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Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch (1993)

the berlin dada photomontages

Chapter 1

1

To visit the First International Dada-Messe (Dada-Fair) of 1920 was to step into the confrontational yet bitterly ironic world of the Berlin Dadaists. The walls of Dr. Otto Burchard's art gallery, a converted three-room apartment at Lützowufer 13, were covered floor to ceiling with a disorienting display of photomontages, posters, Dada periodicals, paintings, drawings, and assemblages by young, largely unknown artists. Here and there on the walls were pasted large posters with slogans like "Dada ist politisch" (Dada is political) and "Die Kunst ist tot/ Es lebe die neue Maschinenkunst TATLINS" (Art is dead/ Long live the new machine art of Tatlin). From the ceiling of the main room, where one might have expected a chandelier, hung a uniformed dummy with a pig's head, the so-called *Preussischer Erzengel* (Prussian archangel) by Rudolf Schlichter and John Heartfield.

In another room, Johannes Baader had erected an assemblage he titled *Das grosse Plasto-Dio-Dada-Drama.* It looked like the aftermath of an accident between a trolley car and a newspaper kiosk. On top of a table covered with papers, posters, and junk, and attended by a male mannequin, were Dada periodicals, mainstream newspapers, and poster-size examples of nonsensical sound poetry.

There were oddly titled works of art like George Grosz's *"Daum" marries her pedantic automaton "George" in May 1920, John Heartfield is very glad of it,* a combination of montage and watercolor, which parodied Grosz's own marriage as well as the stereotypes of the mechanized male and the prostituted female. The Berlin Dadaists also exhibited collaborative periodicals published by Wieland Herzfelde's

Malik Verlag like *Jedermann sein eigner Fussball* (Each Man His Own Football), 1919, a satire of politics and art. Raoul Hausmann showed a variety of tongue-in-cheek advertisements for Dada, like his well-known photomontage *Dada siegt* (Dada Triumphs). Many of the Dadaists created assemblages (most since destroyed) such as George Grosz and John Heartfield's construction that featured a light bulb – wired and turned on – as the head of a male mannequin with an amputated leg. From outside Berlin, such artists as Hans Arp, Francis Picabia, and the Cologne Dadaists Max Ernst and Johannes Baargeld were included.

Dominating one wall in the main room were the works of Berlin Dada's least-known member, Hannah Höch (fig. 6). Höch's wall space, adjoining Hausmann's, was filled primarily with photomontages, but also at least one relief, now missing, *Diktatur der Dadaisten* (Dictator of the Dadaists), and one poster, *Plakat Ali-Baba-Diele* (Poster Ali-Baba-Hall), also missing (fig. 5).[1] Höch's huge and elaborate photomontage critiquing Weimar culture, *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) was displayed prominently. In addition, Höch exhibited *Dada Rundschau* (Dada Panorama), which also satirized the Weimar Republic and celebrated Dada and the New Woman, *Da-Dandy* and other photomontages, as well as sculptures and two hand-sewn Dada dolls (fig. 7), each 60 cm. tall with ragamuffin hair and abstractly rendered body parts.

The Dada-Messe was the highpoint of the short-lived Berlin Dada movement, a loosely federated group of artists who had come together during the World War I out of a shared interest in pacifism and anarchic Expressionism. In early 1917, the artist Richard Huelsenbeck had returned from Zurich where he had seen the art of Hans Arp, Emmy Hennings, Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara, and other Dadaists. He had been particularly impressed by their embrace of chaos and randomness. Huelsenbeck had shared his enthusiasm with a group of artists that included John Heartfield, George Grosz, Wieland Herzfelde, Raoul Hausmann, Johannes Baader, and Hannah Höch. Berlin Dada's first public appearance on April 12, 1918 was a riotous evening at the otherwise decorous Secession where Huelsenbeck's Dadaist Manifesto was presented along with readings of sound poetry by George Grosz and the Italian Futurist F. T. Marinetti. Cacaphony was created by drums, instruments, and noise from the audience.[2] From 1918–22, the Dadaists were involved variously in publishing periodicals and portfolios, painting, printmaking, photomontage, collage, assemblage, sound poetry, and performance. Although not a monolithic movement, this Berlin "Dada Club" had multiple styles that were united by an ironic cynicism and a desire to provoke.

From the beginning, the group was politically engaged, interested in representing the concrete and the chaotic instead of the transcendent. After the so-called socialist revolution of 1918, the Dadaists were highly vocal in their opposition to the new Republic, going so far as to organize street demonstrations and distribute copies

6 Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann in front of their works at the First International Dada-Fair, June 30, 1920

7 Hannah Höch, *Dada-Puppen* (Dada Dolls), 60 cm high, cloth dolls, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin

of a periodical criticizing the government.[3] One of their principal complaints centered on the hypocrisy of the supposedly socialist government. Far from establishing socialism, the new Weimar government immediately entered into agreements with big business and with the vestiges of the imperial military. In the name of keeping order, the state even encouraged the use of radical right-wing vigilantes, the dreaded *Freikorps*. By collaborating with the Freikorps, the state in effect sanctioned the assassinations of such leftist leaders as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. The more radical members of Berlin Dada – Grosz, Heartfield, and Herzfelde – were highly critical of the government's bloody suppression of the Spartacist revolt in 1919 and joined the newly formed Communist Party, the KPD. Höch, Hausmann, and Baader were affiliated with a more utopian type of anarcho-communism.[4]

Although the Dadaists embraced agitation, polemic, and disorder, they were not exclusively involved in strategies of negation. Typically, their program was neither consistent nor limited. As can be seen from the varied works displayed at the Dada-Messe, the Berlin Dadaists prided themselves on both affirming and negating their principal themes. While they were applauding the newly rationalized man – associated in their minds with the machine, the engineer, and the Soviet artist Vladimir Tatlin – they were also satirizing man-as-machine idealism, particularly as it had been played out in the carnage of World War I. While the Dadaists were using their art to propagandize for a radical Soviet-style revolution and to criticize the German military, they were also questioning the very production of meaning and the efficacy of art.

In addition, Berlin Dada's relationship to the mass media was purposefully ambiguous. The Dadaists co-opted media strategies – headlines, advertising campaigns, propaganda – but satirized the popular press as well. Through Herzfelde's publishing house, the Malik Verlag, Berlin Dada produced a series of periodicals on culture and politics and portfolios such as George Grosz's *Gott mit uns* (God with us) lithographs, which lampooned the military. Malik also published mass market books such as German translations of Upton Sinclair's muckraking novels, part of a clever two-track strategy to reach both avant-garde and general audiences.[5]

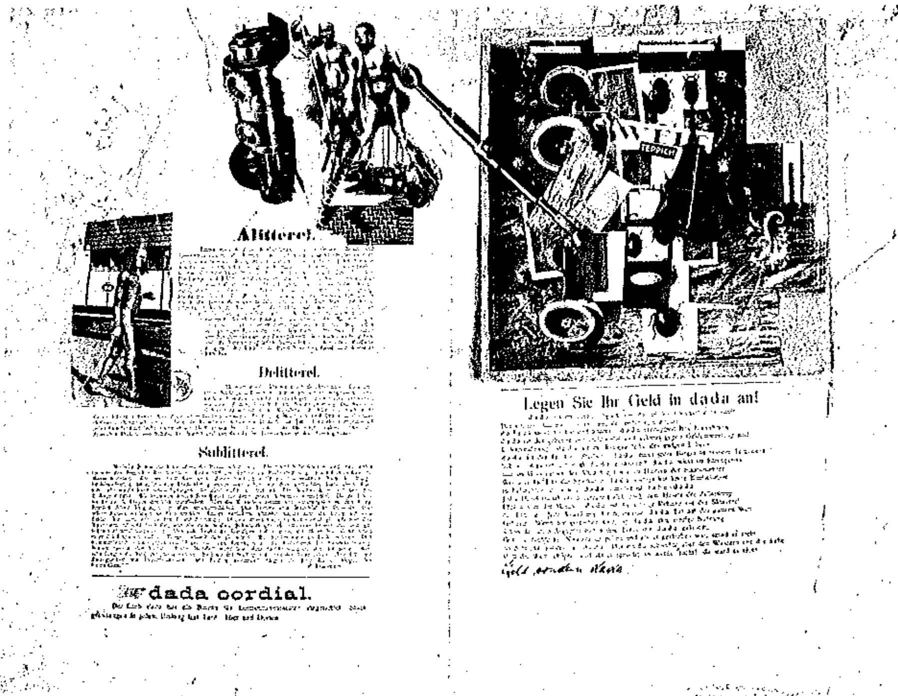
Amid the array of Berlin Dada production, Hannah Höch's work was distinguished by her interest in the allegorical uses of montage to represent the society, gender roles, and modernity of Weimar Germany. Höch had become involved with the Berlin Dada movement through Hausmann, whom she had met in 1915. Although Hausmann was married and had a daughter, he and Höch became lovers and a publicly acknowledged couple. For seven years, from 1915 to 1922, the two had a passionate, intense, and friction-filled relationship during which they struggled to define their individual identities along with new concepts of gender, politics, and psychology. Through Hausmann, Höch became acquainted first with the proto-Dada, loosely Expressionist circles of *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion,* including such writers and painters as Franz Jung, Maria Uhden, Georg Schrimpf, Mynona (Salomo Friedlaender), and Arthur Segal, and later with the more iconoclastic and experimental artists affiliated with the Dada Club.[6]

Because Höch's links to the Dadaists were almost exclusively through Hausmann, and as she was the only woman in the group, she always held a marginal position in the "Club." Grosz and Heartfield initially opposed including her in the Dada-Messe (probably because she was a woman – she was one of few to exhibit in the show and the only one with adequate representation) – relenting only when Hausmann threatened to withdraw his own works.[7] Yet Höch managed to participate in all the major Berlin Dada exhibitions,[8] and early reviews of Höch's work identify her as a Berlin Dadaist.[9] On the other hand, Höch did not present her work through mass distribution channels, as did Grosz, Heartfield, Hausmann, and others associated with the Malik Verlag. She only had one abstract woodcut included in *Der Dada* 2 (which was edited by Hausmann and published by Malik)[10] and two photographs of her Dada puppets published in the avant-garde periodical *Schall und Rauch*, one on the cover and one inside.[11]

Höch was also featured in one of the Dada performances, an evening of satires read by Höch, Hausmann, and Mynona at the Secession in 1921. Her reading of "Italienreise" (Italian trip), which parodied the Italians and the Germans and described part of her journey to Rome, was praised by a reviewer and the text was later published in the Novembergruppe periodical *NG*.[12] Höch's greatest contribution to the Dada movement was her sophisticated development of the technique of photomontage. Höch, together with Hausmann, is often credited with inventing avant-garde photomontage (although other Dadaists also claimed this distinction).[13] As cultural historian Sally Stein has pointed out, photomontage had been common in advertising since the nineteenth century.[14] Höch herself located the source of photomontage in popular culture (see appendix, "A Few Words on Photomontage").[15] When Höch and Hausmann began to make photomontages in 1918, they were first inspired, as she tells it, by montages of soldiers's heads and officers's uniforms that they saw on postcards when they were vacationing at Gribow on the Ostsee.[16] Several years later, Höch collected French popular postcards montaged with photographs, feathers, and other materials and noted them for herself as "Vorgänger der Photomontage und der Collage" (precursors of photomontage and collage).[17]

Höch and Hausmann collaborated on at least one occasion, the *Dada-Cordial* of about 1922 (fig. 8). This photomontage combines images with *Der Dada* texts by Hausmann as an advertisement for Dada: "Legen Sie Ihr Geld in dada an!" (Invest in Dada!) Three interconnected photomontages are arranged throughout the text and are laid out as illustrations. They mix images of tribesmen, modern machinery, a European woman with a veil, embroidery, insects, and some lettering (most significantly the words "Malik Verlag" and "Welt Teppich" [World carpet]). Insects appear throughout Höch's work as emblems of Dada.

Despite occasional collaboration, Höch's preoccupation with the New Woman and with gender roles set her apart from the other Dadaists (fig. 9). For example, her work stands in marked contrast to George Grosz's misogynist depictions of prostitutes. As might be expected, there is a greater similarity between Hausmann and Höch in their representation of women. Gender issues were more central and



8 Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann, *Dada Cordial*, c. 1919, 45 × 58 cm., photomontage, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin. (Right side by Hannah Höch, left side by Raoul Hausmann)

9 Raoul Hausmann, *Dada Cino*, 1920, 12½ × 9 in., photomontage, Collection Dr. Philippe-Guy Woog, Geneva

fully developed in Höch's work than in that of any other Dadaists, however, and she was more interested in the development of modern identities and new freedoms for women.[18]

Though seemingly as chaotic as the Dada-Messe itself, Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* is a remarkably concise and elegant work that functions as a Dadaist manifesto on the politics of Weimar society. In keeping with its large theme Höch gave this grandly-scaled photomontage an equally grand name: *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 (114 × 90 cm.) This montage (fig. 10) combines photographs of political leaders with sports stars, Dada artists, and urban images. In this allegory, Höch 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.

In *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* images of Höch's fellow Dadaists (fig. 11), are aligned with Marx, Lenin, and other revolutionary figures (lower right). But many other images that populate Höch's Dada world are photographs of women she admired, particularly dancers, actresses, and artists. In opposition, Höch's anti-Dada world (fig. 12) is represented by images of the paunchy President Ebert and other Weimar government leaders (upper right). In Höch's decentered inversion of Weimar society, the images of women are crucial. Famous and easily recognizable women signify various metaphors of liberation: movement, technology, female pleasure, innovation, Dada, and revolution.

Cut with the Kitchen Knife offers an entire social panorama of the Weimar Republic. The upper right "anti-dadaistische Bewegung" (anti-Dada movement), as it is labeled, is dominated by a densely clustered composite montage-portrait of the recently deposed Wilhelm II. Two upturned wrestlers form his moustache. On his right shoulder perches the body of the exotic modern dancer Sent M'ahesa whose head has been replaced by that of General Field Marshal Friedrich von Hindenburg. One of the dancer's arms seems to tickle Wilhelm under the chin; the other rests on the shoulder of General von Pflazer-Baltin. He in turn is standing on the heads of the infamous Reichswehrminister Noske (known for his support of the *Freikorps*) and another general. Over Wilhelm's left shoulder is a scene of people waiting in line at a Berlin employment office.

Another series of witty gestalts, though, makes inroads on this pompous portrait. Immediately below is the area labeled "Die grosse Welt dada/ Dadaisten" (the great Dada world/ Dadaists). At the time of the Dada-Messe – when the newly achieved Soviet revolution still loomed large as a model for the German left – Höch labeled this section "Weltrevolution/ Dadaisten" (world revolution/ Dadaists), but these words were later replaced with the more innocuous Dada slogan. At the center of the Dada world is Raoul Hausmann in a diver's suit, facing the viewer, mouth open in ironic confrontation. Out of his head grows a montage of technology. Karl Marx's

10 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, 114 × 90 cm., photomontage, Nationalgalerie Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin (pl. 2)

11 Hannah Höch, detail of the Dada world, *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, 114 × 90 cm., photomontage, Nationalgalerie Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin

12 Hannah Höch, detail of the anti-Dada movement, *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, 114 × 90 cm., photomontage, Nationalgalerie Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin

13 Hannah Höch, detail, Impekoven/Kollwitz, *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, 114 × 90 cm., photomontage, Nationalgalerie Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin

head is appended on one side of the machinery in what seems to be a nonambiguous reference to revolutionary hopes for the marriage of communism and new technological production. The pile of machinery is topped by a wheel at Wilhelm's breast; next to the wheel is the head of the much-admired poet Elsa Lasker-Schuler.

The centrifugal composition rotates around a cut-out photograph of the body of the popular dancer "Niddy" Impekoven. Headless, she pirouettes below the tilted head of Käthe Kollwitz which has been pierced by a spear (fig. 13). In the "Dada world" section of the montage, these other female faces appear: Niddy Impekoven again (bathing John Heartfield), the actress Asta Nielsen (as an American photojournalist), the dancer Pola Negri, and Hannah Höch herself. Höch's face appears in the lower right corner, in what is commonly a signature area, abutting a map of Europe showing the progress of women's enfranchisement. The bodies of female athletes and dancers punctuate this section; for example, the heads of George Grosz and Wilhelm Herzfelde are attached to a ballerina's body. By their professions, movements, and locations in the montage, the women represented are strongly and positively associated with Dada and the new. One of Impekoven's feet rests on the forehead of Walther Rathenau, the liberal Jewish foreign minister who was later assassinated. The other foot kicks back in the direction of a giant roller bearing. In the lower left the leader of the revolutionary sailors, Raimund Tost, appears as if addressing a montage of crowd scenes with the words "Tretet Dada bei" (Join Dada). Surrounding him are a photograph of a throng of children, a view of the new National Assembly in session, two street scenes of urban crowds, and an image of an outdoor

orchestra. In the upper left there are more advertisements for Dada, several seeming to spring from Albert Einstein's head. Next to Einstein and leading in a clockwise direction back toward the anti-Dada, militaristic world are two montage caricatures of President Ebert.

Within the montage, five gigantic wheels or roller bearings echo the centrifugal motion of the composition. This tribute to technology is itself paralleled by the incorporation of mass-produced newspaper images and the use and parody of advertising slogans. The art historian Jula Dech has painstakingly located the Illustrierte sources for the majority of the montage's photographic fragments.[19] The mass media as form and subject of the montage is a comment on the status of the media in the postwar years; its newly visual, photographic face, marked by a significant increase in the number of photographs used, and the sheer proliferation of newspapers signified a new cultural order.

In *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* the power of Dada is signified, on several levels, by movement; Dada is a destabilizing force. In addition to the formal echoing of the wheels and roller bearings, the dynamic action of the compositional design is paralleled iconographically by images indicating movement, either by machines or female dancers or revolutionary scenes.[20] Art historian Hanne Bergius has suggested that dance represents the anti-intellectual, action-dedicated beliefs of Dada.[21] If this is so, then the dynamic Impekoven, a female dancer, is offered as the antithesis of male, militaristic culture, typified by Wilhelm II and his generals. (Significantly, Kollwitz's head is presented in an unresolvable and ambiguous position. The separation of a female head from the body, although here delicately, even wittily portrayed, has underlying connotations of great violence, brought to the fore by the spear running through Kollwitz's head.) The key role of Dada dancer, symbolizing power, movement, and the female, is one that Höch assumes for herself. Even the title of this work, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* points to a female actor. It is the female gaze that cuts through the "Weimar beer belly" and offers this Dadaist cross-section.

Women occupy the principal revolutionary roles in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* often signified by dramatic or assertive physical movement, such as dancing or ice skating. Formally, the instability of disjunctive montage fragments creates a kaleidoscopic effect of movement which is embodied in the figures of the female dancers and athletes. Dada as disseminated by voice and word is associated with men. (For example, the word "dada" emanates from Einstein's brain in the upper left of the montage). But it is Impekoven's body that, small as it is, literally has the pivotal position in the work. Impekoven's pirouette and the movements of other dancers and ice skaters can be read explicitly as physical freedom and Dada anti-repression. But, more than this, the images of women are allegorical signifiers of female liberation and anarcho-communist revolution. In *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* the montages and representations of women function as utopian elements within the centrifugal dissolution of Weimar hierarchies.

In other words, these photographic fragments of women should not be regarded separately, with each having a discreet, fixed meaning. Rather, the meaning of each

fragment is contingent and incomplete, open to a variety of supplementary readings in juxtaposition with other fragments. I should like to emphasize an allegorical reading of Höch's montage. Whereas a symbolic reading offers one definition of an image, an allegorical interpretation reads layers of meaning in or through a text. As the critic Craig Owens put it succinctly, "In allegorical structure, then, one text is *read through* another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relationship may be."[22]

When constructed to emphasize its disjunctive properties, the approach favored by the Berlin Dadaists, photomontage is inherently allegorical.[23] Art historian Benjamin Buchloh has pointed out that when an image is taken from its familiar context – appropriated – and therefore depleted of one level of meaning, and then recontextualized and given new layers of meaning, this montage technique makes it possible "to speak with hidden meaning." He quotes George Grosz as saying that photomontage allowed the Berlin Dadaists to say allegorically "in pictures what would have been banned by the censors."[24] Allegorical fragments in suggestive juxtapositions assume a knowing audience – montage is a technique well suited to a veiled and open-ended propaganda. Further, an allegorical representation opens up a range of interpretations and a play of significations for the viewer. Meanings, political and otherwise, are intentionally not made explicit. Allegory is not prescriptive. The viewer is an active, creative proponent in constructing meaning rather than a passive recipient. Allegory often implies and builds on a shared knowledge or value system between author and audience.

In the allegorical suggestions of Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* the representation of pleasure has an important function. In fact, there is a significant parallel between critical theories about the allegorical operations of montage and Sigmund Freud's foundation thesis of how pleasure functions with other psychoanalytic processes. In an early essay from 1911, "Formulation of the Two Principles of Mental Functioning," Freud describes the way that psychic processes, striving to gain pleasure, work through and with more repressive mechanisms. Although Freud does not use the word "allegory," the relationship he is describing is allegorical: the ego's goal of pleasure is represented through and mediated by the necessity of making adjustments to external reality. Freud defines pleasure as the minimizing of tension, and, for him, the search for pleasure is a primary and primitive mental function; indeed, he calls it one of the most basic psychic processes and motivations. But Freud complicates his definition when he describes how the primitive "pleasure principle" interacts with what he terms as the "reality principle," meaning the psychic mechanisms that make the ego come to terms with outside reality. Over time, Freud says, the reality principle adjusts the ego to the external world, teaching it to delay gratification in order to reach satisfaction eventually. But Freud cautions against treating the pleasure principle and the reality principle as opposites. Instead, he implies an additive, layered, and contingent relationship: "Actually the substitution of the reality principle for the pleasure principle implies no deposing of the pleasure principle, but only a safeguarding of it."[25] In everyday functioning, then, this relationship is

allegorical in the sense that the pleasure principle must be "read through" the reality principle.

It is the coexistence of the pleasure principle and the reality principle – the drive to minimize tension and at the same time the need to accommodate the ego to the external world – that has the potential to provide ambiguous, allegorical readings of any *representation* of pleasure. The two principles are interdependent, but there is also, of course, the possibility for tension between the search for pleasure and the experience of reality. To use montage to represent pleasure can emphasize the discordant nature of these broadly-based tensions. And to do so with specifically female pleasures (here of female athleticism, modernity, the body, dress) is to underline these tensions in a highly gendered context. In some instances, the tension between the two psychic principles Freud outlines can be seen as a distinction those between fantasizing about the future and coping with present-day reality. In terms of montage theory, this analogy is useful for examining the coexistence of utopian traces with fragments connoting more repressive elements of everyday life. Freudian theory suggests the strong linkage and interdependence between the two types of representation.

To apply this reading to Höch's Dada montages and their allegorical representation of pleasure is not to say that Höch was interested in a direct transcription of Freudian theory. On the contrary, Höch and Hausmann were involved in circles influenced by Freud but often in disagreement with him. In a series of articles published in 1919, Hausmann elaborated his views on psychoanalytic theory and gender roles. Particularly influential for Hausmann's "feminist" theories were the writings of the contemporary psychoanalyst Otto Gross, a staunch anti-Freudian. Gross saw gender difference as societally conditioned and considered such conditioning (particularly as it was practiced in his own culture) to be repressive and destructive. Gross's writings are inconsistent and utopian, but they insistently advocate the full expression of male and female sexuality in communal living.

Following Gross's theories, Hausmann attempted to formulate a "natural law" of communism by locating communal instincts in the unconscious. According to Hausmann, both communal instincts and fully formed gender roles were repressed by patriarchal capitalist society. To rectify this dysfunction, Hausmann called for an idealistic repatterning of sexuality and family structures to liberate communal instincts.[26] In his writings for the postwar culture journal *Die Erde*, Hausmann developed a model of communal living that centered around matriarchy, in which he combined prewar anarchist goals with postwar admiration for communism.[27] What is significant for understanding Höch's intellectual context is that Hausmann's concept of political revolution depended on a new, liberated role for women in society.

In a 1919 essay titled "Weltrevolution" (world revolution) – the term Höch used in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* – Hausmann proclaimed his support for a communist economic revolution, but argued that such a revolution would never be viable unless accompanied by a sexual revolution. "The communist movement," wrote Hausmann, "will lead to a complete breakdown of the male spirit if it does not re-

orient itself from mere economic justice to sexual justice, to allow women to finally be women."[28] Hausmann believed that capitalist ideas of ownership were deeply rooted in the patriarchal organization of the family, a system legalized by marriage, which allowed the father to possess the wife and children. In theory, Hausmann also opposed marriage, which he called "the amplification of a rape into a right."[29] He argued that the oppression of women's sexuality enforced female bondage and the false idea of the male's right to possession. Hausmann, at least in his essays, insisted that each person should have control of his or her own body. Women, he argued, should have the right to experience a full range of female sexuality:

> The creation of a feminine society leading to a new promiscuity and to matriarchy, in opposition to the masculine model of a patriarchal family, is intimately connected to the restructuring of bourgeois society into communism.[30]

Although Hausmann was a theoretician and a prolific writer (his nickname was "Dadasoph"), Höch left few written statements and none of her published statements from the Weimar period touch on feminist issues. Höch and Hausmann were closely associated, but it cannot simply be assumed that she agreed with his views. There are, however, areas in Hausmann's theory that must have been of interest to Höch and that pertain to Höch's representation of women, despite the fact that Hausmann in his relationship with Höch actually contradicted certain tenets of his own "feminism."

Höch recalled their relationship as "a difficult and sad apprenticeship."[31] Yet, it seems likely that Höch agreed with Hausmann's call for liberation of women. Although brought up in a bourgeois family and the daughter of an authoritarian father, she was leading an unorthodox and independent life. It seems probable that, like Hausmann, Höch aligned sexual equality with communism.[32] Many leftist intellectuals of the Weimar era supported the communist ideals of the Bolshevik revolution. Höch's own support of communism is evidenced by her participation in the 1920 November Group letter which demanded artists's involvement in politics and advocated communism in particular.[33] However, the most convincing proof of Höch's associating women's liberation with political revolution is in her artwork, where representations of women are central to her ironic, anti-Weimar images depicting and urging political change.

In letters that Hausmann wrote to Höch, he quoted at length from such sources as Gross and Freud. It is clear that his psychological theories of 1919–20 evolved through and with his relationship to Höch, what Hausmann called their "antagonistische Gleichwertigkeit" (antagonistic equivalence).[34] Both Höch and Hausmann used psychoanalytic theory to analyze themselves, each other, and their relationship. In one letter, from 1918, Hausmann wrote accusingly to Höch, "And isn't it true that you're always reading books – Mereschkowsky, Adler – just to gather material to use against me?"[35] As any reader of these letters quickly becomes aware, Hausmann and Höch were attempting to live as a New Man and New Woman, that is, to live outside bourgeois conventions and to formulate social and sexual identities

in keeping with their anarcho-communist beliefs. The letters also reveal, however, Hausmann's attempt to justify his psychological brutality and at times even physical violence towards Höch with psychoanalytic theory.[36]

The entire time that Höch and Hausmann were involved, Hausmann remained married to and living with his wife Elfriede Hausmann-Schaeffer (they had a daughter, Vera Hausmann, who was born in 1907). Hausmann's position on his marriage was contradictory; on March 15, 1918, for example, he wrote to Höch: "I am not for bigamy, and am no bigamist, since I am opposed to any type of marriage."[37] Despite his inability to dissolve this union, he repeatedly wrote to Höch about his desire for her to bear his child and for them to live together. As early as 1915 he talked about having a son with Höch: "How can I say I love you and our son who I want to have with you?"[38] The Höch–Hausmann relationship was a public one; he knew her family well; they had friends in common and were regarded as a couple. Höch apparently wanted Hausmann to end his marriage and, although she wanted to have children with him, refused to do so under the circumstances. She had two abortions, one in May 1916 and the other in January 1918.[39]

Not coincidentally, in the 1919 photomontage *Bürgerliches Brautpaar – Streit* (Bourgeois Bridal Pair – Quarrel) (fig. 14), Höch parodied conventional marriage. In the background are colored illustrations of household items for cleaning and cooking, and in the foreground are Illustrierte photographs of a male figure and a female figure in modern sports attire. Both athletes are infantilized – the woman bears the head of a child with a distressed expression, and the man awkwardly carries an enormous ribboned hat on his back and head. He is dwarfed and feminized by the oversized hat. Höch created other works during this time ridiculing marriage, such as her watercolor *Bürgerliches Brautpaar* (Bourgeois Bridal Couple) 1920, where a groom in formal clothes stands arm-in-arm with a headless mannequin wearing a bridal veil.

Although Höch's photomontages do not simply reflect the tumult of her efforts to sort out her own identity as a New Woman, details of her biography show how deeply and directly questions about the New Woman affected her. One suspects that in Höch's life at this time, issues concerning new roles for women – new possibilities, new pleasures, and new anxieties – were never distant.

For his part, Hausmann constructed two elaborate fantasies around Höch: one saw her as holy, as Eve or a virgin, with himself as Adam and their son-to-be completing the trinity; in the other, Hausmann imagined himself wresting Höch from the influence of her father and his bourgeois values.[40] When Höch would periodically leave Hausmann, he would use these "arguments" to justify his behavior and plead for her return. Hausmann was violent; he hit Höch on several occasions, and this, along with his refusal to end his marriage, was most frequently her reason for leaving him.

One of Höch's attempts to escape from Hausmann was in autumn 1920 when she, her sister Grete, and the poet Regina Ullmann hiked across the Alps from Munich to Venice. Höch then continued to Rome by herself. Höch maintained much inde-

14 Hannah Höch, *Bürgerliches Brautpaar – Streit* (Bourgeois Wedding Couple – Quarrel), 1919, 38 × 30.6 cm., photomontage, private collection

pendence in the relationship and should not be seen as a martyr or passive victim. Her anger and resistance are indirectly evident in Hausmann's letters. She also parodied Hausmann in her wonderfully funny and pointed short story "Der Maler" (The Painter) in which she satirizes a painter's male vanity and the glib appropriation of one of his works (an abstract rendering of a chive) first as an allegory of Woman and second as a representation of revolution (see appendix).[41] In 1922, Höch broke completely with Hausmann, although they had some contact in later life. That same year (and the relationship between these events is not clear), Hausmann became involved with the artist Hedwig Mankiewitz. He obtained a divorce and subsequently married Mankiewitz in 1923.

As I suggested at the outset, there is a dialectic in Höch's work between anger and pleasure and, for the viewer, an oscillation between ironic distance and intimate identification. Using montage, Höch fragments photographs of female performers and allegorizes these images, recomposing them in open-ended narratives, eliciting empathy but confounding a sense of closure in the viewer. The sight of the fractured image of Impekoven and Kollwitz at the center of *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* elicits responses of alienation, exultation, and dislocation. Ambiguities result from viewing the head separated from the female body and yet recognizing the dancer's headless body as a signifier of female pleasure, power, and movement. As such images become allegories in the implied narrative of the larger composition – dismantling the Weimar Republic – this pleasure is linked specifically to revolutionary change.

Here theories of montage reception from the twenties and thirties, particularly those of Ernst Bloch, illuminate the nascent utopianism of Höch's montages. In much of Bloch's theoretical writing, he stresses the critical value of disjuncture and fragmentation and the relationship of these formal procedures to the development of what he terms "anticipatory consciousness," that is, the instances in everyday life of desire for a better future. Rather than privileging a single technique such as photomontage, Bloch celebrates any device or strategy that prompts the viewer to imagine and desire a new utopian future. Bloch scrutinized both fine art and mass culture, in search of what he called "utopian traces," those elements in a representation that elicit a desire for societal utopia. Bloch concentrated on the reception of various styles rather than on prescribing one correct style. Above all, Bloch was interested in the popular appeal of different representations and was an early observer of National Socialist propaganda, warning of its ominous effectiveness.

In an important essay published from exile in Zurich in 1935, Bloch explored the "nonsynchronism" (*Ungleichzeitigkeit*) in Nazi cultural appeal to different groups in German society.[42] By *ungleichzeitig* (nonsynchronous) he meant literally "not of this time." Pointing out that such segments of German society as youth, white-collar workers, and farmers had become angry and dissatisfied, particularly during the economic depression, Bloch analyzed how these groups had turned to pleasures of nostalgia, and how susceptible they were to Nazi seduction, to promises of a future

that would resurrect the qualities of a mythic German past. He is perceptive about the situation of the middle-class, white-collar worker: "An immiserated middle class wants to return to prewar conditions when it was better off. . . . The desire of the white-collar worker not to be proletarian intensifies the orgiastic pleasure in subordination, in magic civil service under a duke. . . . Order and hierarchy, do they make up the fascist architectural style? – perhaps, but many are looking for quiet in the order, for a job in the hierarchy."[43]

Although Bloch does not expand on the relationship between anger and pleasure, such a connection is the cornerstone of his investigation of various utopias. In the same essay, he writes "pent-up anger has its nonsynchronous contradiction not so much against the meager inheritance of the past as against a Now in which even the last inkling of fulfillment has disappeared." In other words, Bloch suggests that for certain groups in Depression-era Germany there was no dialectic between anger and pleasure in the present. Instead, the immediate dominant emotion was anger, which was then coupled with pleasure in the past (evoked by lingering traces in the modern present of the pre-modern past). In this essay and in the later, multi-volume *Principle of Hope,* Bloch, a Marxist, dissected the different motivations necessary for the desiring of quite different utopias.[44]

In order to imagine a better future, Bloch argued, a person needs a sense of anger and discontent with some aspects of the present. But he or she must also know the experience of pleasure and have a feeling of entitlement to that pleasure in order to imagine an improved life. It makes a difference, then, what kinds of anger and what types of pleasure are felt. What are their sources? What sort of future is imagined? How are, in each case, an individual's emotions linked to dreams for a whole society? Are these dreams egalitarian or hierarchical? Is the utopian image open to the process of change or is it petrified – dialectical or reified? Thus Bloch's utopian theory provides a good starting point for considering utopian processes – the conjoining of anger and pleasure – in Höch's photomontages. Applying a Blochian critique is not simply a matter of identifying elements or their sources as utopian, but rather analyzing their function for producer and viewer within the dynamics of representation.

In *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* Höch expresses her utopianism by celebrating the female pleasures of political liberation founded on the dissolution of the Weimar government and leading to a Dadaistic anarcho-communist alternative. A key element in this political allegory is the ambiguous Impekoven-Kollwitz pairing at the center of the work. In 1919, Käthe Kollwitz had just been named the first female professor at the Prussian Academy of Arts. This rather remarkable appointment acknowledged the fact that at the age of fifty-two, Kollwitz was widely respected as a veteran artist and political activist. Höch's image of her head was cut from the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* for March 30, 1919, the very issue that announced Kollwitz's appointment (fig. 15).[45] The oval of the head is left intact and icon-like, but an idealized wholeness is made impossible by its violent disassociation from the body and its diagonal

15 *Käthe Kollwitz, die Malerin und Radierin, das erste weibliche Mitglied der Akademie der Künste* (Käthe Kollwitz, the Painter and Etcher, First Female Member of the Art Academy), *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* 28, no. 13 (March 30, 1919), page 101. General Research Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations

orientation. In *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* the head is speared by an Indian man standing in front of an elephant. Yet, whatever connotations of martyrdom might be inferred are made merely ironic by the improbability of the implied narrative. The spear disturbs neither Kollwitz's head nor her contemplative expression.

Höch's use of Kollwitz's head is somewhat enigmatic. Although formally there is a great contrast between Kollwitz's own Expressionistic work, which integrated stereotypes of working-class women, and Höch's fragmented photomontages of ecstatic dancers, politically Kollwitz was often aligned with the Dadaists. Somewhat later, several tributes were paid Kollwitz in the communist press as well. So Kollwitz did not simply personify the Expressionist enemy derided in Dada manifestos. Nor, as an activist artist, could she have represented a disengaged intellectual position. Perhaps Höch's mixture of irony and accent here can be interpreted as an intergenerational tribute, a sign of both admiration and difference. In all probability, like most of the other women in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* Kollwitz, as a leftist artist, was someone Höch admired.

Nidda Impekoven was also highly celebrated, but in a different context. Having made the transition from child star to adult celebrity, by 1919 "Niddy" Impekoven still conveyed a childlike persona in the popular press and in her dances. The particu-

lar image used by Höch was reproduced in both *BIZ* and in *Die Dame* and shows a pirouetting Impekoven dressed as a Pritzel puppet in a marionette costume (fig. 16).[46] Lotte Pritzel was a well-known contemporary puppet-maker; an exhibition of her work was advertised in a December 1919 issue of *Die Dame*.[47]

Impekoven's status as a dancer, which could have connoted an active, empowered woman, was somewhat contradicted by her childlike identity in the media. A 1922 brassiere ad for which Impekoven posed is a good example. Captioned "Harmonie der Linien im Tanz mit Bustenhalter Forma" (Linear harmony in dance with the *Forma* bra), the ad (fig. 17) shows the slender Impekoven, virtually without female curves, stretching backward, further erasing any suggestion of breasts.[48] Yet she is presented as an ideal for bra-wearers. Impekoven here embodies a liberation of movement and a freedom from aging, which at the same time creates an uncomfortable (and ultimately destructive) equation of female power and childishness.

By depicting Impekoven as a headless dancing body and juxtaposing this photo fragment with Kollwitz's head, Höch further complicates these connotations. The montage cannot simply be read as additive – the wisdom of the older Kollwitz added to the youthful corporeal power of Impekoven. For all its whimsy – the head balances lightly just out of reach of the dancer's outstretched arms – this is at its most basic a violent representation of a female mind–body split. Particularly for the female viewer, the severing of Kollwitz's head and Impekoven's body provides a more urgent and personal level of critique than the overarching condemnation of the Weimar government and the military. Anger surfaces, as does a sense of frustration with the separation of a life of the mind from the power of the female body so clearly celebrated in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* – adding a sharper edge to the liberating tone of the montage.

Kollwitz's head is pinned in place, but Impekoven's entire body suggests movement. Her kick sets in motion the circular sweep of the montage's composition. Here, the modern dancer represents the various pleasures associated with social freedoms available to Weimar women, particularly those relating to their bodies. These new concepts about the body often concerned explicitly ideological issues of sex, class, and the role of technology.

In many ways, the image of the modern dancer in Weimar is a pastiche, a sign operating in multiple contexts. This image combines the stereotype of the lower-class dancer from the nineteenth century, a woman who could live out fantasies forbidden to bourgeois women; a symbol of postwar modernism with its cult of the machine and contemporaneity (particularly through the rationalized choreography of dance troupes); and the myth of a bohemian artist, existing outside class boundaries. This combination adds up to a representation of unbounded, fully expressed female pleasure.[49] Using Freud's definition of pleasure, we are reminded of its roots in the body and its drives, and the complex relationship of the pleasure principle to the principle governing the interface with external reality. The reality principle can repress the pleasure principle, or it can guard it, protect it in terms of delayed gratification. Or

16 Niddy Impekoven as Pritzel-puppet. *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* 28, no. 45 (Nov. 9, 1919): 460

17 "Harmonie der Linien im Tanz mit Bustenhalter Forma," (Linear harmony in dance with the Forma bra) *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* 31, no. 5 (Jan. 29, 1922): 93

in a utopian vision such as *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* the reality principle, aligned here with the Weimar government, can be disrupted, and change propelled by the pleasure principle, represented here by the female body. I do not suggest reading *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* as a schematic map of Freudian theory; instead, I am arguing that one can use the theory as an entry for interpretation of the multiple layers of meaning given the female body in Höch's montage.

Valeska Gert, Niddy Impekoven, Anna Pavlova, Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca – these dancers, as represented in avant-garde and mass culture – were leading emblems of female corporeal pleasure. Like many women of the 1920s, Höch was a devoted follower of dance. In her treatment of the Impekoven photograph in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife,* Höch has preserved the formal aspects of the publicity or fan photograph. Although the image has been beheaded, the graceful silhouette of the dancer's pose is retained and even highlighted by a surround of white space. (Compare this respect for the outline to the treatment of Hausmann's face – above the diver suit in the lower right – where the scissors have invaded his outline, trimming the face and leaving the open mouth ridiculously large). Impekoven's pirouette is echoed by the equally choreographed poses of an ice skater (lower left), and an exotic dancer (upper right, below Ebert's head). The exotic dancer's body has a dual impact: juxtaposed with Ebert's head, it mocks him, and as an independent element in the composition, it echoes Impekoven's movement and adds to the sense of female-propelled motion.

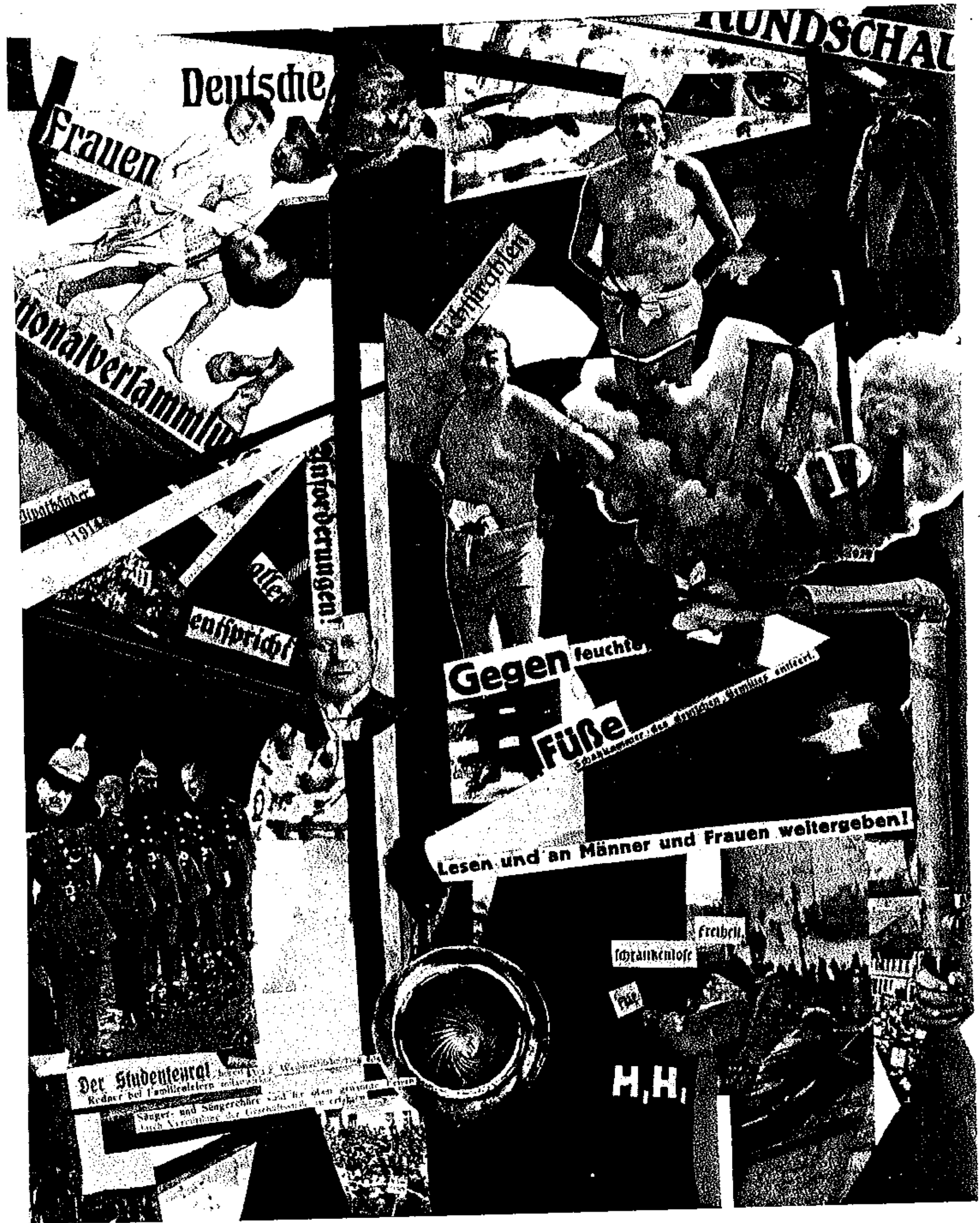
To reproduce the image of a recognizable mass media star, even if fragmented, was in and of itself to celebrate the star system, a method that presents anew the pleasures of viewing media images. These pleasures would range from a narcissistic identification with the star to the more general enjoyment of the production quality of the photographs and their sensuous presentation in magazines and Illustrierte. Hannah Höch was an avid moviegoer and reader of the popular press in the twenties, the era that sparked a proliferation of publicity photographs in a variety of guises. For example, Höch could have seen Asta Nielsen live on stage and on the screen, in newspaper photographs reporting on or publicizing her performances, in "candid" shots in *Die Dame* and other magazines, and in advertising. To repeat images of this admired star in an avant-garde context (as Höch did later in her painting *Roma*) was, for Höch, to participate in this thoroughly pleasurable cycle of media reproduction. However, to deconstruct a Weimar Illustrierte subject using examples of newspaper photography was also to counter the widespread reverence for the media and its technologies. To combine the two was to turn technological progressivism in on itself and, at the same time, to express the desire for a new order.

Höch's strategies raise questions about gender and identity, particularly the revolutionary potential of representing female pleasure. Traditionally women have been relegated to seemingly frivolous arenas of enjoyment like shopping, appreciation of beauty, and spectatorship of media. Recently, feminist film theorists have argued that because women have no position outside patriarchal culture from which to put forward a critique, the feminine positions within that culture – particularly those

concerning pleasure – must therefore be examined for their power, ambiguities, and contradictions. In Blochian terms, "utopian traces" prompting pleasure – especially those experienced dialectically with others prompting anger – could motivate women to imagine a more egalitarian future. Thus certain representations of pleasure can be valued for their potential to motivate change through desire.[50] In this sense, Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* serves as a model, combining the representation of female pleasure with sharp societal critique to create a utopian allegory of revolutionary change.

Hannah Höch's utopias and her rethinking of feminine identity are, above all, historically specific. Höch's Dada works, in general, critique Weimar bourgeois culture and traditional gender roles and celebrate the pleasures of modernity and the New Woman. In *Dada Rundschau* (Dada Panorama), 1919, (fig. 18), for example, brown-tinted newspaper photographs appear with text and pasted papers, some solid black, some watercolored with blues or reds, to create a series of smaller montages within the larger one. Vertical strips of paper imply a grid format, but this is disrupted by multiple diagonals; the eye wanders within the composition. For the Weimar-era viewer, perhaps the most eye-catching image would be flabby President Ebert and Reichswehrminister Noske in their bathing suits. The photographs of the Weimar SPD (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands,* Social Democratic Party) leaders were taken from an infamous *BIZ* cover of 24 August 1919: "Ebert und Noske in der Sommerfrische: Aufgenommen während eines Besuchs des Seebads Haffkrug bei Travemünde" (Ebert and Noske in the summer air: taken during a visit to the seaside resort Haffkrug near Travemünde) in which the two stand in the water looking slumped and ridiculous.[51] The photograph of the two top government officials wading at the beach was already a joke – this was hardly the image of Prussian grandeur most Germans had come to associate with national office. But on top of this derision inherent in the photograph, Höch's treatment is mocking. She has added flowers to each bathing suit, ironically feminizing them. And she has placed Ebert's feet in handsome riding boots, perhaps spoofing the traditional militaristic look of German officialdom. Juxtaposed with the boots is the pseudo-advertising slogan "Gegen feuchte Füsse" (Against damp feet) – another mockery, as if Ebert's image problem could be solved by the right consumer product.[52]

Höch shared with most other members of the twenties avant-garde a tendency to represent technology and modernism in a positive, even exultant light. A cloud marked Dada seems about to swallow Noske and beneath the cloud a New Woman gymnast dives gracefully into a pipe. If this melding of the New Woman and technology is implicitly utopian, the montage in the upper left of toga-clad, forward-moving women is explicitly so. The toga figures are cut, significantly, from the same issue of *BIZ*. Originally captioned "Tanz-Gruppe von einem Schweizer Sommerfest" (Dance group from a Swiss summer festival), this utopian image links modern women, body culture, sun, dance, liberation, and Antiquity.[53] The headline, "German Women in the National Assembly," montaged with them in *Dada Rundschau*



18 Hannah Höch, *Dada Rundschau* (Dada Panorama), 1919, 45 × 35 cm., photomontage, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin

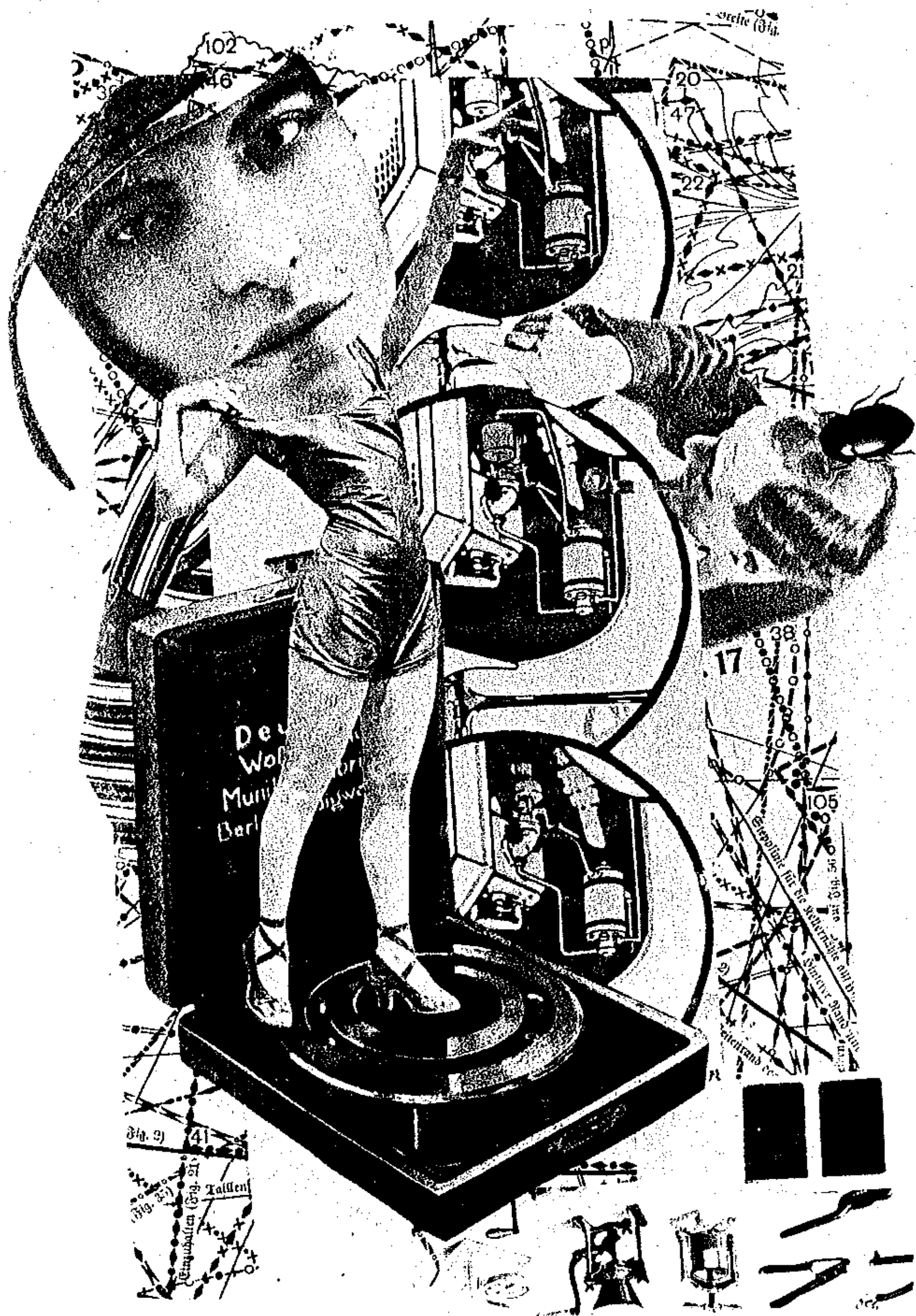
refers to the fact that 1919 was the first year German women held elected office. The toga-draped bodies are modern dancers, but in the montage at least one of the heads attached to them is that of Anna Von Giercke, a woman recently elected to the Assembly.[54] Nearby, Woodrow Wilson's head appears on a young female athlete's body that seems to salute the toga-wearers. In this photomontage, dislocations of scale, identity, and context – the alienation effect of montage – create the distance and recognition necessary for allegory. Instead of simply portraying the women new to the National Assembly, Höch creates an utopian allegory of freedom of movement, internationalism, and modernity out of this specific political victory for women. In the lower right corner, as signature, Höch has pasted the caption "Schrankenlose Freiheit für HH" (Unbridled freedom for HH).

At times Höch used images of women to embody and represent Dada. This inscription of the female as the generative force, the center of Dada, was itself a fantasy, especially given the peripheral status accorded to women in the group.[55] One early photomontage from 1918 or 1919, titled *Oz, der Tragöde* (The Tragic Actor Oz), now missing (fig. 19), functions loosely as a portrait of George Grosz's Antwerp friend Otto Schmalhausen, who occasionally exhibited with the Dada group. Schmalhausen's nickname, "Oz," appears in the background along with the sort of insect illustrations that in Höch's work often serve as a Dada signature. The central figure of the piece is androgynous – a dancing woman's body wearing pearls with Schmalhausen's head. The dancing female legs also serve as an allegory for Dada as in *Dada-Tanz* (Dada Dance), 1922, (fig. 20). And in the untitled Neumann Collection photomontage (fig. 21), in which a female dancer is also the primary focus, the familiar Dada bug crawls across a man's head seen from above. (In Weimar photomontages often images of aerial photography or related points of view read as a tribute to technology and corresponding new ways of seeing).

Da-Dandy, 1919 (fig. 22), depicts a series of fragmented images of fashionable women, almost like an overlapping film montage. These are different women but dressed so much the same they look like one. This is the twenties version of a female dandy, upscale and flamboyant, dressed in an elaborate hat, pearl earrings, a pearl necklace, bracelets, and a velvet dress, with a beaded purse and heels. In each set of eyes, one eye has been made slightly larger, as if to resemble an eye with a monocle. (In later years, Höch affectionately remembered the monocle as the sign for the [male] Dada dandy; Hausmann, she quipped, probably came into the world wearing a monocle).[56] The montaged women are primarily in elegant shades of black and white while the background of collaged papers is accented in reds, yellows, and blues. Enigmatically, behind the dandy, a woman's head with a soft hair style and lowered eyes seems almost to kiss one of the necks of the composite dandy. Höch herself wore avant-garde clothes, plain and drop-waisted, possibly of her own design; she hardly appeared the dandy. Nor could she have afforded to costume herself like the dandy in the montage. So if *Da-Dandy* is to be considered a self-portrait at all it would be in the realm of fantasy.

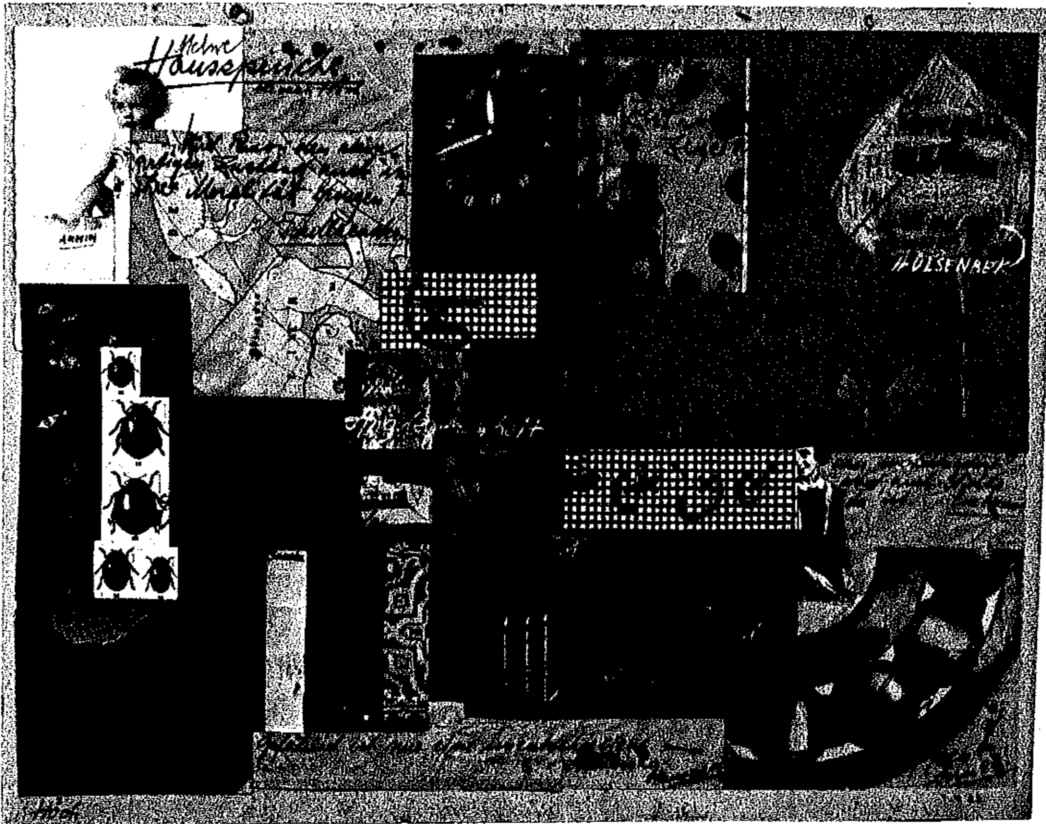
19 Hannah Höch, *Oz der Tragöde* (The Tragic Actor Oz), 1919, photomontage, now missing

20 Hannah Höch, *Dada-Tanz* (Dada Dance), 1922, 32 × 23 cm., photomontage, Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan (pl. 6)



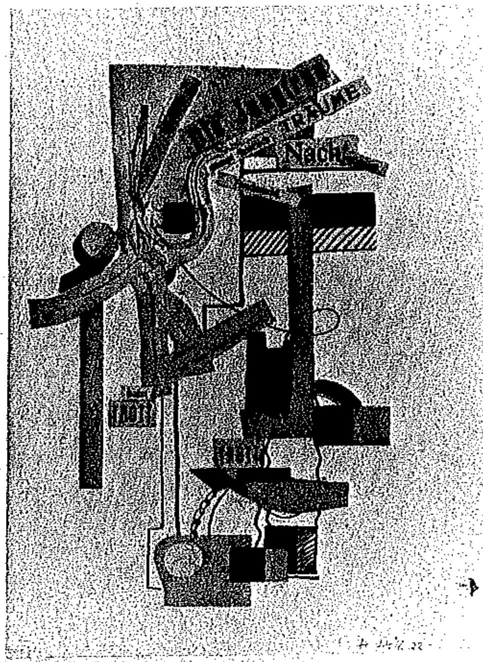
21 Hannah Höch, *Untitled,* 1920, 13¾ × 11¾ in., photomontage, Morton G. Neumann Family Collection (pl. 3)

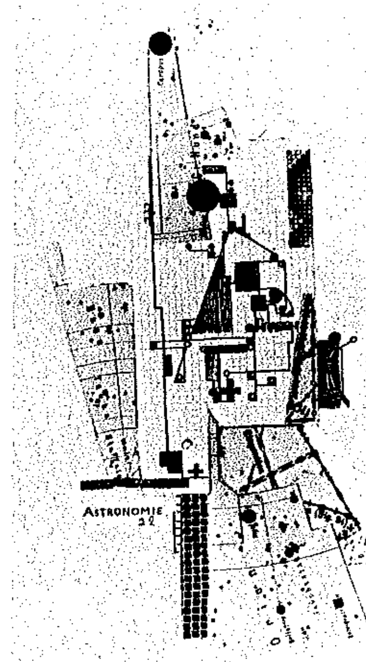
22 Hannah Höch, *Da-Dandy*, 1919, 30 × 23 cm., photomontage, private collection

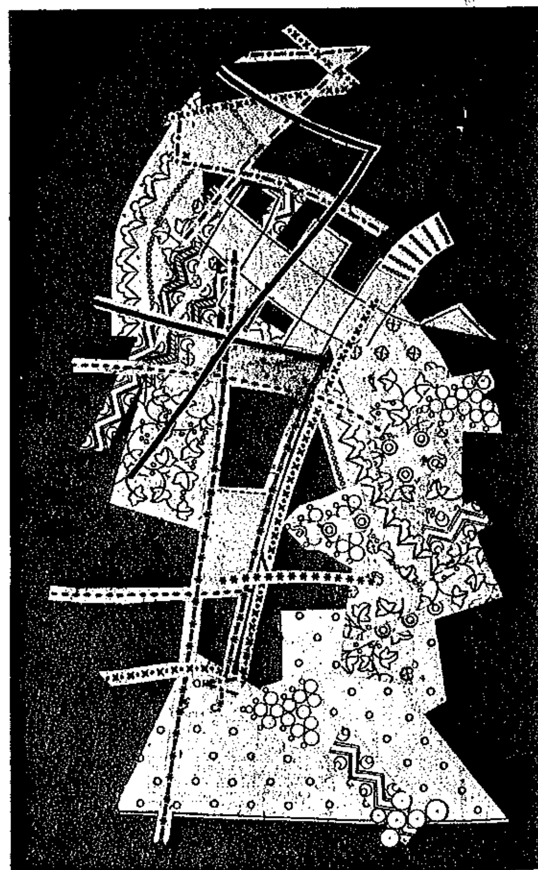


23 Hannah Höch, *Meine Haussprüche* (My House Sayings), 1922, 32 × 41.3 cm., collage, Galerie Nierendorf, Berlin

Meine Haussprüche, 1922 (fig. 23), is generally considered Höch's last Dada work, a sign-off collection of sayings.[57] It combines a Constructivist grid composition with emblems of Dada and sayings from Dadaists and like-minded writers. With this work, Dada, instead of being represented as the trigger of dynamic change, has become the stuff of memory. The title, *Meine Haussprüche* (My house sayings), refers to the German tradition of having a guest book where visitors leave aphorisms and good wishes upon departing. For Höch, the year 1922 marked her break with Hausmann, and, in the art world, a shift of interest from the anarcho-communism of much of Dada to the more concrete political ideals of Soviet Constructivism (figs. 24, 25, 26).[58] Already there is something nostalgic in some of the Dadaist statements quoted in *Meine Haussprüche:* "Der Tod ist eine durchaus dadaistische Angelegenheit. R. Hülsenbeck" (Death is a thoroughly Dadaist affair. R. Hülsenbeck); "Ohne dieses Lesepult kann überhaupt keine Literatur verstanden werden! Baader" (Without this podium no literature can be understood! Baader); "Dada ist die Polizei der Polizei! Hülsenbeck" (Dada is the police of the police! Hülsenbeck); "Und immer mehr Zeit und doch keine Zeiger auf Zeit" (And always more time and yet no indication of time. Arp.)







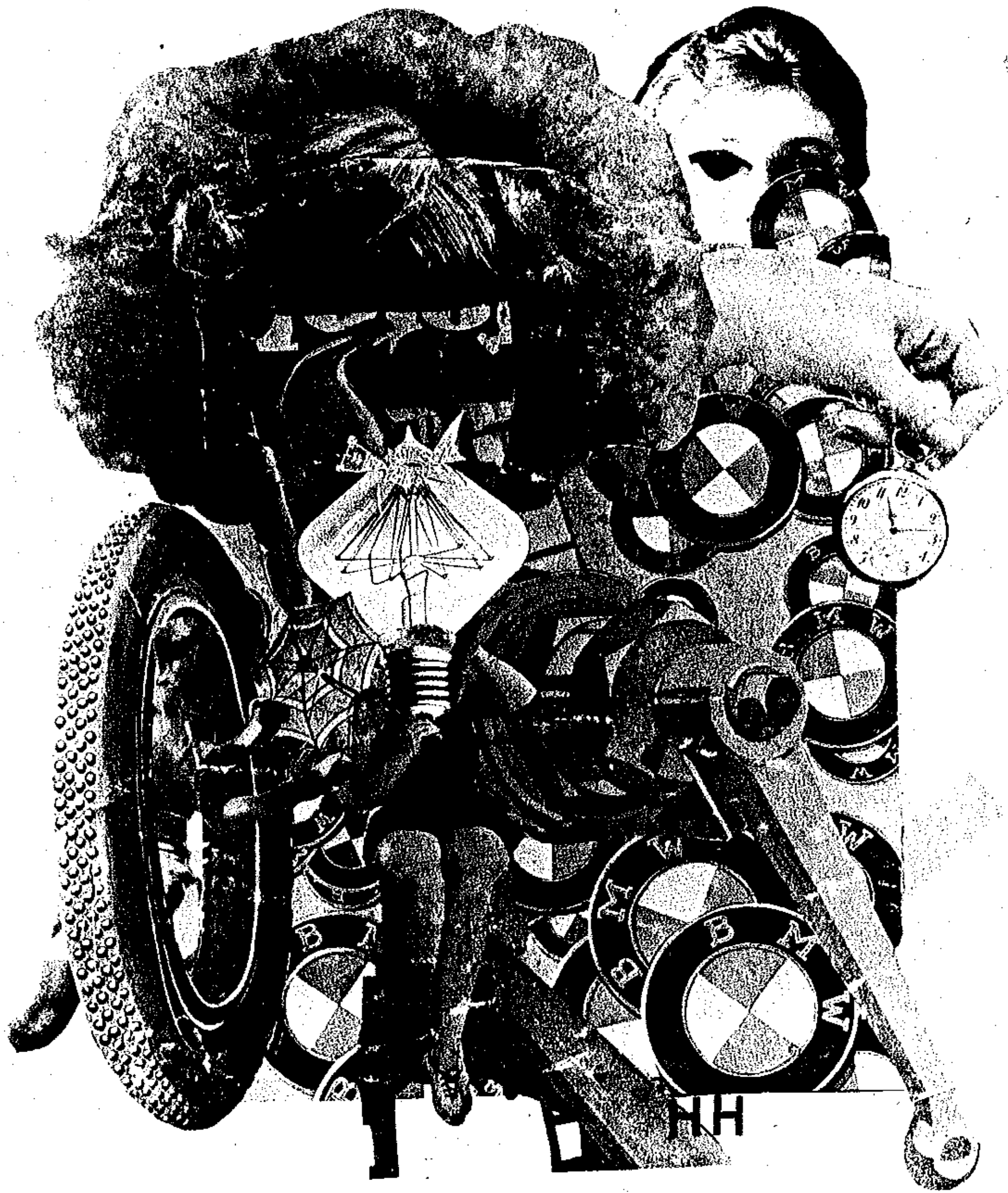
24 Hannah Höch, *Poesie* (Poetry), 1922, 25.5 × 19.5 cm., collage, private collection (*top left*)

25 Hannah Höch, *Entwurf für das Denkmal eines bedeutenden Spitzenhemdes* (Sketch for Memorial to an Important Lace Shirt), c. 1922, 27.6 × 17 cm., collage, Hamburger Kunsthalle (*bottom*)

26 Hannah Höch, *Astronomie* (Astronomy), 1922, photomontage, 25.7 × 20.5 cm., Collection Grete König-Höch (*top right*)

But the utopianism Höch associates time and again with the representation of the New Woman remains alive in her work after the Dada years. And so in closing my consideration of those years, I want to explore further the construction of these utopias through two examples. *Die Mädchen* (The Girls), 1921 (fig. 27), now missing, consists of joyous figures of female swimmers, dancers, and a pilot, an energetic mix of heads and bodies with the addition of one car signifying technology.[59] The whole composition, with its familiar centrifugal movement and jazzy diagonals, reads like an advertisement for corporeal pleasures of New Women-in-motion. At the center is a swimmer about to dive; the smiling female pilot's head is atop a gymnast's body; the three women in the lower right are clasping hands and dancing together. Everyone is smiling; the car apparently flying in at the lower left is clean and shiny. This utopianism reflects the representation of female dancers in the contemporary mass media; the circle of dancers in the lower right of *Die Mädchen* derives from *BIZ*, July 10, 1921 (fig. 28): "An der See: Ballett im Wasser: Eine Aufnahme aus Westerland" (By the sea: ballet in the water: a photograph from Westerland). If Höch's image celebrates the then-popular *Girlkultur* (which idolized the lithe, the athletic, the young), it does so with an appropriately American accent in its resemblance to a Hollywood movie poster (then taking up ever more wall space in German cities).[60]

In contrast, *Das schöne Mädchen* (The Beautiful Girl), 1919–20, (fig. 29), presents what appears to today's viewer as a bizarre and even sinister equation of technology and the female: circular BMW insignias repeat throughout the image; perched atop a girder, a female body in a modern bathing suit with a parasol has a light bulb for a head.[61] In the most simple interpretation, *Das schöne Mädchen* is a portrait of a modern woman defined by signs of femininity, technology, media, and advertising. Behind her, looming like a large shadow, is a red-tinted advertisement topped by a woman's bobbed and puffed hairdo; she is part human, part machine, and part commodity. The background is apparently from a BMW advertisement which repeats the circular red, white, green, and black insignia in erratic clusters across the surface. The New Man makes his entrance in the lower left; a black boxer appears through a tire. His face is cut out and his arms are held stiffly in front of him, suggesting an automaton. There are also gears and a clock in the image. The whole montage is given the feel of an advertisement in contrast with the woman's head visible in the upper right. One of her eyes is replaced by a cat's eye, but the other peeks over a BMW logo to look directly at the viewer. (The cat's eye is larger than the woman's own eye, giving her the appearance of wearing a monocle; this was Höch's sign for a Dadaist, in this case possibly a reference to herself). The black-and-white tones of the observer's face are those of a newspaper photograph whereas the rest of the image consists of the brown tints and painted colors of an advertising poster – making the woman "behind the scenes" appear more realistic. The absurdity of the scene provides an ironic distance that is doubled by the presence of a spectator within the montage. But the viewer outside the montage is in part implicated by the gaze of the female spectator within the frame of representation. It is as if we, the viewers, are aligned with the montage spectator in looking at this surreal advertising scene; she views from the back, we from the front, and our gazes meet.



29 Hannah Höch, *Das schöne Mädchen* (The Beautiful Girl), 1919–20, 35 × 29 cm., photomontage, private collection (pl. 4)

But what she as a representative twenties spectator and we, seventy years later, are likely to see are two extremely different matters. In our overly industrialized, noisy, and polluted world, it is hard to believe or accept the unbridled twenties optimism for technology expressed by people across the political spectrum. Advertising and rationalization were seen as aligned with technology in promoting an egalitarian, progressive modernism. As historian Victoria de Grazia reminds us about the interwar period: in advertising could be seen "a new language, the idiom of youth embattled against the rhetorical conventions of the old, the sacrosanct, and the academic. Advertising promised to become the Esperanto of a dynamic capitalism [here the Dadaists would substitute the word 'socialism'], 'the key to world welfare' to use the slogan of the 1929 Berlin World Advertising Conference."[62]

It is possible that only our contemporary cynicism about advertising and the depersonalizing effects of technology makes the facelessness of the New Woman and the New Man in a Weimar representation seem ominous. Whereas we might interpret the dislocation between the female spectator and the scene in the montage as a representation of alienation, in contrast a twenties viewer might identify with her interest in utopian imagery. Or perhaps even a Weimar-era spectator would have read ambiguity into this image, both desiring and fearing the depicted melding of women, technology, and commodity. She might in fact have felt both alienated by the facelessness of the modern woman and the boxer, and, at the same time, excited by these blank slates, by their implication of identity transformations occurring and possible. *Das schöne Mädchen* raises questions about how Höch's irony was received at the time, whether, for different viewers, it veered toward critique or celebration of new identities in modern life. But the historical context is all-important. Höch's work requires our sensitivity to a historically specific spectator, the meanings and ambiguities she would perceive, and to utopias, desires, and fears time-bound to Weimar Germany.