2. Hannah Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*

Photomontage, Signification, and the Mass Media

> Why can't we paint pictures today like those of Botticelli, Michelangelo, Leonardo, or Titian? Because human beings have completely changed in terms of their consciousness. This is the case not simply because we have the telephone, the airplane, the electric piano, and the escalator, but rather because these experiences have transformed our entire psychophysical condition.
>
> —RAOUL HAUSMANN, "Présentismus" (1921)

The first stage of Walter Benjamin's critical practice aims to "carry over the principle of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event."[1] I begin, therefore, with two fragments, or "details," from Hannah Höch's photomontage *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* [Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany] (1919–20). These two related images of cyborgs, as I shall show, are both wired into more-encompassing networks constituted by the photomontage as a whole as well as the work's position in its specific field of cultural production.

In the first example (Figure 2.1), Raoul Hausmann—Höch's lover and collaborator—appears in the form of a slightly hunched cyborg. The creature is composed of a frontal and cropped photographic portrait of Hausmann, wearing a monocle and yelling directly at the spectator, as well as two mass-reproduced photographs of manufactured elements, a metallic screw form that covers the top of Hausmann's head and a deep-sea diver's suit out of which his body is made. "My years with Hausmann, 1915–1922," wrote Höch more than thirty years later, "took in war, the peace settlement, revolution, hunger, and inflation. Through Hausmann I got to know Herwarth Walden's *Sturm,* the Futurists, *Die Aktion,* the Franz Jung circle (Georg Schrimpf,

Figure 2.1. Hannah Höch, *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* [Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany] (1919–20) (detail). Photomontage and collage with watercolor. 114 × 90 cm (44⅞ × 35 7/16 inches). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, Berlin. Photograph from Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY. Copyright 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Maria Uhden, Richard Öhring), the Mynona-Segal circle, and, finally DADA."[2] And this sense that Höch had of her beer-belly cultural epoch as one that combined both trauma and possibility—a moment in which war, social revolution, economic catastrophe, and radical cultural production were intimately and inextricably bound—seems present in her cyborgian representation of her lover, the Dadasoph.

As a whole, Höch's depiction of Hausmann exudes both positive and negative associations. The hunched posture, overly long arms, cropped face, and covered and fingerless hands connote aggression and violence, and Hausmann's appearance as a whole suggests simultaneous processes of arming and dismembering that evoke the cyborgian soldiers and war cripples depicted in the paintings, photomontages, and assemblages of such Berlin Dada artists as George Grosz, John Heartfield, and (the Dresden-based) Otto Dix. Like them, Höch developed a type of imagery in this portrait that responded to and represented the existence of soldiers and cripples in German urban centers during and after the war. Yet the cyborg also projects a critical humor and energy. Hausmann's grinning and gaping mouth (emphasized by Höch's cropping of his cheeks and chin) and his slightly squinting eyes are subtle signifiers referring—both iconically and indexically—to a vital irony, a humor in the face of adversity, that Hausmann attempted to embody in his artistic practices.

Hausmann described his idea of hybrid modern identity in "The New Material in Painting," a text that he initially read at the Berlin Sezession on April 12, 1918, perhaps a year before Höch's photomontage was made. There he described the human being as "simultaneous, a monster of own and alien," that encompassed different cultures and moments of time.[3] Slightly earlier that year, in a notebook entry written in late January, he characterized the new form of humanity that he was seeking to bring about in different, but related terms:

> The new man: community, the dissolution of the I, of the individual, into the force, the truth, of the We; the sublation of alien power as violent authority into the innermost personal authority as boundless responsibility: because We will exist when I am at the same time the other, [and] I, the other, am at the same time another I.[4]

And something of Hausmann's vision of human beings as provisional combinations of contradictory elements, mixtures of "I" and "we," can perhaps already be glimpsed in Höch's tiny representation of him.

We recognize Hausmann's vision of the new man—a vision influenced by Mynona (Salomo Friedlaender), Otto Gross, and Friedrich Nietzsche—in Höch's photomontage portrait of him, because the hybrid figure clearly combines "own" and "alien" elements. Hausmann's face, taken from the cover of *Der Dada* 3, sits on top of the diver's body in a "new iron diving suit" from the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* [Berlin Illustrated Newspaper, or *BIZ*] of January 18, 1920, at that time Germany's most popular illustrated weekly newspaper.[5] The visage of Höch's intimately known collaborator and significant other, whose portrait in its original context evoked the Berlin Dadaists' aggressive performance practices, is thus here linked to an anonymous deep-sea diver, dressed in a suit that can go to twice the depth of previous suits, as the *BIZ* caption tells us. Thereby the head of the athletic and confident Hausmann—who despite his physical prowess was so nearsighted as to be exempted from military service—is paired with a body that seems awkward and childlike despite its ability to plumb greater depths than ever before. (In the original photograph, the diver hangs like a puppet from a cable, something that adds to its apparent clumsiness.) The figure thus conjoins intimate and external associations. It is simultaneously lover and stranger, performer and explorer, living flesh and obdurate metal. Furthermore, the same play between own and alien, intimacy and anonymity, operates on a formal level as well. On the one hand, the image is uniquely Höch's. She created the bizarre and evocative figure by selecting appropriately sized components, cutting them out of their original contexts, and gluing them together to communicate an original and idiosyncratic vision of what it means to be human. On the other hand, the image's various components are not directly connected to Höch in the ways that artistic elements have traditionally been joined with their creators. She did not create them (i.e., sketch, paint, or even photograph them) but simply appropriated them.[6] Thus, as a whole, the portrait of Hausmann combines Höch's unique vision of him as well as (a small amount of) her particular handwork with mere mass-produced and anonymous imagery. Through both subject matter and form, it suggests that human identity is a product of the interaction between subjective and objective elements, aspects of the personality both private and unique as well as general or intersubjective.

In the second image (Figure 2.2), which includes the first (Figure 2.1), Höch represents one of her (and Hausmann's) "enemies" or "opposites," the deposed German kaiser, Wilhelm II of Prussia. Like Hausmann, the former German monarch appears as a cyborg, a figure that is constituted by an even more heterogeneous constellation of fragments. The kaiser's head and body are composed of a black-and-white photomechanical reproduction of a painted portrait of the monarch overlaid with a montage of machined elements including—as one's eye moves down Wilhelm's trunk—a wheel with metal spokes and a rubber tire, a ship's motor, and the motor's screw-tipped metal housing (which, in turn, terminates toward the top of Hausmann's head, bisecting his

Figure 2.2. Hannah Höch, *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* [Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany] (1919–20) (detail). Photograph from Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY. Copyright 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

forehead slightly above his eyebrows). A montage of two inverted wrestlers wearing leotards replaces the kaiser's trademark mustache, and an image of a newborn baby in a tray is superimposed on his right eye. An undersized, black top hat, set at a jaunty angle, crowns the kaiser's head, an allusion, perhaps, to his recent lost status as emperor of the German Empire and king of Prussia and new identity as an upper-class German *Bürger* in exile in the Netherlands. (Although he did not eschew wearing civilian headgear during his tenure as German monarch, Wilhelm's preferred form of head adornment—at least in the bellicose years leading up to his abdication—appears to have been the Prussian *Pickelhaube,* the spiked helmet characteristic of the German military after 1842, which was discontinued for its lack of protective qualities during World War I.)

Because of the mismatches between its various photomontage fragments, the kaiser's body appears monstrous—truncated or deformed at the waist or the hips. The royal cyborg also sprouts multiple appendages in the form of other figures and heads, including, dangling below the kaiser's groin, Hausmann, the cyborg on which the whole "anti-Dada" kaiser edifice perhaps rests. Further accentuating the cyborg's inhuman nature, other appendages include important conservative government and military figures as well as left-wing thinkers and artists.[7] Dr. Wolfgang Kapp, who unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow the Social Democratic Party (SPD) government in March 1920 and subsequently fled to Sweden, sits in an airplane that emerges from the kaiser's right ear. Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg is attached to the front of the kaiser's right shoulder, his head montaged onto the body of a popular female dancer, Sent M'ahesa, in a harem outfit. Hindenburg's right arm touches the left shoulder of the Austro-Hungarian General Karl von Pflanzer-Baltin, another hero of the monarchy, whose body partially occludes Wilhelm II's right arm. Von Pflanzer-Baltin's feet rest on the heads of Ulrich Graf von Brockdorff-Rantzau, the so-called Red Count and SPD foreign minister in 1919, and Gustav Noske, the SPD's infamous minister of defense from 1919 to 1920 (and former master butcher), who was best known for employing right-wing paramilitary troops to suppress communist and left-wing uprisings throughout Germany in early 1919. These two figures appear to emerge out of the top of the kaiser's forearm. Below them, the heads of the Bolshevik Karl Radek, Johannes Baader, and Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin, the Bolshevik leader and first head of the Soviet Union, appear like parts of a large decorative cuff. The bodies of female acrobats in checkered suits hang below the heads of Radek and Lenin and suggest further ornamentation, while the bodies of two female gymnasts dangle below Baader's head, suggesting elongated fingers emerging from beneath the kaiser's cuff. To the left of a large wheel, which projects from the kaiser's chest like an oversized nipple, the head and upper body of Else Lasker-Schüler, the expressionist poet with whom the Dada artists were friendly, grows from the deposed monarch's sternum, like a cancer or a decorative medal. Below and to the right of Lasker-Schüler, the kaiser's left hand cups the head of Max Reinhardt. The famed theater director, who collaborated with the Dadaists on the cabaret *Schall und Rauch,* seems to grow out of the kaiser's stomach. (In official portraits, the kaiser often kept his left arm slightly crooked to conceal the

fact that it was withered as the result of a birth defect. Because of this history, Reinhardt's head perhaps takes on some of the associations of the kaiser's characteristic white gloves or sword, objects that he would sometimes hold in his left hand to mask his infirmity.) Finally, Marx's head protrudes from Wilhelm's lower back, like another strange growth that is possibly disturbing its host. The kaiser, as Höch represents him, is thus both individual and collective, a radically hybrid human–machine organism composed of contradictory and mismatched elements. Not only does the deposed monarch incorporate different genders and different class positions (as suggested by his inclusion of counts as well as communists, generals as well as "lowly" Dadaists), but, as suggested by the harem costume worn by his Hindenburg appendage, he possibly incorporates different racial types as well (a type of montage juxtaposition that became more and more ubiquitous in Höch's work as the decade developed).

Like the cyborgian image of Hausmann, the Wilhelm II cyborg connotes both violence and energy, trauma and regeneration. A number of his appendages seem only loosely attached to his body, and he appears to be frozen in a process in which he is either incorporating or expelling heterogeneous parts. In addition, although the cyborg looks monstrous and deformed, his upright and regal posture suggests both power and control—something also emphasized by his technological enhancements. Moreover, as implied by the technological interface between the kaiser and Hausmann, the cyborg appears as a figure through which Höch—anticipating a conceptual opposition that would intensely occupy the conservative legal theorist Carl Schmitt during the second half of the Weimar Republic—could reimagine the relationship between friend and enemy in a new and more densely connected way.[8] Although it is unclear whether Hausmann is dreaming up the kaiser or the kaiser is excreting Hausmann, they are scarcely separate beings anymore.

Cyborgian Subjects

Despite the fact that artists and other cultural producers during the Weimar Republic posed questions about the nature of human identity in the context of modern industrial societies, the hybrid and interconnected nature of modern existence—a phenomenon that the concept of the cyborg would later be used to identify and analyze—was difficult to speak or write about. Instead, in the context of Germany between the wars, it could largely only be shown. However, as suggested by the first two examples analyzed in this chapter, the antithetical yet interrelated cyborg constellations excised from Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* the Weimar cyborg—at least as it appears in Dada art—exhibits numerous correspondences with post–World War II concepts of the cyborg. Already by 1920, in other words, more than forty years before the term's invention, the cyborg appears as a figure of hybrid modern identity that undermines clear divisions between gender and class while interrelating the individual with the collective, friends with enemies, and trauma with regeneration.

By analyzing the cyborgs in such photomontages as Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen*

Knife—by paying attention, in other words, not only to how the cyborgs are represented but also to the interrelationships that appear between them, and how they are shown to interact with their environments—we can better understand several issues now associated with Berlin Dada art. They include the innovative nature of the Berlin Dadaists' montage-based strategies of signification; Berlin Dada's relationship to the rise of the mass media in Germany after World War I; and, finally, the group's links to new discourses about transforming human perception in the modern world. These issues, I will show, help to explain why the Berlin Dadaists were so drawn to the image of the cyborg.

When taken as a (somewhat loosely organized) whole (Figure 2.3), Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* suggests that its creator saw the cyborg as fundamentally interconnected with a rapidly transforming technology-driven society. Broadly speaking, the large photomontage presents a turbulent image of Germany's postwar revolutionary moment of 1918 and 1919. It was mostly constructed from mechanically reproduced photographic fragments that Höch clipped from the *BIZ,* which appeared once a week on Thursdays, and which had the largest circulation of any illustrated weekly newspaper in Germany. Published by Ullstein Verlag, the same publisher for whom Höch worked—primarily on women's magazines—between 1916 and 1926, the *BIZ* was for Höch an illustrated record of her moment, which she drew on time and time again.[9] Against what must originally have been a white background of undefined space (now both wrinkled and browning), Höch pasted an array of photomechanically reproduced fragments that suggested Germany's wartime and immediate postwar history.

These monochromatic reproductions, with primarily sepia and olive-green coloration, consist of five main types of image. Most prominent are the figures of cyborgs: sutured-together images of Wilhelmine and Weimar personalities, including government, military, and political leaders; artists and writers; dancers and actresses; and scientists. These collaged, hybrid, and (sometimes) hermaphrodite figures represent recognizable individuals while suggesting—through their fragmented and recombined structures—a radical transformation of these modern individuals through war, revolution, and technological development. And although the photomontage contains more male cyborgs than female ones, numerous cyborgian women are also represented, thus suggesting that neither gender was immune to technological change.

Also prominent are images of metropolitan buildings and crowds, drawn primarily from New York and Berlin, which evoke the urban contexts—the sites of interface—within which Höch's revolutionary-period cyborgs exist. As suggested by the main crowd scenes—the first, in the photomontage's bottom left corner, which juxtaposes images of demonstrating masses, delegates in the Weimar National Assembly, and bourgeois concertgoers with public architecture taken from Wall Street and royal Berlin (the Berlin City Palace), and the second, in the top right, which presents a mass of jobless proletariats waiting for work in front of a Berlin unemployment office—German society was strongly stratified in the early postwar years. At the same time, because of the jumbled and intermixed character of the various crowd and architecture fragments,

Figure 2.3. Hannah Höch, *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* [Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany] (1919–20). Photograph from Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY. Copyright 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

the photomontage suggests that the new society is also a place where different classes interact. The Weimar Republic, Höch's photomontage implies, is a site of class struggle and conflict.

Although fewer in number, images of technology are also prominent—primarily because of their larger size and occasional greater separation from the other montage clusters. Here, images of turning and locomotion predominate. Five great gears or tires dominate the photomontage's middle and extend to its left side. The wheel motif, with its associations of turning, evokes the November Revolution and the resulting social and political transformation of German society.[10] In addition, it also connects Höch's photomontages to Kurt Schwitters's collage paintings, which used circular motifs to evoke similar associations of technology, movement, inversion, and social revolution.[11] Furthermore, the central foreshortened gear is connected by a dark axle to the kaiser's back, thereby suggesting that he is some sort of monstrous windup puppet. Closely related to the pictures of wheels and gears, images of such vehicles as trucks, trains, ships, and planes also appear. Evoking the early stages of a rapidly globalizing society, they connote travel, speed, and the early-twentieth-century conquest of space and time. In addition, these depictions bring to mind flying and road races, modern activities that had recently captured the public imagination and achieved significant representation in the press and in mass culture in general.[12]

Individual letters, words, and the occasional full sentence also appear throughout the picture field. Among the more legible are "Hey, hey, you, young man, Dada is not a direction in art," "Invest in Dada," "Dada," "Dada triumphs," "come," "nf," "k," "The anti-Dada movement," "The great world Dada," "Dadaists," and "Join Dada." These textual fragments, primarily taken from Dada publications, evoke the practices of sound poetry and the Dada artists' parodic advertising campaigns and media stunts. In addition, other texts, printed on the objects depicted within the montaged image fragments, suggest the realm of brand names and trademarks, additional forms of information that circulate within Höch's rapidly changing world. A few of these texts also orient the viewer by labeling different groups that inhabit the confusing picture space.

Finally, representations of animals, babies, and "primitive" people also appear. These stereotypical signs for concepts such as "nature," "origin," and "innocence" have their meanings inverted by Höch's hybridizing montage juxtapositions. Because of their proximity to images of technology and urban spaces, the natural signs come to suggest the interpenetration of nature and culture through an expanding set of increasingly powerful technologies. As a result, they evoke the debates about science and technology's impact on nature and traditional modes of life that agitated German society since the late nineteenth century.[13]

The turbulent, crisis-prone character of *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*'s subject matter is further emphasized by its formal structure. The photomontage is divided by a diagonal axis that partially runs along the bottom of the kaiser's right arm. This axis moves downward, through the machinery that constitutes the back of his torso, and along a baby's backside, then upward, along an elephant's head, until it seems to exhaust

itself in the left ear of a cyborgian portrait of Albert Einstein. Above and to the right of this diagonal axis "the anti-Dada movement" appears, identified as such by Höch's appropriated texts, the Wilhelm II cyborg, and various other political and military figures, including Wilhelm of Prussia, the crown prince, dressed in an oversized checkered dress, and two representations of Friedrich Ebert. Emerging in profile from the side of Einstein's head, the first Ebert strikes a classic speaker's pose with his right arm extended in front of him as if he were exhorting a crowd. The second Ebert consists of his head montaged onto a female gymnastic artist's body. The figure is positioned to the right of Einstein's head and to the left of the central gear that seems to wind up the kaiser's body. Below this axis, the Berlin Dada artists—Hausmann, Baader, Richard Huelsenbeck, Grosz, Wieland Herzfelde, Heartfield, Walter Mehring, and Höch—appear in various hybrid forms. Grouped mainly on the bottom right, their coalition extends through Einstein on the upper left, who is identified with Dada through the various bits of text that surround him. Below and to the left of the Dada artists, the Weimar Republic's stratified social world is represented through the images of crowds and architecture. The photomontage's overall diagonal articulation—as well as its compartmentalization or clustering of figures into semidistinct groups—connotes both dynamism and struggle. Prompted by the overall compositional structure, one can envision two competing strata in German society, with the Dada artists inhabiting a more open "buffer zone" between these two groups—a position that seems to find support in Hausmann's contention from 1918 that, "besides exact photography, Dada is the only valid pictorial means of communication and equilibrium in collective experience."[14] As the composition suggests, the Dada artists at times envisioned themselves as mediators between different extremes, and this idea of mediation—of possessing the ability to translate between opposites and perhaps also to translate opposites into one another—is, as Donna Haraway reminds us, also central to the concept of the cyborg.

The fragments that make up *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* are also juxtaposed in a way that emphasizes their heterogeneity. Not only does Höch allow gaps or white spaces to show between many of the montage elements, but she also cuts them together with a disregard for exact matches in scale and perspective. To further emphasize the heterogeneous and conflict-permeated nature of her world, Höch has also sometimes accentuated the edges of her fragments with paint to make them appear even more separate. Höch thus represents her world as one of omnipresent crisis and conflict that has no overarching script or master narrative—a place where the old formulas for structuring experience no longer seem to apply. "Even before the war ended in 1918," Höch wrote in 1958, "Berlin's young people had become politically rebellious and were searching for new intellectual orientation. . . . Dada here was probably above all else a kind of negative eulogy for a form of government and life whose time and past and world view had gone up in flames."[15] And this sense of conflagration and the decisive but incomplete destruction of the previous social and conceptual orders are mirrored in her technique's violent and disjunctive forms.

As Höch's photomontage begins to suggest through both its form and its subject matter, the cyborg became a central figure in Weimar visual culture precisely because this period constituted a moment of modernity in which competing concepts of the self and society clashed in German society. Höch attempted to emphasize the conflict-ridden character of her contemporary moment through her title: "Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany." By mixing past and present in her title, Höch suggests that the old and the new live in unresolved competition. Indeed, numerous traces of the war and the deposed Wilhelmine regime remain in Höch's representation of the early years of the Weimar Republic. The steel-helmeted soldier's head, the machine gun, the airplane, and the military leaders that surround the kaiser all suggest the previous four years of fighting, and the mismatches between the heads and the figures of Höch's hybrids evoke the transformations of the human body under the conditions of mechanized warfare during World War I. In addition, the kaiser's large figure suggests the lingering presence of the German monarchy in the postmonarchal world. Despite the destruction of the old order, its loss of hegemony, the ghosts of the past are curiously alive and vital in Höch's representation. Although these specters are not portrayed as dominant figures, they do appear to be vigorous participants in the contemporary spectacle.

Because the question of what constituted the new German citizen was posed at this moment in such a forceful yet undecided way, it is perhaps not surprising that the image of the cyborg would thus emerge as it did. As Höch's photomontage implies, the figure embodied a sense of modernity that appealed to actors on all sides of the political landscape. Although it was popular with the (communist and anarchist) Dada artists who welcomed modernization, it also addressed antimodernists of all political stripes in that its freakish or uncanny qualities evoked that which they most feared. Even the most ardent traditionalists and cultural conservatives believed that they were being changed by the modern world; the figure of the cyborg, which could equally suggest both willing and unwilling mechanization, might thus also become a point of identification for the detractors of modernization. Although I am here tracing the cyborg's articulation in the work of a left-wing artist, it is significant that Höch, already at this early moment in the Weimar cyborg's history, represents the figure as appearing on all sides of the social and political spectrum.

Photomontage and Signification

As Jula Dech notes, "Every beholder can see a different picture in Hannah Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*" (Figure 2.3).[16] Maud Lavin, for example, interprets *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* as "a Dadaist manifesto on the politics of Weimar society," one that "assigns women a catalytic role in the opposition between a revolutionary Dada world associated with Karl Marx and the anti-Dada world of the politically compromised President Friedrich Ebert."[17] For Lavin, the various images of new women in the photomontage, its different and specific representations of female dancers, film stars, and

artists, signify "female pleasure" and "liberation" and function as "utopian elements" that dissolve the Weimar Republic's traditional hierarchies.[18] Because of the fragmentation of its source images, however, as well as certain rather sinister juxtapositions, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* also signifies violence.[19] Thus, as a whole, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*—like Höch's other Weimar photomontages—focuses largely on the new woman to create a dialectic between "anger and pleasure and, for the [female] viewer, an oscillation between ironic distance and intimate identification."[20]

Central to Lavin's reading of Höch's photomontage is the pairing of the leaping body of the dancer Niddy Impekoven, her hands extended above her, with the head of Käthe Kollwitz, the left-wing artist and political activist, who, at the age of fifty-two, had just become the first female professor at the Prussian Academy of Arts, at that time one of the most important art schools in Germany (Figure 2.4).[21] For Lavin, this pairing, in an open area of space slightly below and to the left of the photomontage's center, suggests an ironic tribute to both figures—the older expressionist artist and the fragile, childlike dancer, whose lithe, androgynous body was quickly becoming a new ideal of feminine beauty.[22] By linking the young dancer, with her associations of female corporeal pleasure, to the mature artist, who had broken the gender barrier that kept female professors out of the German art academy, this hybrid figure suggests the revolutionary power of women's actions in the new republic. In addition, however, the pairing, which leaves Kollwitz's head clearly separated from Impekoven's body, also evokes anger and violence. Because of this separation, the hybrid figure can be read as a critique of Weimar German society, which, the figure implies, continues to separate a woman's mind from her body, emphasizing the latter at the expense of the former.

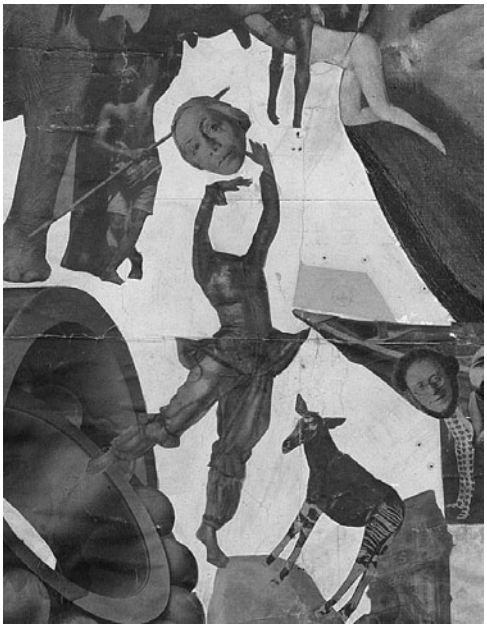


Figure 2.4. Hannah Höch, *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* [Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany] (1919–20) (detail). Photograph from Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY. Copyright 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

For Hanne Bergius, on the other hand, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* is not specifically focused on the new woman. Rather, its themes are more general: human hybridity,[23] the transformation of social bonds through the mass media,[24] and the metamorphosis of the physical world into a shifting play of forces[25]—all subjects, one might add, that have been associated with the cyborg, despite the fact that Bergius never uses the term. Although Bergius emphasizes that there is no dominant fragment or "initial image" in the photomontage, and that the "viewer's first impression is that of an unconnected mass of numerous images and quotations," her eye quickly fixes on the "striking" head of the young Einstein in the photomontage's top left quadrant.[26] For the Dadaists, Bergius argues, Einstein's theory of relativity, which dissolved matter into a sequence of events, was a primary point of reference for the photomontage's overall structure as a vast and complex "simultaneous montage," a constellation of photomechanically reproduced photographic fragments that represent the physical world as a dynamic play of forces. Characteristic of the simultaneous montage of *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* are the various disproportions or mismatches in size and viewing angle between the different photomontage fragments. As a result of these mismatches and the overall nonhierarchical composition, every person and object represented seems "to be the function of another thing," the relation between things becomes "a fundamental component of their existence," and reality becomes "a relative, energetic quantity of many possibilities."[27] Not only does the play between empty spaces and clusters of photomontage elements create a sense that the composition might fluctuate or move, but natural and mechanical motions are shown to intermingle, and traumatic experience is suggested.[28]

Interestingly, for Bergius, Höch's representations of new women in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* are largely critical. Noting a key fragment that Lavin cites very positively—namely, a map of Europe in the photomontage's lower-right corner that delineates the countries in Europe where women had gained the right to vote—Bergius argues that the map instead signifies Höch's sense of "the contradictions between women's newly won right to vote, their politicization during the war, and the fact that they afterwards faded back into privacy during demobilization."[29] Instead of representing female liberation, the photomontage emphasizes the fact that women's "real integration into the work process failed to come."[30] Nor, for Bergius, is the new woman the dominant focus of the photomontage. In contrast to Lavin, Bergius holds that the work's central theme is the transformation of both people and the world into a play of forces that constantly reconfigures itself, a new state of being that the photomontage suggests is intimately bound up with the development of the mass media and which is reflected by the work's formal structure as a simultaneous montage.[31]

As suggested by these two interpretations of *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* the early Berlin Dada photomontages had multiple meanings that fluctuated depending on which clusters of fragments the viewer engaged. Works like *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* are so filled with different recognizable objects, and the groupings permit so many divergent configurations, that they cannot but support a multiplicity of distinct, sometimes conflicting readings. Furthermore, because they are so obviously edited and reassembled,

they impel their viewers to go beyond merely identifying and cataloging fragments to constructing overall interpretations that spell out the creator's possible "take" on his or her various subjects. Thus *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* simultaneously signifies the November Revolution, the revolutionary and repressive potentials of the new woman, the hybridization of human beings under the conditions of mass-reproduction, the capabilities of the mass media to both dissolve and reconstruct social reality, the trauma of World War I, and the new understanding of nature brought about by Einstein's theory of relativity. In addition, it is also "about" the various other interpretations that can be generated by linking different photomontage fragments in the image together. Because their component parts are so numerous and their compositions are without a main focus, the Berlin Dadaists' early photomontages necessitate constructing multiple interpretations and rejecting any sense of totality or the end of interpretation. Their all-over, nonhierarchical compositions empowered their original viewers to identify the elements that mattered the most to them, and by bringing them together, to reimagine their contemporary world.

Both the richness of and the disparities between the different interpretations supported by *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* also suggest quite strongly that Höch consciously composed her photomontage to create ambiguity and encourage multiple readings. By drawing the spectator's attention to the artificial and constructed nature of *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* Höch underscored the perspectival nature of her representation—the fact that it represented one particular viewpoint in a potentially much larger discursive field—thereby inviting dialogue. Other artists, Höch's photomontage suggests, could have used the same source materials to create radically different perspectives on the same people and events; for this reason, the viewer should not uncritically accept Höch's representation but analyze its various implications. Finally, the multiple and conflicting combinations of text and image that characterize Höch's strategy of composition destabilize the everyday and instrumental meanings of the worldly objects that *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* contains. After viewing Höch's photomontage, we perhaps see everyday objects in a different light. In these diverse ways, Höch's photomontage helps promote a "negative dialectics" between its photomontage fragments: a nonhierarchical relationship between elements that actively undermines any single reading or overarching interpretation.

As Adorno later defined it in relation to philosophy, negative dialectics is a method of associating concepts and the particulars that fall under them to show that the conceptual order does not exhaust the natures it subsumes. According to Adorno,

> The matters of true philosophical interest at this point in history are those in which Hegel, agreeing with tradition, expressed his disinterest. They are nonconceptuality, individuality, and particularity—things which ever since Plato used to be dismissed as transitory and insignificant. . . . A matter of urgency to the concept would be what it fails to cover, what its abstractionist mechanism eliminates, what is not already a case of the concept.[32]

As it functions visually in Höch's photomontage, negative dialectics results from juxtaposing photographic and textual fragments to produce ambiguity and, very importantly, to prevent reducing reality to the level of either photographic or written representation. By creating contradictory chains of metaphoric association to prevent the discovery of a single dominant reading, Höch's photomontage juxtapositions not only produce divergent interpretations but also preserve nature's difference from both photography and language. In other words, because the photographic and textual elements do not mesh seamlessly or constitute well-known concepts or objects, it is difficult for the photomontage's various spectators to think the combinations of fragments apart from the conflicting particulars they represent. In this way, the ambiguity and multivalence of reality is retained—a sense of the world as exceeding the various definitions that human beings bring to it.

A comparison to other photomontage strategies can make this point clearer. Although created somewhat earlier, the cabinet card advertisement for *Chrl. Tichy, Anotomisches Wunder* [Chrl. Tichy, Anatomical Wonder], probably from the 1880s or 1890s (Figure 2.5), presents a good example of the (more direct and clear) commercial photomontage strategy used since the second half of the nineteenth century. In this sepia-toned albumen print mounted on heavy cardstock, sixteen separate images of the subject, a professional contortionist, are presented in a stable, symmetrical, and vaguely pyramidal composition. A bust-length portrait of Tichy in a suit and tie appears in the lower center of the image, surrounded by fifteen shots of the costumed performer in action against a painted backdrop. While the central portrait suggests Tichy's normalcy and—through his costume and dignified bearing—intimates a proper bourgeois standing, the surrounding images, which depict him in a series of mostly frontal and side poses all shot from the same vantage point, reveal his unique talents. Blocks of text serve as titles and captions, thus helping explain or interpret the composite photograph. Tichy's name and profession appear in the center just above his portrait, and three additional rectangles of text, presenting two captions, are added toward the photograph's peripheries. The first reads "medical abnormality" and suggests the rareness or uniqueness of Tichy's act; the second states "doctor examined," which helps reassure the viewer that Tichy's strange contortions are not dangerous (and thus that it is not immoral to watch his act).

Designed to function as both an advertisement and a souvenir photograph for a circus or variety act, the cabinet card differs from Höch's photomontage in several important ways. First, the various images out of which *Chrl. Tichy, Anotomisches Wunder* is composed are all the same size and shape: they have not been cut up or fragmented in any way, and they are all of roughly the same type (i.e., they are all full-figure portraits). Unlike *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* the Tichy cabinet card does not divide or break up its subject, represent him as a hybrid figure by adding additional photomontage elements to his face or body, or cut together incongruous photographic material. In addition, the photographic elements are symmetrically arranged. They do not suggest an unstable and potentially shifting image field, as is the case with Höch's

Figure 2.5. *Chrl. Tichy, Anotomisches Wunder* [Chrl. Tichy, Anatomical Wonder] (ca. 1880–1900). Cabinet card (albumen print). Photographer unknown. Private collection.

representation. Second, the text in the Tichy card explains the photographic material and supports a fairly clear message as to the performer's identity and the nature of his act. A discernable difference in typeface distinguishes the title—the performer's name—from the various captions, which list his attributes. These characteristics stand in clear contrast to the use of text in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* where the partial sentences, words, and letters are ambiguous and multiply interpretations. Third, the Tichy card is seamless. Instead of emphasizing its cuts, which is the case with Höch's photomontage, the mode of construction characteristic of the Tichy card covers over the disruptive aspects of its montage structure. Rather than paste together separate images, the creator of the Tichy photograph simply rephotographed a collection of existing photographs that had been affixed to an undifferentiated background (the tacks can still be seen throughout the image). And because it was produced through a less-disturbing strategy of photomontage construction, the Tichy image calls much less attention to its mode of making.

Downplaying the self-reflexivity of its photomontage medium, the Tichy card strives for strong impact and clear communication. The juxtapositions of photographic elements, though striking, do not call into question the nature of the subject that they represent, and the text, likewise, bolsters Tichy's identity instead of undermining it. Rather than challenge the spectator's assumption that his or her everyday understandings of "the human body," "contortionists," "variety acts," "medical abnormalities," and "doctor examined" can adequately comprehend and categorize the images and texts combined in the composite representation, the cabinet card instead confirms and mobilizes these everyday concepts to incite a desire to consume what is represented (by, in this case, either patronizing Tichy's act, reliving the experience through the memory, or buying the card and experiencing his act in a mediated fashion through a photographic representation). Obeying the fundamental principles of effective advertising, *Chrl. Tichy, Anotomisches Wunder* helps stabilize an existing conceptual horizon to derive profit from it—a strategy that Höch's photomontage clearly eschews. As the Tichy card thus reminds us, although Höch's photomontage technique was influenced by print advertising, it remained fundamentally at odds with its overall strategies and goals.

Rosalind Krauss's distinction between Dada photomontage and surrealist photography helps further clarify Höch's negatively dialectical compositional strategies. For Krauss, the fundamental difference between Dada photomontages such as *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* and surrealist photographs such as those created by Man Ray, Hans Bellmer, André Kertész, and Jacques-André Boiffard among others has to do with how each group respectively mobilized the indexical aspects of their photographic source material, that is, the photograph's causal connection to that which it represents or, to put it another way, its nature as an imprint taken from the real, like a fingerprint, a footprint, or a water ring left by a cold glass on a table.[33] The obvious cuts and jarring juxtapositions of the Dadaist photomontages, on the one hand, robbed their photographic sources of their compelling reality or presence, and demonstrate the Dadaist strategy of employing photographs like parts of language to construct obviously artificial

(and readable) interpretations of reality. By thus injecting writing into reality through photomontage, the Dadaists revealed, to use Sergei Tretyakov's terms, not the simple social facts depicted in the photographs but the social tendencies expressed by those facts. The surrealists, on the other hand, tended to eschew photomontage, preferring instead other photographic manipulations such as radical cropping, the staging of people and objects, negative printing, multiple exposure, mirror manipulations, solarization (the inversion of photographic values through light exposure during processing), photograms (the contact printing of objects on photographic paper to create abstract and semi-abstract images), and *brûlage* (the burning of the photographic emulsion). They did this to preserve the presence of their photographic representations and thereby to employ the indexical power of photographs to present reality as a shifting representation or written sign.[34] In other words, instead of constructing an obviously artificial interpretation of reality (which argued for a particular truth) as did the Dadaists, the surrealists attempted to represent the world as permeated by the same shifting play of presence and absence that characterized the experience of the meaning of written language. Surrealist photographs, as Krauss puts it, "are not *interpretations* of reality, decoding it, as in Heartfield's photomontages. They are presentations of that very reality as configured, or coded, or written," and thus "what unites *all* surrealist production is precisely this experience of nature as representation, physical matter as writing."[35]

As suggested by Krauss's distinction, photomontages such as *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* employed montage to construct obviously artificial interpretations of the world. The Dadaists were less concerned than the surrealists with using photography to evoke an actual experience of the uncanniness of reality (which was accomplished by altering photographs while preserving a strong sense of their indexical character) and more concerned with using photography to produce a legible statement about the multiple and changing nature of the real. In short, Dadaist photomontage, in Krauss's view, was more didactic than poetic. Although Krauss's distinction between Dadaist photomontage and surrealist photography is important, it misses, I think, certain central characteristics of Dadaist practice. In the first place, Krauss does not distinguish between different forms of Dadaist photomontage—the early all-over form, for example, from the later, more hierarchical and focused compositional strategy or, for that matter, both these forms from the much clearer and more propagandistic strategy Heartfield used after 1920 (a strategy that still distinguished itself from contemporaneous advertising through its greater irony and ambiguity). In addition, Krauss's theorization does not examine the type of message that the Dadaists were attempting to communicate. For the most part, their strategies of photomontage juxtaposition were radically ambiguous and thus, in distinction to Heartfield's later photomontage work, not always (or even generally) politically didactic. In addition, as I have already shown, they did not so much eliminate the photograph's indexical character as de-emphasize it to play the photograph's indexical aspects off its iconic and symbolic characteristics, a dialectic designed to provoke viewers to compare the world as the mass media depicted it to both the realities they experienced in their lives and the possibilities they could

imagine. The Dadaists, in other words, did not get rid of the photograph's indexical qualities so much as integrate them into a dialectic with both reality and human imagination. And the reason that they did this was because of their interest in depicting their contemporary moment and their focus on the burgeoning mass media.

The Weimar Republic

As numerous historians have argued, the Weimar Republic, although lasting only fourteen years, is a tremendously difficult period to describe or evaluate.[36] Beginning with Germany's defeat at the end of World War I and the abdication of the German kaiser, the Weimar Republic remained a compromise solution for most Germans throughout its existence, a much-maligned social, political, and economic settlement between ideologically opposed parties of the left, right, and center. Initially, it held tremendous promise. Germans developed their first dual-system parliamentary democracy as well as a surprisingly farsighted constitution that defined the basic rights and obligations of a modern and democratic welfare state. Women achieved the right to vote, a few advances were made in the material conditions of the working class, and while the modernization of both society and industry was allowed to proceed, some of its worst consequences were avoided or at least mitigated. In addition, progressive ideas about gender, sexuality, education, and race gained some influence in the public sphere, and there was a genuine flourishing of both "high" and "mass" culture.

But these years were also a time of great instability and dislocation. Periodic economic crises resulted from substantial foreign debt, runaway hyperinflation, and massive unemployment. Political crises developed in the form of party polarization and frequent shifts in government, the rise of political violence (with the concomitant growth of paramilitary armies linked to the various parties), foreign occupation, and the Right's eventual takeover of the democratic government through legal and extralegal means. There were also frequent complaints about the growth of nihilism and consumerism in the population. With the continuing migration of German citizens from the countryside into urban centers, traditional social ties loosened, and, with the added pressures of cyclical unemployment and inflation, a cynical "dog eat dog" attitude emerged that undermined the social fabric from within. As the economy deteriorated, the old forms of racism and discrimination became more prevalent and virulent again, bringing fear and instability in their wake. For these reasons, by the time Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party took over the reins of power, a significant number of Germans were not unhappy that the existing system was coming to an end.

It is thus not difficult to see why the cyborg was frequently used by the Berlin Dadaists (and, later, other German cultural producers) to represent and analyze the unique time in German history in which they lived. A contradictory figure evoking the great possibilities and dangers that characterized the Weimar Republic as well as the interconnection of even the most opposed areas of society in an overarching and only imperfectly understood technological network, the cyborg mirrored its violent,

innovative, and rapidly modernizing moment. Moreover, because it could also be used as a framework to examine how the rise of mass media was transforming human perception, it could also serve as an "aggregator" for the various discourses on how human sense perception was changing in the contemporary moment.

As Detlev J. K. Peukert argued, Weimar Germany represented "the crisis of classical modernity": the culmination of a moment between the 1890s and the 1930s, when the main modern ideas and movements achieved their breakthrough and, almost immediately, became uncertain.[37] Writing in 1987, Peukert defined classical modernity as

> the form of fully fledged industrialized society that has been with us from the turn of the century until the present day. In an economic sense, modernity is characterized by highly rationalized industrial production, complex technological infrastructures and a substantial degree of bureaucratized administrative and service activity; food production is carried out by an increasingly small, but productive, agricultural sector. Socially speaking, its typical features include the division of labor, wage and salary discipline, an urbanized environment, extensive educational opportunities and a demand for skills and training. As far as culture is concerned, media products dominate; continuity with traditional aesthetic principles and practices in architecture and the visual and other creative arts is broken, and is replaced by unrestricted formal experimentation. In intellectual terms, modernity marks the triumph of western rationality, whether in social planning, the expansion of the sciences or the self-replicating dynamism of technology, although this optimism is accompanied by skeptical doubts from social thinkers and cultural critics.[38]

As a paramount figure fitting this view of "classical modernity" as a time of radical and ongoing crisis, the cyborg appealed to the Berlin Dadaists and, eventually, Weimar cultural producers of all political stripes. In it they saw the outlines of their increasingly specialized, bureaucratized, and technologically mediated society. Furthermore, the cyborg's violent and monstrous connotations confirmed and possibly also assuaged their deepest fears by suggesting that the constant appearance of the unnatural was a "normal"—potentially everyday—aspect of modern life. The cyborg potentially taught the Dadaists to live in hope despite violence or, perhaps, to live in hope through and because of violence. And the cyborg's eventual ubiquity in Weimar culture was a function of the fact that it became a figure onto which many different Germans could so resolutely project themselves.

The Rise of the Mass Media in Weimar Germany

Another reason why the cyborg was so common in Dada art was that it was the perfect reflexive figure: a type that allowed the Berlin Dadaists to think formally and critically about the new montage media out of which they often constructed their cyborgian images. As suggested by *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* Höch's appropriative de- and

reassembling of her social and cultural moment, photomontage introduced new kinds of reflexivity into German art. By promoting institutional critique, photomontages encouraged Germans to question and investigate the roles that art played in their society. In addition, photomontages, because they were created through appropriating mass-reproduced images, also provoked Germans to examine the new forms of the mass media as well as the messages transmitted. The Weimar Republic, after all, was that moment of German history in which a truly modern mass culture was initially developed. It was here that film, radio, illustrated books, newspapers, and magazines first achieved a mass breakthrough; although spending levels could never match those of the United States, there was also a developing consumer and leisure culture, particularly in advertising and the media.[39] A figure through which the Dadaists could examine the growth of Germany's society of the spectacle, the cyborg became increasingly the choice in this highly self-conscious moment.

There are many ways in which the cyborg represented the new mass subject—the consumer and target of the new modes of communication and entertainment—that developed during the Weimar Republic. Because it revealed how technologies could function as prosthetics that augmented human perception, for example, the cyborg can be seen as a figure that announces the rise of radio broadcasting. Radio developed rapidly during the 1920s. The first radio broadcast in Germany took place on October 29, 1923, between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m., when the Berlin Funk-Stunde transmitted a mixture of recordings and live recitals, consisting of instrumental solos and vocal performances, to what was at most a few thousand radios.[40] The following year, there were more than a half million registered radio subscribers, and the number of registered sets rose by nearly a half million each subsequent year: over one million by 1925, more than two million by 1928, above three million by 1929, and in excess of four million by 1932.[41] The amount of time radio stations spent on the air also increased rapidly, and by 1931 the various stations were broadcasting an average of fifteen hours per day.[42] Consisting of eight regional companies (which began operating between October 1923 and October 1924) and one national company, the Deutsche Welle, which started transmitting in January 1926, German radio was not a private enterprise, as it was in the United States, but a curious mixture between a capitalist business and a profit-restricted public enterprise, controlled by the state.[43]

Dominated as it was by the state, German radio was, unlike the German press, above party politics, and in distinction to German film production, not subject to foreign influence. In addition, because each station was granted a monopoly in its particular area, there was no competition between producers as was the case in the other media.[44] As a result, radio broadcasting was much more strictly and powerfully controlled by public authorities than any other mass medium of the time, and its programming—which included classical and popular music; lectures and readings; radio plays; social, political, cultural, and sports reportage; and specialized programming directed toward women and children—was much more uniform.[45] As Karl Christian Führer has argued, because of the bourgeois pedagogical philosophies of its most important

leaders, German radio operated according to a strategy of "defensive modernization."[46] Its leaders, in other words, sought to employ modern technologies to stabilize the status quo by using radio programming for aesthetic education; thereby they hoped to educate German listeners to become better subjects and citizens through an audio diet of high culture and uplifting programming.[47] As a result, German radio was dominated by bourgeois taste throughout the Weimar Republic and its consumption remained a largely middle-class phenomenon.[48] In addition, because of the high cost of radio sets (particularly those required to pick up long-distance airwave signals) and the placement of radio transmitters in large population centers, radio listening was primarily confined to urban milieus.[49]

Although these state-dominated, urban, passive, and bourgeois-reformist characteristics of radio programming might have inspired the creative critical resistance of the Berlin Dadaists had they heard it, radio was too much in its infancy during Dada's heyday for this to be the case. At the same time, although no official German radio station existed in 1920, when Höch had (largely) finished *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* there was a significant group of amateur "ham radio" operators *[Funkbastler],* who reportedly numbered in the tens of thousands.[50] In retrospect, this subculture, which represented a much more active form of radio listener, stands in sharp contrast to the official and passive population of radio listeners that would soon form, and in 1920, the *Funkbastler* might have suggested to Höch that radio could be an interactive and creative phenomenon, something that the existence of the wireless telegraph might also have implied.[51] As I have already shown, Hausmann used the figure of the cyborg as early as 1920 to imagine the synthesis of human beings with audio technologies. His line drawing *Heimatklänge,* a disturbing combination of a human head and a phonographic body that shouts "hurra! hurraa! hurraaa!" and was published in *Der Dada* 3 (Figure 1.8), demonstrates that the Dadaists acknowledged the nationalistic uses of the new means of audio mass communication, applications that began during World War I. In addition, in light of Hausmann's drawing, it may not be too far-fetched to suggest that the aerial views that Höch included in many of her photomontages—as well as the figures that she depicts floating through or hovering in space—suggest the transmission of the human voice and consciousness through the air in a manner reminiscent of radio waves. Although these aerial views and floating figures connote flight as much as they do radio transmissions, radio's growing presence, with both positive and negative connotations, can perhaps be found in a number of her representations.[52]

Cinema, it seems, had a greater impact on the Dadaists. Not only did Hausmann compare photomontage to cinema in his writings, but a cinematic iconography also began to appear in the works of several of the Berlin Dadaists.[53] Heartfield, moreover, is reported to have worked as a set designer for "trick" or special effects films at Grünbaum-Film in Berlin-Weissensee between 1917 and 1920, and Heartfield and Grosz also appear to have collaborated on propaganda, advertising, cartoon, and trick films for Universum Film A.G. (UFA, which was then known as BUFA) from 1917, during the first year of the company's existence as a propaganda machine controlled by the Army

High Command, until the beginning of 1919—projects that, despite the fact that they are no longer extant, all speak to the importance of cinema for the Berlin Dadaists.[54] Among the reasons for their interest in film were no doubt the speedy artistic and technical advances made by the new medium as well as its rapid growth after about 1910. (The number of movie theaters in Germany, for example, grew from around 1,000 in 1910 to 2,446 in 1914.)[55] Furthermore, by the time Berlin Dada began at the end of World War I, German cinema was entering one of its most exciting moments.[56] During the war, a ban was imposed on foreign films, depriving German theaters of their primary product, and, in the wake of this prohibition, several major German film production companies were formed, including Deutsche Lichtbild-Gesellschaft (DLG), to produce educational and advertising films extolling Germany industries, and UFA, which became the most significant German film company of the Weimar Republic, a massive "vertically integrated" conglomerate that controlled production, distribution, and exhibition.[57] As a result of these transformations and the attraction that the new industry held for many creative Germans, German film flowered both commercially and artistically in the immediate postwar period. By 1918 there were 2,299 movie theaters in the Reich; by 1919 the number was 2,836; and by 1920, 3,731.[58] New major film companies were founded, including Emelka, Terra, Decla-Bioscop, Deulig (a transformed DLG), and National.[59] By 1919, Germany, which imported most of its films prior to 1914, had become the major film producer in Europe and was second only to the United States in terms of the quantity of its productions.[60]

From its very beginnings, Weimar cinema was extremely heterogeneous and stylistically eclectic. Despite today's scholarly image of German film in the 1920s as authorial, highbrow, psychological, and artistically complex, only a few of the feature films made in Germany at the time conform to this model of classical Weimar cinema.[61] While significant works were produced, in general much more light entertainment and kitsch appeared on German screens, and, in addition, beginning in the early 1920s, German motion pictures had to once again compete for their audience with foreign products, in particular American slapstick comedies. Adding to the heterogeneity of German film in the 1910s and 1920s was the fact that German filmmakers developed and worked in various genres, including horror (for which Weimar cinema is perhaps best known), the historical pageant (whose historical narrative was often used to comment on the contemporary moment), the "educational film" (which treated sexuality and other tabooed topics), the literary adaptation (which was based on a preexisting literary work), the "chamber drama" (which used a small cast and limited setting to dramatize psychological conflicts), the "mountain film" (which pitted man against nature), the "street film" (which explored the working-class milieu), the "silent musical comedy" (to which popular music was played as an accompaniment), as well as a host of other generic types such as comedies, romances, melodramas, detective films, adventure serials, science fiction movies, and even fake westerns.[62] Industrial and advertising films were also produced, and, in terms of style, Weimar cinema appropriated several different artistic forms including expressionism, *Neue Sachlichkeit,* and socialist

realism. In addition, the realism and compelling narrative qualities of classical Hollywood cinema also had an important effect on German filmmaking—and not simply because American film companies began to establish a presence in Germany after 1925. For these various reasons, it is thus difficult to determine which characteristics of Weimar cinema attracted the Dadaists the most—or, for that matter, how uncritically enthusiastic they were about the new medium. Because Weimar cinema was a mass medium that required huge amounts of labor and capital, German filmmakers were under pressure to remain politically neutral so as to appeal to the greatest number of moviegoers. As a result, the German film industry tended to eschew politics or at least to hide it, a practice that tended at the very least to support the status quo and that often resulted in various forms of camouflaged conservatism.[63] As Siegfried Kracauer's well-known analysis of German film reminds us, even the masterpieces of Weimar cinema can be read as revealing a hidden authoritarianism—a social and psychological tendency that the Dadaists attempted to combat through their art.[64]

To generalize from what the Dadaists wrote about film, cinema was one of the inspirations for their development of photomontage.[65] In particular, it helped them understand the power and possibilities of photographic montage, which, as Hausmann argued in 1931, was a strategy that allowed the Dadaists "to use the material of photography to combine heterogeneous, often contradictory structures, figurative and spatial, into a new whole that was in effect a mirror image wrenched from the chaos of war and revolution, as new to the eye as it was to the mind."[66] Cinema, in other words, revealed the power of photographic montage to fragment and reassemble reality—a process that not only mirrored the revolutionary postwar moment but also allowed its practitioners to comment on their new reality and to imagine new forms of individual and collective existence emerging within it. In addition, it is probable that the Dadaists appreciated cinema for its working-class associations, its anarchic aspects (especially as revealed through the films of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton), and perhaps also for its burgeoning ability to constitute a spectator by evoking points of view through narrative identification and subjective camerawork. Finally, because films sutured together divergent viewpoints, the Dadaists also probably appreciated cinema as a training ground for a new type of perceptual consciousness, one that could tolerate—even appreciate—competing perspectives. Thus, in general, as suggested by their photomontage practices, they valued cinema's possibilities for fantasy and criticism, for disrupting the social and political status quo, and for creating new modes of visual perception—as opposed to its more univocal, authoritarian, and (classically) narrative aspects. As I argue in the next chapter through analyses of Hausmann's *Self-Portrait of the Dadasoph* (1920) (Figure 3.2) and other photomontages, the cyborg was a figure that allowed the Dada artists to imagine how cinema affected representation and perception. This photomontage, which uses the iconography of film ambiguously, suggests that the Dada artists were well aware of cinema's potential to both expand and control consciousness.

Despite the impact of cinema on the Dadaists, however, it was print journalism—in particular the illustrated newspapers and magazines from which they made their

photomontages—that probably had the biggest influence on their work. Newspapers and magazines were still the dominant form of mass communication in Germany throughout the 1920s, reaching a larger audience than either film or radio.[67] In 1866 there were about 1,500 newspapers, of which 300 were dailies. By 1900 their number had risen to 3,500; by 1914 there were more than 4,200 papers, of which slightly less than half appeared at least six times a week.[68] The number of newspapers had dropped slightly to 3,689 by 1919–20, although it rose again by the mid-1920s.[69] According to one contemporary source, in 1928 there were 3,356 daily political newspapers in Germany as well as 10,297 periodicals, a number that included fashion magazines, political and literary reviews, almanacs, professional and trade journals, scientific publications, and the like.[70] In terms of specialization, there were newspapers for every region and every political orientation throughout the nineteenth century, and, during the second half of that century, mass circulation newspapers—which emphasized mass tastes and local news, and which contained extensive advertising sections to keep subscriptions low—became more and more popular.[71] Around the turn of the century, tabloids began to appear: newspapers geared toward street sales, which broke with the subscription-based sales model followed by the majority of nineteenth-century German newspapers.[72] These papers, which increased rapidly in popularity before World War I, were even more sensational and declamatory than the mass-circulation newspapers, and, like their predecessors, they were heavily dependent on advertising.[73]

As Modris Eksteins has argued, "The most striking features of the German press on the eve of the First World War were its abundance, its decentralization, and its growing commercialization and politicization"—features that, despite certain changes, also characterized the press during the Weimar Republic.[74] The experience of World War I created a public hungry for breaking news, and, as a result, more and more high-circulation special editions were sold on the street.[75] Although papers that sought a mass audience began to renounce their explicit political allegiances during the Weimar Republic so as not to alienate their advertisers, the much-heralded "depolitization" of the press during that time was actually something of a misnomer. In the 1920s German papers remained political in that journalists were encouraged to express opinions and make judgments in their stories,[76] and papers began to support political tendencies as opposed to parties.[77] Because the majority of these "nonpolitical" Weimar newspapers tended to express the popular dissatisfaction with the current situation as well as a longing for an ideal national community (sometimes projected onto an idealized past), depolitization often resulted in a political shift to the right.[78] Only the Social Democrats, the Communists, and (later) the National Socialists possessed a centrally directed party press, and these papers suffered in terms of circulation because they emphasized national politics over local issues and were also far less entertaining.[79]

The addition of photographs also radically transformed the mass appeal of newspapers and magazines. Although the first illustrated magazines in Europe date from the late eighteenth century, it was the nineteenth century that witnessed the rise of the popular illustrated periodical—initially fashion magazines and, by midcentury, weekly

pictorial newspapers such as *The Illustrated London News* (1842), *L'Illustration* (Paris, 1843), the *Illustrirte Zeitung* (Leipzig, 1843), *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (New York, 1855), and *Harper's Weekly* (New York, 1857).[80] Generally illustrated by means of end-grain woodcuts (produced from drawings and, slightly later, photographs), these papers and newsmagazines proved immensely popular, and they helped engender a mass audience made up of a range of social classes as well as enfranchise a new group of working-class readers. Before the development of the halftone process between the late 1870s and the 1890s, newspaper and magazine illustrations were created through several different methods including lithography, woodcut engraving, and copper plate engraving. New techniques, such as photogravure, photolithography, collographic printing, and the Woodburytype, became popular in the 1870s and 1880s for printing photographs in magazines and books; however, these techniques, like the ones mentioned above, could not be used with type and thus required that image and text remain on separate pages or for the page to be printed twice in order to combine them.[81] With the advent of halftone engraving, however, photographs and texts could finally be printed together; as a result, printing time was reduced, as were printing costs.[82] Daily newspapers started regularly publishing photographs around 1900, and rotogravure, the printing of text and image in massive rotating presses, which was introduced in the early 1900s, allowed halftone illustrations to be printed at an extremely rapid rate. As a result of these developments, illustrated newspapers proliferated during the first decades of the twentieth century.[83]

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also witnessed rapid changes in photographic technologies. The dry plate process of Dr. Richard Leach Maddox, celluloid negatives, orthocromatic film, exposure calculators, anastigmatic lenses, handheld cameras, new forms of shutters, new types of printing papers, flash powder, and the science of sensitometry, which were all developed by the early 1900s, allowed for photographs to be taken more easily and rapidly as well as in places where it was previously too difficult to obtain an image. These innovations, along with the burgeoning of amateur photography since the 1880s, led to the increased production of—and demand for—instantaneous photographs of life: candid images of fleeting events (everyday and historical) that prepared the ground for photojournalism.[84] In addition, phototelegraphy, the telegraphic transmitting of photographic images, was first put into use in 1907, thus making photographs even more readily (and quickly) available for publication.[85] For these various reasons, after World War I, press illustration became largely photographic.[86]

The interwar period was the beneficiary of these various developments. As scholars have noted, the Weimar Republic represents a moment in which the modern language of photojournalism was first developed, where newspaper and magazine layout became a significant form of creative endeavor, where the photograph became a primary mode of communication (as opposed to merely an addendum to the text), and where much thought was devoted to analyzing these transformations.[87] Magazines and illustrated newspapers, it was argued, promoted a new form of reading that was impatient,

distracted, and tailored to a life on the go.[88] This was a mode of reception in which, for better or for worse, bits of reading time were snatched amid other activities—on the tram, for example, during a lunch break, or after dinner. As a result, reading materials became more visual, fragmented, and emphatic, thereby beginning a development in which changes in reading habits and changes in material culture mutually reinforced one another and contributed to lasting transformations in how ordinary Germans received and processed information. Periodical covers, for example, were changed to address the new, supposedly less attentive reader. Whereas before the war they had featured tasteful (often drawn) illustrations, single posterlike photographs began to be used more and more during the Weimar Republic, with a prominent series title above the image to lodge the periodical brand in the reader's consciousness and a caption below it to explain its significance. Articles, moreover, were becoming shorter and increasingly broken up by illustrations, photographs, and captions. In addition, there was less pressure to ensure that the images were always closely connected with the texts. Now, instead of directly illustrating something that was written, it was considered sufficient if the images at times functioned as amplifications of the article and represented aspects of the subject to which the text only alluded. Images, furthermore, became the primary means of communicating meaning—although few believed that they could function easily without some text—and it was argued that more and more a predominantly visual mode of understanding the world was coming to the fore.

As I argue over the next three chapters, the Dada artists associated the cyborg with this new more "distracted" consumption of conjunctions of images and texts that characterized the experience of reading the illustrated magazines and newspapers—a mode of perception that was strongly debated. Kracauer, for example, argued in 1927 that the illustrated newspapers, whose aim was "the complete reproduction of the world accessible to the photographic apparatus," promoted a profound loss of historical understanding.[89] Because they merely represented topical subjects wrenched out of their original contexts and juxtaposed without being given a new, historically informed significance or structure, "the flood of photos sweeps away the dams of memory. . . . Never before has a period known so little about itself. In the hands of the ruling society, the invention of illustrated magazines is one of the most powerful means of organizing a strike against understanding."[90] Benjamin, on the other hand, argued in 1936 that the distracted mode of perception that characterized the experience of film, illustrated magazines, and architecture was potentially revolutionary.[91] It was a mode of perception that was tactile (as opposed to optical), habitual, and collective, and as such it was much more suited to the new tasks that confronted human awareness at turning points of history such as Benjamin believed his own moment to be. Although Benjamin never explained how this not-fully-conscious form of perception allowed human beings to achieve revolutionary consciousness, he clearly defined how distracted perception helped mobilize the masses and condition human beings to the increased threats to life and limb characteristic of modern life, a conditioning that it achieved by exposing human beings to the shock effects of montage. For the Dadaists, it seemed, the

distracted mode of viewing promoted by modern media was a mixed bag, a mode of perception that could be used for both revolutionary and reactionary ends.

But how, specifically, did the Dadaists conceptualize this experience of distracted perception? And how did this understanding affect their practices of photomontage? The *BIZ* provides a good example of the reading experience to which the Dadaists were in part reacting through their photomontages—and not simply because it was the illustrated newspaper from which a few of them, and in particular Höch, appropriated photomontage fragments. First started in 1892, and taken over in 1894 by the Ullstein Verlag, the publishing company for which Höch worked in the late 1910s and the early 1920s, the *BIZ* was the most popular weekly illustrated newspaper in Germany during the Weimar Republic.[92] Since the late nineteenth century it regularly published photographs of a wide variety of subjects including contemporary political and social events, the lives of politicians and celebrities, war and other forms of social and political unrest, natural catastrophes, foreign lands and people, scenes from popular films and theatrical productions, new technologies (particularly those of flight and other forms of modern transportation), and, very importantly, all forms of modern life (and, in particular, those appearing with increasing frequency on the streets of large German cities). Its articles were generally short and interspersed with photographs, illustrations, and captions that broke up and amplified the blocks of printed text. It also published poetry and serialized novels, and it had regular advertising and humor sections. Although it is commonly thought to be a newsmagazine, it did not present an overall account of the news of each week; rather, its coverage was determined by the interest and appeal of its visual materials. As Kurt Korff, the editor in chief from 1905 to 1933, explained, "The *BIZ* adopted the editorial principle that all events should be presented in pictures with an eye to the visually dramatic and excluding everything that is visually uninteresting. It was not the importance of the material that determined the selection and acceptance of pictures, but solely the allure of the photo itself."[93] Moreover, according to Ullstein's own promotional literature, the press emphasized the contemporaneousness or up-to-dateness of its pictures, the need to retouch nearly all its photographs to strengthen their visual impact, and the importance of mixing different forms of visual media to promote variety and reader interest.[94] The *BIZ* was thus in many ways a central medium through which the German public was exposed to the new and developing practices of photomontage—here understood in a broad sense as juxtaposing photographs with texts and other forms of illustrative materials. Despite its emphasis on visual communication, juxtaposing words with images, and breaking up and shortening blocks of text, however, the *BIZ* layout was for the most part designed so as to smooth over the dislocations produced by its strategies of montage. The experience of simultaneously viewing and reading was intended to be new and exciting, but, like the *BIZ*'s advertisements, it was also expected to be easily intelligible and not radically transformative of the status quo.

Significantly, as suggested by the following brief inventory of articles and photomontages that appeared in 1919, the *BIZ* also published features that were self-reflexive,

that promoted visual literacy, and that taught its growing audience about the new forms of optical communication being introduced by the mass press. The cover of the February 16 issue, for example, stressed the new speed of information delivery. It depicted newspapers being unloaded from a two-cockpit biplane, with a caption that noted that the *BZ am Mittag*, another Ullstein publication, was the first newspaper to be delivered regularly in this way.[95] An article from August 17, on the other hand, instructed readers on "the art of instantaneous photography," detailing all the considerations that went into creating successful candid images of modern life.[96] Underwater lights and observation tools were featured in a November 9 article on new technological developments; the profession and technical tricks of newspaper photographers and their contributions to "a change in our way of thinking away from abstract speculation and towards the 'scientific objectivity' of concrete observation" were discussed on December 14; and a brief history of newspapers' roles in fostering crime prevention, world exploration, technological advance, economic growth, political engagement, democracy, bureaucratic reform, and public works was printed on December 28.[97]

Contests for cash prizes were also used to promote visual literacy, their puzzles designed to encourage readers to engage with and comprehend the new ways to combine photographs and texts. A Christmas contest announced on December 28, 1919, for example, awarded cash prizes to viewers who could identify six people or objects photographed from above (Figure 2.6).[98] The answers—a photographer hunched over his camera, a soldier wearing an assault helmet, a fireman wearing a smoke helmet, a coffee mill, a lantern, and an arc lamp—were all cyborgian or technological subjects. A contest announced on July 5, 1925, on the other hand, rewarded its viewers with cash prizes if they could successfully identify photographic fragments depicting partial faces of famous celebrities, including Chaplin, Dr. Hugo Eckener, Gerhard Hauptmann, Jack Dempsey, and Benito Mussolini (Figure 2.7).[99] This contest is particularly significant since it implies that—as photomontage developed during the Weimar Republic—an expectation arose in the popular press that at least a few readers could and would recall the identity of a represented person or object from a fragmentary image presented in a photomontage. It thus suggests that the Berlin Dadaists could assume that some of their viewers might remember the original subjects, meanings, and contexts depicted in the cut-up printed photographs used in the Dada photomontages and, furthermore, that they would call on these memories when interpreting the Dadaists' complex appropriationist works—an issue that has been vigorously debated in recent years.[100]

A somewhat earlier discussion of Dada art, published in the *BIZ* in October 1919, confirms this assumption. In an analysis of the new ". . . isms" or contemporary directions in painting, C. Sehn argued that

> "Dadaism" is the gallows humor of a perverse and confused epoch. The Dadaist does not paint everything in the picture, he also pastes in catalog clippings and labels, or hammers slices of bread or prunes onto it. He only wants these things for their mood values, as symbols, and as indications of his feelings and thoughts. The Dadaist may

Weihnachts-Preisrätsel

„Die Welt von oben gesehen"

Was stellen diese 6 Bilder dar?

Von oben, vom Luftschiff, vom Flugzeug aus, nehmen die Dinge eine ganz andere Gestalt an. Sie sehen wie breitgequetscht

Die Welt von oben gesehen. Was stellen diese Photographien dar? Bild 1.

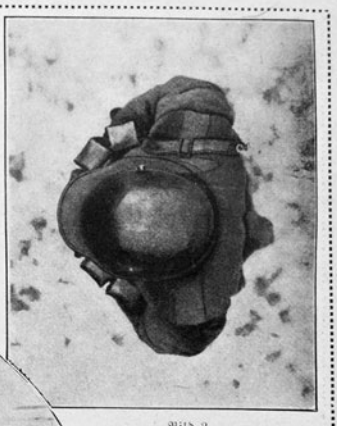


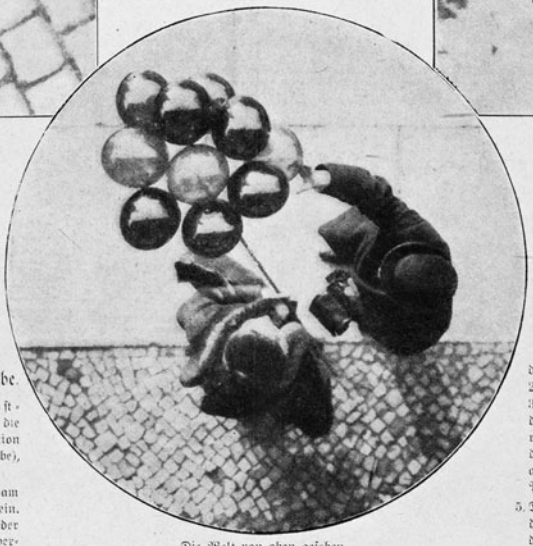
Bild 2.

aus. Können unsere Leser die hier abgebildeten photographischen Aufnahmen enträtseln? Auf die richtige Lösung dieser Preisaufgabe, also auf die Angabe, was jedes dieser sechs Bilder darstellt, setzen wir Preise aus von zusammen

1000 Mark.

Bedingungen zur Preisaufgabe.

1. Die Lösungen müssen auf Postkarten geschrieben sein und die Adresse tragen: An die Redaktion der „Illustrirten" (Preisaufgabe), Berlin SW, Kochstraße 22/26.
2. Alle Lösungen müssen spätestens am 20. Januar in unserem Besitz sein. Das Ergebnis wird in einer der darauffolgenden Nummern veröffentlicht werden.



Die Welt von oben gesehen. Ein Beispiel: Photographische Aufnahme einer Verkäuferin von Kinderballons.

3. Für die richtige Lösung setzen wir einen 1. Preis von 300 Mark, einen 2. Preis von 200 Mk., einen 3. Preis von 100 Mk. und nach Bedarf bis acht Trostpreise von je 50 Mk. aus.
4. Gehen mehrere richtige Lösungen ein, so werden die Preisträger durch das Los bestimmt, derart, daß aus allen richtigen Lösungen der zuerst Gezogene den Hauptpreis, der Zweite den 2. Preis, der dritte Gezogene den 3. Preis und die folgenden 8 Löser die Trostpreise erhalten. Gehen mehr richtige Lösungen ein, so müssen die durch das Los nicht Gezogenen sich auf mehr Glück bei einem späteren Preisausschreiben vertrösten.
5. Die einmal getroffene Entscheidung der Redaktion, der sich die Einsender durch ihre Beteiligung unterwerfen, ist auf alle Fälle endgültig.

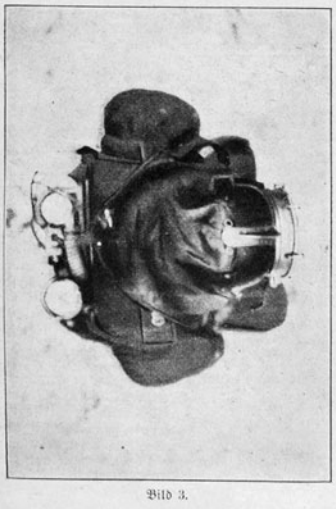
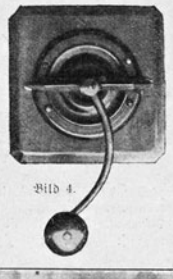


Bild 3.



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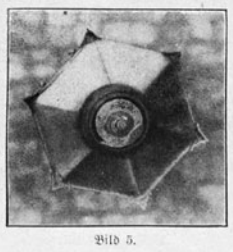

Bild 5.

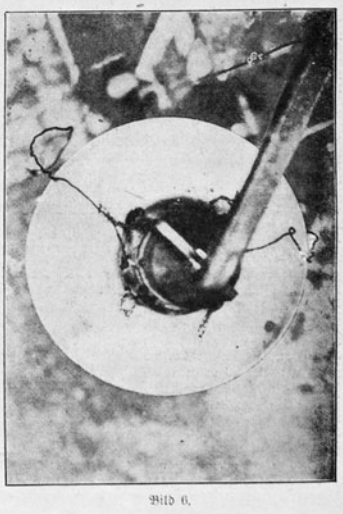

Bild 6.

Figure 2.6. *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* [Berlin Illustrated Newspaper] 28, no. 52 (December 28, 1919): 544. Title: "Christmas Prize Puzzle: The World as Seen from Above."

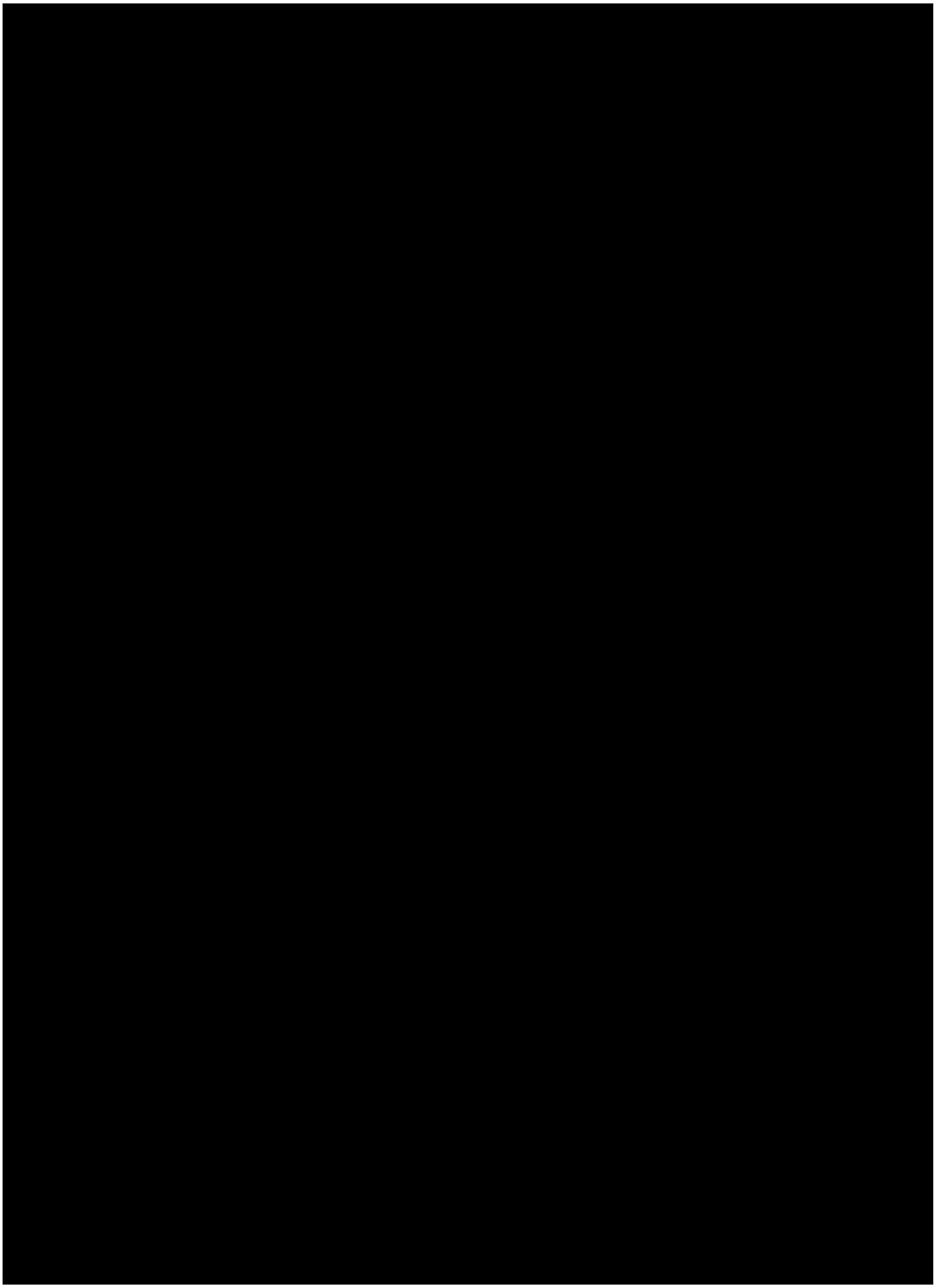

Figure 2.7. *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* [Berlin Illustrated Newspaper] 34, no. 27 (July 5, 1925): 846. Title: "Oh, These Children!"

> care to awaken in us the idea of a definite, possibly political reading. The suggestion of this atmosphere is achieved just as well, indeed perhaps better, by a pasted clipping from a certain newspaper, than by a painted copy. The Dadaist is in many instances a sharp-edged accuser and satirist.[101]

According to this fairly sympathetic interpretation of Dada art, the Dadaists appropriated objects and printed photographs for their connotative and symbolic meanings. Their intention was to accuse, to satirize, and to encourage political interpretations of the subjects that they represented. For this reason, Sehn suggests, the Dadaists had to rely on their viewers to recognize the fragmentary subjects and objects depicted in their source materials. The *BIZ*'s art critic thus does not indicate that audiences responded to the potential of Dada photomontage to negate meaning and the hitherto-existing tradition of art and, thereby, to inspire institutional critique. Instead, Sehn implies that the Dadaists' contemporaneous spectators would have read the Dada photomontages in much the same way as they would have read traditional forms of representational art. In terms of audience expectations, the component parts of Dadaist artworks still represented people, places, and ideas. At the same time, Sehn's emphasis on connotation through words like *mood, atmosphere, suggestion,* and *indications* also indicates that Dadaist forms of representation were less direct and emphatic than traditional forms of depiction (and thus perhaps targeted at a more distracted form of spectator).

As suggested by the specific montage strategies and self-reflexive tendencies of the *BIZ,* the Dadaists responded to the new modes of simultaneous seeing and reading promoted by the illustrated magazines and newspapers, and to some extent they incorporated forms and strategies derived from these new types of print journalism into their art. Contrary to the establishment press, however, the Dadaists used photomontage to encourage their spectators to employ their distracted modes of perception to dismantle the status quo and to reveal the hidden political agendas, social ideologies, and "ideal" psychological types that the mass media promulgated. Thus, although the Berlin Dadaists were in many ways inspired by the German culture industries, they also remained fundamentally opposed to them, seeking as they did to turn the strategies of mass communication and advertising against the mass media itself.

Cyborgs, Distraction, and the Blasé Attitude

The frequently heard argument during the Weimar Republic that the mass media promoted a new, more-distracted mode of perception points to an important protocyborgian concept of the subject developed in the years preceding World War I, which linked changes in the subject as a locus of perception to changes in the subject's overall identity understood as his or her personality, consciousness, fundamental values, unconscious desires, and attitudes toward life. Although he did not emphasize the term *distraction,* Georg Simmel's account of the reserved and blasé metropolitan type has