the female body (at least those presented in Dix's and Laserstein's construction of identity) might be considered in Judith Butler's idea of drag as an appropriation of identity:

Drag is not the putting on of a gender that belongs properly to some other group, i.e. an act of *expropriation* or *appropriation* that assumes that gender is the rightful property of sex, that 'masculine' belongs to 'male' and 'feminine' belongs to 'female.' There is no 'proper' gender, a gender proper to one sex rather than another, which is in some sense that sex's cultural property. Where the notion of the 'proper' operates, it is always and only *improperly* installed as the effect of a compulsory system. Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but *gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original*; in fact, it is a kind of imitation

that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of imitation itself.³⁴⁹

Butler's notion of appropriation and imitation, while pertaining particularly to drag (a performance), highlights the problems encountered when discussing ideas of natural or authentic representation of a character in portraiture. Schwitters' depictions of women in portraiture capture likeness and an essence of the sitter, but they do not offer political insights into a wider context of gendered portrayals as Dix's and Laserstein's earlier works do. These insights are given in his collaged works which he almost abandons until his second term of exile in Britain Laserstein's self-depiction and Dix's representation of his progressive female friend is comparable to my earlier discussion of Höch and Brugman. Moreover, West compares artworks made by both a male and a female artist and as such presents an alternative to the historical narratives which, in David Hopkins' terms, reveals 'male separatism.'³⁵⁰

As previously noted, Schwitters was painting commissioned pieces of work which provided a small income. He called these his 'bread' paintings, a term which has been both ratified and contested as legitimate by scholars.³⁵¹ His naturalistic paintings have often been overlooked or under-analysed due to their less radical quality, a tradition, as Hellandsjø has noted, that began with Werner Schmalenbach in the 1960s and was continued into the 1980s by John Elderfield, when their studies of the artist's work revived public and scholarly interest.³⁵² During his exile in Norway, the collage form seems to have been less of a priority for Schwitters, perhaps for greater reasons than simple necessity. However, it may be more useful to consider the landscapes, portraits

³⁴⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 21. Original emphasis.

³⁵⁰ Hopkins, *Dada's Boys*, p. 1.

³⁵¹ As Hellandsjø notes, Werner Schmalenbach, 1965, ignored the importance of the landscape paintings. Elderfield (1985) takes a similar stance. Nicholas Wadley (1981) emphasises the importance of the landscape works and argues against Schmalenbach's position. Dietmar Elger (1985) makes connections between his collages and landscape paintings. Jutta Nestegard's dissertation examines the landscape paintings, but Hellandsjø writes that she takes the same perspective as Schmalenbach. Didier Semin (1994) continues Wadley's ideas and highlights the influence of the landscape on the development of Schwitters' style. And Per Kirkeby (1995) – the Danish artist – strongly states his position against the Schmalenbach view. (Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, pp. 49-56.)

³⁵² Werner Schmalenbach (1965) and John Elderfield (1984) were both quite dismissive of these early naturalistic works. The works might be considered somewhat less interesting, particularly in the development of the avant-garde, often being perceived as simplistic or academic in style, and therefore not as paradigm shifting as his collage works, assemblages, or even unconventional sculptures.

and collages as three parts of one whole. The difference between his collages and landscapes are dictated by materiality and form. I am interested in the former for the following discussion. The materiality of these works is controlled by his surroundings: in the city the detritus of modern, metropolitan life is the stuff of his collages; in the ice-capped mountain regions he frequented, hiking and cycling, the natural beauty, best captured by his paintbrush becomes the materials for his artworks—a discussion of which can be found in both Hellandsjø's and Orchard's volumes on this period. However, discounting the large collage that filled the hallway of his *Merzhytta* (a discussion of which can be found in Chapter 5 of this thesis), only two collages were made in this Norwegian period. I wish to discuss two pieces which are somehow distinct from and connected to one another by form and content.

These collages were found on the lid of Schwitters' travelling trunk, the first thought to have been created in 1926 (before he had even visited Norway for the first time); and the second, found on the back of the lining of the lid of the trunk, thought to have been made between 1926 and 1937, therefore taking in much of the time spent in Norway—this was most likely the travelling trunk taken with him on these expeditions.³⁵³ These collages rely on depictions of women and are paired and arranged with often paradoxical materials. Furthermore, it seems appropriate that this work should have been created on the lid of a travel trunk. Schwitters uses materials which depict two geographies he experienced. It also expresses the transitory nature of Merz. Unlike Dada or Expressionism, the latter of which did not travel outside of Germany in the same way as Merz did, and which did not survive their travels as successfully as Merz did.

Schwitters' Norwegian collage

In *Untitled (Collage in the Interior of a Trunk Lid)* (Fig. 12a and 12b) dated to circa 1926, multiple images of the Virgin Mary appear, in varying poses and materials—

³⁵³ It is important to note that Schwitters "re-made" or "re-Merzed" some of his older collages. The most prominent example of this is his *Merzbild 29 A. Bild mit Drehrad* [Merz Picture 29 A. Picture with Flywheel], 1920/1939.

photographic reproductions of statues, line drawings of the Mother God, always with her head bowed in prayer.³⁵⁴ The collage on the reverse of the insert has been dated to 1926/1937. There are two reasons for this: the first is that the materials used clearly originate from *both* German and Norwegian sources. It is worth recalling that Schwitters did not make his first trip to Norway until 1929, and while it is likely he would have collected scraps on many, if not all, of his excursions to the north, it does not seem probable that these materials would have made it into the collages as early as this. His understanding of Norwegian was, at best, perfunctory; and even while in Norway, he maintained the company of many German expatriates. Therefore, it is unlikely they would have held any special linguistic meaning for Schwitters. The second reason is simply that the timeline of his travels to Norway, and the shift in his aesthetic practice, would suggest that he may not have worked on the collages due to the material poverty he experienced while in Norway.

The reverse of the trunk lid contains many references to women. They not only show a shift in the political standing of women, but also the cultural and social representations of women through clippings from magazines and fashion catalogues. Moreover, they represent the differences between the Norwegian people and those of his home country. In one image, three women are dressed in traditional Norwegian costume, and dancing in what the viewer might assume is a native dance; in another, a young woman in a long black dress looks out to the viewer, her arm bent at her waist, accentuating her form—most likely taken from a fashion or lifestyle magazine. An ice skater's leg—which Hellandsjø has identified as belonging to the famous Norwegian figure skater Sonja Henie—mid-stride, is also featured, we can see her skirt in motion, and behind her appears a black mass, perhaps a mountain, thus emphasising the relationship between the Norwegian people and the landscape.³⁵⁵ His mixing of German (fragments of German typography and from German newspapers appear, as well as handwritten notes in Schwitters' odd short hand, and specifically samples of *Sütterlin* typeface and Hannover's *Stadtische Bühnen*, a fragment which reads

³⁵⁴ Schwitters' fascination with the Virgin Mary is discussed more fully in the final chapter of this thesis; and I will return to these depictions and how they may be linked with the medium sized sculpture which stood inside the *Merzbau* in Hannover, which he named *Madonna* (1925).

³⁵⁵ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p. 30.

'Niedersachsen' [Lower Saxony], the state in which Hannover is located, and advert for his Merz Vortragsabend and an accompanying self-portrait) and Norwegian cultures, signifies not only his own identity crisis but one experienced by many Germans who found themselves expatriated due to their country's political culture and persecutory environment.

It has been noted by Jasia Reichardt that Schwitters attempted to communicate as much as possible in the language of his host country, and in much later years, in letters to Raoul Hausmann, would denounce his own language, choosing often to communicate with his old friend (a fellow German, exiled in France) in English.³⁵⁶ Yet, in this collage, the German language still predominates. This may be a result of the early date of the collage, and that the materials he happened to bring with him or collect along the way were in his mother tongue. It may also be that, particularly for the fragments added in the later year, that these fragments reminded him of home or of a time when life was less troubled—a nostalgia of sorts. Perhaps this can be taken one step further, and we might read this as a secretive object, hiding and simultaneously preserving his identity in an environment when he was assumed enemy on account of his nationality.³⁵⁷

Hellandsjø emphasises these textual components in one part of her analysis. She notes the printed texts, identifying phrases which she believes must have 'contained a hidden message to Schwitters.'³⁵⁸ She draws particular attention to the large, angled advertisement for the Hannover Städtische Bühnen [Hannover City Theatre], for whom Schwitters made promotional materials. She writes:

³⁵⁶ Between 1946 and 1947, Schwitters and Hausmann collaborated on an unrealised project: a little magazine called *PIN* (a title which was short for "Poetry Intervenes Now"). In this, they write in German, English and French, with the latter two predominating; intending their magazine to reach the audiences of their new "homes". Much of their correspondence is conducted across the three languages. For further information on this see: Kurt Schwitters and Raoul Hausmann, *PIN and the Story of PIN*, ed. Jasia Reichardt (London: Gaberbocchus Press, 1962); and my own essay, 'The Thing about *PIN*,' in *Sch... The Journal of the Kurt Schwitters Society*, Issue 5, 2015, pp. 43-52.

³⁵⁷ Hellandsjø notes that it is uncertain if the trunk was taken on Schwitters' bike rides around the country, but states that it is certain that it was housed at Lysaker during the war and part of Ernst's inheritance, bequeathed to him by his father. (Hellandsjø, 2016, p. 30.)

³⁵⁸ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p. 29.

Kurt Schwitters' background as a graphic designer and typographer clearly finds expression here as well as in a large number of other collages. He himself had introduced the *Antiqua* font into his graphic products, also used on a number of occasions in *The Trunk*, while the term 'Städtische Bühnen' stands out from the white field top right, highlighted and elegantly written in the old German font *Fraktur*, introduced in 1933 on the orders of the Nazi regime.³⁵⁹

This is, however, not *Fraktur*, but *Sütterlin*, or at least a typographical rendering of the calligraphic *Kurrentschrift* (old German script/German cursive). Therefore, it seems that the inclusion of this font in his work is in fact an act of defiance against the Nazis, as opposed to one of conformity as Hellandsjø propose, evidence that Schwitters was politically engaged, even in works that might never be shown, and as such enforcing the notion that even the personal (collection) can be political.

Other typographical fragments are also noteworthy. For example, one small fragment, offset against images of Venus, Cupid, and a photograph of a scene from a movie *Eine Sängerin muß atmen lernen*, reads "pa=Pa". This fragment is in *Fraktur*, and can be read in two ways: it can be read as Hellandsjø has suggested, and the two lines which connect the plosive phrases is an equals sign, signifying an equivalency between the two nonsensical fragments.³⁶⁰ However, in the *Fraktur* typeface, this double line often represented a hyphen, thus it might be read as "Pa-pa", the German endearment for "Father"; simultaneously representing the same term in Norwegian. Here, the equals sign comes into play, and acts as a symbol for the transference of language across cultures; and the blurring of boundaries between the Norwegian and German languages and Schwitters' own engagement with these languages (and cultures). This collage is mostly composed of fragments which not only refer to this linguistic transference, but to Schwitters' physical movements from Germany to Norway. Schwitters also includes clippings of three boat schedules. They read: 'Nach den schönsten norwegische Fjorden und dem Nordkap mit M.S. >>Monte Rosa<< vom 3. Juli bis 18 Juli'; another 'Nach dem schönsten norwegischen Fjorden' for 20th to 28th July; and the third shows the timetable '[n]ach dem schönsten norwegischen Fjorden,

³⁵⁹ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p. 29. It is worth noting the distinction between the use of *Antiqua* and *Fraktur* and the cultural, political, and social implications such choices might suggest when an artist like Schwitters uses them. *Fraktur* is older than *Antiqua*, which originated in the 15th and 16th centuries, and during the Nazi-era, the use of *Fraktur* and cursive typefaces were phased out and *Antiqua* was favoured.

³⁶⁰ Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p. 30.

dem Nordkap und Spitzbergen‘ for 3rd to 22nd August. Accompanying these *Fahrpläne* are promotional photographs of the sights one might see on a trip to ‘the beautiful Norwegian fjords.’ Spitzbergen, the ‘Norwegian fjords’, Eidfjord, and Balholm: Schwitters visited these places during his many visits to the country, as evidenced by the many tickets he displays in the collage. From Hannover to Salzbergen, Amsterdam to The Hague, and The Hague to Rotterdam, all purchased from the Mitteleuropäisches Reisebüro, as well as a small advertisement for a cruiseliner: ‘Hamburg-Süd’ (the route from Hamburg to South America).

In addition to his varied and extensive travels, this collage includes multiple images of women. In one instance, eight young girls skip along the street, their arms linked. They are happy, laughing and all looking down the line to the tallest girl in the foreground of the photograph who looks straight ahead. The caption reads: ‘Sonntagsmittag-Spaziergang in Mellendorf. Wer hat die längsten Zöpfe?’ [A walk in Mellendorf on a Sunday afternoon. Who has the longest plaits?]³⁶¹, it is a fun, throw-away piece, most likely from a local newspaper.³⁶² The girls, out for a walk, laughing and playing, do not relate to any of the other images on the lid of the trunk; in fact, none of the images of people relate at all. The leg of ice skater, Sonja Henie (1912-1969)³⁶³ has nothing to do with the girls on an afternoon walk, nor does it relate to the still from the movie *One Night of Love* (1934) [*Das leuchtende Ziel*]. As well as these incongruent images, are those of a line drawing of Sandro Boticelli’s *The Birth of Venus* (ca. 1486), a drawing from a fashion magazine of a woman in utilitarian fashion, three women in traditional Dutch or German dress, seemingly mid-dance, also a cartoon of a young woman, her scarf and skirt blowing in the wind as she plays the violin, and a photograph of another young woman who stares down the barrel of the lens, dressed in a figure-hugging black dress, her hair stylishly tied up: she stands against a white background, and a black line curves wildly from the curve of her lower back, and snakes it about her waist on the other side. Some of these images can be

³⁶¹ My thanks to Karin Hellandsjø who provided a detail large enough to read the caption (28.06.17).

³⁶² Mellendorf is circa 20 kilometres from Hannover city centre.

³⁶³ It is interesting to note that Sonja Henie and her husband Niels Onstad founded the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in 1968. The Art Centre now houses a large collection of Schwitters’ work, and is where Hellandsjø worked as Director for a period.

linked by fashion (traditional and contemporary) or by music or art or by dance or sport, however they cannot all be linked with each other. This dissonance across these images is particularly interesting: it presents multiple representations of women, across cultures, disciplines, and times. Therefore, it celebrates the evolution of women's fashion, women's role in the arts (from the "Venus" figure in art history, to the champion figure skater in Henie) and society (children having fun, traditional dancers, or the erotically autonomous woman; in control of her sexuality). These women cross boundaries socially and politically, as well as geographically, and stand in opposition/contradistinction to the multiple images of the Virgin Mary that appear on the other side of this canvas.

It was not a happy settlement in the 'happy country' for Schwitters. He was still the target of Nazi persecution, and while the threat was not as great as the one posed to others who fled in fear of death, it seems that to have remained in a state of 'inner emigration' in his home country would have caused him as much misery. Those who chose to remain in Germany in this period were often forbidden to paint, artists like Emil Nolde and Karl Schmidt-Rotluff: by decreasing their productivity and prohibiting any creative output, one might assume the regime hoped that the avant-garde would die. Avant-garde artists challenged and pushed the boundaries as well as the highlighted the political, social and cultural situation. Schwitters opted not to remain in Germany, and while not Jewish, it is undoubted that Schwitters would have been detained in a concentration camp. The Nazis were particularly interested in his work, and there were numerous essays (as previously discussed) which singled Schwitters out as a specific example of the mad artist, the schizophrenic. Hans Richter hypothesised: 'If Schwitters had been caught, he would certainly have been sent to a concentration camp, and would have died there.'³⁶⁴

Schwitters, although not openly challenging the status quo through his art in the same way as his colleagues, used materials which were in contrast to traditional art. He discards canvas almost entirely as the base for his creations, and eschews the

³⁶⁴ Richter, *Dada*, p. 154.

traditional usage of paint, whereby it becomes something to blur the lines between the forms, rather than the medium itself. He exposes the process by which his collages come to be: his collages are everything from the sketch to the completed masterpiece and all of these stages are evidenced. Furthermore, as previously discussed, the general estimation of Schwitters was as a schizophrenic or mad man, and thus the archetypal avant-garde artist. Therefore, as the Nazis advanced on Norway, he felt his safety under threat.

It was in April of 1940 that the Nazis invaded Norway. In June 1940, Schwitters arrived in Britain. As Gwendolen Webster has noted, Schwitters' flight to Britain was almost a disaster: there were many missed opportunities, and a betrayal on account of a lack of room aboard the ship that would have transported them to safety.³⁶⁵ The drama of this period of Schwitters' life makes for an exciting narrative, but in this story only two points are important to my argument: the first that the vessel *Fritjof Nansen* landed in Edinburgh; and the second that Schwitters almost might have ended up in America, had his letter from the American Consulate General arrived just a little earlier.³⁶⁶ After landing in Edinburgh, Schwitters, Ernst and his wife Esther were all sent to a military camp; and then ten days later they were transferred to the Donaldson's School for the Deaf and Dumb (West Coates).³⁶⁷ This building is a grand Gothic 'palace' and it was designed in 1842 by W. H. Playfair, turreted and over four stories, the building has a courtyard, pool, and a chapel, an unlikely host building for an internment camp.³⁵⁸ Their stay here was short (two or three weeks) before they were transferred to York Racecourse, and then onto Camp Douglas on the Isle of Man, where he, Ernst and Esther would spend the longest period of their internment.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁵ Webster, *KMS*, p. 307.

³⁶⁶ Webster, *KMS*, p. 305.

³⁶⁷ The School was originally located in the West Coates area of Edinburgh, it was relocated in 2008 to Linlithgow. This building still stands, but is currently being developed into homes. ³⁵⁸ It was rumoured that Queen Victoria, who visited and opened the completed building in 1850, considered giving up Holyrood Palace and changing residence to Donaldson's Hospital/School. (See: <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/200365347-edinburgh-westcoates-donaldsons-school-for-the-deaf-edinburgh#.WVOVy4jyvIU>).

³⁶⁸ Webster, *KMS*, pp. 307-8.

Schwitters in Britain

Camp Douglas was not a place of creative destitution; Schwitters made many contacts there and while materials were scarce, he made sculptures of porridge, stones and twigs, and painted portraits of his fellow internees when he could, these included Fred Uhlmann and the art historian, Klaus Hinrichsen. In November 1941, Schwitters was released from the Hutchinson Camp on Isle of Man, he made his way to London, and sought out the Free German League of Culture (FGLC) which had been founded by Fred Uhlman³⁶⁹, whom Schwitters had met during his internment.³⁷⁰ Rachel Dickson and Sarah MacDougall write about Schwitters' connections to the large émigré-artist community who were interned in Camp Douglas on the Isle of Man, noting the numerous exhibitions which were organised and shown on the island.³⁷¹ Dickson and MacDougall also highlight that despite Schwitters' being part of the avant-garde scenes in Britain even during his exile, he lived out his time in Ambleside in obscurity and poverty:

Despite his inclusion in two high-profile London exhibitions: *International Surrealist Exhibition* (1936) and the *Exhibition of Twentieth Century German Art* (1938), letters written to the authorities on his behalf by British admirers, and his and Ernst's own letter of protest to the *New Statesman*, Schwitters' small circles of friends in England, lack of political connections and lack of identity as an established antifascist, as well as his 'odd artistic preoccupations, scant English [...] general intractability [...] and concerns about both his politics and his ability to support himself on the outside', may all have contributed to his 'unusually long' internment.³⁷²

Megan Luke comments on the 'unusually long' internment', calling it an

³⁶⁹ Schwitters painted a portrait of Fred Uhlman in Hutchison, 1940. He is lounging on his bed in his 'cell'; he is dressed smartly; two books lie open in front of him.

³⁷⁰ Emma Chambers, 'Schwitters and Britain,' *Schwitters in Britain*, ed. Emma Chambers and Karin Orchard (London: Tate Publishing, 2013), pp. 6-19; p. 9. The FGLC consisted of artists such as Fred Uhlman (painter, writer and lawyer), Siegfried Charoux (sculptor and of whom Schwitters painted a portrait), Erich Kahn (painter, Expressionist), Georg Ehrlich (Austrian, sculptor), and Paul Hamann (sculptor).

³⁷¹ Rachel Dickson and Sarah MacDougall, 'Forced Journeys,' in *Ben Uri 100 Years in London: Art, Identity, Migration*, ed. Rachel Dickson and Sarah McDougall (London: Ben Uri, 2015), pp. 78-90; p. 82.

³⁷² Dickson, 'Forced Journeys', p. 84.

‘extended internment’ on the Isle of Man, and she argues that he was ‘marooned’ in London.³⁷³ Such descriptions of Schwitters’ time in Britain promote a sense of desperation, unease, and depression. His health was failing, he had suffered multiple serious epileptic fits. He was separated from his wife, his colleagues, friends, and found himself in a city which was experiencing its first wave of the Blitz. He also had landed in a part of Britain which could not be more different from the idyllic setting of Norway which he had experienced for the past three years. The city-wide destruction may have reignited his passion for collage: once again, the fragmentation of the world around him became the inspiration for his Merz aesthetic. As early as 1941(/42), he returned to making collages.

A prime example of his “new” Merz aesthetic is *Untitled (The Doll)*. This collage differs from his earlier Merz-works as paint is not present, it is constructed entirely of paper and photographs. It consists of coloured fragments, an upturned photograph of a (Norwegian) landscape (taken by Ernst), a colour photograph of a couple also upside-down, an advertisement for Terry’s ‘Oliver Twist’ chocolate, a truncated London bus ticket, a plate of non-descript and bland-looking food (at the height of rationing), and most prominently a fragment which reads: ‘What is morale?’, all of which has been pasted onto a reproduction of (another) Franz von Defregger painting from ca. 1870. Karin Orchard writes that this collage:

exemplifies many of the features that are typical of the late collages Schwitters made in England. On one hand, there are the unusually clear allusions to politically and socially relevant themes, as in *(Untitled) The Hitler Gang* or *Mr. Churchill is 71*. This new, explicit reference to significant contents was no doubt a consequence of the ongoing critical situation to which even self-avowed ‘non-political’ artists such as Schwitters had to react.³⁷⁴

The allegedly ‘self-avowed “non-political”’ Schwitters, a myth this thesis rejects, is opposed in his use of materials inextricable from their sources, particularly in *Hitler Gang* (1944) which features an advert for John Farrow’s eponymous 1944 film, cut from a newspaper; furthermore, Orchard highlights *Mr Churchill is 71* (1947)— made

³⁷³ Megan Luke, ‘Togetherness in Exile,’ *Schwitters in Britain* (2013), pp. 42-51; p. 42.

³⁷⁴ Karin Orchard, ‘British made’: The Late Collages of Kurt Schwitters,’ (trans. Fiona Elliott) *Schwitters in Britain* (2013), pp. 56-65; p. 62.

in Churchill's seventy-third year—also presumably taken from a newspaper clipping. In *The Doll* (the title for which is derived from the Defregger painting and not actually from Schwitters' collage), the brightly coloured fragment with the philosophical musing upon it requires analysis. To the inexperienced English-speaking Schwitters, 'What is morale?' doubtless held an odd duality: ringing between 'moral' and 'morale', eliciting questions of social and political duties. Schwitters directly questions the morality of morale: that is, if it is principled to encourage one's country to go to war, to share an ideology which might be detrimental to their future progress and undoubtedly inhibitive to their present situations. How does a country keep its country's morale high when they are experiencing abject poverty, loss of life, rationing, and witnessing destruction?

Echoes of such moral crises can be found in another collage, made in 1947. *EN MORN*, (Fig. 13a) features a blond-haired woman, who is youthful, beautiful, hopeful looking—she would comfortably fit on a propaganda poster. (Fig. 13b) Sarah Wilson writes: '*En Morn*, 1947 does not signal 'One Morning', a common mistitling, but 'Golden Morn cling peaches', which together with the Marilyn-like blond [*sic*] were labelled 'These are the things we are fighting for'.³⁷⁵ Even though Marilyn Monroe was a brunette at this time, it is a helpful description for a contemporary audience to visualise her glamour. In fact, the blonde woman is cut out from an advertisement/notice by Community Silverware from 1943.³⁷⁶ The original poster features a female teacher, who sits at her desk, her pencil pointed toward South America (Peru) as she lectures a blonde female student. Under the image, the words: 'the right to teach the truth [...] not propaganda' can be read. We assume from such a slogan, the youthful and inquisitive student, the young, beautiful teacher, and the beams of light which seem to penetrate the globe, that this campaign propagates hope, not doom and gloom. Furthermore, the Community Silver advert tells its patrons:

³⁷⁵ Sarah Wilson, 'Anglism': The Dialectics of Exile,' *Tate Online: Schwitters in Britain*, unpaginated. <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/schwittersbritain/essay-sarah-wilson-kurt-schwitters-england>

³⁷⁶ Emma Chambers has noted that this advert was found through a hive-mind search: a Tate Blog follower, John Eaton, found the advertisement for Community Silverware. See. 'Schwitters in Britain: a mystery collaged figure revealed.' *Tate Blog*, 26 March 2013. <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/schwitters-britain-mystery-collaged-figure-revealed>.

‘Some day we will again be making the Community Silverware you love, but now all our skills and facilities are being devoted to the war that must be fought and won. Meanwhile, in messages like this, we try to express the things for which America is fighting.’ Despite the poster’s claim that it will not teach propaganda, it does. The blonde is surrounded by advertisements for the ‘luxurious’ in a time of severe poverty and rationing.

As Sarah Wilson has identified, the ‘EN MORN’ fragment, from which this piece takes its title, is from the label of Golden Morn yellow cling peaches (canned fruit produced by the J. C. Ainsley Packing Company, California). Two less legible fragments can be found, a green lattice background, with the letters ‘COLATE / ppermint’ and another where the lower parts of three letters and an ‘n’ can be seen. I have identified that these fragments have been cut from the wrapper of a bar of Rowntree’s Chocolate Peppermint Cream.³⁷⁷ At the bottom of this collage the slogan, also taken from Community Silverware’s poster, ‘These are the things we are fighting for’ can be read. The suggestion is that ‘we’ are fighting for beautiful women, canned peaches and chocolate (more generally, things of pleasure). However, Webster interrogates this statement, asking:

Who might be fighting for what in 1947? And who does ‘we’ refer to? Artists? The British? Schwitters was of course German, if alienated from his homeland and on the brink of gaining British citizenship. Is he preaching, mocking, warning or just plain teasing?³⁷⁸

I suggest that Schwitters is mocking. Firstly, with the exception of the London bus tickets and the Rowntree’s chocolate wrapper, the two most prominent features are from American-made products, and in reality, U.S. soil was not under threat in a sustained fashion, unlike British territory; and Schwitters mockingly highlights this point two years after the War had ended. Furthermore, the propaganda poster from which the slogan and blonde woman are derived are wholly American. Perhaps to link

³⁷⁷ It has been confirmed by the Rowntrees Archive, that these fragments are taken from a Rowntree’s Chocolate Peppermint Cream (no longer in production) a connection which has not been made to this point. This is a particularly interesting point as the Rowntree’s factory was at this time based in York, Hoxby Road. Schwitters was, for only a few weeks, interned in a camp in York before being transferred to Hutchison Camp on the Isle of Man.

³⁷⁸ Gwendolen Webster, ‘Schwitters in Britain,’ *abstract critical*, 14 February 2013, unpaginated. <https://abstractcritical.com/article/schwitters-in-britain/index.html>.

such sweet luxuries with the image of the perfect young woman, her hair in the style of the day, and her eyes bright (or as Webster writes, ‘dewy’), one might interpret these as traditional characterisations of femininity. The trope, now overplayed, that women are indulgent, might be perceived as Schwitters’ view. However, what if this collage is read as a celebration of the women who had been working in traditionally male roles in factories and providing for their families while their husbands, sons and fathers were at war? They are left with false luxuries, without their husbands, and only material goods to comfort them. Moreover, when one consults the original propaganda poster, the young woman is a teacher, and her student is also female. While the slogan is propagating the ideologies of war and territory (seemingly male concerns), the legacy of the lessons learned will live on with the women who have been left behind and with whom the responsibility lies to rebuild their countries. This exchange of knowledge between two women might offer a hopeful message, and therefore, changes might be made to the patriarchal status quo. An example of cross-generational mentorship, whereby female education is of more importance than anything else; that older women might be the source of wisdom, strength, and the future, subverting the traditional notions of lineage and hierarchy.

In another collage of the same year, Schwitters presents another young and beautiful woman. This time, she is from a photograph, in fact, from *Life* magazine. The iconic red ‘E’—or, part of it—can be seen, splicing through the woman’s forehead, down the bridge of her nose, and removing her lips. Her eyes are closed, her hair in ‘Victory Rolls’ or ‘Omelette fold updo’’: she epitomises the 1940s feminine ideal. *left half of a beauty*, 1947 (Fig. 14), is pasted onto a photograph of Sydney—the roll of her hair runs into the arch of the Sydney Harbour Bridge which can be clearly seen. (The small fragment of text in the bottom left corner of the collage, although truncated, references the ‘famous bridge’, it being the ‘third biggest’, a reference to the ‘Empire’, and another to ‘London’.)

This aesthetic approach reduces female beauty to notions of utilitarianism and function—that the forms of fashion can so easily be compared with those of engineering or architecture, primarily a feat of design for purpose, rather than one for

aesthetic pleasure, only strengthens the ideologies surrounding women's fashion. Of course, Schwitters had seen such utilitarian cross-overs in his days visiting the Bauhaus, when tunics and 'worker's shirts' were common attire for the young women artists, and as such the androgynous effect these sartorial choices (coupled with the pageboy haircuts of the time) had on the female form. A shared admiration for the structural beauty of the Sydney Harbour Bridge (after all, Schwitters had an architect's eye) and the beauty of the cover girl is also evoked in this odd pairing.

This collage is one of the most prominent examples of the shift in Schwitters' new Merz aesthetic. It does not feature any line drawings or traces of paint and the fragments are entirely taken from photographic sources taken from publications and locations foreign to his own. Unlike the collage on the lid of his travelling trunk, the fragments which refer to places other than his current location, are not from his home town or country, nor are they from places he has visited. Furthermore, apart from the stalk of the red 'E'—reduced to a line in Schwitters' truncation of it—there is no other presence of textual fragments, again, an unusual feature of his Merz aesthetic. It is interesting to note the title of the work, *left half of a beauty*, written entirely in lower case, plainly references the process through which this image has undergone to become the finished work of art.

It is the 'left half', therefore, implying that it was at once a whole. However, what is interesting is whether this is the left half of the image, or of the beauty. It invokes the question, what does her right half look like? Oddly, the left of the image is the artist's left, and so is actually the model's right. This plays into Schwitters' penchant for the non-sensical and inversion of logic. It also alludes to his mixing of perspective, which he does literally in the work itself by amalgamating the curves of the model's curls with the arc of the bridge, and reinforces his position of an artist who is always 'sowohl... als auch...' Schwitters' presentation of a woman from only one side, and his connection with a bridge acts, metaphorically, as a representation of art historical and artistic depictions of the female form/women more generally. That the object is framed beautifully and as something of awe, while the woman can only be shown from one angle presents a double-conundrum. The first is in the assimilation of object

and woman, which dehumanises (literally and ideologically) the body presented to the viewer. The transmutation from person to thing is further enacted in the construction of the female form in Schwitters' collages from found objects: her identity is thus never fully her own; always changeable, multivalent.

The final collage discussed in this chapter, *Mz x 22 Wantee* (1947), is set inside a lunette shape. A sketch of a city, and a ship of the Empire on the seas make up the background for this collage. On top, two portraits are to be found, that of King George VI on two postage stamps; and the other of Schwitters' young companion at the time, a Miss Edith Thomas, whom he affectionately named Wantee.³⁷⁹ Schwitters met Thomas in 1941, they lived in the same house, and Schwitters had first approached her to ask if she might show him how to work his unruly water heater. Webster recounts (via Thomas):

Her name was Edith Thomas, and she was, as Kurt wrote his friends, 'very beautiful'. One morning, inexplicably unable to operate the water heater in his bathroom, the otherwise expert handyman approached his quarry in the hallway and humbly asked her to show him how it worked. He then invited her to take coffee with him one evening. When Edith Thomas hesitantly entered Kurt's crudely furnished flat she was amazed to find that this strange, over-sized, shabby German had set a beautifully laid table with a white towel for a tablecloth, matching blue and white china and a vase with two roses. Food rationing and shortages meant that Kurt had virtually no access to his favourite biscuits and sweets, but for this occasion he had achieved the impossible and conjured up a chocolate cake. His Victorian upbringing never forsook him, and towards his guest he was correctness itself. The panic she felt when he smiled at her, strode to the bed and pulled back the covers was instantly relieved when he took out a coffee-pot, explaining that he had kept it warm under the bedclothes. He was, he told his awed visitor, an artist and gave her some of his pictures to study.³⁸⁰

Webster paints the picture of their first encounter quite vividly that Schwitters made the first move and that Wantee reciprocated, albeit seemingly nervously, elucidates an interesting dynamic. It seems then that Schwitters charm and sheer strangeness was the attraction for Thomas. She was a telephonist in the censorship office seven days a

³⁷⁹ Webster makes clear that Schwitters was honest and open with Edith Thomas, ensuring she understood he was married and that 'his wife was a wonderful person.' (*KMS*, p. 330)

³⁸⁰ Webster, *KMS*, p. 329.

week, and half Schwitters' age.³⁸¹ Thomas gave Schwitters the pet name "Jumbo", likely a product of his height; and Schwitters gave Thomas the name "Wantee", 'owing to her habit of popping her head round the door and asking 'Want tea?', became Wantee, or, when Kurt was feeling especially gentlemanly, the Lady Wantee Winterbottom.³⁸² While many photographs of the couple can be found, Schwitters never painted Wantee's portrait. Instead, only sketches of her were produced, of which nine exist in the Kurt Schwitters Archive, Sprengel Museum Hannover.

There seems something impermanent about the sketch, it can be more easily changed or adapted; it is fleeting, done on the move, in pencil usually, and so easily erased. It perhaps reflects their relationship. However, while Schwitters made many portraits of his wife, she was never memorialised in one of his collages, nor did her name make it into the title of one of his collages. Schwitters was Merz and Merz was Schwitters, therefore, it seems like this would have been the highest honour bestowed upon a person from Schwitters. He made numerous Merz-collages dedicated to his friends. *For Käte* (1947) is both a collage and a postcard; *Für Carola Giedion Welker. Ein fertig gemachter Poet.* (For Carola Giedion Welker. A Finished Poet.) (1947)—the full stop at the end of the title seems to make her even more defined: definitively finished—and much earlier in his career, another postcard sent two to Hannah Höch, on 10.9.1921 and another undated, except for 1921, as discussed in Chapter 3. These dedications however, were to his friends and his colleagues; supporters of his work; his collaborators. All other portraits were commissioned, or of his colleagues (mainly male), and thus cannot be considered in the same way as those of Helma and Wantee.

The distinction between personal and professional dedications, particularly those in the collage form, is interesting to consider in the context of collage as a feminist tool outlined in this thesis. It further expands our understanding of Schwitters' as a feminist artist. Collage's hybrid nature is particularly apt for thinking through Schwitters' women, and understanding the multivalence of their identities, an artistic rendering of

³⁸¹ Webster, *KMS*, p. 329.

³⁸² Webster, *KMS*, p. 329.

the reality of female identities, which are continually changing and adapting to the ever-shifting social and political circumstances.

The collages discussed in this chapter which feature women are not an exhaustive list of Schwitters' engagement with this subject. However, those I have selected are particularly linked with the politics of the time, and present Schwitters as a political artist. He was asking thought-provoking questions about the state of women's rights, the image of women created by the media, particularly in a time of mass destruction and the reconstructing of the male body (which was further explored in the decades that followed Schwitters' death as a new awareness of selfhood, obscured by illnesses and changes in culturally accepted definitions of identity became more prominent). Schwitters' exploration of these themes in this period vary in tone, ranging from mocking and perplexed, to showing a genuine concern for the status quo. Furthermore, Schwitters' exploration of these themes in collage redefines the shifts in even the avant-garde's most prominent exponents: a return to traditional methods and styles, not least in paint, and a return to figuration was at once an attempt to reorganise the world (like the abstract artists, asserting rationality and logic over the destruction post-World War II). Such a shift toward landscapes and portraiture would not have suited the unconventional Schwitters, and as such, the use of landscape and portraiture was not to appease a changing regime, but rather a means of economic survival. As previously stated, Schwitters' style changes, not only because of the media's change in style, but because of the materials he had available to him at that time. His move from collected fragments and detritus of the everyday, in Hannover, to natural objects (stone and wood) as well as more traditional materials (paint) were largely due to his circumstances. However, advances had been made in printing methods since Schwitters' time as a publisher and typographer, and so too had the ways in which images and text were used in publications. His exposure to new material such as American and British magazines, posters, propaganda, meant that his work physically changed, and so too did his aesthetic.

As in Hannover at the beginning of the Weimar era, he saw first-hand the material poverty, whereby every scrap became an object of value: the natural fragments that Schwitters encountered became equally valuable to his work; and his exposure, particularly in Britain, to the English-language American publications clearly changed his aesthetic. Not discussed in this chapter, but what presents evidence for a further shift in his aesthetic, is the use of natural objects or components in his Merz sculptures. These comprised wood, stone, sticks, often glued together to create odd abstract shapes, and others were painted so as to present yet another alternative to canvas, another legacy of his early Merz works. These works are less concerned with the political landscape of his time, and more with the ways that his environment had affected his work, and how his Merz ideology could adapt to fit with these changes instead of being truncated or ousted altogether. In his exploration of these themes, he anticipated a style of art which radically challenged societal and cultural consumption of every day products. In the late-Forties and early Fifties the piecing back together of broken countries again expressed itself in the form of collage, and exposed the capitalist mythology of profit and commodity.

Schwitters and Pop Art

Lucy Lippard, in her 1966 edited volume on Pop Art, writes:

Pop Art is an American phenomenon that departs from the cliché of big, bold, raw America that became current when Abstract Expressionism triumphed internationally. It was born twice: first in England and then again, independently, in New York.³⁸³

In presenting Pop as a dual sided movement, Lippard highlights the far-reaching power of the media, and the cross-cultural exchange happening between Britain and America post-1945. It is particularly interesting that she draws attention to Schwitters in her introduction, stating:

Kurt Schwitters produced one of the most convincing Pop prototypes in 1947 with his *For Käte* collage, which features comic-strip images. However, it is much more convincing in reproduction than the original, very small, delicate, and pale, with gauzy pink paper veiling one area of the comic,

³⁸³ Lucy R. Lippard, 'Introduction,' *Pop Art* (London and New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1966), p. 9.

it bears little resemblance to the immense, undoctored images of the Pop artists.³⁸⁴

While *For Käte* is a good example of Schwitters' incorporation of mass cultural media, it is not the most convincing 'Pop prototype'; not for the reasons that Lippard describes above, but rather because it has much more sentimental value attached to it. It is more convincing to consider works such as *EN MORN* or *left half of a beauty* as examples of prototypes of Pop Art.

These works better characterise Schwitters' interest and critique of popular culture, consumerism, propaganda and ideology, as well as his interest in print culture. More interesting to consider is Lippard's inclusion of the German exile's inclusion in the introduction to a volume on Pop, which, as cited above, positions Pop as an Anglo-American movement. Schwitters' collages had become increasingly influenced by both American and British media, and his 'merzing' of these materials reflects his view of his new environment as an outsider looking in.

The similarities between Pop and Merz might be seen when Jessica Morgan writes, 'pop style or pop spirit encompassed graphic techniques that mimicked popular, commercial and media art, with flattened, simplified, and cut away imagery, bright artificial colours, and the combination of text with image.'³⁸⁵ Schwitters' design background and his appropriation of commercial and consumerist imagery can also be contextualised in Morgan's application of Roland Barthes' theories set out in his *Mythologies* (1957). Morgan notes:

[Pop] built its desired socio-economic and commercial meaning into the figuration of the object in a manner reminiscent of Roland Barthes's famous formulation, in *Mythologies*, of the sign that flickers between signifier and signified, so that the image or text, icon or logo denotes a real object but also stands as a simultaneous representation of a code.³⁸⁶

This flickering between the signified and the signifier is the critical conundrum one faces when reading Schwitters' works. The scholar is acutely aware of a fragment's

³⁸⁴ Lippard, *Pop Art*, p. 11.

³⁸⁵ Jessica Morgan, 'Political Pop: An Introduction,' in *The World Goes Pop*, eds. Jessica Morgan and Flavia Frigeri (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 15-28; p. 16.

³⁸⁶ Morgan, 'Political Pop,' p. 15.

life before Schwitters' appropriation and integration of it into a new context, but this is complicated (even hidden) by its juxtaposition with other fragments of text and image which often dislocate or dissociate it further from its original source. This is also achieved in *Merz* by Schwitters' painting over of some fragments and his insistence on the intrinsic value of the fragment and collage, more broadly.

Therefore, to consider Schwitters as a progenitor of Pop Art highlights his importance for artists of contemporaneous and future artists, but others around the same time were making similar work, and have been more closely allied to Pop. Lawrence Alloway calls Eduardo Paolozzi 'a progenitor of great importance' and notes that he was connected to the earliest iterations of British Pop.³⁸⁷ The Edinburgh-born artist made collages using scraps of magazines, newspapers, and advertisements which he arranged in a format that challenged the stereotypes of the day. Hamilton, who Alloway claims was firmly a Pop artist,³⁸⁸ produced collages that exposed and criticised the home of the 1950s. The new model for the home had been radically altered by technology and a better standard of living, a result of increased economic prosperity. Jürgen Jacobs suggested that Hamilton's inclusion of a woman vacuuming was influenced by John McHale's Independent Group lecture 'Technology at Home' (1957).³⁸⁹ Schwitters' reconfiguration of the domestic space, which Chapter 5 analyses, is comparable to Hamilton's use of interior space in his *What makes today's home*. Both artists' works might be read as challenges to the conventional or traditional domestic space (although in both configurations the inhabitants appear heterosexual). McHale, Paolozzi and Alloway were important figures in the Independent Group (an informal group operating within the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London) out of which the first phase of British Pop Art grew.

In 1954, Alloway organised an exhibition at the ICA, he called it *Collages and Objects*. McHale debuted his "Transistor" collages and collages by Schwitters were

³⁸⁷ Lawrence Alloway, 'The Development of British Pop,' in Lippard, 1966, pp. 27-68; p. 28. It should also be noted that Alloway was present during the early days of Pop's beginnings and he documents throughout the essay.

³⁸⁸ Alloway, 'British Pop,' p. 28.

³⁸⁹ Jürgen Jacobs, *Die Entwicklung der Pop Art in England von ihren Anfängen bis 1957* (Frankfurt: 1986), p. 90.

also included in this exhibition.³⁹⁰ Paolozzi was making collages even earlier than Hamilton, and his *I was a Rich Man's Plaything* dates to 1947, and is a work which critiques the propaganda which had been used throughout the war. Paolozzi's collages were made along similar formal principles to Schwitters', and were concerned with similar themes. Paolozzi was also influenced by the collages of Max Ernst and Schwitters. In a short essay entitled 'Waste' (1982), Paolozzi notes that for him, 'it was going to the London Gallery³⁹¹ in the [1940s/1950s] to see the works of Max Ernst, Kurt Schwitters and the English Surrealists that gave encouragement to [his] treatment of magazines as serious raw materials...'³⁹² Paolozzi's collages were hailed as pre-Pop due to their analysis and critique of consumer culture; however, within this narrative, Schwitters has often been overlooked, and in some cases ignored. Hamilton was also influenced by Schwitters, and was responsible for the safekeeping of the *Merz Barn Wall* and its transportation to the Hatton Gallery (aided by Fred Brookes). His interest to remove the wall from the damp Barn in Ambleside, where it lay eroding, was most likely motivated by Lawrence Gowing's bid to the Arts Council of Great Britain regarding the Wall, after the Hatton Gallery had hosted an exhibition of Schwitters' work in 1958. Hamilton was a lecturer at the Newcastle University at that time, where the Hatton Gallery is located, and was apparently instrumental in persuading the university to support the removal and relocation of the Wall.³⁸⁴

It is interesting to consider such legacies as those described above, particularly in the setting of cross-cultural exchanges: Schwitters, the German alien exile, being appropriated as a progenitor of British Pop is fascinating given the cultural, social, and political status of German refugees directly after the Second World War. Moreover, the distinction between British and American Pop seems to be driven by the nationality of the artist, as most of the accounts given of Pop art (Lippard, Alloway, Morgan, et al.) contend that Americana was the foundation for much of their work.

³⁹⁰ John McHale, Independent Group: <http://independentgroup.org.uk/contributors/mchale/index.html>.

³⁹¹ The London Gallery was directed by E. L. T. Mesens, a Belgian poet, whom Schwitters had reached out to during his exile when he and Hausmann were trying to publish their collaborative magazine, *PIN*. (See: Reichhardt, 1962, pp. 5-8; see also my essay 'The Thing about *PIN*,' 2015; pp. 46-47.)

³⁹² Eduardo Paolozzi, 'Waste' (1982), in *Eduardo Paolozzi: Writings and Interviews*, ed. Robin Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 257-258; p. 257. ³⁸⁴ See the Hatton Gallery's Information Pages on the Merz Barn Wall. <https://hattongallery.org.uk/collections/kurt-schwitters-merz-barn-wall>.

The fascination of the big, bold and brash cultures of the United States of America would have been exciting to a group of young people coming out of long years of rationing in the UK (1940-1953) and the slow economic upturn. The introduction of pop culture, including Rock 'n' Roll music, Elvis, Superstardom, all coming across the Atlantic offered a sign of a new culture; a youth culture. It may also have been interesting to devote an entire chapter to an analysis of this British period, and the notion of Schwitters' as a proto-Pop artist would certainly have made for an interesting study. However, I have chosen not to write this chapter because I feel that in doing so I risk creating further separatism. By only considering these British male artists, I continue and add to an exclusively male legacy, traced back through centuries of other male artists.

As with Chapter 2, this chapter examines the ways in which Schwitters' collages used images of women, except this time the focus is on how the aesthetic is changed by his new geography and its new ideas about the female body. Schwitters' experienced two periods of distinct material poverty and, as I have argued throughout this thesis, Merz offered a way of maintaining a critical eye on his surroundings. This chapter focused on how these women were manifested in his exile and contrasted his collages with his paintings of women. The historiographical approach to Schwitters' paintings were that they were merely a means of making a living while in exile, however, the landscapes capture his surroundings with an almost Expressionistic vision, and they are usually discussed within the context of Schwitters' poverty. However, the collages, while almost always discussed in reference to the avant-garde and heralded as a radical practice, still fall foul to aestheticization and the political worth is lost. Schwitters, despite language barriers, among others, still understood his predicament in relation to world politics and this chapter highlights not only works which feature and document the changing attitudes to women and beauty, but also the inclusions of clear political markers. As with *Mai 191* and *Versailles* in the earlier years, works such as *EN MORN* and the *Hitler Gang* expose Schwitters' critical perspective on his immediate surroundings, as well as a commentary on his homeland. It is important not to ignore the ways in which these works have been overlooked as markers of Schwitters' political viewpoint and how these works might help scholars to view him

less as the supposed (and self-avowed) apolitical artist as has been the trend in much of the existing scholarship. It also pointed to Schwitters' enduring presence in future avant-gardes and his influence on artists who would come to be known for their commentaries on their own times. However, these legacies were predominantly male-centric and as such it seemed important, given the central argument of this thesis, to consider how Schwitters' feminist perspectives might be understood when compared with an artist whose work is undeniably feminist and whose work has taken influence from *Merz*, but denies that the works can be considered as similar to one another. Therefore, the next chapter examines the connections, distinctions and theoretical similarities between Schwitters and Anna Oppermann.

5: 'THE BASIC DIFFERENCES PREDOMINATE': LEGACIES IN ANNA OPPERMANN'S ENSEMBLES

Anna Oppermann and Kurt Schwitters have often been paired together by critics and scholars. Her large-scale *Ensembles*, installations which radically redefine spaces, were first constructed in the studio of her home, and then re-assembled in the same configuration in the gallery, has prompted the discussion of the domestic with which this chapter will explore. It will also compare and contrast Oppermann's work with Schwitters' *Merzbauten* (Hannover and Hjertøya) to consider his own reconstructions of domestic space, and propose that his redesignation of the home as studio-cum-artwork (and later as artwork-cum-museum) might be considered through queer and feminist lenses, arguing for a re-evaluation of both Schwitters' and Oppermann's installations in this way. This chapter will also propose the notion of an 'anti-legacy' which can be found through Oppermann's refusal of the comparison between hers and Schwitters' work. I will do this by examining, first, the accepted legacy of Schwitters' work, building on the ideas expressed in the previous chapter on Eduardo Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton, and consider the queer lineages evident in American artist Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns.

Legacies: Schwitters, Johns, and Rauschenberg

There has been a substantial amount of literature produced on the legacies of Kurt Schwitters, examining the aesthetic and formal influences he and his work have had on artists, particularly those working in the post-World War II period, spanning as far as Damien Hirst in the UK, and Thomas Hirschhorn in Germany.³⁹³ Many artists have credited Schwitters as an influence on or inspiration for their working methods, or their aesthetics. Jasper Johns explained to the curator Leah Dickerman that after Robert Rauschenberg had discussed Schwitters with him, he trawled the archives held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, for everything he could find on the artist.

³⁹³ Key works on Schwitters' legacy include: Susanne Meyer-Büser and Karin Orchard, eds. *I the Beginning was Merz: From Kurt Schwitters to Present Day* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2000); Nigel Whiteley, 'Interdisciplinarity and the contribution of Kurt Schwitters,' *Sch... The Journal of the Kurt Schwitters Society*, No. 1, 2011, pp. 4-13; Ulrich Finke, 'Kurt Schwitters' Contribution to Concrete Art and Poetry,' *Forum for Modern Language Studies* (1973), Vol. 9, Iss. 1, pp. 75-85.

Johns claimed that Schwitters became the single most important influence over his work.³⁹⁴ Johns' and Schwitters' respective oeuvres are not as obviously connected as those of Rauschenberg and Schwitters, however his investment in using everyday objects to reveal codified or private symbolism might be considered similar to Schwitters' re-use of everyday detritus. Rauschenberg's collage technique is akin to Schwitters' in its use of everyday materials and found objects, each of which are juxtaposed and played off each other to give way to a meaning beyond their original context. As Lisa Wainwright suggests in her essay, 'Robert Rauschenberg's Fabrics: Reconstructing Domestic Space':

Indeed, collaging things from the everyday world afforded a much stranger result than painting on canvas, for Rauschenberg rendered his found objects uncanny by moving them into the artistic frame where they became both familiar (as recognizable objects) and unfamiliar (as ascribed with new meanings due to different contexts and in relations to other disparate objects).³⁹⁵

In this assertion, the collage technique is heralded as an innovation of Rauschenberg's – yet the Dadaists used the collage 30 years previously to similar effect. Helen Molesworth rails against this idea that Rauschenberg and Johns are merely heirs to a Dada legacy, and that both artists might be better understood in terms of Neo-Dada. She writes, specifically referencing William Rubin's Museum of Modern Art exhibition, *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage*:

In Rubin's catalog, images of Dada works and those of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg appear side by side as if Dada existed first and foremost in a state of temporal and geographical collapse. The simultaneous appearance of Dada and Neo-Dada is telling, as both share a similar narrative logic in the

³⁹⁴ Leah Dickerman, 'Merz and Memory: On Kurt Schwitters,' [*The Dada Seminars*, eds. Leah Dickerman and Matthew Witkovsky (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2006), pp.103-125.] However, scholars such as Rosalind Krauss and Leo Steinberg saw Rauschenberg's use of the collage as a departure from the medium/form used by the Cubists and Schwitters. See: Leo Steinberg, 'Reflections on the State of Criticism' (pp. 7-37) and Rosalind Krauss, 'Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image' (pp. 39-55) in *Robert Rauschenberg*, ed. Branden W. Joseph (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2002).

³⁹⁵ Lisa Wainwright, 'Rauschenberg's Fabrics: Reconstructing Domestic Space,' *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity and Architecture*, ed. Christopher Reed (London and New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1996), pp.193-205; p.193.

discourse of art history. Dada is usually introduced as a precursor, an unruly child who matures into the properly codified movement of Surrealism.³⁹⁶

The complicated heritage of Dada, and art historical lineages more generally, is expressed in Molesworth's summary of art historical approaches to Dada as the unruly child and Surrealism as its grown-up form. That so many artists have been influenced by Dada, and some more specifically by Merz, is also noted by Molesworth in the creation of labels such as Neo-Dada (there is no Neo-Surrealism or Neo-Constructivism). Furthermore, Rauschenberg himself stated that he was influenced by Merz. Mary Lynn Kotz, in her study of Rauschenberg noted:

Critics often compared Rauschenberg's combines to the 1920s collages of Dadaist [sic] Kurt Schwitters, whose tight compositions were meant to explore a corrupt society. But Rauschenberg said he did not see Schwitters' work until 1959, five years after he began making collages with found objects. When he did discover Schwitters, in an exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery [75 *Collages by Kurt Schwitters*, 2.2-3.7.1959, New York], he was delighted. 'I felt like he made it all for me,' he said.³⁹⁷

Rauschenberg was clearly captivated by the work of Schwitters, and while some critics have noted the similarities, Rosalind Krauss argues that Rauschenberg's use of collage was 'a form of collage that was largely reinvented, such that in Rauschenberg's hands the meaning and function of collage elements bore little relation to their earlier use in the works of Schwitters or the Cubists.'³⁹⁸ Her appraisal of Rauschenberg's innovation and its detachment from his Merz (in Krauss's terms framed as Dada) and Cubist predecessors complicates art historical perspectives and the notions of lineage with which this chapter is concerned. Although Krauss attempts to separate Rauschenberg's execution of the collage from that which had gone before, contemporary critics of Rauschenberg were not so accommodating of this detachment. As Kotz notes:

A major dissent came from Harold Rosenberg, the art critic of *The New Statesman*, and a champion of the original New York School of Abstract

³⁹⁶ Helen Molesworth, 'From Dada to Neo-Dada and Back Again,' *October*, Vol. 105, Dada (Summer 2003), pp. 177-181; p. 177.

³⁹⁷ Mary Lynn Kotz, *Rauschenberg: Art and Life* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), p. 91. Kotz quotes an unpublished interview with the artist, conducted by Dorothy Gees Seckler, Archives of American Art, 1966.

³⁹⁸ Rosalind Krauss, 'Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image,' *Robert Rauschenberg*, ed. Branden W. Joseph (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2002), pp. 39-55; p. 40.

Expressionists. Rosenberg's complaint was that Rauschenberg had failed to acknowledge the artistic influences on his work—including Albers, Schwitters, Dada, the Abstract Expressionists, and commercial photomontage—claiming instead that his pictures were uniquely his own creation. Rather than being a spontaneous original, said Rosenberg, 'Rauschenberg has been in and of the art world; here is an art-world wit, attuned and responding to prevailing opinions and phases of taste...'³⁹⁹

Rauschenberg studied under Albers at Black Mountain college, who also made photomontages which he called 'combinations' (Rauschenberg called his 'combines'). Albers was Schwitters' friend and colleague and one has to wonder if the student Rauschenberg had perhaps heard of the *Merz* artist during his time studying in California. The reinforcement of a lineage which is ultimately male (note that in the quotation above, Rosenberg does not consider Höch as a potential influence on Rauschenberg, or even the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, whose American connection would seem much more obvious) and as such resonates with the history of Dada and its unapologetic maleness, which David Hopkins argues for in his study discussed above. This chapter will further explore this male lineage and the unapologetic maleness proposed by Hopkins and studies which omit artist women as important figures in these lineages and argue against them by using Anna Oppermann as a caveat or intervention in this historicisation of legacy through male artists.

If we consider for a moment that while the closeness of the connection between Rauschenberg and his forebears is contested and debated, his ability to critique the world around him is not lessened by this. Strong examples of this occur in earlier periods than that in which Rauschenberg lived: Hannah Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* (1920) and John Heartfield's beheading of police chief Karl Friedrich Zörgiebel (*Self Portrait*, 1929)⁴⁰⁰ showed distinctly political subject matter and critiqued the leaders and cultural figureheads of the day. While this political context can be clearly seen even today, it would have been clearer to the public of the early Weimar period and could be considered as a means of highlighting the plight of their environment. Still today, as in their own time, the overt political nature of Höch and Heartfield's works

³⁹⁹ Kotz, *Robert Rauschenberg*, p. 211.

⁴⁰⁰ For more information on this specific work see, Sabine Kriebel, 'Manufacturing Discontent: John Heartfield's Mass Medium,' *New German Critique*, No. 107, Summer 2009, pp. 53-88.

have withstood political annulment. Like the Dadaists, Rauschenberg possessed an astute ability to highlight and criticise the political scene of the 1950s and 1960s by using familiar images of famous men and women of the time and placing them in unfamiliar or compromising positions. This has the effect of prompting their audiences to think about the world around them, and the current conditions under which they lived.

Domesticity

In the appropriation of Freud's notion of the uncanny in an essay on domestic space, Wainwright relies on the wordplay in the terms *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, which are in fact not antonyms. *Heimlich* is to do with secrecy, hiddenness or furtivity; *unheimlich* is to do with spookiness, eeriness, and more generally the supernatural. *Unheimlich* finds its roots in Middle High German [hochmitteldeutsch] and means "nicht vertraut" or "not familiar". The common translation is "unhomely" and in the Freudian context, "uncanny". However, the notion of homeliness, which Wainwright finds in *heimlich* and takes as the basis for her argument in the context of domesticity in Rauschenberg's work, is an incorrect translation and a misappropriation of this idea. Domesticity is certainly present in Rauschenberg's work, and it expresses his somewhat complicated relationship with heteronormative domestic space. *Bed* (1955) is an evocative example of this. The uninitiated viewer's introduction to the work might be through the Museum of Modern Art's website, which shows a photograph of *Bed*, accompanied by some text. The short text reads:

Bed is one of Rauschenberg's first 'combines' the artist's term for the technique of attaching found objects, such as tires or old furniture, to a traditional canvas support. In this work, he took a well-worn pillow, sheet, and quilt, scribbled on them with pencil, and splashed them with painting a style similar to that of Abstract Expressionist 'drip' painter Jackson Pollock.⁴⁰¹

The assemblage of bed linens onto canvas which are then painted or drawn on is an example of the crossing of the professional and personal. The artist's bed is the canvas in this case, and that art and life are somehow compatible is explored in this combine.

⁴⁰¹ Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*, 1955, MoMA New York.
https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/robert-rauschenberg-bed-1955.

Furthermore, that the artists personal and professional lives are somehow entangled is perpetuated by the MoMA's invocation of mythology surrounding *Bed*:

Legend has it that these are Rauschenberg's own pillow and blanket, which he used when he could not afford to buy a new canvas. Hung on the wall like a traditional painting, his bed, still made, becomes a sort of intimate self-portrait consistent with Rauschenberg's assertion that 'painting relates to both art and life... [and] I try to act in that gap between the two.'⁴⁰²

This work might be read in terms of queer theory, and also through lenses of the abject, as Tom Folland has done in his 'Rauschenberg's Queer Modernism: The Early Combines and Decoration'.⁴⁰³ They might also be read in terms of the uncanny, and the unsettling myth surrounding the work; the opening one's bed to the public for viewing (later this would be characterised more acutely by Tracey Emin's *My Bed* (1999) whose title itself intensifies the public/private divide through the specific possessive pronoun 'my') has at once connotations of comfort and discomfort. Rauschenberg's *Fabrics* are undoubtedly uncanny: his application of paint and collage techniques are, in the context of Pop, radical, but so too was Schwitters' work even within the paradigm shifting context of Dada.

Schwitters, as already noted, claimed: 'I am a painter, and I nail my pictures together Schwitters does three things here which create paradoxes and juxtapositions. First, he calls himself a painter, he excludes the multitude of other media he worked in and therefore creates a professional identity for himself which one might easily contest. Secondly, he contradicts the previous statement about his profession by invoking the use of another tradesman's tools, the nail, and thus connoting sculpture, carpentry, even architecture. Finally, he uses the word 'pictures' [Bilder], a vague term covering a range of visual representations or forms: from the painting, to the photograph, and covering historic and modern artistic methods. Schwitters was an artist of multiple perspectives, crafts and perceptions, and it has been the objective of this thesis to tease out some of these problematic framings of Schwitters in any singular perspective. And

⁴⁰² See Footnote 400, p. 173.

⁴⁰³ Tom Folland, 'Robert Rauschenberg's Queer Modernism: The Early Combines and Decoration,' *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 92, No.4 (December 2010), pp. 348-365.

so I focus on the artworks which specifically feature images of women, suggesting he presented them in a different way to his compatriots who worked in collage and used female and so-called feminine subject matter. In order to establish this one might track Schwitters' influence through legacy (or non-legacies). Therefore, in this chapter I will consider the correlations, similarities, and differences between Schwitters and the work of the German installation artist Anna Oppermann (1940-1993) to examine aesthetic and political associations.

Schwitters and Oppermann: Disentangling legacies

Oppermann's work has been, and continues to be, discussed in relation to Schwitters' *Merzbau. Ensembles*, her large-scale installation pieces, are constructed from various materials, found objects, newspaper clippings, and uses innumerable media and forms. They are always conscious of and reflective upon their own process, and so a self-history of the work is presented, alongside a critique of the world off-canvas. Oppermann's work is concerned with and explores simultaneously the extrinsic and intrinsic qualities of the *Ensemble* in a way that is similar to the process I suggest earlier in this thesis for examining Schwitters' collages. Furthermore, her inclusion of herself in the works (sometimes by way of synecdoche, and other times with literal representation via self-portrait) betrays and defies the clearly set boundaries of personal and public. Her work is thematically connected, and when analysed creates a nexus of ideas which were clearly of interest to Oppermann, but also expose the societal and cultural anxieties of the GDR and post-war Germany. Oppermann, as will be discussed throughout this chapter, refuted comparisons to Schwitters, and even responded with an article eschewing such claims, in which she concludes that 'the basic differences predominate.' In response to Oppermann's claim that it the basic difference are what separate hers and Schwitters' art, this chapter poses the question: what are these basic differences? In doing so, I am not attempting to make a case study of Oppermann; nor am I discarding or disparaging the artist's interpretation of her own work. Instead, I am proposing that by thinking through these differences (and of course the similarities) that one can consider why she refuted this idea; and question the very notion of lineages which rely on females being discussed in the context of

their male compatriots. Oppermann's *Ensembles* were, like Schwitters' *Merzbauten*, lived experiences; they were visionary, and progressive. These positives which they share are not always discussed in the existing literature.

Oppermann's career and scholarly recognition of her work have been hindered by relative obscurity outside of German-speaking countries, despite relative success and reasonably wide exposure in solo and group exhibitions. It can be posited that due to the nature of her work being experimental in form, the continual re-working of her *Ensembles* so that they grow and evolve beyond their original iterations, and the unfixity of the work makes them much more difficult to discuss. Furthermore, these difficulties pose an issue of how to properly conserve the works and thus makes them less attractive to museums, galleries and even scholars.⁴⁰⁴ Working from the 1960s until her death in 1993, her style shifted from paint on canvas to large scale collages and installations (not wholly unlike the shifts in practice exhibited by Schwitters), as well as utilising various other media and processes to create her *Ensembles*, she continues to evolve as an artist, and to push the boundaries of her discipline. Like Schwitters, her oeuvre is difficult to assign any singular association with a particular artistic movement, or to give formal definition. It seems this may have been her intention, and like Schwitters in his creation of a *Merz* aesthetic, Oppermann characterised her work as '*Ensembles*', independent from any other form. Writing about the multidisciplinary/multimedia presentation of her work, Ute Vorkeoper states:

the visual arrangements also include tables, pedestals, and sometimes sheets of cloth; they always contain building blocks and straight pins and conceal a variety of architectural models, which, from one case to the next, can become large, three-dimensional sculptures.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ This is a challenge the current estate manager, Barbara Thumm and her team face. There are 'original' configurations of the work, however, as Oppermann continually updated and added to each *Ensemble*, it might be suggested that the work was always unfinished and so an original form cannot be ascertained. Thumm and her team are building a fully itinerated digital archive which will allow curators to properly assemble her works in the way she envisaged. This project is aided by Oppermann scholar Ute Vorkeoper and Oppermann's life partner Herbert Hossmann.

⁴⁰⁵ Ute Vorkeoper, 'Therapy and Revolt of the Present', *Anna Oppermann: Ensembles 1968/1992*, ed. Ute Vorkeoper (Osterfeld: Hatje Cantz, 2007), pp. 29-37; p. 29.

Vorkoeper invokes architectural and theatrical terms to make her argument: building blocks, straight pins and direct references to ‘architectural models’ highlight the structure of these works, and their boundary-blurring appearance. These sculptural, installatory, collage-cum-assemblage structures are large in scale, vast in the variety of materials used, and impossible to read.⁴⁰⁶ In the same way that Schwitters’ *Merz* aesthetic has/had been undermined or overshadowed by its position on the periphery of Dada (and Dada Studies), so too were Oppermann’s *Ensembles*. Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler point to this in saying:

In the art world of her time—in the midst of Fluxus, Pop Art, Minimal Art, and Arte Povera—she was relatively on her own, and her participation in the documenta 6 cannot hide that fact. Even though the structure of Oppermann’s work allows it to be assigned to Processual and Conceptual Art, situating it in the 1970s, in aesthetic terms the way her massive, somewhat Baroque ensembles manifest in space can hardly be reconciled to the reduced approaches of Conceptual Art. Furthermore, since Oppermann brought in the secular, the emotional, the familiar, and the personal, Roland Barthes’ notion of “the death of the author” also could not be traced in her work. It is likewise difficult to evaluate her work in terms of political art, which regarded the personal as a shift of emphasis from the big picture to a silly ersatz problem.⁴⁰⁷

Some *Ensembles* look like elaborate set designs for shrunken actors, others look like miniature galleries showing an eclectic agglomeration of everyday banalities. To approach these works with the intention of finding any single message, meaning, or theme, is too difficult. Instead, I suggest one is required to make connections and draw constellatory lines between the many fragments, some of which are in duplicate and triplicate, in multiple forms and fashioned from various materials, and to use these connections to then draw meaning.

In 1986, Oppermann published a short article titled: ‘Lebensprozess und Künstlerliches Vorgehen. Wodurch wird mein Leben strukturiert’ [Life Process and Artistic Method: How my life is structured] in which she outlines the difference or

⁴⁰⁶ I use ‘read’ here in the literal sense – the text fragments are often so small, or obscured, it is difficult to see them.

⁴⁰⁷ Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler, ‘A Commentary, Not a Foreword,’ *Anna Oppermann: Ensembles 1986-1992*, ed. Ute Vorkoeper (Osterfeldern: Hatje Cantz, 2007), pp. 14-16; p. 15

separation of her personal and professional lives. In the penultimate paragraph of this article, she states:

It should become clear that my artistic working method has in fact similarities to Kurt Schwitters' collages that are transferred to three-dimensional space – especially in his MERZ Bau – but it should be equally clear that the basic differences predominate.⁴⁰⁸

She is answering the calls of critics such as Michael Erlhoff who in his 1982 *Schwitters Almanach*, cannily placed the display of Anna Oppermann's *Das Hehre und das Banale – Besinnungsobjekte über das Thema Verehrung – Anlaß Goethe* (1981/82) in the front pages of the journal, before launching into discussions of Schwitters' *Merzbau*, connecting her aesthetic model and process with that of Schwitters'.⁴⁰⁹ She continues to explain to the reader what these basic differences are, as she sees them, at least:

Moreover, Schwitters in his MERZ Bau arranges mementos [Erinnerungsstücke], found things, and objects that have their fixed places and can be covered or permanently concealed behind other objects. By contrast, my arrangements are, with regard to their semantic context and thematic range, principally open, and can be altered and expanded.⁴¹⁰

The prevalent difference that Oppermann identifies lies in each artist's ability to manipulate space, and the ways in which they accomplish this. According to Oppermann, for Schwitters, it is the changing of static or fixed space by his use of objects, statues, facades and architectural skill; in her own work, it is in the transportability and malleability of her ideas and materials irrespective of space. Oppermann acknowledges at once her legacy and her departure from Schwitters' proto-installation art.

This has not been the only connection drawn between Schwitters and his artistic descendants. Some scholarly and critical interventions have already established the formal and aesthetic correlations between Schwitters and his art historical

⁴⁰⁸ Anna Oppermann, 'Lebensprozess und Künstlerliches vorgehen. Wodurch wird mein Leben strukturiert', KUNST+UNTERRICHT (Art and Education), Zeitschrift für Kunstpädagogik, D-3016 Velber Heft 100/Merz 1986, pp. 53-54; p. 54.

⁴⁰⁹ Michael Erlhoff, (ed.) *Kurt Schwitters Almanac*, (Hannover: Postskriptum, 1982), n.p.

⁴¹⁰ Ehrloff, *Schwitters Almanac*, p.54. My thanks to Oona Lochner for her translation.

successors.⁴¹¹ However, when considering these legacies, the evidence uncovered that most, if not all, of them were male. This led to a consideration of the word 'legacy' and the potential problems it might expose in considering women and female artists taking their lead from male artists.

The term 'legacy' has its etymology and definition in inheritance; a historically tricky subject particularly regarding women. Historically, women had been considered the property of their husbands and fathers, and more generally of men (and even today in some cultures this remains the practice).⁴¹² As property, and thus beings without subjectivity, it seems inconceivable that they might own their own property, or inherit money from their father, husband, etc. It seems then that if women cannot inherit within a societal or political context, it may be problematic or even contradictory to propose that they can inherit artistically or aesthetically. This matter is further complicated in that an alternative word, unburdened by centuries of oppression, cannot be so easily found. Despite these complications, Mira Schor has attempted an intervention in this instance, and has coined the term 'matrilineage'. She argues:

In a sense it is simply stating the obvious that legitimation is established through the father. It must be noted that, in this historical moment, some fathers are better than others. Optimal patrilineage is a perceived relationship to such mega-fathers as Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys, and mega-sons such as Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg.⁴¹³

Schor proposes here that women's art is rarely considered independent of artworks made by men. They are always held up against the standards set by the figures she terms the 'mega-fathers' and 'mega-sons' of modern and contemporary art. While I

⁴¹¹ In particular, Susan Meyer-Büser and Karin Orchard (eds.), *In the Beginning was Merz: From Kurt Schwitters to the Present Day* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2000).

⁴¹² For historical accounts and analysis of the status of women as property, see: Renée Hirschon, ed., *Women and Property—Women as Property* (London: Croom Helm, 1984) and Fern Pullam, "'Marriage had bastilled me for life': Propertied Women as Property in the Legal Fictions of Richardson, Wollstonecraft and Collins,' *Literature Compass*, Vol. 13, Iss. 8 (August 2016), pp. 493-500. For cultures which continue the cultural designation of women as property we might consider the politics of dowries. An example of this can be found in Priya R. Banerjee, 'Dowry in 21st-Century India: The Sociocultural Face of Exploitation,' *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, Vol. 15, Iss. 1 (January 2014), pp. 34-40.

⁴¹³ Mira Schor, 'Patrilineage', *Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), pp. 282-289; p.283.

agree with Schor's assertion, I want to propose a caveat to this idea, and take into consideration the sexuality of these supposed patriarchs.

Let us consider that Schor is discussing patriarchy as a heteronormative and heterosexual position, her argument is complicated by her inclusion of gay and bisexual artists such as Warhol, Johns and Rauschenberg. She also does not take account of the numerous queer interpretations of works by all of these artists (with the exception of Beuys) which taint or subvert their positions as patriarchs. Duchamp was heterosexual, however, his collaboration with Man Ray and the creation of his 'alter-ego' Rose Sélavy would suggest an interest in gender-play: an altogether queer/subversive act. Andy Warhol did not define himself as heterosexual, and much of the subject matter for his work would attest to this (consider his pornographic drawings and silkscreens); he too dressed in women's clothes, and through a combination of self-portraits and a photoseries by Christopher Makos which captured Warhol in drag, exposed a queerness which extricates him from the formal and rigid definitions of the traditional patriarch. The same case can be made for both Johns and Rauschenberg, whose sexualities, at least publicly, were ambiguous. Even without a consideration of these biographical details, Schor's skirting of the critical interventions must also be taken into consideration.

Her creation of the antonym 'matrilineage' is further problematised and compounded by her insistence on an 'artist family tree,' even one traced only through women. Any dealing with lineage—irrespective of which prefix one favours—is linguistically, ideologically and conceptually wrought with notions linking it to the family. The family is undeniably attached to notions of reproduction, which when explored further, will return to ideas of heterosexuality, heteronormativity and eventually to its place within a patriarchal system. That patriarchy is systemic is the issue, and furthermore much of language—Schor cites Charles Baudelaire (French), Walter Benjamin (German), Bertolt Brecht (German), Samuel Beckett (English, but wrote in French), Roland Barthes (French) and Jean Baudrillard (French) as examples of philosophers and critics who have helped to perpetuate the patrilineage to which she

refers—is linked inextricably to a patriarchal system. The dominance of the masculine in these languages might be interesting to consider, however is not possible at present.

The solution, therefore, is to find a linguistic signifier which allows for the expression and exploration of an artist's relationship to their forebears and successors without the hindrance of gendered stereotypes, oppression or subjugation. Such terms as 'influence' or 'inspiration' are problematic as they denote a certain passiveness, or even reliance on predecessors: as though to create, an artist is required to acknowledge the art of those whom they have experienced, consciously or otherwise. This is particularly tricky in the case of examining the works of female artists, as these reference points, for the most part, are to be found in an androcentric canon. The issues surrounding feminine language and that regarding women have not been ignored by feminist critics and theorists. Some feminist scholars have rejected the use of 'seminal' when referencing the inaugural or groundbreaking works of women writers or artists, because of its relationship to 'semen' (and thus, of man) and therefore being antithetical to feminist thought and practice. Instead many feminist scholars have opted to use the term 'germinal,' of embryo (and thus, of woman), to signify the work, an essentialist approach no less.

Such slippages in the English language are defined by connotation rather than grammar. However, much of this early feminist criticism was translated from French: *embryon* is a masculine noun; *sperme* is also masculine.⁴¹⁴ Where these languages assign nouns gendered articles, the linguist is compelled to investigate and critique. It is interesting to note that an aspect of biology which has been socially ascribed as female has been ascribed a male article. Some feminist thinkers might critique this as an imposition of patriarchy over all aspects of the body—and while this may seem an arbitrary argument, it may be the starting point for this thesis' departure from such binarized thinking. I instead suggest that one might consider these illogical pairings of the masculine and feminine as a carving out of queer linguistic space: one may even consider them collagistic in their composition, and instead of asking the question

⁴¹⁴ In German, *Embryo* is masculine; *Semen* (which is the singular form) is neuter, and in the plural, *Semina*, as previously discussed, is preceded by 'die' as in the feminine form (this is not to confuse the plural and the feminine forms).

‘why’ as I have previously suggested, one might embrace this hybridity. In any language, a reproductive essential is invoked to describe the text or artwork in question, and thus linking it inextricably with familial or genealogical terminology. It is in this same way we might consider ‘legacy’ as a problematic term, particularly with regards to the German artist Anna Oppermann and her relationship – or, as I will come to elaborate, non-relationship – to Schwitters.

Anna Oppermann: a brief introduction

It was originally my intention, in this thesis, to avoid biographical usage to read the artist’s work, particularly in the case of Schwitters, and choosing to favour a quasi-Barthesian notion of ‘the death of the author[/artist].’ This choice was made because so much of the literature which exists on Schwitters and women relies on testimonies which characterise Schwitters as a Casanova-figure, a philanderer and adulterer, and thus skewing the argument against him being proto-feminist. Such biographical details seemed to have hindered any objective critique or analysis of his work which is based entirely on the work itself. However, further problems are incurred when applying a Barthesian reading of the artist. In both Oppermann and Schwitters to continue this non-biographical approach creates gaps in our understanding. Schwitters’ geographical and personal situations (most often linked to his financial situation) inform his working method and his aesthetic to some extent. While this thesis focuses on the use of images of women, the predicaments surrounding the creation of these works has been considered throughout. In the case of Oppermann, I will also consider these biographical details to illustrate the ways in which her work and life were inextricably linked and to ignore details of her life would not allow for such intricate investigation of her work. It is also important to note some details about Oppermann due to the lack of existing research available to non-German readers.

Oppermann was born Regina Heine in Eutin on February 18th, 1940. Her father was a soldier who died during the Second World War, and as such she did not have the chance to know him. Her mother was a housewife, and after the death of Oppermann’s father, she remarried a judge. Oppermann’s life partner, Herbert Hossmann, revealed in an interview that her life at home was difficult and that her family showed her little

understanding [Verständnis], and as a schoolgirl she left the family home because she could no longer stand the confinement [Enge].⁴¹⁵ She studied graphics and painting at the Academy of Visual Arts, Hamburg, from 1962 to 1968; and then studied Philosophy from 1976 to 1978. She was married to Wolfgang Oppermann (1937-2001), a fellow artist, and together they had a son, Alexander (b. 1964) while Anna was still studying in Hamburg. The pair separated in 1977. In 1975, she met Herbert Hossmann, publisher and co-owner of the Lebeer-Hossmann Verlag; and from 1977 to her death in 1993, the two remained long-term life partners.

Her two significant relationships, the first with Wolfgang Oppermann and the second with Hossmann, were quite different. Wolfgang and she exhibited together, and their styles were quite similar in their use of bright colours and dynamic and surreal subject matter. The two would no doubt have vied for similar funding and exhibition opportunities, and while they may have exhibited together, the works do not seem to have been created collaboratively nor in harmony for the exhibitions. In Hossmann she found a different kind of relationship, he was a publisher, and not an artist—he was very supportive of her work, and helped her to publish one of the most significant pieces of literature on the artist. With Hossmann's assistance she authored the exhibition catalogue for the 1984 retrospective of her work in the Kunstverein in Hamburg and the Bonner Kunstverein. In this, she explores her works in her own words, and without any interference from outside sources (with exception to the organisers of the respective exhibitions). These texts allow any viewer to understand the working process of the artist. It exposes the great influence that philosophy had on Oppermann and makes apparent the connected, constellatory nature of her work, and gives a sense that perhaps these projects might never be finished.⁴¹⁶

Oppermann's early paintings, particularly those produced in her final year of art school, are bright and often feature images which allude (and some examples make explicit reference) to female genitalia, these images also often include her legs from

⁴¹⁵ Interview with Herbert Hossmann, Celle, 9.9.2016.

⁴¹⁶ The catalogue was titled: *Anna Oppermann. Ensembles 1968 bis 1984* (Hamburg und Brüssel: Edition Lebeer Hossmann, 1984). Also note that many of her Ensembles have long ranging dates of production.

her perspective looking down, as though she were at once sitter and artist. In one example, *Einzelwerk Karton 007* [Single Work, Carton 007] (ca. 1968) (Fig. 16) we see the artist's knees, bent in a sitting position; in front of her is a white table, atop which we see an enlarged slice of tomato which fills almost the entire area of the table top.⁴¹⁷ The tomato's seeds and hollow centre are exaggerated, and given texture and depth. It is offset by the obscured perspective of multiple dimensionality represented in a planar space: the walls and floors meet in an identical pattern, yet because of her use of lines, depth is created. The image is constructed almost entirely of lines, save for the table top which is opaque, giving this picture a technical or mathematical sense: exposing dimensionality and perspective.

However, upon closer inspection, we notice that the lines are not perfectly straight; they are drawn free-hand, adding a sense of the human or organic, and so redirecting our attention to the mutated tomato atop the table. The tomato's seeds are reminiscent of sperm, with large bulbous heads, and long thin tails which meet in the empty space at the centre of the tomato. The subject matter of this work seems to tap into the anxiety surrounding the struggle of women, and suggests Oppermann's own anxiety about her position within a domestic situation: the inclusion of the table dominated by the giant tomato, and the sperm-like shapes which consume the food through which sustenance and nourishment are invoked, suggesting her artistic career is being subjugated by domesticity and expectations antithetical to her own.

These works are difficult to define in terms of genre, some appear surrealist, others conceptual, often looking through "windows" into other worlds. Many of the works feature images of Oppermann, usually her legs or feet, perhaps a representation of an anxiety about mobility or confinement? One shows her in a seated position, not dissimilar to the perspective we see in *Einzelwerk Karton 0073*, another shows the bottom of her dress and pinafore or apron, suggesting a domestic situation (*Einzelwerk Karton 002*, ca. 1968), and in another, *Einzelwerk Karton 004* (1970), we can see another woman sitting at a table with her back to the artist. In a small cloud-shaped bubble at the bottom right of the canvas, Oppermann tells us that this is 'Housewife

⁴¹⁷ See *Frühwerk – Nr. 175b* (Early work – No. 175b), ca. 1968.

Lydia B. (47) sitting at the kitchen table after doing the washing-up'.⁴¹⁸ Her image is doubled in a 'transparent; outline, which opens the viewer's sight to see what is on the table; his outline acts in a similar way to the 'windows' in Oppermann's early works such as *Frühwerk – Nr. 370* and *Frühwerk – Nr. 371*. In these early works the two worlds, otherly and reality, encroach on each other; the drawn lines give way to formal discrepancies which allow the dark otherly-scape to overlap with the bright real-scape: a surrealist nightmare, exposing perhaps anxieties felt by Oppermann at the time of completing her art school training, raising a child, and maintaining her "domestic expectations."⁴¹⁹ The artworks she produced early in her career are not linked with Schwitters' in any of his many phases of production; but they are important to consider Oppermann's own position as an outsider, perhaps even to her own self, which might be understood to be in conflict given the social pressures imposed on women during the already fraught political time of the 1960s.

Oppermann's controlled graphic drawings and surreal works are in congruence with the restless and imminently revolutionary tones of 1968, around the time she had produced these early works. In 1966, the German economy suffered a recession, the first since the country's recovery post-1948. It seemed many had realised that the *Wirtschaftswunder* [economic miracle] of the past would not endure, and so change must be sought. Political and social unrest began in 1967—students were protesting what they saw as the bourgeois and Nazi legacy of the country (particularly in the appointment of Kurt Georg Kiesinger as Chancellor because of his active role in the Foreign Ministry during the Third Reich). In 1968, tensions deepened, and the protests and riots only became more frequent and more impassioned. On April 11, 1968, the leader of the Socialist Students Union [Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund] Rudi Dutschke was shot by a neo-Nazi in West Berlin.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ [1970, Hausfrau Lydia B. (47) nach dem abwaschen am Küchentisch sitzend.] (My translation)

⁴¹⁹ Mignon Nixon, in *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 2005), discusses the notion of motherhood and its compatibility with being an artist. She uses terms such as 'bad enough mother' and discusses maternity and fetishism and feminism. (pp. 79-82)

⁴²⁰ He survived the shot, however, suffered lasting brain injuries and died eleven years later, aged 39. It is interesting to note that the *Bild-Zeitung*, a tabloid newspaper, would often refer to Rudi Dutschke

The students' movement were dissatisfied with the status quo in Germany and its government's plans to limit the rights of migrants, and with what they saw as reduced human rights for workers, women, and children, particularly, and protests moved to challenge these issues. However, riots ensued after police were accused of being too forceful and quick to react. In addition to the rights of the German people, the students' movement showed solidarity with the Paris protestors and sympathised with the on-going campaign to end the war in Vietnam. Oppermann was a student in Hamburg, in 1967, not far from Berlin where most of these incidents occurred, and of course, the recourse of the May riots was immediately in her vicinity while in Paris from 1968 to 1969; and she no doubt would have found herself looking inwardly on the not too dissimilar situation in her home country. Therefore, we see the artist inserted into her early works. Perhaps, also, this chaos might explain the focus on the graphic aspects of her work and might also be considered as a method for regaining control through art. The artist's insertion of herself, or at least parts of her body, into her work suggest not only a need for reflexive art, but we see her struggle with her personal position in relation to the political goings on of her home and host countries. Not only is her position as a political individual, and her own country's political and social turmoil, drawn to our attention, but by painting herself into these works we see her position as woman as subject, woman as artist, and woman as object called into question. We might also see her grasping for control over personal anxieties caused by the unrest around her, revealing a tension between the personal and public; a tension which is continually at play in Oppermann's work.

On May 6th, in Paris, during the peace talks to end the Vietnam War, blood is shed as the students and workers' unions protest. It becomes a riot and thousands of lives are lost. Moreover, from September 1968 to September 1969, Oppermann was in Paris to complete a short residency funded by the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (The German Academic Exchange Service, or DAAD), a possible geographical coincidence, however, she would no doubt have felt the aftermath of the earlier

as "Red Rudi", insinuating that he was communist (or perhaps even Soviet) and therefore a threat to the country. Similarly, Rosa Luxembourg was dubbed "Red Rosa" and was killed by the German police, again, a result of the propagation of her status as a threat to the country.

violence resonating in the city. These restless times of the 1960s draw enduring parallels with the late 1910s and early 1920s, and the political unrest in particular; political, social and cultural upheavals of both historical periods, makes for an interesting comparison when considering the work of Schwitters and Oppermann. While Germany had been somewhat progressive with regard to women's rights, particularly in the wake of the Weimar Republic, seemingly enshrining parity in its constitution, it still fell short of meeting absolute equality. Oppermann herself felt this struggle well into her career, and many of her works deal with this personal-professional inequality and document the struggle of her female colleagues and compatriots, as well as her own, of being repressed by patriarchal systems. What at first might seem arbitrary, domestic, or banal – a tomato on a table – can be better understood through contextualisation via historical and biographical investigation. Oppermann's requirement for her viewer to be engaged in their surroundings is less obvious in her early works; however, in the later works and *Ensembles* this need for awareness is vital to understanding the themes that run through her large (physically and numerous) oeuvre. I will now discuss her *Ensembles* to ascertain the politicisation, also the material and methodological/formal connections between her works, as well as the thematic similarities which comprise her vast oeuvre and one in which has significant connections with one of Schwitters' most repeated themes.

Schwitters, Oppermann, and the Madonna

Umarmungen, Unerklärliches und eine Gedichtzeile von R.M.R [*Embraces, the Inexplicable and a Line of Poetry from R.M.R*; referred to hereafter as *Umarmungen*] (1977-1989) (Fig. 17) is a large Ensemble which comprises over one hundred fragments. This work has a strong theme of femaleness and femininity. Images of women are recurring: the viewer's attention is drawn to one small, bald, doll-like figure which is posed and re-positioned multiple times, always with an indifferent demeanour, across the work. In one iteration, she seems to be pinned to a flat surface (an operating table or a bed) and with a brown splash across her lap, perhaps a signification of her menstruation, of dried blood; or something more sinister, connoting themes of rape and abuse: actions of extreme dominance asserted in a

patriarchal society?⁴²¹ The image of the paper doll is an alarming one. Oppermann's use of the doll, a child's plaything, suggests that girls are taught from a young age to hide these aspects of their bodily function--in Julia Kristeva's terms the 'abject'--and that by painting a natural process on to a manufactured object the viewer is forced to confront their own preconceptions and discomforts with natural process and women's bodies. As previously discussed, the use of the doll among women in the avant-garde was a common practice (see Chapter 3) and Oppermann is no different when she emphasises the ridiculousness of hiding such facts simply because it is perceived as indecent.

Furthermore, Oppermann's paper dolls are bleeding, exposing their flesh, and being subjected to oppressive positioning; while Schwitters' paper doll—specifically, his *Mz 180 Figurine*—is the only woman in his oeuvre to appear whole, she is clothed, coy, and unexposed, and therefore is the perfect model for the traditional women. It is only upon closer inspection that one can see that she has been collaged from newspaper and magazine cuttings—and is therefore a product of modernity (specifically of an ideology of her day, which is represented by the newspaper), and so arguably antithetical to the traditional or accepted representation of woman.⁴²² The paper doll is not the only contiguity between the two artists: in opposition to these displays of indecency, and projections of uncleanness, is the representation of the Madonna.

In *Umarmungen*, the image of the Mother of God is repeatedly used. In a work, which, despite its title, is seemingly exploring notions of femininity, it is crucial that the inclusion of the Virgin Mary be explored. She stands in stark contrast to the image of the paper doll. It is suggested that the Mother of God remained a virgin, and thus her hymen was not split by a sexual act. She therefore represents the opposite to the blood-splattered crotch of the paper doll. The Madonna stands for purity and chastity, she

⁴²¹ For more on Chicago, and the cultural significations, perceptions, and societal issues regarding menstruation, see: J. Delaney, M. J. Lupton, and E. Toth. *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation*, (New York: EP Dutton and Co. Inc, 1976).

⁴²² See Chapter 2 on Schwitters' representation of women in a German context for further analysis, and the significance of the wholeness of *Mz. 180 Figurine*.

represents cleanliness, but also can be read as an image of oppression, a woman who was miraculously impregnated, by a male deity, without the act of sex ever being committed. However, we might also read this as a denial of pleasure, and therefore a reinforcement of women conceived of as property. The absence of the phallus is by default a deprivation of pleasure; hence the threat of the ‘lesbian existence’ outlined by Rich, and discussed earlier in this thesis. Furthermore, the depictions of the Madonna are line drawings carried out by the artist, she is in the iconic pose of holding the baby (the earliest depictions date to 2-3 B.C.), her head is covered for modesty, and her mantel drapes across her shoulders, and flows by her side also instating modesty.

She is depicted in the same way that the paper doll is; with child-like outline, very little detail and eyes fixed ahead. Perhaps the depictions of the Madonna and the paper doll are not as disconnected as at first it might appear; I want to suggest that they are not merely representations of binarised ideologies, but rather they are the same image: to consider that Oppermann may be challenging the notion of the women denied pleasure, and instead inflicts a reality on Mary, stripping her of her modesty, and exposing the (supposed unclean) truth of the female body. Moreover, the doll and the Madonna become part of the larger narrative being explored in the theatre of Oppermann’s Ensembles. The players on her stage interact and depend upon their setting to gain meaning through connections and disconnections with their environment. Oppermann’s actors are stripped of their usual signifiers of race and gender. This is done by the removal of hair, and covering of identifiable body parts—instead allusions are made to their gender, and as such, her spaces enact a queering of domesticity. The story of the Virgin Mary and the Immaculate Conception is queer in itself. The conventionality of the heteronormative family is broken down by the Virgin Mary’s impregnation by an othered body—a deity, an unseen, unknown, assumed-male figure—and by Jesus having two fathers and a mother.

Schwitters’ Madonnas are seemingly far less politicised, they are tools or foundations upon which to build his *Merz* aesthetic: in one example, *Mz 151. Wenzel Kind Madonna mit Pferd*, [Wenzel Child Madonna with Horse], 1921, the image of the Madonna is taken from a print of Raphael’s *Sistine Madonna and her Angels* (1512),

housed today in the permanent collection in the Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden, and it was here that Schwitters first experienced and became familiar with the iconography of the Virgin Mary.⁴²³ Schulz, in her short essay, discusses Schwitters' interest in the Madonna and proposes that 'Schwitters familiarity with the iconography of the Madonna was founded on his intensive study of the Old Masters in Dresden Art Gallery.'⁴²⁴

In another appropriation of the figure, she appears as a sculpture. *Madonna [1]*, at first does not appear to resemble the Madonna, and it is interesting to note that when a reproduction was first exhibited in 1958, it was given the abstract title *High Red Spot, Low Mushroom Column*.⁴²⁵ However, it becomes more evident in a photograph from 1936 taken by the artist's son Ernst, in which the sculpture casts a shadow on the wall which resembles the hooded Mary, head bowed in prayer.⁴²⁶ It seems therefore that the collaborative efforts between Schwitters and his son are an experimentation in form: the sculpture itself can easily be broken into geometric patterns, and Schwitters has highlighted the geometry by painting the circle at the top red, the base blue, the neck of his Madonna white, and the non-descript shape attached to the base brown.⁴²⁷ We might read the use of primary colours (except for brown) as a nod to his association with Theo van Doesburg, and his continued experimentation with Constructivism, however, these colours may have greater associations. The red of Mary's head may be indicative of the Holy Spirit, purported to have appeared above the heads of Jesus' disciples as a bright red flame (today, represented by the Pentecostal candle/flame), blessing each of them with the power to do God's will. The blue of the base represents the iconic lapis lazuli of the mantel worn by the Madonna, and so further invokes religious iconography. The Madonna is recognised as a symbol

⁴²³ Isabel Schulz, 'Old Masters'.

⁴²⁴ Schulz, 'Old Masters,' p.19.

⁴²⁵ Schulz, 'Old Masters,' p.20.

⁴²⁶ Both the sculpture itself and Ernst's photograph of it highlight the beauty that can be found in the simple object. Ernst Schwitters told Gwendolen Webster that the sculpture was made by tilting the arm of a chair ninety degrees and attaching it to a base. Webster told me that she asked her son, who is a furniture expert, and he told her that it was a possibility that the sculpture could have been produced in this fashion.

⁴²⁷ This analysis is based on the reproduction of *Madonna*, number 5, which is housed at the Sprengel Museum Hannover. The original photographs of the work are in black and white and the reproduction has been painted in a mix of white and primary colours.

of Christianity, but quite specifically of Catholicism. The Protestant faith, in which Schwitters had been raised, and for which Hannover was a stronghold at the time, does not recognise or glorify the Madonna in the same way. She is not a worshipped deity or an idol within the Protestant faith, and so it seems that this mystical (and mysterious) woman had captured the attention of Schwitters like so many artists who have preceded him.

Why was she so interesting to Schwitters? Was it her saintliness? Her motherhood? Was it that classical depictions showed her as a radiant, porcelain-skinned beauty? While perhaps Oppermann may have been combating the violence of men against women by inflicting her own violence on her paper doll, and, as I have argued, have viewed the Virgin Mary as a symbol of subjugation and oppression, one might also suggest that the Virgin Mary's power to command men and women to pray at her feet, to be genuflected upon, to be the centre of hope in an extremely masculine religion (God is gendered male, Jesus is a man, and the Holy Spirit, while usually in the form of a dove or flame, is often referred to as "He"), and thus offers an interesting and didactic other being who evokes fascination. The Madonna is the subject of works by some of Schwitters' other Dada colleagues: particularly, Francis Picabia and Max Ernst. Picabia's inkblot entitled *La Sainte Vierge* (1920) published in his short-lived Paris Dada magazine *391* is representative of the immaculate conception.⁴²⁸ Max Ernst's *Die Jungfrau züchtigt das Jesuskind vor drei Zeugen: André Breton, Paul Eluard und dem Maler* [The Virgin Chastising the Christ Child before Three Witnesses: André Breton, Paul Eluard and the Painter], 1926, shows the Madonna punishing an assumedly naughty Christ child (the Madonna's halo remains above her head, while Christ's is on the floor); adding to the absurdity of the moment, it is witnessed by two Surrealist artists and an unidentified painter. Both the sculpture itself and Ernst's photograph of it highlight the beauty that can be found in the simple object.

⁴²⁸ Elizabeth Legge, 'Thirteen Ways of looking at a virgin: Francis Picabia's *La Sainte Vierge*,' *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, Vol. 12, Iss. 2 (1996), pp. 218-242; David Hopkins, 'Questioning Dada's potency: Picabia's 'La Sainte Vierge' and the dialogue with Duchamp,' *Art History*, Vol. 15, Iss. 3, pp. 317-333.

Ernst Schwitters suggested to Gwendolen Webster that the sculpture was made by tilting the arm of a chair ninety degrees and attaching it to a base.⁴²⁹

The Madonna is obscured by abstract fragments in another two appropriations of her image: *Untitled (The Holy Family)*, 1941/42 and *Untitled (With Madonna and Angels)*, 1947. However, these two collages are unlike *Mz. 155* as instead of covering the Virgin's face with an image of a 'bob-haired "New Woman"'⁴³⁰— perhaps unveiling a long lineage of women who contravene accepted notions of femininity, as understood through the Madonna's bearing of a child by unconventional means, and the New Woman's transformation of fashion and social status—the Madonna's face remains unchanged. She stares out to the viewer from behind the square and oblong fragments which surround her.

Appropriating Franz (von) Defregger's *Die Heilige Familie*, and Sandro Boticelli's *Madonna with Child and Singing Angels*, 1477, these images act as the foundation for his Merz aesthetic. By altering the surroundings of the Virgin Mary and not her image itself, Schwitters exposes a history of women in portraiture, and as previously discussed in relation to his return to the figurative in the early days of his exile, these realistic depictions trace the histories of the depictions of women, which are further explored in his reconfigurations of the Maria, and her inclusion in his collages alludes to the shifts in attitudes and representations of the female image. Schwitters' study of the Madonna seems to have greatly influenced his work: Schulz suggests in her essay that he painted his wife Helma in poses and lights akin to the portraits of the Virgin Mary.⁴³¹ This may explain another Madonna who appears in Schwitters' oeuvre, although she is not *the* Madonna.

In his little hut, named the *Merzhytta*, on the Norwegian island of Hjertøya, the entrance to and hallway of which was its own Merz masterpiece—collaged from ceiling to floor, covered in a variety of typographical, textual, and pictorial fragments—has now largely been weathered, faded and destroyed, with exception to

⁴²⁹ My thanks to Gwendolen Webster for sharing this story with me. Ernst Schwitters told her this story when she interviewed him during her research for her biography of Kurt Schwitters.

⁴³⁰ Schulz, 'Old Masters,' p.21.

⁴³¹ Schulz, 'Old Masters,' p.19.

one section which has come to be called his *Hjertøy Madonna* (Fig. 19). The woman's face at the centre of this large collage remains largely unobscured by the fragments which surround it, and while not the face of the Virgin Mother, the pose of the sitter, the light, style of painting and the sitter's dress, all allude to a Madonna-like figure. Her presentation is serene, beautiful, and her features porcelain, enlarged red lips, are the only hint of immodesty. Karin Hellandsjø, who has worked tirelessly for the past five years with a team of experts to excavate and reassemble the ruined remains of the Merz hut, also searched to find the source of this Madonna. She discovered that the

...picture is a reproduction of a painting, and at the bottom one can almost make out the artist's name, but not quite. Investigations have arrived at the Flemish Renaissance painter Bernard van Orley (1488-1541), and the woman he has portrayed is Margaret of Austria (1480-1530) in a painting from c.1518, van Orley painted no fewer than seven versions of this motif, one of which – probably this one – is to be found in Le Musée municipal de Bourgen-Bresse, where Margaret of Austria was buried.⁴³²

Margaret of Austria was a formidable woman, who married three times, suffered the pain of the loss of a daughter, born stillborn, and during her third marriage took control of her husband's administrative duties. She spoke French, Latin and Castilian (Spanish). And after the death of her brother John, she served as a guardian to his children and was therefore ruler of the Netherlands until Charles (her nephew, who would become Emperor Charles) took the throne. Furthermore, she was a great patron of the arts, and her portrait painted by van Orley was printed on the verso of the 500 Belgian Franc note (2 July 1962) and on the recto of the note, a portrait of van Orley can be seen.⁴³³ Yet another example of the strong and independent women whom Schwitters so often favoured. There is no certainty that Schwitters would have been aware of Margaret of Austria's history, but one might imagine that if he was, he chose her image because of it, and not in spite of it. Moreover, that this formidable woman stands at the forefront of the makeshift domestic space which Schwitters, his wife and

⁴³² Karin Hellandsjø, *Ultima Thule*, p.176.

⁴³³ Katrien Costermans, 'Margaret of Austria, a woman who managed to play a political role,' *National Bank of Belgium Museum*, May 10, 2010. <http://www.nbbmuseum.be/en/2010/05/margaret.htm>. Accessed: 27.10.16.

son, inhabited, is most interesting; that her image has withstood the test of time and weather is serendipitous.

Schwitters' collages straddle the boundary between planar and multidimensional, using a mix of paper and three-dimensional objects to build his pictures. However, he went further and physically altered the shape of his home/studio in the family home at Waldhausenstraße 5, in Hannover. This space became known as his *Merzbau* [Merz construction/building]. It took up residence in the spare rooms, attic and cellar of his large semi-detached house in the suburbs of Hannover, and was lost to Allied air raids in 1944. All that exists are a few testimonies, 6 professional photographs taken by photographer Wilhelm Redemann, and a few photographs taken by friends of the Schwitters family, which merely detail their favoured aspects of the artwork. The existing research on the *Merzbau* is exhaustive, with varying theories of how, why and with what materials had been used in its construction. There are also differing opinions on the date at which construction began. It was the prevailing thought that the building of his atelier-cum-artwork was begun in the early twenties, however, after detailed investigation, using the letters sent to friends and colleagues by Schwitters and his wife, Helma, Megan Luke posited that it had been as late as 1930.⁴³⁴ While the structure was lost, Peter Bissegger's reconstruction at the Sprengel Museum gives its viewer a sense of its architectural merit. The constructivist columns, plinths, and façading which Schwitters has so carefully devised, is, in itself, a sight to behold. However, closer attention and a viewing of some photographs from private collections show that it was not as cleanly abstract as it might first appear. Embedded within the walls and structures were bits of collages, covered up by the much sleeker forms and lines created in the Constructivist vein; any permitted visitor would also have found a quite eclectic collection of grottoes, filled with mementos of artist-friends, and a sculpture with a collaged base, and topped with the death mask of Schwitters' and Helma's first-born son, Gerd.

It seems then, that the space which inhabited these stand-alone objects before they were covered by the sweeping lines of the 'new' *Merzbau* might not only suggest a

⁴³⁴ Luke, *Space, Image, Exile*, p. 93.

manipulation of the physical space, but also of the space as it was perceived by visitors. The room changes its very definition, shedding its role as a room for living, transitioning through and beyond a space for working, and becoming a room for viewing. Giving way to an undefined status, of being a hybrid form of living space-studio-artwork-museum. Schwitters' *Merzbau* was designed to be explored, to be walked around in, and to be experienced. Accounts of the *Merzbau*, though few, suggest that it was a sensory experience: it changed the physical space by lowering parts of the ceiling, making the walls closer together, placing immovable obstacles in the path of the visitor. If Peter Bissegger's reconstruction is to be taken as an example, the space is closed in and the walls protrude and jut out at various points; one has to move in certain ways in order to experience and see all of the different perspectives and components of the work. In some parts, one has to crouch down, or stand on their toes to see the points which are hidden just out of sight. The body becomes part of the work.

While Oppermann's works are more static, the need to contort the body and continually change perspective is no less prevalent. Although one cannot physically step into her works, at least not while they are presented in a museum environment, the desire to get close and read the tiny newspaper articles, and to see the miniscule sculptures and reproductions in drawings and photographs is, at points, overwhelming. Upon viewing *Umarmungen, Unerklärliches und eine Gedichtzeile von R.M.R* (1977-1989), I found myself on my knees, squinting my eyes, trying to read an article entitled, 'Ein Mädchen aus gutem Haus' ['A young girl from a good home'].⁴³⁵ Oppermann's use of textual and visual components draws intrigue from the viewer: in the first instance one can see only the enlarged images, which make up the sides of her three-sided installation (they are usually presented in the corner of a gallery, so as to become part of the existing structure). It becomes apparent upon closer inspection that these images are scaled up photographs, printed onto canvas, of the smaller components which lie at the centre of the work. The multiple re-imaginings of these

⁴³⁵ This piece was part of the exhibition *130% Sprengel* held at Sprengel Museum, Hannover, from 5.6.16 to 29.1.17. It is part of the Sprengel's permanent collection, and was installed specially as part of the re-opening of the museum. I viewed the piece on 17.6.16.

components on different scales, and in different materials, is perhaps Oppermann's way of making her process part of the final piece. The sketch, the model, the line drawing, the mock-ups, normally thrown away, or embedded under layers of paint, are celebrated in Oppermann's inclusion of these processes in her final work.

In the same way Schwitters leaves nails and tacks on show, and in one particular piece, *c. 57 Smiling Through* (1946), one can see his notes on the canvas as part of the final work. I suggest this a technique used in breaking the illusion that these "things" have anything to do with the outside world. Analysis of Schwitters' work relies on knowledge *a priori*. That is, the sources of the texts, images, and often their connectedness are not discussed. In some cases, this is a result of the way in which Schwitters' obfuscates some fragments, rendering sense or the semantic field (visually and linguistically) unintelligible. Therefore, I believe this is the reason many scholarly accounts of Schwitters' work have focused intently on the form and materiality of the collages, rather than taking account of their relationships to the external sources and influences. This, coupled with blind faith in the artist's own words, has led to what I believe are limited readings of Schwitters' politically aware and active works of art. Oppermann's work makes so many internal references that one begins to forget the newspaper clippings, or photographs had lives before her manipulation of the materials. In *Umarmungen*, Oppermann even inserts herself: a photograph of the artist looking at her own work can be seen. This internalisation of herself in the work is a signal to the private presented to the public and despite the homage to Rainer Maria Rilke (R. M. R.) in the title, her inclusion of herself, and the fact that the majority of the newspaper clippings, photographs and other materials relate to women and women's issues, highlights, I think, her authorial presence.

Merzbauten and Ensembles

In both Schwitters' *Merzbau* and Oppermann's *Ensembles*, the notion of space is particularly important. In the way that Schwitters' *Merzbau* becomes a kind of museum of its own whereby one is invited to explore and wander around the space; Oppermann's somehow is equally inviting, however, one cannot step into her works and explore them in the same way. Martin Warnke, Professor of Digital Media and

Culture Information at the University of Leuphana, Lüneberg, has stated that Oppermann always wanted her viewers to be able to step into the works. In the early 1990s, Warnke and Carmen Wedemeyer, with the assistance of Oppermann, devised a platform in which they could allow viewers to step into the works and explore them.⁴³⁶ This required uploading and reconstructing each Ensemble in a digital format.

They created a vast archive for Oppermann's work which allowed the viewer to select an Ensemble, and then to focus on individual aspects, to zoom in and see the tiny details, or to have a large-scale image of the whole piece. The archive was intended to bridge the spatial alienation that Oppermann had invented, and it was her own idea to do this. She saw the new and rapid development of the Internet as the perfect platform in which to make her work more accessible and in a sense to enliven the experience of the work. Warnke stated that this work was designed on the principle of complex systems network theory, particularly internet networks, of which Warnke is a luminary and pioneer, and he suggests that Oppermann's Ensembles can be understood through mathematical equations.⁴³⁷ In a short essay, Wedemeyer and Warnke state:

In line with Niklas Luhmann's theoretical systematic communication model, the self-referential system of the Ensemble purposefully lets the environment disrupt its artistic practice in order to be able to use the available operations to react to itself: that is, to produce meaning using a structural change, such as an addition, a representation or a reorganisation.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ The Hyper Image Reader designed by Warnke, Wedemeyer and Christian Terstegge can be viewed here: http://www.uni-lueneburg.de/hyperimage/HI_Goethe/#wstart1_en/ and is available in both English and German.

⁴³⁷ Warnke published the text *Theorien des Internet zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junis, 2011) which introduces the basic notions of the network, of which there are multiple definitions which apply to various disciplines and models, but explores the computational methods by which internet networks are built. This theory is a branch of applied mathematics and as such requires a understanding of the subject (each network is determined by an equation).

⁴³⁸ Carmen Wedemeyer and Martin Warnke, 'Die Selbst-Archive der Anna Oppermann,' pp. 383-392; p.388.

http://opus.unilueneburg.de/opus/volltexte/2007/11023/pdf/Die_Selbst_Archive_der_Anna_Opperma_nn.pdf.

[Analog zum systemtheoretischen Modell der Kommunikation Niklas Luhmanns ließ sich das selbstreferenzielle System »Ensemble« durch seine Umwelt – absichtsvoll als künstlerische Praxis – »stören«, um darauf mit den Operationen auf sich selbst zu reagieren, die ihm zur Verfügung stehen:

Oppermann's Ensembles are distinct from each other in that they all approach slightly different subjects, yet are somehow connected by their form, process, and methodology. While the Ensembles might be interconnected, they are of course valuable as stand-alone pieces; and Oppermann's own attempts to reject such associations between her own work and Schwitters' is perhaps not unwarranted. The Merzbau in Hannover, his studio and hut in Norway, and the incomplete barn in England have been understood as a network or extension of the initial Merz project. Therefore, it is perhaps more useful to consider Oppermann's works not in connection to Schwitters' most famous Hannover Merzbau, but rather a relatively lesser known work which has survived this early iteration of his architectural experimentation.

In 1932, before emigrating to Norway, Schwitters took out a ninety-nine-year lease on a little cottage on the island of Hjertøya, an island located in Moldefjord. The little cottage, in which he lived and worked, became a space of refuge and sanction during his holidays and eventually in his exile. He began to design a space which shared features with his Hannover *Merzbau*: utilising façades and cornicing; invoking the constructivist architecture and favouring of primary colours which had been the focal point of his once home. However, this was not the only 'Merzbau' he developed.⁴³⁹ In Lysaker, an area in the Bærum municipality, bordering Oslo, he built his *Haus am Bakken*, or the House on the Slope.⁴⁴⁰ This Merzbau was designed as a small portable atelier: an extension to the existing property he was currently renting. It seems perhaps that in a longing for his Hannover Merzbau, he built his little *Haus am Bakken*; a space/sculpture which could easily be transported and reassembled. Unfortunately, this little house no longer exists: it was destroyed by fire in 1951, and was never documented. At the same time as this little house was being built, Schwitters was constructing the interior of his small house on Hjertøya. The little disused stone hut was too small for the six-foot-something artist to stand up straight in, and its floor plan

mit einer Hinzunahme, einer Abbildung, einer Reorganisation, kurz einer Strukturveränderung, mit Anschluss an weitere Kommunikation, die dadurch Sinn produziert.] With thanks to Oona Lochner for her translation.

⁴³⁹ There have been discussions as to whether or not the Norwegian contingents of his architectural series should be classified as *Merzbauten* on account of Schwitters not using the term "Merz" at this time. However, these debates are numerous and unratiied; and for the purposes of my own discussion, I consider them as *Merzbauten* and therefore will proceed my discussion thus.

⁴⁴⁰ Luke, *Space, Image, Exile*, p. 140.

would show one single room. By the time Schwitters had 'completed' his construction, he had divided his one-room hut, creating a hallway and small living space. In the compact living room, he had dug the floor out to provide room in which one could stand, adding a small kitchen, three bunk beds, and a potato cellar, attempting to make the space liveable. However, a stone hut is not a home, and like his Hannover *Merzbau* he began to sculpt his constructivist architecture into the corners of the room, cornicing the space with wooden structures, and painting them in primary colours gave a sense of reminiscence on, perhaps even an extension of, his former home in Hannover.

Since Schwitters' departure from the island in 1939, the hut lay open and was played in by local children and visitors to the island, explored, pillaged, and became weather worn. Today, his little hut stands embedded in the land, with moss- and weed-covered roof, now locked to the public. The interior has been removed and, with great care, restored, and reconstructed in a modified frame which simulates the exterior of the Merz hut, and is on permanent display at the Romsdalsmuseet, in Molde.⁴⁴¹ In a sense, his idea of a movable architecture was realised, just not for him to see. Moreover, the process of collecting and assembling has been continued in this project, the realisation of the reconstruction was very much like a jigsaw; and Hellandsjø and team worked tirelessly to reconstruct what is quite possibly his largest surviving collage work. The hallway/entrance to the small hut was entirely collaged and featured most prominently his aforementioned Hjertøy-Madonna.

If then, we consider the project of the Lysaker and Hjertøya houses alongside Oppermann's *Ensembles* we may begin to understand the importance of these forgotten and neglected works and their significance for the development of contemporary art.⁴⁴² While Schwitters' collages, typographical works, sculpture, and Hannover Merzbau were all known to Anna Oppermann, Schwitters was largely forgotten until Werner Schmalenbach's exhibition in 1956 installed in the Kestner

⁴⁴¹ A second reconstructed model of the Merz hut interior is on display at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo, Norway.

⁴⁴² There is no visual evidence for the Lysaker property, except floor plans of the building, and therefore my ensuing discussion will focus on the hut on Hjertøya in its comparison of Oppermann's *Ensembles* and Schwitters' *Merz hut*.

Gesellschaft Hannover, and the publication which accompanied it was the first major exploration of the artist's work.⁴⁴³ The exhibition catalogue was later translated into English, further exposing Schwitters' art without Germany.⁴⁴⁴ One might imagine that she at least knew of the exhibition, being an art student at the time, or that she perhaps read the exhibition catalogue. Schmalenbach's investigation is meticulous, and includes a survey of all aspects of Schwitters' works: detailing his collages, sculpture, drawings, typography, poetry and *Merzbauten*. Still, regardless of whether Oppermann read this volume or not, or irrespective of her seeing the exhibition, Oppermann's construction of her Ensembles can be linked with and compared to Schwitters' Hjertøya Merzbau. Both structures relied heavily on wooden frames, built into the spaces they occupied; both utilise the found objects from their surroundings; both were designed to be dismantled and rebuilt; and both blur stylistic and formal boundaries. Moreover, and somewhat coincidentally, Oppermann's little studio in Celle was built by the apprentice to Otto Haesler, a friend of Schwitters.⁴⁴⁵

However, this connection made between Schwitters and Oppermann is tenuous, and I believe entirely imagined by Hossmann.⁴⁴⁶ Furthermore, Hossmann has suggested that perhaps the similarities between the two are not as striking as they might first appear:

...critics have seldom neglected to point out the relationship between the art of Anna Oppermann and that of Kurt Schwitters, frequently describing her ensembles as collages transported into three-dimensional space, as sequels to the *Merzbau* (*merz building*). Again, Anna resolutely denied any connection, saying 'the basic differences predominate.'⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ Herbert Hossmann revealed that Anna had, in her personal library, books on Kurt Schwitters. These included the exhibition catalogues: *Kurt Schwitters 1887-1948. Ausstellung zum 99. Geburtstag* [Kurt Schwitters, 1887-1948: An Exhibition on his 99th Birthday], Sprengel Museum Hannover (1986), and *Kurt Schwitters*, Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (1971); and Joachim Büchner, *Kurt Schwitters* (Hannover: 1987). E-mail correspondence, 2.2.17.

⁴⁴⁴ Gwendolen Webster has suggested that this translation is poor, however this does not detract from the importance of exposure.

⁴⁴⁵ Celle is located approximately 23 miles (37 km) north-west of Hannover. Herbert Hossmann, 'Strange Coincidences: On the Reinstallation of the Ensemble *Paradoxical Intentions* in Celle Palace' (trans. Tom Morrison) [unpaginated].

⁴⁴⁶ That is, the importance of the link between the two is imagined; Hossmann has evidence that the studio was indeed built by the assistant to Otto Haesler.

⁴⁴⁷ Hossmann, 'Strange Coincidences.'

What these basic differences are is a mystery to the reader of Hossmann's testimony; however, comparing analyses of the works separately from each other, and taking account of the differences as Oppermann saw them, one might see more similarities than differences. Ute Vorkoerper, on Oppermann's *Ensembles*, writes: '[t]he disconcerted eye takes in the profusion of colours and forms, the confusing flood of images and motifs, objects, drawings, photographs and texts flowing over the floor, up the walls, of the space.'⁴⁴⁸ She continues her analysis by saying, '[a] single ensemble includes not only virtually the full range of media and genres – from found object, drawing, painting, photograph, writing to sculpture and architecture – but also conveys a sweeping diversity of styles.' And further supports her argument of multimedia and multidisciplined formulation by writing, 'stylistic pluralism is the declared hallmark, and not just a visible characteristic, of ensemble-making.' Ines Linder concurs when she writes:

Anna Oppermann's ensembles are multiperspectival. The interplay of texts, pictures and emblems seeks a viewer prepared to surrender the safe distance of aesthetic contemplation. A viewpoint from which "the whole" could be surveyed does not exist. Once the spectator becomes involved in the rhythmic structure of repetitions, excerpts, enlargements and diminution's [sic], the changes from text to image and vice-versa, he or she has to engage in a direct, physical encounter with the rhythm of opposing perspectives – for example, near and far, large and small, drawing and writing, photography and painting.⁴⁴⁹

If Vorkoerper's and Lindner's words are a summation of the basic differences, then it is hard to contest the likeness and parallels drawn between Schwitters' and Oppermann's work. Multiperspectivism, the use of multiple mediums and multimedia, multidisciplinary, and the general unfixity of the status of the work, are defining characters of both artists' explorations of form, style, boundaries between mediums, and their manipulation of or shifting of the purpose of a space, all point to

⁴⁴⁸ Ute Vorkoerper, 'To Be Continued: Anna Oppermann's Paths of Perception and Understanding' [unpaginated].

⁴⁴⁹ Ines Lindner, 'The Paradox and Other Fuses: On transfigurative structures in Anna Oppermann's ensembles Paradoxical Intentions' (trans. Bernice Murphy) [unpaginated].

a shared interest in the advancement of art, before the more defined discipline of “installation art”.

Like Schwitters’ *Merzbauten*, Oppermann’s *Ensembles* are designed to be explored and manoeuvred within and around—they not only physically alter the space but also the viewing experience. Oppermann’s work, while only vaguely recognised by some, has altered interpretations and art historical understandings of not only installation art, but also artistic process, and the role of the gallerist curator.⁴⁵⁰ Ute Vorkoeper, who is largely regarded as the leading figure on Oppermann, has suggested that the installation of Oppermann’s work requires meticulous, even scientific, attention to detail, and is somewhat prescriptive in her views on how these works should be installed.⁴⁵¹ Schwitters’ *Merzbauten* have been understood in terms of architecture, installation art, and even environmental art; and as prototypes of the latter two forms.⁴⁵²

I have chosen to connect Schwitters’ and Oppermann’s work because for all that ‘the basic differences predominate’, the similarities are overwhelming. It has often been read as a negative connotation, not least by Oppermann herself, that her work has been connected to Schwitters’, which alongside a consideration of Mira Schor’s proposal of a matrilineage is a problematic figuration of her work in the context of a feminist reading. However, that both artists’ installatory experiments are connected to the domestic sphere connects them in a way which has heretofore been undiscussed. Furthermore, by discussing Schwitters’ link to Oppermann we might consider the

⁴⁵⁰ Until her death, Oppermann personally reinstalled all her *Ensembles*; after her death, this process was taken up by Herbert Hossmann and more recently Ute Vorkoeper has been involved in this process. Galerie Barbara Thumm, which represents the artist’s estate, is in the process of managing and creating a database of Oppermann’s *Ensembles* which will aid curators in the painstaking task of installing Oppermann’s works.

⁴⁵¹ Ute Vorkoeper, ‘To Be Continued’.

⁴⁵² For full discussions of these distinctions, see Gwendolen Webster’s PhD Dissertation (unpublished but available for download, 2007), Gamard, *Kurt Schwitters’ Merzbau* (2000), and most recently, Luke, *Kurt Schwitters: Space Image Exile*, 2014. ⁴⁴⁴ Luke, *Space, Image, Exile*, p.125. It should be noted that there are factual errors present in Gamard’s account of the Merzbau, particularly pertaining to the dates of production. Webster’s account is extremely detailed and accurate. Luke’s scholarship reveals a new timeline for the making of the *Merzbau*.

legacies of Schwitters' work as more than a formal antecedent to the highly political works of art outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

However, to reduce either Schwitters' or Oppermann's works to any singular classification would devalue the intrigue and importance of both artists' genre-defying artworks. Instead, I wish to consider the development of the *Merzbauten* in Luke's terms, and adopt this thinking and apply it to Oppermann's *Ensembles*. Luke writes that the Merzbau is 'characterised by Schwitters' growing ability to think of space sculpturally rather than as something empty and enclosed.'⁴⁴⁴ Although Oppermann's works are less contained than Schwitters', they are no less reliant on a manipulation of space. In Schwitters' case the family home is his chosen canvas – for Oppermann, it is the more traditional gallery space; however, either artist's art could be installed independently of their original environments, and in doing so, it may proffer new and more diverse interpretations of already obscure and multivalent forms. Oppermann references her own manipulation of space in one of her *Ensembles*. In *MKÜVO. Macht Kleine Überschaubare Verkaufliche Objekte* (1979-1992) [MKÜVO: Make Small Easy Saleable Objects] (Fig. 18) presents itself, at first glance, as any other *Ensemble* by Oppermann.⁴⁵³ The inclusion of standalone 'cabinets' in which to present these small saleable objects to which the title refers, appears as a hybrid department store-gallery. This seems to be a commentary not only on the state of the art market—Oppermann's works are extremely large, and are not suitable for display in private collections—but also on the shifting role of the gallery. She constructs an artwork which not only manipulates the viewer's experience of the gallery space, but also raises questions as to the purpose of the gallery and can be read as an indictment of the ever-fickle art market. Thus, Oppermann's work challenges not only the physical space, but the conceptual construction of these exhibition spaces.

Oppermann's reconfiguration of a space might be considered a proto-type of installation art. While the work is not 'site-specific' (unlike Schwitters' *Merzbau*), its ability to redefine or reorient a space's purpose, as well as to reinvent the ways in

⁴⁵³ It should be noted that "überschaubar[e]" can also be translated to mean "manageable" or "accessible".

which a viewer reads the work, is indicative of the shift in ways in which people were forced to move around their environments.⁴⁵⁴ It is indicative of the social and political changes of the 1980s, of the segregation of the East and West of Germany which impeded travel between the sides of the same country, separated families, created chasms in cultural and social difference, as well as political. Oppermann's work was displayed on both sides of the GDR, and her own understanding of the predicament (born, studying, living, and working in the West) are reflected in her use of space. As I have argued in this chapter Schwitters similarly redefines space in his reconstruction of the interior of his family home. This shift in function from living space to gallery or installation, undermines the value of the family home, and thus redefines domestic tradition. While Schwitters' works are less movable than Oppermann's and therefore the configurations and contexts are more rigidly defined, the similarities between the two and their function is more evident than some critics would have previously suggested; and these similarities extend far beyond the merely aesthetic similarities in a redefinition of the collage form, and the hybridisation of plastic and planar arts.

This chapter began by considering more traditional legacies of Schwitters and Dada, and used Robert Rauschenberg as its example, drawing on Rauschenberg's self-acknowledged formal inheritance through Schwitters' collage methods and use of found objects. Moreover, Rauschenberg's interrogation and re-use of the mass media detritus during periods when mass culture and its consumerist/capitalist function were integral to the shaping of western cultures, is also similar to how this thesis has read Schwitters' collages, with close analysis of those which feature women. It has also sought to reapply theories surrounding legacy, the problems inherent in both the idea of a legacy and the discourses of legacies which are generally male-centric and heteronormative. In an attempt to reposition the androcentric discourses of legacy and lineage, Mira Schor's idea of 'matrilineage' is taken into consideration and explored. However, equally as complicated as traditional definitions of legacy and lineage, Schor's essay on the subject struggles to escape the discourse of heteronormativity.

⁴⁵⁴ One need only consult the many photographs taken post-1945 of cities and towns, entirely destroyed and landscapes of rubble. In these images, one can see that a person's physical geography is changed, and thus the way in which one moves around is also altered or impeded.

This is further complicated by the exclusionary nature of any lineage. It is thus, I argue for notions of antilegacy and as such explore Oppermann's refusal of claims that her work was derivative of Schwitters'. Schwitters' and Oppermann's oeuvres are connected and disconnected by their differences. Oppermann's formal principal of an installation-collage-assemblage which she renamed *Ensembles* and her creation of an analogue network is likened to Schwitters' hybrid construction in his home which contained its own network of art by and trinkets from his friends, fellow artists and patrons. Instead of discussing, as scholars have done previously, the formal similarities between Schwitters' and Oppermann's works, this chapter considered the thematic explorations such as womanhood and motherhood (through the Madonna). Moreover, the spatial reconfigurations enacted by both Oppermann's *Ensembles* and Schwitters' *Merzbauten*, as well as their potential to redefine domestic space, and their manipulation or unsettling of the definitions between public and private spheres, show clear expressions of feminist intent in both artists' constructions.

ALTERNATIVES ENVISAGED: A CONCLUSION/REFLECTION

The title of this thesis was borrowed from an idea set forth by the ‘dance-choreographer’ Kenneth King. King’s essay on ‘Dreams and Collage’ (1997) attempts to configure the uncanny recollection of dreams through the lens of collage. While his essay is concerned with dreams and Freudian/psychoanalytical analysis, he views the collage as transformative, subversive, and as a form which harbours the power to change identity, place, space, and to reinvent. He writes:

Collage, now a given, is actually one of the most comprehensively transforming inventions of mankind, one that became an official genre at the turn of the twentieth century, first invented by artists, then usurped and coopted by advertising, television and cyberography.⁴⁵⁵

King’s recognition of the collage as a formal product of the twentieth century is not an uncommon historicisation of the form. In this application of the collage, one is reminded of the Dada collages, assemblages and photomontages which severely criticised the political, social, and cultural *Zeitgeist* of the late 1910s and early 1920s. King further examines the execution of collage, and argues that it allows artists to ‘reposition, overlay, supra- and super(im)pose different orders and inventories of imagery, reconfigure constellations of perceptual elements, and envisage alternatives, options, connective matrices and compositional possibilities between atypical categories, happenstances, events, eras, topologies, disciplines, systems and worlds.’⁴⁵⁶ King’s summation of the power of the collage not only highlights the form’s enduring success as an art form, but also as a political form. Its ability to hybridise seemingly unconnected forms, media, and fragments (along with all of the other forms and subjects King posits) has been the impetus for my approaching Schwitters’ collages in this way, and thus I have examined the dissonant fragments presented by Schwitters—previously read as randomly selected or composite by chance—and have used perceptions of Schwitters’ seemingly misogynist attitudes

⁴⁵⁵ Kenneth King, ‘Dreams and Collage’ (1997), *Writing in Motion: Body—Language— Technology* (Midtown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), pp. 97-110; p. 99.

⁴⁵⁶ King, ‘Dreams’, p. 99.

towards women and offset these by examining the potential for a (proto-)feminist perspective in his collages.

Consideration of Schwitters' works as feminist has been neglected, although not wholly ignored. The most detailed analysis of his works and their relation to femininity, femaleness and feminism is Dorothea Dietrich's essay, in a volume addressing women in the avant-garde, and a chapter in her monograph on Schwitters. I have drawn on these heavily in the opening chapters of the thesis as a way of drawing out the problems which have been set forth by scholars and to highlight perhaps a starting point for future scholars to change the current trend of ignoring or bypassing the feminist politics evident in Schwitters' work. Dietrich's work takes account of the formal and aesthetic qualities which she views as borderline misogynistic, and focuses on his poem, 'An Anna Blume', homing in on the German original text, and paying little attention to the (first) English translation, which was completed by a woman (all other translations of 'An Anna Blume' were produced by men). She also does not fully explore the mechanisation of the body outside of the context of discourses concerned with sexualisation of the female body, and thus taints any readings of his famous Anna Blume character. Other scholars such as Michael Ehrloff and Isabel Schulz have briefly discussed Schwitters' complex and sometimes complicated professional and personal relationships with women. Ehrloff's accounts of the images of women in Schwitters' collages are too brief to be considered as any substantial contribution, and in some cases do not present any evidence, but simply opinions. Schulz's short essay on Schwitters' *Freundinnen* [female friends] details his many professional relationships with women: she lists artists such as Ella Bergman-Michel, Hannah Höch and Lucy Hillebrand, among others. She focuses predominantly on how they met and how they were involved with each other (if they collaborated or not), but does not make a statement as to whether or not Schwitters was supportive of these women, nor if the relationships were mutually beneficial. In the cases of Ehrloff and Schulz, the focus is predominantly on biographical details. One such work which detaches itself from a purely biographical assimilation of Schwitters and women artists is Stina Barcha's dissertation. In this she discusses the mutually beneficial relationship between Schwitters and Hannah Höch. She focuses not only on the personal support

the two friends offered to each other, but also discusses in detail the professional support they offered one another; and even shows that the two often collaborated. Such an approach offers a much broader context within which to discuss Schwitters' complex relationship to women, and removes the sometimes unsavoury biographical details raised by scholars such as Dietrich, Gwendolen Webster, and Götz-Lothar Darsow, much of which is based on perceived poor treatment of his wife, his affairs, and his penchant for younger women.

The rationale for discussing Schwitters' work in a broader context was in trying to reconcile the radical politics explored in Schwitters' work with the political climate in which he lived which had largely been overlooked: themes of women's rights and the representation of the women had been all but ignored. In the artist's biography, women have been presented as secondary to his own progress, and narratives of Schwitters' philandering have dominated descriptions of these relationships, thus apparently rendering him incapable of representing women in a positive way, or exploring feminist ideologies in his works. Therefore, this thesis explored the perspective that his work might be considered as feminist in its approach, particularly through the use of female imagery, textual fragments which mentioned women, or were presenting ideologies which shared the language of the anti-women's movements and overtly misogynistic politics of the time. In analysing these fragments and their interaction on the canvas, it seemed possible to explore the politics of the day, and by presenting this alongside evidence of the concentration of women's movements and groups which originated or operated in Hannover from the mid-1800s and into the first half of the 1900s with varying degrees of success. In exploring these movements and their prevalence in the city, I suggested that Schwitters must have been aware of their successes and failures, and so would have been conscious of the causes for which they were fighting.

However, it seemed more appropriate to explore the use of collage more generally as a political, and more specifically, as a feminist tool of expression before engaging in discussions of Hannover and Schwitters' use of the mode. Feminist theories and histories have themselves been fragmented and divided by changing values. Such

challenges to feminist thinking stem from intersections of alternative identities which shifted the boundaries of the female/feminine identity; accentuated or further complicated by shifts in male/masculine identities. Women's studies have contemplated and battled with the everchanging social boundaries of the feminist ideal. Therefore, it is in a hybridisation of feminist and queer theories that this thesis finds its grounding—particularly in points made by Halberstam about notions of 'unbecoming' woman and the breakdown of identity through an un-tracing of lineages of patriarchy, which offers the alternative of tracing these legacies through a lineage dominated by women. The notion of unbecoming woman lent itself to the fragmentation process enacted through collage, and a notion of redefinition that occurs in the reconstruction of female bodies in Schwitters' (and other artist's) collages, allowing for a redefinition of the female identity which can be read in multiple and varied ways. Moreover, it emphasised choice and conditionality. Halberstam, through Woolf, suggests that women can choose to define as 'woman', 'feminine', etc., and in having the ability to reconfigure one's identity, to select the parts of these identifiers which we like and do not like, might allow for a greater, deeper, and more realistic understanding of gender outside the realms of binary definition.⁴⁵⁷

Among Schwitters' greatest creations which explore the theme of women, is the protagonist of his most famous poem 'An Anna Blume'. The poem's notoriety and controversial imagery made Anna and Schwitters the subject of many newspaper articles and psychological studies, which diagnosed him with madness and *dementia praecox*, among other things. His work caused members of the public to approach him, or to send him letters detailing their distress. Anna Blume became a recurring feature in his work, and references can be found in many of his works, spanning his entire career. She was transferred from the page of the book to a poster, and found her way into the collages and to reality as an extension of Schwitters' self. He used her name to sign letters and postcards, and in one particular example, a rosette-shaped

⁴⁵⁷ I would also argue that the same process for men could be activated, and that we might discuss the dichotomy of "feminine male" or "masculine woman" in a similar way, however, this discussion was not as pertinent to Schwitters' representation of women, nor his own sense of identity. Cf. Jack Halberstam's

sticker, is torn, reconfigured, and placed over his face before being sent to Hannah Höch. Anna as Schwitters' alter ego exists not only as a feminine extension of his masculine identity; she is not the only example of such an extension within the avant-garde, the most prominent example is of course Rose Sélavy, created by Marcel Duchamp. However, unlike Duchamp's creation, Schwitters' feminine alter-ego never takes human form, and remains a linguistic/textual device. Furthermore, she straddles realms of textual, poetic, linguistic, visual, and conceptual; as well as appearing, in the poem, as an animal, as melted fat, as a palindrome (and therefore numeric as well as linguistic), as machine, and as madwoman. She is characterised not so much by her traditional forms (the poem reads like an ode, at least to begin with) as much as its radical forms, and it is thus that Schwitters' poem defies categorisation of form and genre, and acceptance by the institution and avant-garde alike.

Schwitters' own life was influenced by strong women: his mother owned a clothing store with his father; Helma, his wife, acted as his secretary, ran their home, looked after their son, and maintained three other properties they owned, and helped him sustain many of the relationships he had cultivated in the early years; he was afraid of his mother-in-law; and he worked with and interacted with some of the most important female artists of the early twentieth century. Schwitters met Til Brugmann, while she and Höch were in a relationship, and from correspondence it seems neither he nor Helma seemed troubled by their relationship; he visited Sophie Taeuber-Arp in Strasbourg to see her design for L'Aubette; he corresponded with Kathrine Dreier, artist and co-founder of the Société Anonyme, who visited his Merzbau more than once; he and Kate Steinitz collaborated on multiple projects; he introduced the art historian Hans Hildebrandt to the work of artist Ella Bergmann-Michel, and the architect, Lucy Hillebrand (who co-operated an architecture firm with Bergmann-Michel's husband, Robert Michel, also Schwitters' friend).

Moreover, Schwitters had, for a long time, had an interest in fashion, and had attempted to produce his own book on the subject. This may also explain why many of the images of women that appear in his collages are taken from fashion magazines. These women epitomise beauty, youth, fashion and therefore the avant-garde, and so, it seems an obvious choice that the women he takes as the subjects of his work are

representative of the progressive aspects of the period. Without the various interjections on these women through textual and visual fragments, their representations of new fashions and new identities is clear. However, Schwitters' inclusion of these works alongside terms which criticise and highlight both the inequalities of the day, but also the progressive aspects of the Weimar era. His hometown of Hannover was integral to the women's movement, with multiple organisations beginning and operating out of the city. This thesis has argued that the presence of these organisations would have resonated with Schwitters, and so would have filtered into his work. This resonance, coupled with the language and images of the 'New Woman' presents a compelling case to consider Schwitters' work as feminist, and so this thesis, has aligned an exploration of Schwitters' work with the likes of Hannah Höch, whose collages and photomontages enacted a more overt feminist politics. This comparison, that is, of a male artist exploring feminist aesthetics, also offers the potential for an alternative history of the development of feminist art, an art not solely made by women. Such an expansion of the field would allow for a deeper and broader analysis of the ways in which equality were developed as well as hindered by such exclusions. The trend has been to refer to men who explore feminine imagery in a positive manner as queer. For example, Marcel Duchamp's *Rose Sélavy* has been explored through a queer context within the discourse of drag and the obscuration of traditional methods of looking. Inversions of gaze are often read as acts of queerness, and while there are potentialities for such readings in Schwitters' work, these readings cause an anachronistic understanding of the artist's work.

This potential for anachronism is a continuing struggle within the field of modernist and avant-garde studies, and as such, it is important to address these issues directly. This thesis does not claim Schwitters as a queer artist, nor does it position him as a feminist artist either. Instead, it uses queer and feminist discourse and theoretical frameworks to discuss the works of art and their subject matter which feature image of women. It also separates Schwitters' work from readings of other avant-garde artists set within a queer and feminist context, by focusing instead on the source

materials rather than performative ‘queerness’, as is the case with scholarship on Duchamp and Höch, among others. In the early works, the focus is on the relationship of textual and pictorial evidence which presents an alternative history of the women’s movement: conflicting images of seemingly emancipated young women, modelling the trends of the day, and textual fragments which alluded to traditional roles of women, suppression of freedom, and, in some cases, connecting women with animality and abjection. The politics of these works are more codified than those of the later works made in exile. Schwitters’ political angle later changes, and with it so too does his material choices. In times of poverty, a few of which he suffered, during his exile in Norway and Britain, the material shortages he encountered changed his mode of creation. Sculptures of abstract forms become more prominent, often utilising materials such as rocks, driftwood, or sticks; while interned in Britain, porridge is incorporated. Despite this material shift, mainly caused by the change in environment—from urban to rural—paint and canvas were reintroduced to his oeuvre, and he makes a small living from selling landscapes of Norway and the Lake District, and from commissioned portraits.

Schwitters’ early portraits were of everyday scenes; many of them were of his wife, Helma, and in these portraits she is often depicted in poses typical of traditional portraiture, and in the one this thesis focuses on she is pictured in mourning after the loss of their first son; and for the first time not as an object of beauty, but a human. Schwitters had managed to capture the suffering of the world around him through use of fragmented and sullied detritus of a world damaged by war, and in this early portrait he captured human suffering and loss, and a deep and personal loss no less. I use these early portraits of his wife as a point of comparison to discuss the portrait of Mabel Elliot-Taylor, in which he returned to traditional modes of representation, and produced commercially viable works of art. This was not his only source of income, and while he made fewer collages in Norway, those he did complete contained politically charged fragments, and the images of women presented are multinational, and oriented around the Madonna. This shift from beautiful young women of fashion who originate from magazines and catalogues to images of the Holy Mother, presents a fascinating aesthetic change, made even more interesting by Schwitters’ upbringing

in Protestant Hannover. Moreover, his most significant, and largest surviving collage work from the period was aptly named the Hjertøy-Madonna, and features a large image of Margaret of Austria, a strong and empowered woman. I read in Schwitters' choice of protagonist an engagement with strong women throughout history, and his incorporation, borderline idolisation, of her in the hallway of his small hut on the all but uninhabited island of Hjertøya, further strengthens my case for reading a feminist perspective in his collage art.

After his departure from Norway, and an unsettled, unrooted, first two years in Britain, he eventually settled in Ambleside. He continued painting his country scenes and landscapes, selling the works to tourists, but his collage practice was finally revived. This time using a mix of American and British media: the images of women he presents are taken from a mix of propaganda which originated from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, adverts for famous products, and capture the post-World War II period in Britain; impoverished and fragmented, rationed and struggling. This presented Schwitters with an environment reminiscent of his time in Hannover post-1918, and therefore it seems appropriate that he should revive his collage practice. In Hannover, the collage practice is a by-product of *Ersatzkultur*, as suggested by Maria Makela, and in Britain, one of his poverty and struggle. I examined the women presented in these later collages as new-new women and considered the drastic shifts in post-war Britain, and further analyse Schwitters' compositions of women in this new era. The works made in 1946 and 1947 could be prototypes for the Pop Art style made famous by artists such as Eduardo Paolozzi and later Richard Hamilton. In this analysis, this thesis makes connections with the futurity and legacies of Schwitters' collage practice, however, in doing so encountered the problematic definitions of legacy, which could potentially undo the positioning of Schwitters within a queer and feminist discourse as had been previously set forth by the thesis. In an attempt to ensure that Schwitters' feminist aesthetic could be considered beyond his time and oeuvre, I chose not to look at another male artist with a similar aesthetic, but instead, chose the German conceptual artist, Anna Oppermann.

This notion of an all-female legacy is compounded by Mira Schor's essay 'Matrilineage' which argues for the exclusive consideration of a lineage which begins

with the mother and whereby women are the determiners of their own teleologies. This notion of lineage which removes either one sex or the other was problematic. It suggested expendability or at best favoured one sex over the other. I argue that a lineage created or understood entirely through female figures is no less exclusive than one which functions by presenting one generated by an all-male line. Regardless of which sex occupies the lineage, the historical, social and linguistic connotations of 'legacy' and 'lineage' are bound up in masculinist traditions; and almost always favour a male-centric understanding of the family. It was thus that the term 'matrilineage' posed a problem, and became a point of departure for my argument surrounding notions of women creating for women, men creating for men, and attempted to interrogate the problems inherent in the status of the viewer. This was further explored in the case study of Anna Oppermann, whose relationship to Schwitters' was not personal, but rather created by critics and art historians in her own time. She was resistant to the notion that she shared a legacy with Schwitters, for formal reasons, rather than political or material. Oppermann's use of space and place is key in understanding perspective and gaze. The viewer is often tricked into believing they are being invited into her private world. She often inserts herself, as a photograph or with a textual reference, into the work, and so the private and public collide and the definition between the two becomes less distinct. Moreover, in her choice of subject matter, which runs thematically through her oeuvre, alludes to her own struggles as an artist, as a mother, as a woman, and existing as a combination of these three positions simultaneously. By inserting herself into these stage-like spaces, which are then placed in a museum or gallery, she creates another dichotomy between the domestic and public. And in the same way that the viewer is confused about whether they are viewing material they have been allowed to see, in positioning these works in these spaces, she redefines domesticity and what it means to have a domestic space which is not always a private one. I compare this with Schwitters' *Merzbau* in Hannover, and consider how his transformation of the family home might be considered as a similar redefinition of the domestic space, again not necessary a private one.

Furthermore, Oppermann's work is understudied, particularly in English literature; and the few who have published on her work are often preoccupied with Oppermann's process or her biography. However, her work has been widely exhibited, across Europe, America and across the Pacific in Australia. The textual aspects of her work include non-German works, and so there is a barrier in content when these works are displayed outside of German-speaking countries. These histories of both artists' works cross-over and highlight similar approaches in their composition, as well as in scholarly reception and analysis; further problematising certain notions which focus on the biographical, particularly in artist women's work. Yet, the similarities are met by just as many differences: a point that Oppermann saw herself when critics had compared her work with Schwitters'. It seems that Oppermann was attempting to distance her work from accusations of derivative ideas set forth by a male artist, charges levelled against many artist women. Her *Ensembles* were not site-specific, and some of her works were composed of hundreds of fragments, found objects, fragments of text, canvases of painted and photographic works, small sculptures, models of the final product, sketches in pencil, and so on. Every step of the process is exposed in each of her *Ensembles*. Moreover, her works can be thematically linked and strands run through her *Ensembles* which often expose and allude to problems faced by women (some persona, others more general). In comparing Schwitters' and Oppermann's works, this thesis did not wish to disregard such oppositions proposed by the artist; nor did was it the intention to conflate the ideas of two artists. Instead, it set out to explore not the reasons that Oppermann disagreed with such a comparison, but instead to consider the differences as a way of understanding Schwitters' influence beyond the contexts of Cornell, Paolozzi, Rauschenberg, or Johns, all of whom are most commonly cited alongside Schwitters, or it is claimed were all influenced by Schwitters. Also, including a female artist as part of the discussion allowed for a break in this male-centric legacy, and made space for discussions of Schwitters' impact beyond the art historical canon of which he is now considered a member.

Women's omission from the canon is an enduring discussion within feminist scholarship, most notably Linda Nochlin's 1971 essay 'Why Have There Been No

Great Women Artists?’ discusses this in-depth and takes various artists and time periods as her case studies. However, this discussion falls short of offering an alternative or a solution which would benefit living artists. Moreover, some forty years after its publication, much work has been done by both scholars and curators to reconfigure this history and to give women artists a more visible and prominent place in art history. This has been the case, and as has been the focus of this thesis, a successful endeavour especially regarding studies of the work of modernist and avant-garde women artists. Monographs and collected volumes by Shearer West, Marsha Meskimmon, Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, and Ruth Hemus, are among some of the most notable. Most recently, exhibitions such as *Die Dada, She Dada, La Dada* (Forum Schlossplatz Zurich, 2014) and *Dada Differently* (Museum Haus Konstruktiv Zurich, 2016) celebrated the role of women Dadaists and in the latter exhibition, contemporary female artists were asked to respond to the specific works by women Dadaists, creating an interesting matrilineage.

Matrilineage is a term complicated by its etymology. While Schor deals with the removal of the patriarch (patrilineage) and instead proposes he be replaced by the matriarch (matrilineage), the reliance on “lineage” and its inherent problems renders the concept unable to disconnect from previously established ideas of inheritance, genealogy, and most significantly heteronormativity. The insistence on thinking through women is one way to remove orthodoxies of male legacies. However, and it is thus this thesis challenges Schor’s ideas, it is much more useful to think through Halberstam’s notion of ‘unbecoming’ woman. Such discussions of Halberstam’s work, enlightened by his own experience of trans identity, begins with Woolf and the conditional phrase ‘if’. Collages are dependent on the conditional ‘if’, as often the multiplicity of the fragments, obscured by other fragments on the canvas or by paint, leaves the scholar to make tentative judgements on the possible and various outcomes, messages, or meanings offered. Moreover, Schwitters’ use of idealised images of women are subversive in that they are not only presented alongside incongruous materials and therefore are not only radical by their context, but he allows traces of their foundness to remain on the fragments. These residues of foundness not only shatter illusions of traditional notions of creativity (that the artist’s hand was solely

responsible for the final piece), but also exposes the process through which each collage undergoes to become the final thing. It is less up to chance, as the Cubist and Surrealist collagists believed, but instead meticulously chosen and arranged pieces of work. It is here also that Oppermann and Schwitters converge. Oppermann's inclusion of sketches, dioramas, models, photographs, and line drawings in her work, which each show the various steps leading to the final piece, highlights the engineering behind and deliberateness of her choices and themes. Oppermann leaves nothing to chance, and her collecting of materials (often the fragments of texts she has collected have been circled, and then we assume cut out) as well as her intricate composition. Therefore, while the 'basic differences' may well 'predominate' between the two artists' works, the similarities are compelling and thus this thesis has granted them attention.

To this point, critical and scholarly attention has been paid to the formal innovations made by Schwitters, as well as considering the relationship between his art and biography. Some interventions have been made in beginning to think about the material elements of Schwitters' collages and assemblages. Megan Luke has explored the materiality of Schwitters' sculptures through the shift in resources available to him, dictated by his geography: the Hannover cityscape allowed him to critique the bourgeois world around him, and highlights the material poverty (as Maria Makela has suggested) experienced in the Weimar Republic, as well as the city's own material history: Hannover had long supplied lace to a worldwide market. However, in exile in the rural settings of Molde and Hjertøya the natural materials of wood and rock become the basis for his experimental structures. It is also in this period that he returns to naturalistic paintings of his surrounding landscapes and portraits of patrons, less as a means to exhibit, but rather to give him the means to survive. He had lost his publishing house, his status as an exile made it difficult for him to trade his art in Germany (not to mention his status as a degenerate artist), and trading outside of Germany was not so easy (although, he was still in contact with Kate Steinitz in Los Angeles, and Katherine Dreier and Alfred Barr Jr. in New York) and meant he had to survive in any way possible. His return to collage later in Britain, meant that he would

again change his aesthetic and formal principles and so the extrinsic messages also change.

Schwitters' exposure to new materials, new environments, new politics, new social conditions, and a different cultural perspective (although the protagonists of these cultural institutions remained largely the same as before the Second World War) meant his form of Dada had become obsolete, so much so that he had been included in an exhibition of Surrealism. Despite this shift in his position as part of the dominant avant-garde, his collage form would come to be seen as a progenitor of the Pop Art movement, and was most influential to artists such as Johns and Rauschenberg; not to mention his late style was being developed concurrently alongside Paolozzi's collage style, however, little connection has been made between the two artists' styles. This thesis has also not addressed this subject as it is less concerned with connecting more male legacies, and instead advocating for more feminist readings of works of art made by men; and advocating for a positive representation of women in spite of the artist's gendered gaze.

This thesis has sought to reclaim and argued against theories and scholarly interventions which have positioned Schwitters as a womaniser, or as having negatively impacted the representation of women. It has also taken an unprecedented look at Schwitters' collages setting them in the context of the women's movement in Hannover, which was varied and many of the groups used Hannover as the base for their head offices. Moreover, the women's movement in Hannover was dominated by religious leanings, particularly Protestant ones as a result of the town's long Protestant history. While religion was not particularly important to Schwitters, he continually references the Madonna, an icon who is not granted the same importance in the Protestant church, and so Schwitters' religious education was also male-focused: as such I have suggested that his exploration of the Virgin Mary in his work might be read as feminist. This thesis contends that Schwitters, the man should be considered as proto-feminist and that his works were feminist. I argue this position with reference his professional and personal relationships with female artists and close visual

analysis, as well as through historical contextualisation which furthermore, opens the possibility for a discussion of Schwitters' and other male artists' works of this period.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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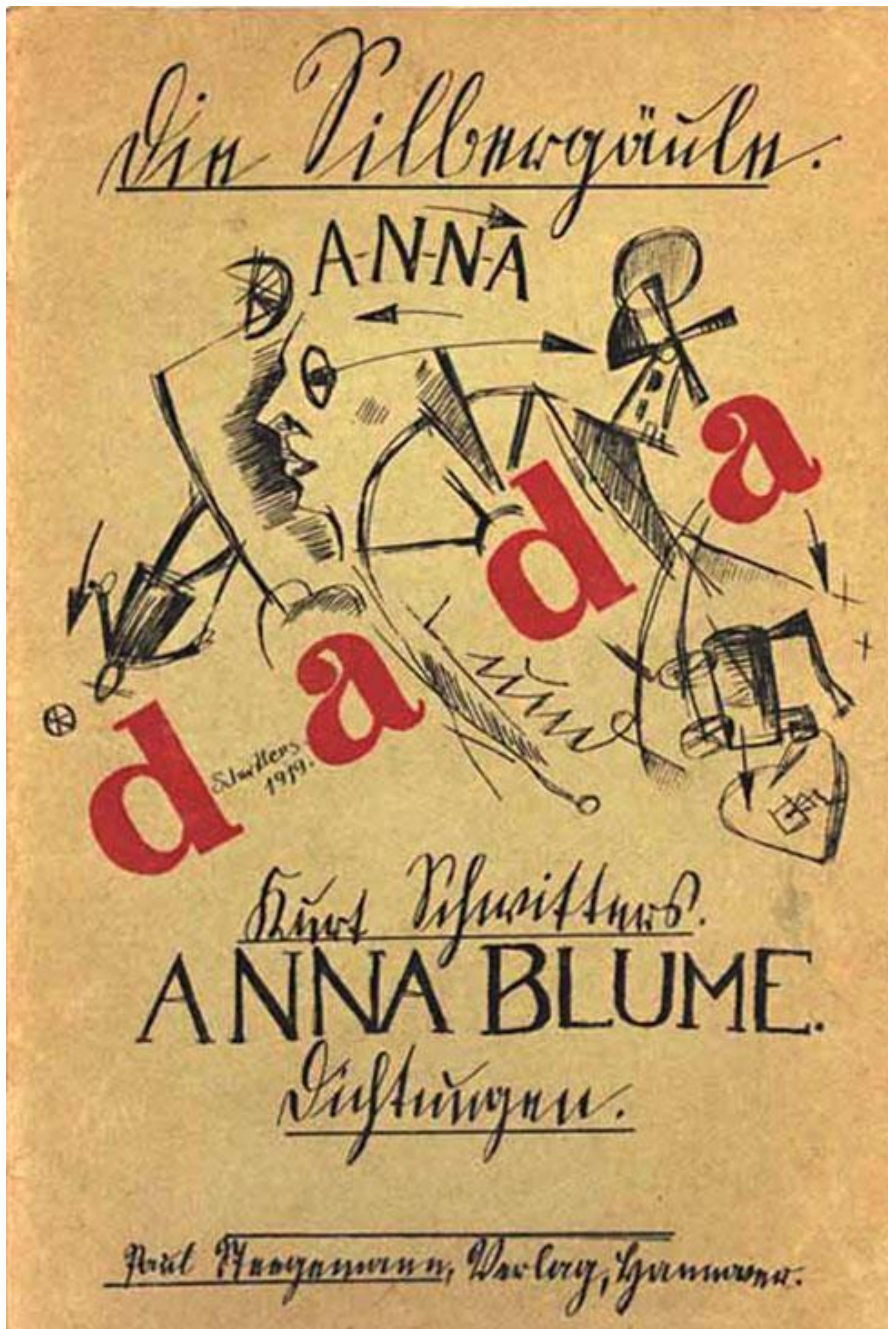


Fig. 1. Kurt Schwitters, *Anna Blume. Dichtungen*, Front Cover.

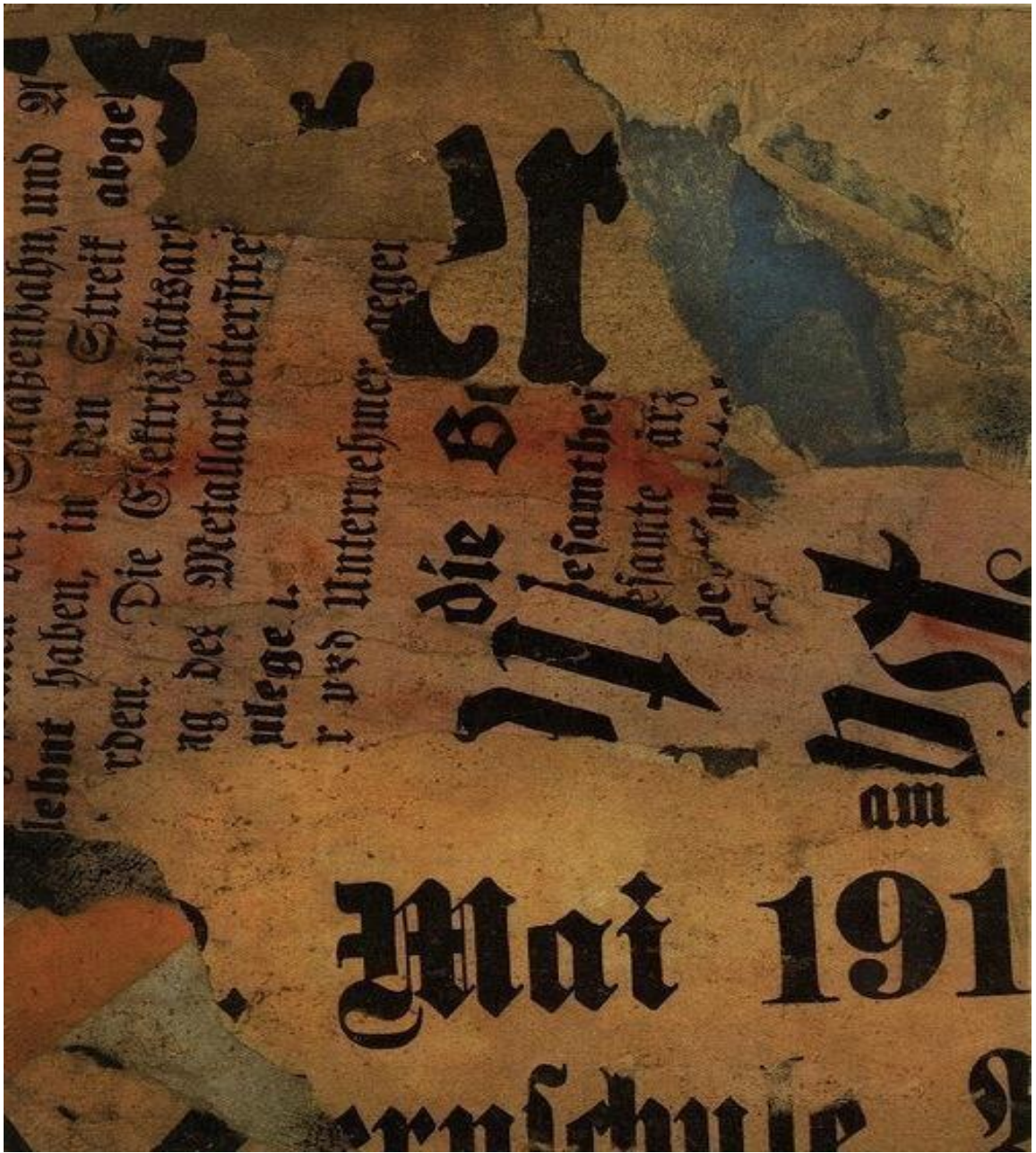


Fig. 2. Kurt Schwitters, Mai 1911, c. 1919.



Fig. 3. August Sander, *Malerin* [Marta Hegemann], 1925.



Fig. 4. Kurt Schwitters, *Mz. 180 Figurine*, 1920. Courtesy Kurt Schwitters Archive, Sprengel Museum Hannover.



Fig. 5. Merzpostcard from Kurt Schwitters to Hannah Höch, 10.9.19.

An Anna Blume

O du, Geliebte meiner siebenundzwanzig Sinne, ich liebe dir! - Du deiner dich dir, ich dir, du mir. - Wir?

Das gehört (beiläufig) nicht hierher.

Wer bist du, ungezähltes Frauenzimmer? Du bist - - bist du? - Die Leute sagen, du wärest, - laß sie sagen, sie wissen nicht, wie der Kirchturm steht.

Du trägst den Hut auf deinen Füßen und wanderst auf die Hände, auf den Händen wanderst du.

Hallo, deine roten Kleider, in weiße Falten zerfägt. Rot liebe ich Anna Blume, rot liebe ich dir! - Du deiner dich dir, ich dir, du mir. - Wir?

Das gehört (beiläufig) in die kalte Glut.

Rote Blume, rote Anna Blume, wie sagen die Leute?

Preisfrage:

1. Anna Blume hat ein Vogel.
2. Anna Blume ist rot.
3. Welche Farbe hat der Vogel?

Blau ist die Farbe deines gelben Haares.

Rot ist das Girren deines grünen Vogels.

Du schlichtes Mädchen im Alltagskleid, du liebes grünes Tier, ich liebe dir! - Du deiner dich dir, ich dir, du mir, - Wir?

Das gehört (beiläufig) in die Glutentüte.

Anna Blume! Anna, a-n-n-a, ich tränfle deinen Namen.

Dein Name tropft wie weiches Hindertalg.

Weißt du es, Anna, weißt du es schon?

Man kann dich auch von hinten lesen, und du, du Herrlichste von allen, du bist von hinten wie von vorne: „a-n-n-a“.

Hindertalg tränfelt streicheln über meinen Rücken.

Anna Blume, du tropfes Tier, ich liebe dir!

Dies ist eine Probe aus dem schönen Buche „Anna Blume“ von Kurt Schwitters

Es ist in allen Buchhandlungen vorrätig. Jeder Gebildete sollte es besitzen.

Nrk. 4.80

Fig. 6. Kurt Schwitters and Christof Spengemann, *Anna Blume Plakat*, 1920. Courtesy Kurt Schwitters Archive, Hannover.

Hannover. H. 5. 21.

Wohlwende.

Gewürst zusammen mit,
• in dieser Zeit in dieser Markt
Hast, davon Christof Spengemann
zum Gemeindeglied der Kirche zur
Verwaltung der Gemeindegüter, mit
Zusatz für diese Tätigkeit, verpflichtet,
auf den besagten Gebieten, sowie der
verbündeten Länder.

ANNA BLUME

J. A. März.

Über die Drogen.

Fig. 7. Letter from Kurt Schwitters to Christof Spengemann, Collage, 1921. Courtesy Kurt Schwitters Archive, Stadtbibliothek Hannover.

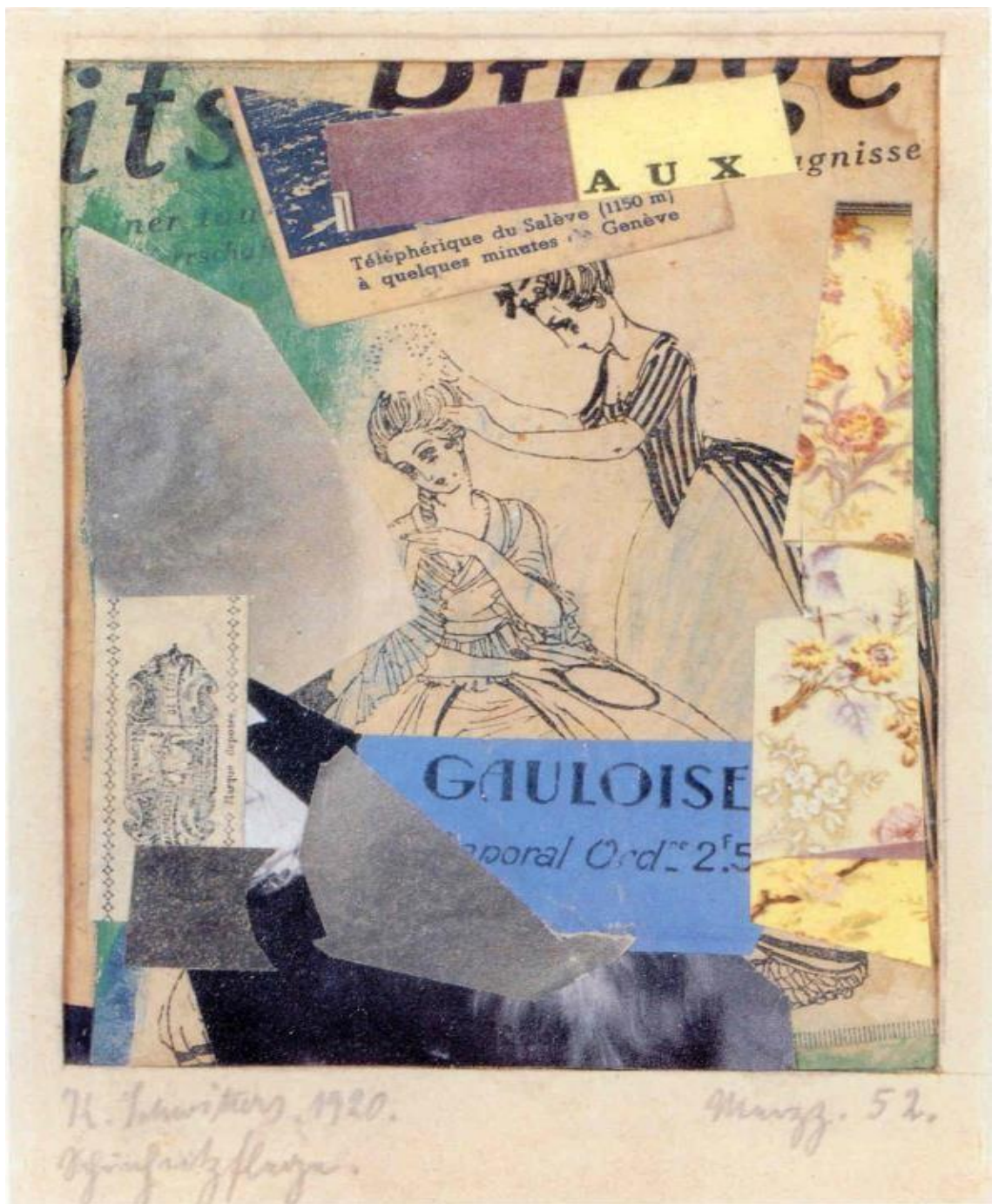


Fig. 8. Kurt Schwitters, *Merzz. 52 Schönheitzflage*, 1920. Courtesy Kurt Schwitters Archive, Hannover.



Fig 9. Kurt Schwitters, *Mz. 158 Das Kotsbild*, 1920. Courtesy Kurt Schwitters Archive, Sprengel Museum Hannover.



Fig. 10a. Exterior view of the *Merzhytta* on Hjertøya today. © Author, 2016.



Fig. 10b. Schwitters Room, Merzhytta Reconstruction, Romsdalmuseet, Molde. Courtesy Romsdalmuseet, Molde. © Johnny Braseth.



Fig. 11a. *Portrait of Mabel Taylor*, 1938. Courtesy Kurt Schwitters Archive, Hannover.



Fig. 11b. Ernst Schwitters, Photograph of Kurt Schwitters painting the portrait of Mabel Taylor (Fig. 11a). Courtesy Kurt Schwitters Archive, Hannover.



Fig. 12a. Kurt Schwitters, *Trunk Lid*, 1929-1939. Courtesy Kurt Schwitters Archive, Hannover.



Fig. 12b. Kurt Schwitters, *Trunk Lid*, 1929-1939. Courtesy Kurt Schwitters Archive, Hannover.



Fig. 13a. Kurt Schwitters, *EN MORN*, 1947.

These are the things we are fighting for



... the right to teach the truth ... not propaganda

Some day we will again be making the Community
Silverware you love, but now all our skills and facilities
are being devoted to the war that must be fought and
won. Meanwhile, in messages like this, we try to express
the things for which America is fighting.*

*TRADEMARK



ARMY-NAVY "E" AWARDED
TO ONEIDA LTD.



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Fig. 13b. Poster for Community Silverware, ca. 1946.



Fig. 14. Kurt Schwitters, *left half of a beauty*, 1947. Courtesy Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo, Norway.



Fig. 15a. Kurt Schwitters, *Blaues Fenster*, 1933. Photograph, Wilhelm Redemann, 1933.

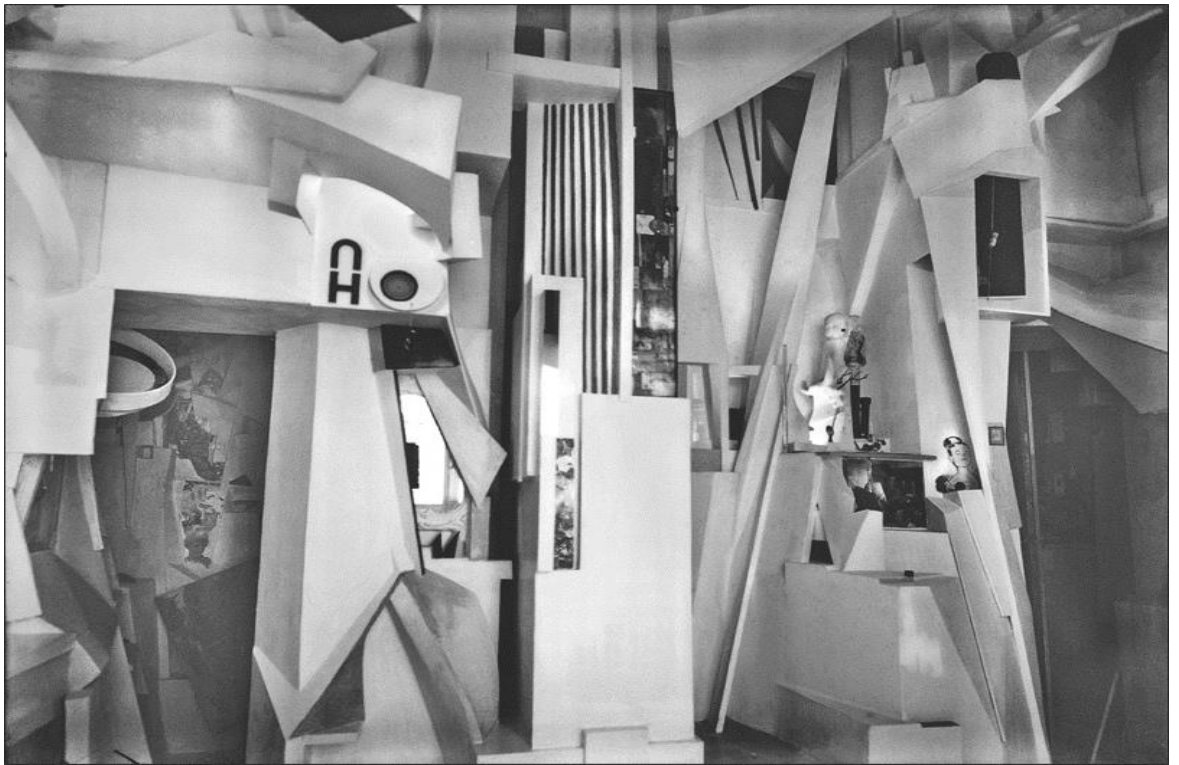


Fig. 15b. Kurt Schwitters, *Treppeneingang, Merzbau*, Hannover, 1933. Photograph, Wilhelm Redemann, 1933.



Fig. 16. Anna Oppermann, "Einzelwerk Karton 007", ca. 1970. Courtesy Anna Oppermann Estate and Galerie Barbara Thumm.

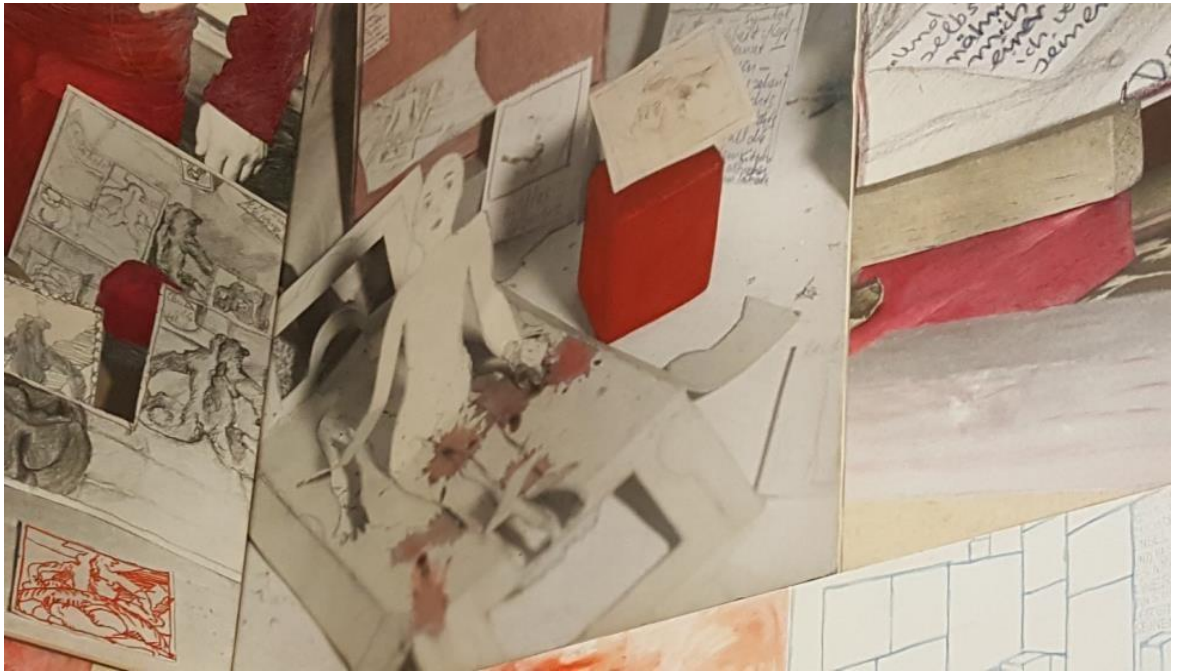


Fig. 17. Detail from *Umarmungen, Unerklärliches und eine Gedichtzeile von R.M.R* [*Hugs, the Inexplicable and a Line of Poetry from R.M.R*] (1977-1989), Sprengel Museum, Hannover. ©Author, 2016.



Fig. 18. Anna Oppermann, *MKÜVO (Make Small Easy Saleable Objects)*, 1979-92, Bonner Kunstverein Bonn, 1984. Courtesy the Estate of Anna Oppermann/Galerie Barbara Thumm.



Fig. 19. Kurt Schwitters, *Hjertøy-Madonna*. Courtesy of the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo and Romsdalmuseet, Molde. ©Johnny Braseth