CHAPTER THREE

The *Zweck* of Schwitters' *Merzentwürfe*

As the term "Merz" in *"Merzentwürfe"* indicates, the selection and use of found objects in Schwitters' architectural models would follow the same set of criteria as other works in his Merz *oeuvre*. In 1920, Schwitters explained in his article "Merz," that this 'criteria,' or *Zweck* (aim, purpose) for materials in his Merz art, was determined by the "demands of the picture" he referred to as an ineffable invisible component to its "expression" that "can be only given to a particular structure, it cannot be translated."[1] In the previous chapter, the conception of Schwitters' Merz art as a dichotomy of visible material and invisible content was compared to the anagogical perspective of materials in Christian art and architecture. However, as a model for the design of architecture, the *Zweck* for Schwitters' *Merzentürfe* was no longer limited to the visible manifestation of an invisible content, but also how the assembly of "arbitrary materials" could anticipate "the representative material as well as constructive possibilities" of a planned construction.[2] Compared to *Haus Merz,* that Spengemann proposed as a model for the making of all German architecture, Schwitters intended his *Merzentwürfe* to act as models for individual

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1. Kurt Schwitters, "Merz," *Der Ararat* 2, no. 1 (Munich, 1921): 3-9. Reproduced in Kurt Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, ed. Friedrich Lach, vol. 5 (Köln: DuMont, 1981), 74-83. See specifically 76. Hereafter references made to Lach's compendium of Schwitters' writings will be abbreviated as follows: *LW*, followed by a volume number and pagination. This English translation by Ralph Manheim in Ibid., 405.

2. *"Der Merzentwurf für die Architektur verwendet jedes beliebige Material nach architektonischem Gefühl, um eine Wirkung zu erzielen, welche die Architektur nachbilden kann. Die Verwendung beliebiger Materialien bedeutet eine Bereicherung der Phantasie. Die Phantasie arbeitet in diesem Falle rhythmisch mit schon gegebenen Rhythmen. Das Transponieren des Entwurfs auf darstellendes Material sowie auf konstruktive Moeglichkeiten ist Sache der Durcharbeitung."* (The Merz design for architecture uses any material according to an architectural feeling, in order to obtain an effect, which architecture can copy/recreate. The use of arbitrary materials means an enriching of the imagination. The imagination works in this case rhythmically with rhythms already given. The transposition of the design onto representative material as well as constructive possibilities is a question of working through it.) Kurt Schwitters, "Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hofbrunnen," *Frühlicht* 1, 3 (Spring, 1922): 87. Reproduced in: Bruno Taut, *Frühlicht 1920-1922: eine Folge für die Verwirklichung des neuen Baugedankens* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1963), 166-7. See specifically 166. (All translations by author unless otherwise noted).

structures. This chapter takes a closer look at the development of Schwitters' Merz interpretation of found objects and how an anagogical perspective of materials supports his use of assemblage as a method for creating architectural models.

The Fragment and the "Expression" of *Merz*

Since the conception of his Merz art in 1918 until the making of *Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hofbrunnen* in 1922, Schwitters continued to explore his use of "all conceivable materials" for the construction of poems, two-dimensional collages, three-dimensional assemblages and architecture.[3] While the objects assembled in *Haus Merz* mirrored the gears and cathedrals in Schwitters' watercolor and stamp drawings from the same period, those he assembled in *Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hofbrunnen* were reminiscent of the non-objective forms in his Merz collages. In these works, fragments of natural and man-made objects were assembled into abstract compositions that left few identifiable words, sentences, or images, leading one to search for a secret meaning generated by the author.[4] At an early stage in the development of his Merz *oeuvre*, Schwitters spoke of the materials he assembled in his Merz art and architecture as unified by an invisible content. In this way, Schwitters' use of assemblage to create art and architecture coincided with the work of a number of German artists at the end of World War I who challenged the objective representation of reality by exploring the inner content of art through fragmentation and abstraction.

Following the unification of Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, the increasing

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3. Kurt Schwitters, "Die Merzmalerei," *Der Sturm* 10, no. 4 (July 1919): 61. Reproduced in *LW*, vol. 5, 37. This is an excerpt from the English translation in John Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 50-1.

4. See the collages Schwitters produced between 1919 and 1922 in the *catalogue raisonné*. Kurt Schwitters, *Kurt Schwitters: catalogue raisonné*, vol. 1 (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2001), 184 – 521.

material desires of the German middle class and Kaiser Wilhelm's efforts to control the seven

seas led to the rapid industrialization of Germany.[5] To generate nationalistic pride in the people

responsible for creating the new German empire, the Kaiser sought to provide a renewed

definition of the country by celebrating "German" culture.[6] To do this, German conservatives

close to the Kaiser shunned "Naturalism" and "Impressionism" as "foreign" and instead,

promoted themes and styles derived from "German" sources including the German countryside,

Romanticism and Idealism.[7] In response, some German artists accused the early twentieth

century industrialization of Germany and the dominance of visual realism in the arts of

dehumanizing and objectifying the individual.[8] To break from the artistic traditions that were

associated with the Wilhelmine Empire, in 1905 a handful of German artists and architects

formed the *Die Brücke* (The Bridge) group in Dresden and in 1911, *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue

Rider) group in Munich. The aim of these two groups was to subordinate realism and to de-

objectify art by returning to the individual experience of it.[9] In his essay *"Die absolute Malerei"*

5. These events during the time of Germany's unification are covered in: Eleanor L. Turk, *The History of Germany* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 75-91 and David Blackbourn, *History of Germany, 1780-1918* (Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 133-369.

6. The cultural motivations of the new German Empire during the years following its unification in 1871 are briefly summarized by Rose-Carol Washton Long and Geoffrey Perkins in: *German Expressionism, Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, ed. Rose-Carol Washton Long (New York: G. K. Hall; Toronto [etc.]: Maxwell Macmillan, 1993), xx-xxi; Geoffrey Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism* (Bern; Frankfurt: Herbert Lang & Cie AG, 1974), 23-40. See specifically, 24-5; See also: Peter Paret, "Expressionism in Imperial Germany," in *German Expressionism: Art and Society*, ed. Stephanie Barron and Wolf-Dieter Dube (Milano: Bompiani, 1997), 29-30 and Joan Weinstein, "Expressionism in War and Revolution," in Ibid., 35-8.

7. This critique of "Naturalism" and "Impressionism" came from both the conservatives and the Expressionists. The motivation for the conservative's critique is summarized by Geoffrey Perkins in: Perkins, 24-31 and Jay Clarke in Jay A. Clarke, "Neo-Idealism, Expressionism, and the Writing of Art History," in *Negotiating History: German Art and the Past*, (Museum studies; vol. 28, no.1), ed. Jay A. Clarke (Chicago: The Art Institute, 2002), 24-37.

8. The early twentieth century critique of artistic conventions and rapid industrialization of Germany as promoting materialism and dehumanizing the individual is suggested by Rose-Carol Washton Long in: Long, *German Expressionism*, xxi-xxii and 77-8.

(The Absolute Painting) from 1911, Franz Marc summarized their challenge to art:

> Objects speak: objects possess will and form, why should we wish to interrupt them? We have nothing sensible to say to them. Haven't we learned in the last thousand years that the more we confront objects with the reflection of their appearance, the more silent they become?[10]

Paul Flechter was the first to label the work of *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* artists as "Expressionism."[11] As Fletcher observed in his book *Der Expressionismus* from 1914, for Expressionist artists, "[t]he perfunctory satisfaction in making the picture conform to 'reality' is eliminated. Appearance is subordinated to the wish for expression . . ."[12] Over time, the art produced by Expressionist artists explored increasingly non-objective, fragmented and abstract forms using contrasting colors, dissonant chords, jagged brushstrokes and angular lines (fig. 79). In this way, Expressionist artists incorporated Nietzsche's concept of creation through destruction.[13] For Wassily Kandinsky, the *Blaue Reiter*'s chief exponent, the concept of destruction was a structuring principle for art based upon a harmony of "antitheses and contradictions."[14] In his seminal work, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art,* Kandinsky argued how

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9. Ibid.

10. *"Die Dinge reden: in den Dingen ist Wille und Form, warum wollen wir dazwischen sprechen? Wir haben nichts Kluges ihnen zu sagen. Haben wir nicht die tausendjährige Erfahrung, dass die Dinge um so stummer werden, je deutlicher wir ihnen den optischen Spiegel ihrer Erscheinung vorhalten?"* Franz Marc, "Die absolute Malerei," in *Briefe, Aufzeichnungen und Aphorismen*, vol. 1 (Berlin: 1920), 124.

11. Based upon an evaluation of the publications and reviews on the art produced by the *Die Brücke* and *Blaue Reiter* groups, Donald Gordan attributes Paul Fechter with having first used the term Expressionism to describe their work. See Donald. E. Gordon, "On the Origin of the Word 'Expressionism," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966): 368-85. See specifically 374 and 376-8; See also: Paul Fechter, *Der Expressionismus* (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1914).

12. Fechter, 22.

13. Donald Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 14-19; See also: Clarke, 24-37.

14. Wassily Kandinsky, "On the Spiritual in Art and Painting in Particular," in Wassily Kandinsky*, Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, trans. Peter Vergo (Da Capo Press, 1994), 193.

the harmony of the age rested "chiefly on the principle of contrast."[15] As he explained,

> Clashing discords, loss of equilibrium, "principles" overthrown, unexpected drumbeats, great questionings, apparently purposeless strivings, stress and longing (apparently torn apart), chains and fetters broken (which had united many), opposites and contradictions–this is our harmony.[16]

In this form of harmony, the juxtaposition of "coloristic and linear forms that have an independent existence," along with musical "dissonance," "ugly sounds," and "unbeautiful dance movements" could be considered beautiful provided they were borne from an invisible determining content he referred to as an "internal necessity."[17] Between 1909-10, the founder of Dada art, Hugo Ball, became closely associated with Kandinsky, just after fostering a deep understanding of Nietzsche for his unfinished doctoral dissertation at the University of Munich.[18] Later, in May of 1915, Ball moved to Zurich, Switzerland where he frequently wrote about Kandinsky and Nietzsche in his diary as major influences upon his conception of Dada art in 1916.[19] Like Expressionists, Dada artists were also critical of the art and culture of the Wilhelmine Empire. These individuals not only challenged visual realism but also sought to use their artistic movement as a means to reveal the arbitrary nature of socially accepted values, meanings and artistic forms by destroying them through random and absurd acts of poetry,

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15. Ibid., 194.

16. Ibid., 193.

17. Ibid., 193, 202-4.

18. Hugo Ball began a doctoral thesis at the University of Munich on Nietzsche between 1909-10 titled "Nietzsche in Basel." See: Hugo Ball, *Hugo Ball (1886-1986: Leben und Werk)* (Berlin [-West]: Publica Verlagsgesellschaft, 1986), 21 and 63. An exhibition catalogue; Ball met Kandinsky in 1912 and planned to work with him and other *Blaue Reiter* members on a theater project. His poetry appeared in Expressionist pre-war journals, in early spring of 1917, Ball organized an exhibition at the Galerie Dada where Expressionist paintings were exhibited, and he lectured on Kandinsky. See: Ibid. 12-17 after Long, *German Expressionism*, 262-266.

19. Not only had Ball commented about the impact that Nietzsche made upon him in a letter to his wife, Emmy Hennings, but also he also frequently mentioned and struggled with Nietzsche's aesthetic ideas in his diary during his early Dada activities. See: Hugo Ball, Ibid. and Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, ed. John Elderfield, trans. Ann Raimes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 59, 90-91 and 93-5.

performances and art.[20] It was shortly after the end of the German Revolution in 1918 that a

number of the people associated with early Expressionist and Dadaist art came to Berlin to

participate in forging a new German society. As members of Berlin Dada and the *Arbeitsrat für*

Kunst, these individuals challenged not only the culture and conventions of the former

Wilhelmine Empire but also a new bourgeois republic by experimenting and exhibiting new

forms of German art and architecture.[21]

While the destruction of artistic conventions was taking place in Berlin, Kurt Schwitters

was having his own artistic revolution in Hanover where he was exploring new methods of

creating art using found objects.[22] Schwitters was not a participant in either Berlin Dada or the

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20. Hugo Ball summarizes the motivation of the Dada activities at the Cabaret Voltaire in a diary entry from June 16, 1916. See: Ibid., 67.

21. After the end of World War I, the Zurich Dadaist, Richard Huelsenbeck, came to Berlin to join the German revolution and create Berlin Dada. Berlin Dada itself was founded in February of 1918 when Huelsenbeck explained in his "Dadaist Manifesto" that the aim of Berlin Dada was "to put forward a new art, from which they [the signatories or the Manifesto] expect the realization of new ideals." This new art and poetry was, like that developed by Zurich Dada, a reaction to the values and norms associated with the former Wilhelmine Empire but also to the new bourgeois republic. The Zurich Dadaists who 'invented' the static, simultaneous and phonetic poetry, applied the same principles to visual representation through photomontage. As Huelsenbeck explained in the Berlin Dada Manifesto from 1919, the ideals of their art consisted of a primitive relation to the reality of its environment that he described as "a simultaneous muddle of noises, colours and spiritual rhythms, which is taken un-modified into Dadist art, with all the sensational screams and fevers of its reckless everyday psyche and with all its brutal reality." For a discussion of the aims of Berlin Dada and its artistic methods see: Stephen Foster and Rudolf Kuenzli, *"Introduction,"* in *Dada Spectrum*, ed. Stephen Foster and Rudolf Kuenzli (Madison, Wis.: Coda Press; Iowa City: The University of Iowa, 1979), 4-7 and Hans Richter, *Dada: art and anti-art* (New York; London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 114-18; Huelsenbeck, "Dadaist Manifesto," (Berlin 1918). Translated by Ralph Manheim in Hans Richter, *Dada: art and anti-art* (New York; London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 104-107, specifically 106; While Berlin Dadaists sought to have an affect on the development of a new German culture and its political aims, the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* sought to join with the workers to effect changing the system of art education in Germany, organizing exhibitions and especially promoting the development of a new architecture as a unity of all the arts. The founding members included Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut and Adolf Behne. Of the three, Bruno Taut and Adolf Behne had published articles in the expressionist journal *Der Sturm*. For the aims of the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst*, see Bruno Taut's *"Arbeitsrat für Kunst's programm"* and *Ein Architektur-Programm* in Bruno Taut, "Arbeitsrat für Kunst's program" *Mitteilungen des deutschen Werkbundes*, no. 4 (1918): 14-15. Reproduced in Long, *German Expressionism*, 193-4; Bruno Taut, *Ein Architektur-Programm*, 1st ed., December 1918; 2nd ed. Berlin: *Arbeitsrat für Kunst*, 1919. Reproduced in Long*, German Expressionism*, 194-7. For the articles published by Taut and Behne in *Der Sturm* see: Adolf Behne, "Bruno Taut," *Der Sturm* 4, no. 198-9 (February 1914): 182-3; Adolf Behne, "Deutsche Expressionisten," *Der Sturm* 5, no. 17-18 (December 1914): 114-15; Bruno Taut, "Eine Notwendigkeit," *Der Sturm* 4, no. 196-7 (February 1914): 174-5.

Arbeitsrat für Kunst, but he also experienced a similar sense of freedom and purpose from the German revolution and quit his job as a mechanical draftsman to devote his time to being an artist.[23] During this period, Schwitters set aside "oil paint, canvas and brush" and began to collage and assemble found objects into art using a method he called "Merz."[24]

Writing about his first Merz assemblages, Schwitters claimed that the composition of words in a poem or piece of prose became an inspiration for the use of found objects in his Merz work. In his 1920 article "Merz," Schwitters described how the assemblage of found materials in

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22. In 1930, Schwitters reflected upon his life during the German revolution. He described himself as overtaken by the sense of freedom, and wanted "to shout out my joy to the world." To do this, Schwitters explained how he took whatever he found since "everything was destroyed anyway and new things had to be made from fragments." See: Kurt Schwitters, "Kurt Schwitters," in *Gefesselter Blick: [25 kurze Monografien und Beiträge über neue Werbegestaltung]*, ed. Heinz und Bodo Rasch (Stuttgart: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Zaugg, 1930), 8-9. Reproduced in Kurt Schwitters, "Kurt Schwitters," in *LW*, vol. 5, 335-6. See specifically 335. This English translation by Gwendolen Webster in Gwendolen Webster, *Kurt Merz Schwitters: A Biographical Study* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 44.

23. In 1917, Schwitters was drafted into the German military. In a description of his activities during World War I, Schwitters claimed that he was a soldier for three months, during which time he feigned stupidity till he was discharged. Schwitters then worked at the Wülfel Ironworks as a mechanical draftsman until after the end of the war in November 1918. Kurt Schwitters, "Daten aus meinen Leben," (1926). Typewritten manuscript reproduced in *LW*, vol. 5, 240-42. See specifically 241; Raoul Hausmann recalls that Schwitters did ask to join Berlin Dada during the end of 1918 although Elderfield claims it must not have occurred until before the early part of the following year. Nevertheless, Richard Huelsenbeck rejected Schwitters because, as Hausmann claims, he had connections to Expressionism through the gallery, *Der Sturm*. See: Raoul Hausmann, *Courrier Dada* (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1958), 109-10 and Elderfield, 35; Although Schwitters may have known the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* or its founding members Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut and Adolf Behne, it cannot be confirmed that he had direct interactions with them till after his conception of Merz. In regards to Gropius and the Bauhaus, Gwendolen Webster recounts that Schwitters' son, Ernst, claimed that his father was in contact with the Bauhaus since its beginnings where he gave recitals and had been offered to take up a teaching post. However, Webster also claimed that in 1921, when Schwitters approached the Bauhaus to let him recite his poems there, he was refused. For Webster, it was not until 1922 that Schwitters' relationship with Gropius can be confirmed when he contributed to a lithograph in a Bauhaus Portfolio entitled *New European Graphic* and designed the poster for a lecture Gropius gave in Hanover in 1923. See: Webster, 121 and 143. Similarly, it appears that Schwitters only had direct contact with Taut in early 1922 when he published his article "*Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hoffbrunnen*" in Taut's architectural journal *Frühlicht*. Conversely, Behne was familiar with Schwitters' Merz since an early stage in its conception. In a review of Dada he mentions Schwitters' one man-show at *Der Sturm* with praise. See: Adolf Behne, "Dada," *Die Freiheit* (July 1920) after Webster, 80, n. 10.

24. "*Ölfarbe, Leinewand und Pinsel sind Material und Werkzeug.*" (Oil, canvas and brush are material and tools). In his article "Merz," these are the materials and tools that Schwitters explains one uses to learn and create academic painting. In this article and his autobiographical statement of 1930 titled "Kurt Schwitters," Schwitters is critical of academic painting for its "creative" limitations and describes his movement away from it into the exploration of using found objects to create art and later architecture. Schwitters, "Merz," in *LW*, vol. 5, 74-76 and Schwitters, "Kurt Schwitters," in *LW*, vol. 5, 335.

his Merz art was comparable to the composition of letters, words and sentences in a piece of poetry:

> At first I concerned myself with other art forms, poetry for example. Elements of poetry are letters, syllables, words, sentences. Poetry arises from the interaction of these elements . . . As in poetry a word is played off against word," he added, so in a Merz assemblage or collage, "here *Faktor* [factor] is played off against *Faktor*, material against material.[25]

Throughout "Merz," Schwitters provided numerous examples for the types of material that could be "played off against" other materials in a Merz work. These included natural and man-made materials, tones, noises, and people.[26] However, a "factor" was a specific composition of the materials in a Merz work for which Schwitters gave four examples. In the first example, a factor was the possible although not necessary "meaning" of an assemblage while in a Merz stage, the stage set, text and score were also factors.[27] Although each factor in a traditional stage-set is "separately prepared so that it could be separately enjoyed," Schwitters explained that, "the Merz stage knows only the fusing of all factors into a composite work."[28] In this way, a "factor" is comparable to a found object as an individual element 'fused' with others in a Merz work.

During the years that followed the publication of Merz in 1920, Schwitters continued to explore the relationship between the compositions of words in a literary work with his Merz assemblage of found objects as art. In "*Die Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt*" (The Meaning of Merz -Thought in the World) from 1923, Schwitters explained that "In poetry, words

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25. Schwitters, "Merz," in *LW*, vol. 5, 77 and 80. With my inclusion of '*Faktor*,' this English translation by Ralph Manheim in Ibid., 406 and 407.

26. Ibid. 74-82. See specifically 79-81.

27. *"Der Sinn ist nur wesentlich, wenn er auch als Faktor gewertet wird."* (The meaning is only important when it will also be employed as a factor.) Ibid., 77; "Up until now, a distinction was made between stage set, text and score in theatrical performances. Each factor was separately prepared and could also be separately enjoyed." This second English translation by Ralph Manheim in Ibid., 407.

28. Ibid., 79. This English translation by Ralph Manheim in Ibid., 407.

are torn from their former context, *entformelt* (dissociated) and brought into a new artistic

context, they become formal parts of the poem."[29] Here, *"entformelt"* was a neologism

Schwitters invented that roughly translates as "disassociation of form(s)."[30] Schwitters' use of

the term to describe the making of a poem is an elaboration of a conception he held about the

assemblage of materials in a Merz work, that in the "artistic evaluation" of found objects,

"essential is only the *Formen* [forming]."[31] The application of these two concepts is

demonstrated most clearly in *Pornographic i Poem* from 1923, where Schwitters cut the printed

pages of a children's story in half (fig. 80). The act of cutting the story into two pieces

transformed the structure and meaning of the sentences. As a result, the relocation of the words

into new contexts gave them new associations that are potentially pornographic. In terms of his

Merz *oeuvre* as a whole, *Formung* and *Entformung* thus meant the transformation of the old –

both literal and figurative – into the new by composing new art from the remains of a "former

culture."[32] In doing so, Schwitters actualized a key principle in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's

(1770 - 1831) teleological philosophy of history that in the creation of something new, the old

orders of human existence and knowledge are neither destroyed nor continued in their prior

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29. *"In der Dichtung werden die Worte aus ihrem alten Zusammenhang gerissen, entformelt und in einen neuen, künstlerischen Zusammenhang gebracht, sie werden Form-Teile der Dichtung, weiter nichts."* Kurt Schwitters, "Die Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt," *Merz: Holland Dada,* no.1 (January 1923): 8-11. Reproduced in *LW*, vol. 5, 133-54. See specifically, 134. This English translation by Elderfield, 43.

30. Ibid. This English translation by Elizabeth Burns Gamard in Elizabeth Burns Gamard*, Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 26.

31. Elderfield gives both senses to the translation of "*Entformung.*" Elderfield, 237. For Schwitters' use of the term *"Formen,"* see: Schwitters, "Merz," in *LW*, vol. 5, 76.

32. Schwitters explains this *Formung* and *Entformung* of objects in a collage through a comparison between the words assembled in a sentence and the materials in a Merz work. Schwitters, "Die Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt," 134; In a reflection on the beginnings of Merz, Schwitters refers to the making of a new art "out of the remains of the former culture" in Schwitters, "Daten aus meinem Leben," Type written Manuscript, 1 page, Kurt Schwitters Archive, Oslo. Reproduced in *LW*, vol. 5, 240-2. See specifically 241.

forms but *aufgehoben* (sublated) into something else.[33] It was, however, a form of sublation in

making a Merz work that Schwitters explained was not applicable to all historical remains.

In discussions regarding the making of his Merz work, Schwitters described how the

selection of materials from a "former culture" were not determined by himself but by an

ineffable determining content he discovered in the making of it. As Schwitters explained in

"Merz," "[b]ecause the material is unimportant, I take any material whatsoever if the picture

demands it."[34] In this statement, Schwitters implied that his selection of materials was not a

haphazard process of collecting objects and inserting them into canvases as art but one that was

determined by their contribution to the composition. In this regard, Kate Steinitz relates one

account of Schwitters' selection of materials from a conversation with the collagist William

Dole. In Dole's recollection, Schwitters did not find the material for his Merz works by chance

but actively collected, washed, dried and cataloged objects according to their color and design

properties.[35] Schwitters himself described the process by which found objects were selected for a

Merz work in a letter he wrote to Margaret Miller about the making of *Konstruktion für edle*

Frauen (Construction for Noble Ladies):

> When I had almost finished, I knew there was lacking something. I went into the
> Eilenriede, the town forest of Hanover and found there half of the engine of a children's
> train. I knew at once, that belonged on the picture and put it at the right spot. But where
> was the other half engine? I got quite uncomfortable, because I could not finish the

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33. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Science of Logic,* trans. A.V. Miller (Routledge, 2004), 106-8; Both Jean-Marie Schaeffer and William Desmond apply Hegel's concept of *Aufhebung* to his theory of art as a sublation of sensuous reality, transforming it into a manifestation of Spirit. See: Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Art of Modern Age: Philosophy of Art from Kant to Heidegger*, trans. Steven Rendall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 140 and William Desmond, *Art and the Absolute: a study of Hegel's aesthetics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 64 and 95-6; Gamard reinforces Schwitters' re-use versus replacement of objects from the "remains of the former culture" as a kind of preservation to maintain and affirm the future. Gamard*,* 26-7.

34. *"Weil das Material unwesentlich ist, nehme ich jedes beliebige Material, wenn es das Bild verlangt."* Schwitters, "Merz," in: *LW*, vol. 5, 76-7.

35. For this account, see: Gerald Nordland, "William Dole," *Art International* 23, no. 3-4 (Summer, 1979): 96, n. 5.

picture without having the other half. I went in the opposite direction of the Eilenriede into the Masch, not a forest, but meadows. The first thing I saw was the second part, the opposite side of the same children's engine. Of course I don't know what was the reason that I at all needed the ruins of the children's toy, but there is a reason, and this reason made the composition of spiritual values correspond to the composition in colors and to the composition in lines and black and white.[36]

What Schwitters explained in this story is that he both found and sought specific objects with "spiritual" or evocative values and that the Merz work was finished only when the entire composition seemed to "correspond." For Schwitters, this correspondence, or "demands" of the assemblage, was based on a concept of art that was not *a priori* but discovered *a posteriori* in the reflective evaluation of its elements.

In his article "Merz," Schwitters explained the determinate correspondence between the visible and invisible aspects of a Merz work through an understanding of material possessing an ineffable content.[37] For Schwitters, all individual or combinations of lines, colors or forms in a work of art had a unique *"Ausdruck"* (expression):

> Every line, color, form has a definite *Ausdruck* (expression). Every combination of lines, colors, forms has a definite *Ausdruck* (expression). *Der Ausdruck* (Expression) can be given only to a particular structure, it cannot be translated. The *Ausdruck* (expression) of a picture cannot be put into words, any more that the *Ausdruck* (expression) of a word, such as the word "and" for example, can be painted.[38]

Despite the limitations that Schwitters extended to his materials, he claimed that the expression was an essential feature of a work of art he discovered in the creative process of making it since, "art is an *Urbegriff*, elevated towards divinity."[39] This was a crucial distinction in Schwitters'

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36. Letter to Margaret Miller, Dec. 11, 1946. Archives of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Reproduced in Elderfield, 55-6 and 55, n. 29. This letter is written by Schwitters in English.

37. Schwitters, "Merz," in *LW*, vol. 5, 74-77.

38. Ibid., 76. With my inclusion of the original German word "*Ausdruck*," this English translation by Ralph Manheim in *LW*, vol. 5, 406.

39. *"Kunst ist ein Urbegriff, erhaben wie die Gottheit . . ."* (Art is an archetypal concept, elevated towards divinity. . .). Schwitters, "Merz," in *LW*, vol. 5, 76.

understanding of his Merz art, which he continued to explain, "comes into being through the artistic evaluation of its elements. I know only how I do it, I know only my materials, from which I take, I know not to what *Zwecke* (end/purpose)."[40] In this way, it can be understood that for Schwitters, the selection of found objects for a Merz work was determined by the merging of physical material with an invisible content that was discovered in the *Formung* (forming) of it. Because "every combination of lines, colors, and forms had a definite expression," it follows that the *Zweck* for Schwitters' Merz works consisted of the sensuous manifestation of this content that both determined and was determined by the unique arrangement of found objects as art. During this time Russian Constructivist artists were also exploring the role that materials and their 'expressions' could play as generators for art. At an early stage in the development of his Merz *oeuvre,* Schwitters was familiar with a few of these individuals whom he perceived had similar artistic aims.

Four and a half years before Schwitters created his first Merz assemblage, a handful of Russian artists began to experiment with making a work of art as an expression of its unique transformation of materials or *"faktura."* The Russian word *"faktura"* stems from the Latin *"facere"* (to make). In English, *"faktura,"* is translated as "facture," which refers to the way in which a work of art is made and how its material constituents have been worked. Similar to Schwitters' Merz assemblages, in 1914, Vladimir Tatlin began to produce a series of relief constructions using heterogeneous found materials, including wood, cardboard, wallpaper, cloth, metal (zinc, copper, aluminum) and leather that he called "Painterly Reliefs (*Zhivopisnye*

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40. *"Das Kunstwerk entsteht durch künstlerisches Abwerten seiner Elemente. Ich weiss nur, wie ich es mache, ich kenne nur mein Material, von dem ich nehme, ich weiss nicht, zu welchem Zwecke."* Ibid.

rel'efy)" or, alternatively, "Selections of Materials (*Podobory materialov*)."[41] In his work, Tatlin

sought to foster the volition of found material such that, the *faktura* of wood, metal, glass, paper,

cloth, paint, etc., dictated the very form of the construction. The architect Vladimir Krinskii,

explained how Tatlin's accumulation of materials caused them to no longer appear as trash but

become "composed [*sopostavleny*] in such a way that they suddenly [began] to speak . . . trash

material . . . [thereby] acquire[d] value."[42] In the early part of 1919, Tatlin's colleague,

Aleksandr Rodchenko, began to explore his principle of materiological determination for the

production of a series of non-objective paintings titled *Black on Black*. As Maria Gough

observed in her article "*Faktura*: The making of the Russian avant-garde," in these works of art,

the *faktura* of painting (the "working of surface") became the subject of the work:

> By brushing the canvas in different ways, Rodchenko "lay bare," both within each
> painting and across the series, how his manipulation of the otherwise constant black
> pigment altered its value and texture. A diversity of surface effects ("dry" matte, "wet"
> gloss, "luminous" metallic, "gritty" bitumen, "smooth" enamel), isolated from any
> semantic function or purpose, was thereby produced.[43]

The work of these Russian artists became known as "*Konstruktivizm*" (Constructivism) and their

materiological determination of art demonstrates a notable similarity with Schwitters' Merz art

and architecture that was determined by a unique facture of materials.[44] As early as 1919,

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41. *Vladimir Tatlin Retrospektive,* ed. Anatolii Strigalev and Jürgen Harten (Köln: DuMont, 1993), 25-6, cat. no, 340-345 after: Maria Gough, "*Faktura*: The making of the Russian avant-garde," *RES*, no. 36 (Autumn, 1999): 45, n. 81-2.

42. Vladimir Krinskii, "*Vosopominaniia*," (unpublished manuscript), quoted in Anatolii Strigalev, "Vladimir Tatlin: K stoletiiu so dnia rozhdeniia," *Architektura SSSR*, no. 6 (1995): 87 after Gough, 52, n. 96.

43. Gough, 32-59.

44. Anatolii Strigalev observes in his essay, "The Art of Constructivism: From Exhibition to Exhibition 1914-1932," that the term "*Konstruktivizm*" (Constructivism) first appeared in the title of a small exhibition mounted by three young Moscow artists in January 1922: Konstantin Medunetskii and the brothers Vladimir and Georgii Stenberg. Later, the name attached itself to the work produced by a number of Russian artists including Tatlin, Rodchenko, Ivan Puni. Anatolii Strigalev,"The Art of Constructivism: From Exhibition to Exhibition 1914-1932," trans. James West in *Art into Life: Russian Constructivism 1914-1932* (Seattle, WA: Henry Art Gallery; New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 15-47

Schwitters first encountered Russian Constructivist art through the reliefs of Ivan Puni, a Russian Constructivist artist whom Schwitters knew and dedicated his 1919 assemblage, *Construction for Noble Ladies* to his wife.[45] During the same year, Konstantin Umanskij published his book *Neue Kunst in Russland, 1914-1919* in Germany along with an article on Tatlin titled "*Der Tatlinismus oder die Maschinenkunst.*"[46] This title was the inspiration for a poster that read "*Die Kunst ist tot: Es lebe die neue Maschinenkunst TATLINS* (Art is Dead: Long Live the Machine Art of Tatlin)" at the "First International Dada Fair" in 1920.[47] When Schwitters visited the fair, he undoubtedly viewed the Dada pronouncement on the work of Tatlin along with Raoul Hausmann's 1920 collage titled *Tatlin at Home* (figs. 81 - 83).[48] Despite this encounter with Constructivism, by 1921 Schwitters created an untitled assemblage that resembles a characteristic motif of Puni's work while in 1922, the *Erste russische Kunstausstellung* (First Russian Art Exhibition) in Berlin probably served as a source for his collage *Moskau* (Moscow) from the same year (fig. 84).[49] Although an exclusive source for Schwitters' Merz use of found objects in Constructivism cannot be made from these examples, it is clear he saw a relationship between the two artistic movements when in 1924, he established a collaborative relationship

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45. For this account see: Elderfield, 61, n. 38.

46. Konstantin Umanskij, *Neue Kunst in Russland, 1914-1919* (Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer; München: Hans Goltz, 1920); Konstantin Umanskij, "Der Tatlinismus oder die Maschinenkunst,"*Der Ararat* 1, no. 4 (January 1920): 12.

47. On the Dadaists' knowledge and reception of Tatlin's art, see: Helen Adkins, *"Erste Internationale Dada-Messe,"* in *Stationen der Moderne: Die bedeutenden Kunstausstellungen des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1988), 159.and Eva Züchner, *"Die Erste Internationale Dada-Messe in Berlin: Eine meta-mechanische Liebeserklärung an Tatlins Maschinenkunst,"* in *Berlin-Moskau. Moskau-Berlin,* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1995), 118–24.

48. Schwitters' friend, Hanna Höch records that Schwitters was at the Dada Fair. See: Hannah Höch, "*Vortrag Düsseldorf, 1966,*" Höch Archive, Berlin after Webster, 79, n. 9. In figure 83, Hausmann's collage, *Tatlin at Home*, can be seen hanging behind Hausmann and Höch in a photograph from the Berlin Dada Fair.

49. Elderfield, 120-43.

with another Constructivist artist, El Lissitzsky, on an organicist-Constructivist theory called "*Nasci*" for the April-July 1924 issues of *Merz*.[50] In this context, Schwitters fused his perception of art as an interdependent dichotomy of visible form and invisible content with an organic conception of this content that was not complete but "becoming" in the work.

Compared to his interests in Constructivism, a year preceding Schwitters' invention of Merz, he was experimenting with the creation of Expressionist art that was founded upon a similar conception of materials as an interdependent combination of physical form and ineffable content. It is hard to imagine that Schwitters was not familiar with this theory when he claimed to have explored it in his own work in 1917. The early connection between Schwitters and Expressionism may have been facilitated by a private institution in Hanover called the *Kestner Gesellschaft,* who sponsored exhibitions of prominent Expressionists and local artists between 1917-1919 including Schwitters.[51] During this time, Schwitters announced his affiliation with Expressionism in the titles of a small group of paintings that were each called an "Expression" including: *Expression 1: Der Wald* (Expression 1: The Forest), *G Expression 2: Die Sonne im Hochgebirge* (G Expression 2: Sun in the High Mountains), and *G Expression 3: Die Liebe* (G Expression 3: Love) from 1917. With this new interest in Expressionist art, it could not have been long until Schwitters tracked the movement down to its principle sources, Herwarth Walden's *Der Sturm* magazine and gallery in Berlin. Walden's gallery was named after his magazine in 1912 and became famous for promoting the work of Italian Futurists, Cubism and

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50. Kurt Schwitters and El Lissitzky, "Nasci," *Merz: Nasci,* no. 8-9 (April – July 1924): 73-89.

51. Elderfield claims that Schwitters exhibited *Die Trauernde* (Mourning Woman) from 1916 at the Kestner-Gesellschaft in 1917. See: Elderfield, 16; For a description of the Expressionist art and lectures on Expressionism being hosted by the Kestner-Gesellschaft between 1917-19 see: Ibid., 16-17, Dietrich, 50 and Curt Robert Germundson, *Kurt Schwitters in Hannover: Investigation of a Cultural Environment*, Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Iowa, (2001), 31-37.

Expressionism in literature and art.[52] It is unknown if Schwitters had visited the gallery during

1917 where he could have seen the exhibition programs for the Expressionist artists, Kandinsky

and Marc, from the prior year.[53] Nevertheless, given the wide circulation and importance of the

Der Sturm magazine, Schwitters could hardly have remained unaware of the artists exhibiting at

the gallery once he began to take an interest in Expressionist art. In this regard, Elderfield

considers Schwitters' painting *Die Sonne im Hochgebirge* from 1917 as indebted to Kandinsky.[54]

Although Elderfied cannot confirm this connection, two months before Schwitters exhibited his

work at *Der Sturm*, the gallery held an exhibition on Kandinsky in August of 1918.[55] During this

time, Schwitters would have easily encountered information about the upcoming exhibition or

Kandinsky's writings in a copy of Walden's new book, *Expressionismus: die Kunstwende*

(Expressionism: The Turn in Art), published during the same year.[56] In this book, Walden

included Kandinsky's 1913 article "*Malerei als reine Kunst*" (Painting as Pure Art) in which

52. For a biography of Herwarth Walden and his founding of *Der Sturm* magazine in 1910 see: *Herwarth Walden and Der Sturm: artists and publications* (New York: Helen Serger la boetie, 1981), 7-10. An exhibition catalogue; For the early uses of the term "Expressionism" in general and by Walden specifically see: Gordon, "On the Origin of the Word 'Expressionism," 371-6.

53. The *Der Sturm* gallery held exhibitions of works from Kandinsky in September and Franz Marc in December of 1916. For a list of the *Der Sturm* exhibitions during 1916 see: *Der Sturm: ein Erinnerungsbuch an Herwarth Walden und die Künstler aus die Künstler aus dem Sturmkreis*, ed. Nell Walden and Lothar Schreyer (Baden-Baden: Klein, 1954), 261-62.

54. Elderfield, 18.

55. Ibid. 18, n. 25; For a list of the *Der Sturm* exhibitions during 1918 see: *Der Sturm: ein Erinnerungsbuch an Herwarth Walden und die Künstler aus die Künstler aus dem Sturmkreis*, 263-4.

56. Aside from three articles from Kandisnky that Walden published between 1912-13, he also dedicated an entire issue of *Der Sturm* to him and published a monograph on his work titled *Kandinsky, 1901-1913*. These articles, books and a program flyer for the at that time upcoming exhibition on Kandinsky would have been readily available at the gallery when Schwitters exhibited there in June of 1918. For Kandinsky's articles, the issue of *Der Sturm*, the monograph on Kandinsky and Walden's book: *Expressionismus: die Kunstwende*, see: Wassily Kandinsky, "Formen und Farbensprache," *Der Sturm* 2, 106 (1912), 2. Wassily Kandinsky, "Ueber Kunstverstehen," *Der Sturm* 3, no. 129, (1912): 157. Wassily Kandinsky, "Malerei als reine Kunst," *Der Sturm* 4, no. 178-179 (1913): 98. "Für Kandinsky," *Der Sturm* 4, no. 150-1 (1913). *Kandinsky, 1901-1913* (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1913). Herwarth Walden, ed. *Expressionismus: die Kunstwende*, (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1918); Monica Strauss summarizes the personal and professional interactions between Kandinsky and Walden in: Monica Strauss, "Kandinsky and 'Der Sturm'," *Art Journal* 43, no. 1 (Spring, 1983): 31-35;

Kandinsky presented a conception of art as a dichotomy of material form and an inner content he called its "internal necessity."[57] In the earlier 1912 essay, *"Concerning the Spiritual in Art,"* Kandinsky outlined his theory of artistic composition based upon this concept of an "inner necessity" that anticipates Schwitters' conception of art and architecture as an inseparable combination of material form and inner content.

Like Schwitters, Kandinsky considered each basic formal unit in a picture as having a unique expressive content that was the task of the artist to reveal. However, instead of torn pieces of printed text and found objects, Kandinsky's basic unit consisted of colored paint on a canvas. In his essay, *"Concerning the Spiritual in Art,"* Kandinsky argued that for him, each color of paint had an essential character of its own.[58] For Kandinsky, the red paint representing the fabric of a dress creates an objective representation of reality. However, when the color red of red paint was viewed in isolation of an identifiable object, it can also be regarded as having the non-objective qualities of being "warm" or "active."[59] Kandinsky believed these qualities derived in part from the experiences he had with material things that were red like the sun and hot metal.[60] These experiences were to have a direct affect upon the soul, which Kandinsky synaesthetically

57. Wassily Kandinsky, "Malerei als reine Kunst," *Der Sturm* 4, no. 178-79 (September 1913): 98-99. Republished in Walden, *Expressionismus: Die Kunstwende*, 12-18.

58. For Kandinsky each individual color was unique and had a specific physical and psychological effect. See Kandinsky's explanation in: Kandinsky, "On the Spiritual in Art and Painting in Particular," 156-60. Kandinsky used the example of a red dress to differentiate between materials that produce specific colors, like the sun (red), versus a dress that could be painted any color the artist chooses. See: Ibid., 200.

59. Although Kandinsky does suggest there can be a cold red, his discussion of colors and their essential character or 'inner value' center on their objective qualities isolated from other colors, forms and mixtures. In this sense, it is warm and active. See: Ibid., 177, 186-189, 200.

60. Kandinsky believed that all people have superficial short-term 'impressions' of colors deriving from their material experiences. Conversely, there are those individuals at a higher level of development in which these impressions have a more profound effect calling forth a vibration from the soul. In these individuals, the vibrations could synaesthetically jump senses. Nevertheless, for every man, there are certain effects of color that were objective and based upon warmth and coldness, lightness and darkness, distance, etc. In these instances, hot metal and the sun are used as examples of red materials whose material effects parallel their color effects in the painting. See: Ibid., 156-60, 177-89.

called their "inner sound" and he sought to use this invisible content of colors in connection with painted form to compose new subjects for his paintings.[61] Here, the depiction of objective forms and colors in the painting were only useful so long as they could contribute to the "inner necessity" of the composition.[62] As Kandinsky explains:

> This hidden construction can consist of forms apparently scattered at random upon the canvas, which–again, apparently–have no relationship one to another: The external absence of any such relationship here constitutes its internal presence. What externally has been loosened has internally been fused into a single unity. And this remains for both elements–i.e., for both linear and painterly form.[63]

Consequently, each particular form and color would have a direct affect upon the content of the painting as a whole.[64] Just as the words and objects in Schwitters' Merz would change their meaning when they changed context, Kandinsky's forms and colors would also suggest different subjects for his paintings depending upon their size, shape and location. As in his *Improvisation 31* (Sea Battle) from 1913, these subjects were not objectively identifiable in the painting but interpreted as an "inner necessity" unifying the forms of color on the canvas (fig. 85).

Similar to Kandinsky's explorations with the non-objective compositions of paint, Schwitters based the *Formung* and *Entformung* of found objects in a Merz assemblage upon the ability of materials to lose their objective identities. In the previous chapter it was discussed how in *"Die Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt,"* the fundative idea behind Schwitters'

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61. Kandinsky thought that the effects of individual colors created impressions or vibrations he called "inner sounds" on us. Where the different tones of sound were the materials that a musician used to compose music, so were the different tones or hues of color the materials a painter would use to compose a painting. Kandinsly thus calls upon artist to become more aware of the effects of color and use them to add content to their work "so that his external talents have something they can clothe [. . .]". See: Ibid., 160-3, 213; For Kandinsky, "form" also had an "inner content" that was comparable to the "inner sound" of color. Ibid., 165.

62. Ibid., 165-193, 211.

63. Ibid., 209.

64. Kandinsky explains this by describing how the color red can become 'muddy' and that 'muddy' has its own inner sound. See: Ibid., 187 also 200-1.

Formung and *Entformung* of found objects in a Merz work was based upon a conception of all

materials as having a transitory invisible "individual character" he called their "*Eigengift*."[65] For

Schwitters, in order for a found object to become useful for a Merz work, this *Eigengift* had to be

"*entmaterialisiert*" (dematerialized) in the *Entformung* of the object.[66] In this way, the thin piece

of shiny metal identified as a "can lid" in the Merz Picture, *Rossfett* (Horse Fat), or the

cylindrical piece of wood with splayed ends that is read as a "spool for thread" in, *Das Kegelbild*

(The Skittle Picture), were *entmaterialisiert* when they were put into the new context of the

assemblage (figs. 86 and 47). As a Merz work, it can be implied that Schwitters also *enformelt* or

disassociated the sticky decaying mass and the shinny porous object from their original identities

as a pine stump and medicine cork in his *Merzentwurf, Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hofbrunnen*.

By dematerializing their *Eigengift* in his imagination, the objects gained new ones in a new

context as parts of a model for a castle, cathedral and courtyard well. Similar to the Catholic

theory of transubstantiation, the outward appearance of an object used for a Merz assemblage did

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65. *"Entformelt"* is the term Schwitters uses to describe the disassociation of words and objects from their original contexts and purposes. John Elderfield explains the relationship between *Formung* and *Entformung* in Schwitters' work at length in: Elderfield, 237-8.

66. *"Was das verwendete Material vor seiner Verwendung im Kunstwerk bedeutet hat, ist gleichgültig, wenn es nur im Kunstwerk seine künstlerische Bedeutung durch Wertung empfangen hat. So habe ich zunächst Bilder aus dem Material konstruiert, das ich gerade bequem zur Hand hatte, wie Strassenbahnfahrscheine, Garderobenmarken, Holzstückchen, Draht, Bindfaden, verborgene Räder, Seidenpapier, Blechdosen, Glassplitter usw. Diese Gegenstände werden, wie sie sind, oder auch verändert in das Bild eingefügt, je nachdem es das Bild verlangt. Sie verlieren durch Wertung gegeneinander ihren individuellen Charakter, ihr Eigengift, werden entmaterialisiert und sind Material für das Bild."* (What the material had signified before its use in the work of art is a matter of indifference, so long as it is properly evaluated and given artistic meaning in the work of art. And so I began to construct pictures out of materials I happened to have at hand, such as streetcar tickets, cloakroom checks, bits of wood, wire, twine, bent wheels, tissue paper, tin cans, chips of glass, etc. These things are inserted into the picture either as they are or else modified in accordance with what the picture requires. They lost their individual character, their own *Eigengift,* by being evaluated against one another, by being *entmaterialisiert* (dematerialized*)* they become material for the picture). Schwitters, "Die Bedeutung des Merzgedankens in der Welt," 134. With my inclusion of *Eigengift* and *entmaterialisiert* from the original German text, this English translation by Werner Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters* (Köln, 1967), 94.

not change, but its original *Eigengift* or inner substance would be altered.[67] Early German Romantics also employed a similar form of interpretation with an assembly of literary fragments. For many scholars and critics of Schwitters work, early German Romanticism provides not only a precedent but also a source for Schwitters' Merz interpretation of found objects as art or models of architecture.

The Merz of Romanticism

Soon after Schwitters' conception of Merz in 1918, a number of his friends and critics immediately equated aspects of German Romanticism with his work. In December 1919, the leader of Berlin Dada, Richard Huelsenbeck, visited Schwitters in Hannover and recalled how "He disliked my fighting ways and I liked his static, snug middle-class world even less . . . we called him the abstract *Spitzweg*, the Kaspar David Friedrich of the Dadaist revolution."[68] In this quote, Huelsenbeck referred to Schwitters in a derogatory fashion by transforming the names of two great Romantic painters, Carl Spitzweg and Casper David Friedrich into the "*abstract Spitzweg*" and "*Kasper*" (the German puppet show clown) David Friedrich.[69] In a letter from 1958, Richard Huelsenbeck confirmed his view of Schwitters and his work during the early twentieth century as belonging to the legacy of German Romantic artists when in retrospect he stated, "Schwitters was at that time in my eyes a German Romantic."[70] Conversely, some of Schwitters' friends and critics also saw a connection between his Merz art and German

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67. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Thomas Carson, 2nd edition (Detroit, MI: Thomson/Gale, 2003), 158-160. c.v. "TRANSUBSTANTIATION."

68. Richard Huelsenbeck, "Dada and Existentialism," in *Dada: Monograph of a Movement*, ed. Wiley Verkauf (Tuefen, 1961), 58.

69. Ibid.

70. Schmalenbach, 366, n. 66.

Romanticism as a positive aspect of his work. In a review of the 1919 Merz exhibition at the

Sturm Gallery, the Berlin art critic Walter Mehring wrote of the *"Gerümpel–Romantik"*

(Rummage Romanticism) inherent in the collages.[71] This interpretation of Schwitters' work was

reinforced by his friend and much admired "leader of the kernel Dadaists," Tristan Tzara, who

described it as "Mechanistic Romanticism."[72] Consequently, it is not without precedent that

Carola Giedion-Welcker, another supportive friend and critic, saw early Romantic theory as an

important way to understand Schwitters' assemblage of words and found objects into poems and

art.[73] This linkage between Merz and Romanticism connect it to a renewed interest in German

Romanticism amongst many of his contemporaries.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, German Romanticism was embraced by

German political and cultural institutions as a precedent and source of inspiration for the making

of a new German art. One of the first individuals to revive Romanticism during this time was

Ricarda Huch in her 1899 book *Blütezeit der Romantik* (The Flowering of Romanticism).[74]

However, it was the Berlin, 1906 *Jahrhundertausstellung deutscher Kunst: 1775-1875*

(Centenary Exhibition of German Art: 1775-1875) that signaled the rediscovery of the legacy of

German painters. Following the exhibition, Wilhelm II's conservative nationalist writers upheld

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71. Walter Mehring, "Kurt Schwitters im Sturm," *Der Cicerone* 11, no. 15 (July, 1919): 462 after Elderfield, 53, n. 23

72. In "Merz" Schwitters made a distinction between the members of Berlin Dada and Zurich Dada with the former being "husk Dadaists" while the later were in his mind, "kernel Dadaists." For Schwitters, Tristan Tzara was "leader of the kernel Dadaists." See: Schwitters, "Merz," *LW*, vol. 5,77-78. This English translation by Ralph Manheim in Ibid., 406; Tristan Tzara, "Kurt Schwitters 1887-1948," in *Collage, Painting, Relief & Sculpture by Schwitters (exhibition catalog),* trans. Marcel Duchamp (New York: Sidney Janis Gallery, 1952), 4-5 after Schmalenbach, 13, n. 4.

73. Carola Giedion-Welcker, "Kurt Schwitters, Konstruktiv Metamorphose des Chaos [1947, 1948]," in Carola Giedion-Welcker, *Schriften 1926-1971*, ed. Reinhold Hohl, (Köln: M. DuMont Shauberg, 1973), 285-8.

74. Ricarda Huch, *Blütezeit der Romantik, (*Leipzig: Haessel, 1901) after Roland März, "German Romanticism and the Expressionist Utopia," in Barron, *German Expressionism*, 63.

German Romanticism as a specifically German art having emerged from post-revolutionary Europe. In her doctoral dissertation, *Romantic Fragments: Kurt Schwitters' Collages,* Christina Hunter surveyed the reception that German Romanticism received by the nationalist conservatives during the years leading to Schwitters enrollment in art school at the Dresden Academy in 1909. As Hunter points out, these conservatives invested Romanticism with notions rooted in the religious and cultural life of medieval Germany including spirituality, inwardness, irrationality and metaphysical striving.[75] Conversely, "Modernism," as Hunter observed, became associated the contrary qualities of the metropolis, democracy, liberalism, pluralism and technology.[76]

During this time of renewed interest in Romantic painting and philosophy, a number of German artists challenged the conservative's claims on the movement and formed *Die Brücke* in Dresden and *Blaue Reiter* in Munich. The rediscovery of this earlier period of German art, literature, and philosophy occurred at a moment in German political and cultural history when many established ideas and orders were being questioned. It coincided with an interest in *"Innerlichkeit"* (spirituality) amongst the Dresden *Die Brücke* artists from 1905-1910 and the later *Blaue Reiter* in Munich from 1911-14. For these artists Romanticism seemed to provide an alternative to the crass materialism of the Wilhelmine era and they strove for a higher, spiritual realm beyond the reality of mere physical appearances.[77] In this way, both Modernists and anti-Modernists received Romanticism in very different ways.[78]

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75. For this observation see: Christina Rosine Hunter, *Romantic Fragments: Kurt Schwitters' Collages*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, (2003), 22, n. 27 and 28.

76. Ibid.

77. For a comparison between the Romantic concept of inwardness and the *Die Brücke* and *Blaue Reiter* theories see: August Wiedmann, *Romantic Roots in Modern Art* (Gresham Books, 1979), 78-9 and Peter Selz, *German Expressionist Painting* (Berkeley [etc.]: University of California Press, 1957), 20-1;

In the midst of the early twentieth century revival of Romanticism in Germany, Schwitters arrived in Dresden and enrolled at the Dresden Art Academy from 1909-1914. At the Academy, Schwitters studied literary theory from the German Romantic scholar, Oskar Walzel, whom he mentioned with praise in a letter to his former professor at the *Kunstgewerbeschule Hannover* (Hannover School of Art), Richard Schlösser on May 2, 1909.[79] While in Dresden, Schwitters may have encountered the work of *Die Brücke* artists in local galleries or on display at the Dresden Saxonian Art Organization's 1912 *Grosse Kunstausstellung* (Great Art Exhibition). Annegreth Nill claimed in "*Die Handlung spielt in Dresden*" (The Action Plays in Dresden), that "Schwitters knew the Dresden collections very well" based on the course outlines of Schwitters' drawing professor at the Dresden Art Academy, Carl Bantzer.[80] However, in the extant documents from the period, Schwitters does not mention the work of *Die Brücke* artists. In addition, any studies or encounters Schwitters had with Romanticism did not seem to affect his work in the same way as it had the *Die Brücke* or *Blaue Reiter* artists, until 1917 when Schwitters claimed he was exploring Expressionism in his own work.

Despite the uncertainty towards Schwitters' encounter with Expressionist and Romantic art, scholars have linked his Merz art to Expressionist *Blaue Reiter* theory and also to the Romantic theory of the intentional fragment.[81] In this regard, Hunter observed that aside from

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78. Kenneth D. Barkin, "The Crisis of Modernity, 1887-1902," in *Imagining Modern German Culture, 1889-1910* (Studies in the History of Art, 53), ed. by Françoise Forster-Hahn (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art [etc.], cop. 1996), 19-32 and Charles E. McClelland, "Young German, not Young Greeks and Romans: Art, Culture, and Educational Reform in Wilhelmine Germany," in *Ibid.*, 37-51.

79. In a letter to his former art tutor Richard Schlösser, Schwitters explained on May 2, 1909 that: *"5 literarische Vorlesungen höre ich bei Herrn Professor Walzel. Vielleicht haben Sie ihn früher auch gehört? Ich bin sehr zufrieden mit seiner Vortragsweise."* (I attend five literary lectures from Professor Walzel. Perhaps you also used to hear him lecture? I enjoy his lecturing style very much.). Reproduced in Kurt Schwitters, *Wir spielen bis uns der Tod abholt: Briefe aus fünf Jahrzehnten,* ed. Ernst Nündel (Frankfurt am Main; Berlin: Ullstein, 1975), 19.

80. Annegreth Nill, "Die Handlung spielt in Dresden," in *Kurt Schwitters 1887-1948,* ed. Joachim Büchner and Norbert Nobis (Hanover: Sprengel Museum, 1986), 40, n. 4

their conceptual similarities, scholars on Schwitters' Merz have not been able to provide an explanation for his sudden sublation of early German Romantic and Expressionist themes into his own Merz theory of art during 1918.[82] Additionally, it has not been ascertained whether or not Schwitters had direct contact with Kandinsky's writings, *Blaue Reiter* theory or Dadaism during his development of Merz until June 1918, when he first signed the guest book at Walden's gallery.[83] Unlike previous research, Hunter proposed that it was Schwitters' introduction to Romantic theory at the Dresden Academy that enabled him to synthesize Expressionist themes so quickly; suggesting, it was Friedrich Schlegel's theory of the intentional fragment and Walzel's 1917 essay "Reciprocal Illumination of the Arts" that constituted the conceptual and structural foundation of Schwitters' entire artistic practice.[84] However, Hunter emphasizes the formal manipulations of fragments rather than their theoretical underpinnings in Neo-Platonism, noted by Walzel in the conclusion to the 1923 edition of *Deutsche Romantik* and reinforced in his *"Plotins Begriff der ästhetischen Form"* (Plotinus' Concept of Aesthetic Form)

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81. The first scholar to examine the connections between Schwitters' work and German Romantic theory was John Elderfield, who traced Schwitters' unification of the arts to the Wagnerian *"Gesamtkunstwerk"* and especially to the aesthetic theories of Kandinsky and the *Blaue Reiter* group that all had their roots in Romantic thought. See: Elderfield, 30-48; Dorothea Dietrich also connected Kandinsky's writings to Schwitters' Merz theory and further linked Kandinsky's dualistic mode of pictorial representation as abstract or real to Schelling's notion of the contradictory forces of nature through Worringer's writings in *Abstraction and Empathy*. See: Dorothea Dietrich, *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters: Tradition and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 50-69; Further, Beatrix Nobis examined Schwitters Merz work as having an ironic intent that she associated with the Romantic notion of irony. See: Beatrix Nobis, *Kurt Schwitters und die romantische Ironie; Ein Beitrag zur Deutung des Merz-Kunstbegriffes* (Alfter: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 1993); Conversely, Gamard has more recently focused on the relationship between Schwitters' Merz theory, alchemy and *Einfühlung* ('feeling') in German nature mysticism and German Romanticism in her discussion of the Merzbau specifically and the artist's entire Merz *oeuvre* in general. See: Gamard, 20-3, 57-58 and 69-70.

82. For a summary of the various scholars and their interpretations of Schwitters' development of Merz see: Hunter, Ibid., 86-92.

83. Schwitters signed his name for the first time in the guest book of Herwarth Walden's *Der Sturm* gallery in Berlin on June 27, 1918. See: Elderfield, 42-3. Schwitters also documents his own experimentations with Expressionism and abstraction as having begun in 1917. See: Schwitters, "Merz," in *LW*, vol. 5, 74-77.

84. Hunter, 1-8; 124-84.

from 1916.[85] Early German Romantics including Friedrich Schelling, Georg Friedrich Freiherr

von Hardenberg (Novalis) and Friedrich Schlegel incorporated Neo-Platonic theories of ontology

into their own theory of art and more specifically, into their theory of the Romantic fragment in

particular. This dissertation argues that a foundation of Neo-Platonism in Romantic art provides

a theoretical ground for Schwitters' conception of his Merz interpretation of found objects as a

visible manifestation of an ineffable content.

Romantic Theory and the Fragment

At the end of the 18th century, Enlightenment and Romantic philosophy developed

around questions concerning the epistemological foundation of knowledge and art. As a

philosophical and artistic movement, Romanticism is a reaction to Kant's secularization of

philosophical and cultural thought through rationalism. Kant's Enlightenment philosophy put

forward the view that all men possess a similar faculty of reason that can reflect, analyze and

know what was perceived to be an *a priori* logical order to the universe.[86] However, for

Romantics, the Enlightenment concept of nature as *a priori*, finite and knowable created a crisis

of oppositions between humanity and what they believed to be an evolving, infinite and

unknowable nature.[87] In response, early Romantics at the German university town of Jena,

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85. Oskar Walzel, "Plotins Begriff der ästhetischen Form," *NJKA*, 19 (1916): 186-225; Oskar Walzel, *Deutsche Romantik: eine Skizze* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner and Company, 1908), 4-8.

86. Isaiah Berlin, Arthur O. Lovejoy and Jean-Marie Schaeffer discuss this tendency of the Enlightenment and its effects upon the making and experience of art in: Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), 21-26; Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 22nd printing (Cambridge, Mass.; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2001), 288-289 and Schaeffer, *Art of Modern Age,* 67.

87. Edward Craig observes that "Wherever they looked they found division and conflict in men's minds and actions: the conception of God as creator of and eternal to nature, the finite opposed to the infinite; conscious, feeling man surrounded by inanimate, unfeeling objects; moral freedom against physical necessity; the battle between reason and sentiment; the desires of the individual versus the requirements of society; the tension between church and state; the friction between I and Thou . . . " See: Edward Craig, *The mind of God and the works of man* (Oxford [etc.]: Clarendon Press, 1987), 136.

including Ludwig Tieck, John Fichte, Schelling, Friedrich Schlegel, and Novalis sought to re-unify humanity with the infinite creative force of nature through art and literature. This created a renewed interest in Neo-Platonism amongst Romantics, who incorporated its theory of an evolving invisible unity behind a visible multiplicity of nature into their artistic and philosophical productions.

Romantic thought owes a certain debt to Kant's edification of the imagination as the *sine qua non* of all genuine knowledge and art. For Kant, our imagination created an autonomous synthesis of our sense experiences in the mental faculty he called the "understanding." In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant described this function of the imagination as the reproduction of our sense perceptions in the mind according to *a priori* combinations.[88] Compared to this "reproductive" activity of the imagination, Kant also proposed in the *Critique of Judgment* its ability to be "productive" by constructing new images from fragments and memories in the aesthetic judgment of art.[89] For Kant, in the judgment of art, the imagination created its own rules or patterns without constraint from external reference and its goal had no purpose other than to stimulate the mind – what he called the "free play of the imagination."[90] Yet, compared to Kant, the Romantics sought to use artistic invention to evoke a sense of nature, not as an *a priori* set of rules but as an evolving order of creation that was unified by an invisible foundation.

Contrary to Kant's isolation of the creative imagination from a finite rational order of

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88. Emmanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1965), 144-146.

89. For the productive role of the imagination see: Emmanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.C. Meredith (Oxford University Press, 1952), 175-77.

90. Ibid., 89.

nature, many Romantics found support in Neo-Platonism for a theory that directly linked human imagination to the knowledge of an infinite and evolving universe. For Romantics, to try to perceive as finite and *a priori* what was essentially infinite, evolving and changing, was a contradiction since any explanation of the infinite would isolate and characterize it as finite.[91] Fichte and more specifically Schelling sought to move beyond Kant's *a priori* rules of the "productive" imagination and to integrate its creative power as maker, not only of art but also the real elements of nature.[92] As M.H. Abrams claimed in his study, *The Mirror and the Lamp,* Romantic philosophy completed what Kant had initiated, the mind ceased to be a mirror passively reflecting external reality and become a lamp, which projects its own internally self-generated light onto things.[93] For the Romantics, the creation of art was proposed as a parallel to nature's creative processes and could play a decisive role in the intimation of an invisible foundation, common to all things.[94] Individuals inspired by similar interests in philosophy and art gathered in Jena around Friedrich Schlegel and called their new genre "Romantic." As Novalis, one of the Jena Romantic's chief exponents explained, Romantic philosophy and poetry sought to evoke this unknowable, infinite foundation in the finite.

> The world must be romanticized. That way one finds again the original meaning. Romanticizing is nothing but a qualitative potentializing . . . When I confer upon the commonplace a higher meaning, upon the ordinary an enigmatic appearance, upon the known the nobility of the unknown . . . I romanticize it. The operation is reversed for the higher, unknown, mystical, infinite.[95]

91. August Wiedmann, *Romantic Roots in Modern Art* (Gresham Books, 1979), 149; Isaiah Berlin, 105-6 and 119-121.

92. Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1988), 177-81.

93. M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1971), 57-69.

94. Wiedmann, 4-7.

95. Novalis, "*Logologische Fragmente*," no. 105, in *Novalis: Schriften*, ed. Richard Samuel, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1960), 545 after Marsha Morton, "German Romanticism: The Search for a Quiet Place," in Clarke, *Negotiating History,* 13, n. 7.

This notion of a higher, ineffable meaning in Novalis' definition of Romanticism belonged to a tradition of Neo-Platonic thought that he recognized had parallels with the philosophical system of Plotinus.[96] During the same year that Schwitters began to study with Oskar Walzel at the Dresden Art Academy, Walzel's book, *Deutsche Romantik: Eine Skizze* was published emphasizing that the Romantic desire to evoke "innate" content in art by imitating nature also harks back to the aesthetics of Plotinus.[97] This renewed interest in the transcendental function of art at the end of the nineteenth century focused its attention on Plotinus. Like Plotinus, the famous description of Romantic poetry that Friedrich Schlegel summarized as "eternally becoming" in "Fragment 116" of the *Athenaeum* journal elevated the processes of nature as an ideal form for art.[98] Walzel recognized the importance for an "organic conception" of art in

96. That Novalis had knowledge of Plotinus and was particularly inspired by him is clear from a letter he wrote to F. Schlegel in 1798 where he stated: "I do not know if I have spoken to you of my beloved Plotinus. Through Tiedmann I have been initiated into this philosopher, born expressly for me, and I have been almost frightened by his resemblance to Kant and Fichte. He pleases me more than either of them." P. Reiff in *Euphorion* (1912), 591 ff. (cited in Spenlé, *Novalis*, 188 ff., where the nature of the Plotinian influence upon the writer is analyzed) after Lovejoy, 288, n. 18; For more on the influence of Plotinus on the thoughts and ideas of Novalis see: Schaeffer, 69-81

97. Oskar Walzel, *German Romanticism*, trans. Alma Elise Lussky, 5th edition (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1965), 283-4.

98. Friedrich Schlegel, "Fragment 116," *Athenaeum* reproduced and translated by Peter Frichow in *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 32. As Schlegel suggests in *Gespräch über die Poesi*e: "*Alle heiligen Spiele der Kunst sind nur ferne Nachbildungen von dem unendlichen Spiele der Welt, dem ewig sich selbst bildenden Kunstwerk.*" (All the sacred play of art, is only a distant copying of the infinite play of the world, that work of art which is eternally fashioning itself). Friedrich Schlegel, *Gespräch über die Poesie* (1800), in Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenäum*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Heinrich Fröhlich, 1799-1800; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992), 107. Citation is to the Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft edition. This English translation by Arthur Lovejoy in Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 22nd printing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 304. For Plotinus, all existence (being) was to have derived from a single source, The One. As Plotinus suggests: "It is by The One that all beings are beings." Below The One, and consequently incorporated into it, Plotinus postulated the existence of The Intelligence (Being) which contained the immaterial archetypes of all sensible things or Ideas. Plotinus thus summarizes this discussion stating "The One, then, is not The Intelligence but higher. The Intelligence is still a being, while The One is not a being because it is precedent to all being." See: Plotinus, "The Good or The One," Sixth Ennead, Tractate Nine, Sections 1-3. This English translation by Elmer O'Brien in *The Essential Plotinus,* trans. Elmer O'Brien (Indiana: Hacket Publishing Co., 1964), 73-78. Conversely, below The Intelligence, was the physical world of becoming containing a transcendent Soul that imparts the Forms onto matter by means of the seminal reasons. Individual souls are thus

Romantic theory and that Friedrich Schelling had developed it most logically in all its phases.

In *Deutsche Romantik*, Walzel gave a description of Schelling's philosophical contribution to Romanticism and briefly summarized how his philosophy of nature contributed to an organic conception of art in *The System of Transcendental Idealism*.[99] As Walzel explained, Schelling's nature philosophy was based upon a dichotomy of consciousness and unconsciousness in which nature is the unconscious in the process of becoming:

> Schelling's natural philosophy regards nature a vast system which has proceeded form reason. Nature is assumed to be an unconscious form of rational life having the tendency to generate conscious forms . . . The philosophy of nature is thus the account of the soul in the process of becoming . . . in which reason progresses from unconsciousness to consciousness . . . Nature, likewise, is intelligence in the process of becoming . . . Nature philosophy is the doctrine of the becoming of the ego.[100]

Here, Walzel made reference to Schelling's conviction that a perfect parallel exists between the world of nature and the structure of our awareness, such that nature reflects consciousness.[101] In this regard, Schelling postulated the concept of an intelligence that is accessible to the conscious ego.[102] Similar to Plotinus, this conscious ego is active to both know by reflection and create the

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composed of two parts, one remains in the realm of Intellect (the "higher" part of Soul) the other descends to inhabit a corporeal body in the physical world. "Formation comes from yet another being, The Soul. The Soul it is that gives them their cosmic pattern. But the Intelligence provides them the seminal reasons much as skill gives the soul of the artist norms of performance." See: Plotinus, "The Intelligence, The Ideas, and Being," Fifth Ennead, Ninth Tractate, Section 3 in Ibid., 48-49. Plotinus argued that humans were directly connected to The One via The Intelligence such that man is able to proceed from the observation of the principles and patterns of sensible objects to a contemplation of their models in the Intelligence. Ibid., Fifth Ennead, Ninth Tractate, Section 7, 52. In the *Enneads*, Plotinus privileged aesthetic experience since it could draw one towards Unity that he referred to as the form of Beauty. For Plotinus, the perception of Beauty resulted when the Soul recognized and took pleasure in the perception of diverse or similar parts unified by one form as an image of that contained in the Intelligence. Plotinus, "Beauty," Fifth Ennead, Eight Tractate, Section 2-3 in Ibid., 35-7.

99. Walzel, *Deutsche Romantik: eine Skizze*, 40.

100. Ibid., 40-1. This English translation by Alma Elise Lussky in: Walzel, *German Romanticism,* 52.

101. In a separate statement, Schelling compared the ideal and the real as having a similar pre-determined harmony: "… that the same activity which is *consciously* productive in free action, is productive *without consciousness* in bringing about the world . . ." F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath, 5th printing (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 12.

102. Ibid., p. 11-12.

invisible Forms or archetypes of the intelligence.[103] Schelling considered the goal of philosophy

"to separate him [man] as purely as possible from the accidental things brought to him by the

flesh, the world of appearances, the life of the sense, and lead him back to the original."[104] Art

became the ideal model for philosophy, because only in the creative act of making art is it

possible to engage in a simultaneous activity – that of producing original acts of the intellect and

reflections on this production.[105] For Schelling, "[t]he ideal world of art and the real one of

objects are products of the same activity; the concurrence of the two (the conscious and the

unconscious) without conscious yields the real, and with consciousness the aesthetic world."[106]

Walzel explained this "activity" in Schelling's philosophy as "genius" or "the unconscious-

conscious activity of the ego, writing: "It is only in art that the sensual and spiritual worlds

merge; for genius is the intelligence which operates in the capacity of nature. Thus art becomes

the highest instrument of philosophy because it solves the problem that is the crux of philosophic

thought. Every work of art is a manifestation of the absolute world unity, expressed in a perfect

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103. In the Eighth Tractate of his *Enneads*, Plotinus recognized the creative power of man to not only know the sensible objects through reflections but also to construct new Ideas in the Intelligence. In the arts, these things were not mere imitations of nature but new constructions that "go back to the Ideas from which Nature itself derives." Plotinus, "On the Intellectual Beauty," *The Six Enneads*, Fifth Ennead, Eight Tractate, Section I. This English translation by Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page in Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page (Chicago [etc.]: William Benton: Encyclopaedia Britannica, cop. 1952), 239.

104. *"Daher auch die Absicht der Philosophie in Bezug auf den Menschen nicht sowohl ist, ihm etwas zu geben, als ihn von dem Zufälligen, das der Leib, die Erscheinungswelt, das Sinnenleben zu ihm hinzugebracht haben, so rein wie möglich zu scheiden und auf das Ursprüngliche zurückzufuehren."* (Hence, also the intention of philosophy in relation to man not to give to him something, but to separate him as purely as possible from the accidental things brought to him by the body, the world of appearances, the life of the sense, and lead him back to the original.). Friedrich Schelling, *Philosophie und Religion (1804),* in Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Friedrich Wilhem Joseph von Schellings Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 1, no. 6 (Stuttgart; Augsburg: Cotta, 1860), 26.

105. As Schelling explains " Two conditions are therefore required for the understanding of philosophy, first that one be engaged in a constant inner activity, a constant producing of these original acts of the intellect; and second, that one be constantly reflecting upon this production; in a word, that one always remain at the same time both the intuited (the producer) and the intuitant." Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 12-13.

106. Ibid., 12.

form."[107] The common task of both art and philosophy for Schelling was thus to rise above the unconscious creation of nature in order to provide a conscious "vision" of this creation in the work of art.[108] In this way art was to embody a metaphysical function that removes "the invisible wall dividing the real from the ideal world."[109]

Inspired by art's potential to reveal the evolving creative processes of nature, Jena Romantics sought to develop new literary and artistic techniques that would frustrate the effect of closure and finitude they perceived to be contradictory to the essential expression of "becoming." Consequently, the Jena Romantics embraced the use of glimpses, fragments and intimations rather than reproductions mirroring nature's externality. They maintained that any attempt to give art or poetry a coherent account, a beginning, middle or end would be a perversion of what they viewed as eternally becoming.[110] The most significant demonstration of the fragmentary form occurred when members of the Jena group anonymously published 451 literary aphorisms in the first *Athenaeum* issue of 1798.[111] Friedrich and Wilhelm Schlegel edited the six issues of the Athenaeum that followed between 1798 and 1800. Like the first, these contained literary conceptions upon a variety of subjects – most of them on philosophy, literature

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107. Walzel, *Deutsche Romantik: eine Skizze*, 41. This English translation by Alma Elise Lussky in: Walzel, *German Romanticism,* (1932), 53-4.

108. For a discussion of Schelling's philosophy of nature and the role of art as a conscious imitation of the unconscious creation of nature see: Werner Beierwaltes, "The Legacy of Neo-Platonism in: F.W.J. Schelling's Thought," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 10, no. 4 (2002): 393-428; Katharine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1956), 428-433; Isaiah Berlin, 97-98; Kearney, 177-181.

109. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 232; For a discussion of this statement in Schelling's philosophy see: August Wiedmann, 109.

110. See Isaiah Berlin, 114.

111. Volume 1, Part 2 of the *Athenaeum* journal was published as follows: Volume 1, part 1 (Berlin: Friendrich Vieweg dem Aeltern, 1798); Volume I, part 2 (Berlin: n.p., 1798); Volume II, part 1 (Berlin, 1799); Volume Ii, part 2, (Berlin: Heinrich Frölich, 1799); Volume III, part 1 (Berlin: Heinrich Frölich, 1800); Volume III, part 2 (Berlin: Heinrich Frölich, 1800) after Hunter, 131, n. 209.

and poetry. In themselves, the aphorisms were complete, but as a collection, they became

disconnected fragments, one following the other, unsigned, undifferentiated by title, number or

other designation.[112] In a discussion of Ricarda Huch's *Natur und Geist als die Wurzeln des*

Lebens und der Kunst (Nature and Spirit as the Roots of Life and Art), Walzel described the

original effect of the "*Aphorismenluft der jenaischen Romantik*" (The air of aphorisms in Jena

Romanticism) as *"in die freie Luft stellen"* (hanging in the air), *"Paradoxen"* (paradox), and

"verblüffend" (bewildering).[113] In this way, the experience of reading the aphorisms compared to

Schlegel's conception of Romantic poetry as "in the state of becoming; that in fact, is its real

essence: that it should forever be becoming and never perfected."[114] By presenting the

disconnected aphorisms as a unified work, Romantics incite what Schlegel referred to as "the

instinct for unity in mankind."[115] This instinct provokes the imagination to consciously posit a

connection between the fragments. As a result, the subject participates in the creation of an

invisible content becoming in the aphorisms. In doing so, the process actualizes Schelling's

concept of art by consciously creating a vision of the unconscious creation of nature that

Schelling viewed as an unfolding of an invisible and unknowable Absolute. As Walzel observed:

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112. For a historical discussion of the *Athenaeum* journal see: Ernst Behler, "*Athenaeum, die Geschichte einer Zeitschrift*," in the facsimile reproduction *Athenaeum Eine Zeitschrift herausgegeben von August Wilhelm und Friedreich Schlegel*, vol. 3 (Darmstadt: Wissenschqaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960), 5-64 after Hunter, 131, n. 210.

113. Walzel claims that it is only when Ricada Huch orders the disconnected fragments that several refer to common themes. See: Oskar Walzel, *Ricarda Huch* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1916), 100-101 after Hunter, Ibid., 133-4, n. 217.

114. Schlegel, "Fragment 116," 32.

115. *"So mächtig ist aber der Trieb nach Einheit im Menschen, dass der Urheber selbst, was er durchhaus nicht vollenden oder vereinigen kann, oft gleich bei der Bildung doch wenigstens ergänzt; oft sehr sinnreich und dennoch ganz wider natürlich."* (But so powerful is the instinct for unity in mankind that the author himself will often bring something to a kind of completion, often at the point of formation, which simply can't be made a whole or a unit; often quite imaginatively and yet completely unnaturally.) In this fragment, Schlegel continues to address not only the creative but also the interpretive process required on the part of the viewer (reader) of an incomplete structure. See: Fragment no. 103 in Peter Firchow; *Philosophical Fragments*, 12.

> The conception that poetry is absolute reality, that it is equal to truth, not only pointed to a philosophical conviction beyond mere things, that beyond the phenomena of the empiric world lay the true world, but actually recognized in poetry a means of grasping the absolute. Here the infinite became finite; here the absolute became experience.[116]

This notion of art as a guide for the imagination to a higher dimension of Being was discussed in the previous chapters as the anagogical interpretation of Christian art and architecture. However, compared to medieval Christian exegetes, who viewed art as an imperfect manifestation of an *a priori* Idea outside the work, Romantics sought to embrace incompleteness in their art and poetry to encourage the audience to interpret an Idea becoming in the work.

Anagogical Merz

Perhaps nowhere does an anagogical perspective of materials re-appear more vigorously than in the making and reception of Schwitters' Merz art and architecture. At an early stage in the development of Schwitters' *oeuvre*, he explained his Merz use of found objects as the interpenetration of an invisible content with material. During this time, Schwitters also perceived a "close artistic friendship" between his assemblage of found objects and the practices of Zurich Dada artists. Like Schwitters, these Dadaists came to observe how an otherwise disconnected assemblage of words or found materials could encourage one to posit a connection unifying them as poetry or art. For Hugo Ball, this interpretation of Dada art and poetry had parallels with an anagogical perspective of materials that, similar to Schwitters' Merz art and architecture, was not *a priori* but interpreted in the making and experience of the work.

Early Dada experiments with anarchy, chance poetry and abstract art began as an attempt to expose the arbitrary nature of cultural values, myths and socially accepted systems of representation they believed promoted and glorified the massacres taking place during World

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116. Walzel, *Deutsche Romantik: eine Skizze*, 22. This English translation by Alma Elise Lussky in Oskar Walzel, *German Romanticism*, 28.

War I. Ball, the founder of the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, wrote in his diary on June 16, 1916:

> The ideas of culture and of art as a program for a variety show–that is our kind of Candide against the times. People act as if nothing had happened. The slaughter increases, and they cling to the prestige of European glory. They are trying to make the impossible possible and to pass off the betrayal of man, the exploitation of the body and the soul of people, and all this civilized carnage as a triumph of European intelligence.[117]

Here, Ball outlined the intentions underlying the activities at the cabaret: to expose and radically question the social ideals of "European glory" and "European intelligence." As Ball continued to explain, the Dadaist's "spontaneous foolishness and our enthusiasm for illusion will destroy them [the cultural values]."[118] Since its inception at Zurich in 1916, the anarchic intent of Dadaism perpetuated a state of confusion and lack of clarity for its activities and goals until its decay about 1922.[119] The Dada artist Marcel Janco recalled these activities as acts of anarchic destruction that "began by shocking the bourgeois, demolishing his idea of art, attacking common sense, public opinion, education, institutions, museums, good taste, in short the whole prevailing order."[120]

As noted above, one method that Dada artists explored in the making of poetry and art was chance. Tristan Tzara was the first to introduce chance as a method of artistic production with his "recipe for a Dadaist poem." In Tzara's recipe, the artist should:

> Take a newspaper. Take a pair of scissors. Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem. Cut out the article. Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag. Shake it gently. Then take out the scraps one after the other

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117. Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 67.

118. This excerpt from Ball's diary entry on May 15, 1916. Reproduced in Ibid., 61.

119. Both Miklauz Prosenc and Hans Georg Kemper stress the directionless and incoherence of the early activities of the Dadaists in Zurich. See: Miklauz Prosenc, *Die Dadaisten in Zürich*, (Bonn: Bouvier, 1967), 64-69 and Hans Georg Kemper, *Vom Expressionismus zum Dadaismus* (Kronberg/Ts.: Scriptor Verlag, 1974), 13-25 after Richard Shepard, "Dada and Mysticism: Influences and Affinities," in Foster and Kuenzli, *Dada Spectrum*, 92.

120. Marcel Janco, "Dada at two Speeds," quoted from *Dadas on Art*, ed. Lucy Lippard (Engelwood Cliffs, N.J., 1971), 36 after Rudolf E. Kuenzli, "The Semiotics of Dada Poetry," in *Dada Spectrum*, ed. Stephen Foster and Rudolf Kuenzli (Madison,WI: Coda Press; Iowa City: The University of Iowa, 1979), 52

in the order in which they are left in the bag. Copy conscientiously.[121]

Hans Richter explains that Tzara's "Dadaist poem" was more than just a method for assembling a series of words into the appearance of a poem but also that it had the intent to be read and to "reveal something of the mind and personality of the person" that interpreted it. Tzara, Richard Huelsenbeck and Marcel Janco also experimented with the use of chance to create their "simultaneous poem" in which three poems were read at the same time in different languages. In a footnote to the simultaneous poem, "*L'Admiral cherche une maison à louer*" (The Admiral looks for a House to Rent), Tzara defined the purpose of this poetic form as an attempt to give each listener "the chance to combine appropriate associations" and "retain the elements that suit their personality" (fig. 87).[122] For Hans Arp, chance also became as a method for inspiring his own artistic compositions by first allowing pieces of paper to fall randomly onto canvases and then adjusting them to suit his needs (fig. 88). Ball explained this random juxtaposition and discovery of words, images and found objects in Dada art and poetry as having the dual effect of being "childlike" and "insane."[123] In his essay "Psychologizing Dada," Hans Kreitler observed that the Dada compositions are also "characteristic of a certain stage in the development of the child, namely the one in which it has not yet grasped the real connections between things, but in looking for such an order, arrays objects with what seems to be arbitrariness."[124] As Richard Sheppard observed in his essay "Dada and Mysticism," a handful of the Zurich Dadaists during

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121. Tristan Tzara, *Sept manifestes dada* (Paris: Jean Budry, 1924). Translated into English by Ralph Manheim in Robert Motherwell, ed. *Dada: The Painters and Poets* (New York: William Schultz, 1951), 73-98. See specifically 92.

122. Tristan Tzara, Richard Huelsenbeck and Marcel Janco, *"L'Admiral cherche une maison à louer,"* in Motherwell, *Dada: The Painters and Poets*, 241.

123. Hugo Ball, 72-75.

124. Hans Kreitler, "The Psychology of Dadaism," in *Dada: Monograph of a Movement*, ed. Willy Verkauf (Teufen: Niggli, 1961), 82.

this time viewed their work as an interpenetration of material with spiritual content in order to provide an explanation for the possibility of making sense of the apparent nonsense in the fluctuating material world.[125] For Ball, the process by which Dada art and poetry incited the imagination to make connections between absurd and misshapen assemblies of literary and visual fragments had a precedent in the anagogic interpretation of Christian art.[126]

In retrospect, Ball found a connection between his early Dada activities at the Cabaret Voltaire with the anagogical interpretation of divine Ideas in Christian exegesis. Although Ball's life too often viewed as a neat progression through three separate phases that led from Dada artist to Cultural Critic and to Theologian, Kurt Flash argues in *"Von der 'Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz' zu Dionysius Areopagita"* (From the "Critique of the German Intelligentsia" to Dionysius Areopagita), that mysticism was always a prominent interest in his intellectual life.[127] Even when Ball first encountered the name "Dada," he recognized a connection between it and mysticism. Ball wrote about this connection in his diary on June 18, 1921 explaining that "when I met the word 'Dada', I was twice called from Dionysius. D.A.-D.A. (H-------k [Huelsenbeck] wrote about this mystical birth; I did too in earlier notes. At that time I was interested in the alchemy of letters and words."[128] The dating of this remark is important, because Ball made it at a time when he was working on a biography of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite for his book,

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125. Richard Shepard suggests that a number of Dadaists came to Zurich with the same question for which they had two different perspectives: "Was a dynamic principle of order discernable within its contradictions and fluctuation or was it, in the end, just chaos?" For those took the position of the former Shepard included, Tristen Tzara, Raoul Hausmann, Hans Arp, Richard Huelsenbeck, Johannes Baader, Emmy Hennings and Hugo Ball. See: Richard Shepard, "Dada and Mysticism: Influences and Affinities," in Foster and Kuenzli, *Dada Spectrum*, 98-104 and 111-13.

126. Hans Richter, *Dada art and anti-art,* trans. David Britt (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 51.

127. Kurt Flash, "Von der 'Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz' zu Dionysius Areopagita," in *Dionysius Dada Areopagita*, ed. Bernard Wacker (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996), 113-30.

128. Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 210. For a discussion of Ball's interpretation see: Ibid., 248-51.

Byzantinisches Christentum (Byzantine Christianity).[129] Again, central to the principle of the

Pseduo-Areopagite's doctrine was a concern for the spiritual and thus anagogical ascent of man

to a perception of an invisible foundation for the multiplicity of matter and beyond to the

perception of a unity above it. This is supported by Ball's discussion of the Pseudo-Areopagite in

Byzantinisches Christentum where, like the Dada poems and visual art, he observed how in the

absurdity and contradiction of a misshapen representation "resides a request that excites the

fantasy of the knower even more and drives his reason even higher."[130] Nevertheless, Ball did

not establish Dada as a religious movement. Rather, as mentioned previously, Ball founded Dada

just after having left the University of Munich where he fostered a deep appreciation for the anti-

Christian philosophy of Nietzsche and the Expressionist's concept of the spiritual in art.[131]

During his activities with the Dadaists in Zurich, Ball continued to reflect upon these influences

in his diary.[132] In this light, it is difficult to argue that the connection Ball made between Dada

and Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite was implying that Dada art had the intention to act as a

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129. Hugo Ball, *Byzantinisches Christentum: Drei Heiligenleben* (München; Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1923).

130. *"Uebrigens wohne der Absurdität und dem Widerspruch solcher Darstellung eine die Phantasie des Wissenden mehr noch erregende und seine Vernunft höher treibende Anforderung inne."* (Incidentally, inherent in the absurdity and the contradiction of such a representation resides a request that excites the fantasy of the knower even more and drives his reason even higher.). Ibid., 235.

131. Hugo Ball began a doctoral thesis at the University of Munich on Nietzsche in 1909-10 titled "Nietzsche in Basel." In a letter from 1918 to his wife, Emmy Hennings, Ball commented upon the significant influence that Nietzsche had upon him. However, in his diary entries from November and December of 1917, Ball also struggled with resolving Nietzsche's atheistic ideas with his own. See: Hugo Ball, *Hugo Ball (1886-1986: Leben und Werk),* 63; Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 93-5. See specifically diary entries for November 28, December 4 and 18, 1917. In reference to Ball's interest in Expressionism, Ball met Kandinsky in 1912 and planned to work with him and other Blaue Reiter members on a theater project. His poetry appeared in Expressionist pre-war journals and in early spring of 1917, he organized an exhibition of Expressionist paintings at Galerie Dada on April 7, 1917. At the gallery opening Ball lectured on Kandinsky. See: *Hugo Ball, (1886-1986) Leben und Werk*, 12-17 after Rose-Carol Washton Long, 262-266. For Ball's complete lecture on Kandinsky translated into English by John Elderfield see: Hugo Ball, "Kandinsky," in *Flight out of Time*, 222-234.

132. "God is dead [. . .] Above is below, below is above. The transvaluation of values came to pass. Christianity was struck down [. . .] You will not understand them if you believe in God and not in chaos." Hugo Ball, "Kandinsky" in ibid., 223-4 and 225.

guide to the perception of the Christian "immaterial archetypes" above material reality.[133] More likely, Ball's comment indicates he recognized a similar form of interpretation with the making and reception of Dada art as that described by the Pseduo-Areopagite with Christian art.

Schwitters also saw a connection between Christian Ideas and his own Merz assembly of found objects that he continued to reinforce throughout his life. Schwitters already made this association between his Merz art and religious thought in his article "Merz," when he explained that "art is an *Urbegriff*, elevated towards divinity."[134] In the years that followed, Schwitters continued to comment on this connection with Dada artists, Tristen Tzara and Hans Arp, that "Art is a spiritual function of man."[135] During the same year, Schwitters made it clear from his statement "Dada is the Christian spirit in the realm of art" that the "spiritual function" he had in mind was a Christian one.[136] Later in 1944, Schwitters connected this "Christian spirit" with his own work when he wrote to Herbert Read thanking him for describing his Merz work as having "a mystical justification for taking up the stones which the builders rejected and making something of them."[137] Schwitters' references to the spiritual in these instances suggest that his interest was in the anagogical role of Merz.

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133. See the Pseudo-Areopagite's discussion about how the interpretation of perceptible matter as both similar and dissimilar to invisible "heavenly intelligences" can lift one up to a contemplation of the "immaterial archetypes." See: Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Celestial Hierarchy," in Dionysius the Pseudo-Aeropagite, *Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works,* trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 145-152.

134. Schwitters, "Merz," in *LW*, vol. 5, 76.

135. "*Die Kunst ist eine geistige Funktion des Menschen*". Kurt Schwitters, Theo Van Doesburg, Hans Arp, Tristen Tzara, Christof Spengmann, "Manifest Proletkunst," *Merz,* no. 2 (April 1923): 24-25. Reproduced in: Kurt Schwitters, *LW,* vol. 5, 143.

136. "*Dada ist der christliche Geist auf dem Gebiete der Kunst*." Kurt Schwitters, "Tran 35, Dada ist eine Hypothese," *Der Sturm*, 15, no. 1 (March 1924): 29-32. Reproduced in LW, vol. 5, 172-5. See specifically 174.

137. Letter to Herbert Read, November 1, 1944. Reproduced in Kurt Schwitters, *Wir Spielen, bis uns Tod abholt: Briefe aus fünf Jahrzehnten*, ed. Ernst Nündel (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1975), 177 and Herbert Read, London 1944, n.p. after Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters,* 93 n. 73-4.

However, Schwitters never used the German term for *"anagoge"* (anagogy) to describe

the interpretation of a "mystical justification" for the found objects assembled in his Merz works.

A survey of German dictionaries published during the early twentieth century indicates that

anagoge was not a common term and it does not appear that Schwitters knew of Joseph

Stigelmayr's use of "*anagogischen*" (anagogical) in his 1911 translation of Dionysius the

Pseudo-Areopagite's "Celestial Hierarchy."[138] Herein, the interpretation of an immaterial unity

dispersed in the multiplicity of material particulars would have easily coincided with Schwitters

own interpretation of found objects in his Merz *oeuvre* as having "a mystical justification."

Indeed, *"mystischen"* (mystical) was the sense that Walzel had given to the term

"anagogischen" in his 1916 article "*Plotins Begriff der ästhetischen Form.*"[139] Nevertheless, the

"mystical justification" that Schwitters described in "Merz" as an invisible content unifying his

assemblage of found objects as art, was not created by a Christian God but by an artist in "the

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138. The conclusion that the German term *'anagoge'* was not in everyday use during the early twentieth century is based upon a survey of three available German dictionaries including: Moriz Heyne, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1905); Fr. L.K. Weigand, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1907); *Trübners deutsches Wörterbuch*, ed. Alfred Goetze (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1939). By itself, the German version of the sentence in which the word *"anagogischen"* appears in Stigelmayr's translation of "The Celestial Hierarchy" is very difficult to translate into English without moving the text around. At the point in the text which *"anagogischen"* appears, Dionysius is explaining how the Idea of *"Licht"* (Light) that is created by the *"Vater des Lichts"* (Father of Light) radiates into multiplicity and never looses its own interior unity. By being dispersed in multiplicity, this Light uplifts and unifies multiplicity with it. *"Denn dieser selbst verliert ja auch nie etwas von der ihm eigenen einheitlichen Einfachheit, während er sich zum Zwecke der anagogischen und einigenden Anpassung an die von der Vorsehung geleiteten Wesen vervielfältigt und (zu ihnen) austritt."* (Because this also never looses anything of its own uniform simplicity, while it multiplies and exits outside itself, for the purpose of the anagogical and uniting assimilation, to the beings that are led by providence.). The English translation of the text from Luibheid reads as follows: "Of course this ray never abandons its own proper nature, or its own interior unity. Even though it works itself outward to multiplicity and proceeds outside of itself as benefits its generosity, doing so to lift upward and to unify those beings for which it has a providential responsibility." See: Dionysius Areopagita, *Des heiligen Dionysius Areopagita angebliche Schriften über die beiden Hierarchien*, trans. Josef Stiglmayr (Kempten; München: Kösel, 1911), 3; This English translation in Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, Ibid., 146.

139. Oskar Walzel introduces the term *'anagogischen'* in his discussion of how St. Thomas Aquinas' biblical exegesis of the circumcision of Christ had given it a "*mystischen und moralischen Sinn*" (mystical and moral meaning). As Walzel argued, Aquinas anagogical interpretation sought to provide *"einen anagogischen im Hinblick auf die Auferstehung und auf die mit ihr verbundene Ablegung von Fleisch und Blut"* (an anagogical view to the resurrection and the shedding of flesh and blood). See: Oskar Walzel, "Plotins Begriff der ästhetischen Form," 222.

artistic evaluation of the elements."[140]

By extending his Merz art to the modeling practices of architects, Schwitters initiated a change in the role that his Merz interpretation of found materials afforded the imagination of new constructions. Previous to his extension of Merz to the design practices of architects, Schwitters explained that the assemblage of found objects as art had no other "Zweck" than to create a visible "expression" of an invisible content that "could be given only to a particular structure, it cannot be translated."[141] However, as a modeling method, Schwitters proposed that the selection of "arbitrary material" for a *Merzentwurf* was based upon it having an "architectural feeling, in order to obtain an effect, which architecture can copy/recreate."[142] Compared to his Merz art, in which the selection of a found object is determined by its ability to contribute to the assemblage as art, the architect who selects material for a *Merzentwurf* has to consider how the assemblage of found objects anticipates the facture of the materials in whatever structure he is designing. Whether of not Schwitters knew the term, this Merz process of modeling making, that is grounded in Romantic Neo-Platonism, can best be understood as "anagogy." To this point, the discussion of anagogy has been primarily concerned with the interpretation of non-utilitarian objects. However, in ancient Greek philosophy the interpretation of an invisible determining content for a utilitarian object was also connected to its purpose and it is this sense of anagogy that needs to be separated from its complicated beginnings in medieval Christian exegesis.

Anagogy, its Intellectual and Mystical applications

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140. Schwitters, "Merz," *LW*, vol. 5, 76.

141. Ibid. This English translation by Ralph Manheim in Ibid., 405.

142. *". . . architektonischem Gefühl, um eine Wirkung zu erzielen, welche die Architektur nachbilden kann."* Schwitters, "Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hofbrunnen," 166.

More fundamental than any other aspect of Schwitters' Merz *oeuvre* is his interpretation

that an assemblage of found objects are unified by a common invisible content. The term

"anagoge" has historically described the interpretation of particulars in material reality as

having a common individual invisible source. While the term today, remains overshadowed by

its use to name a form of religious experience, contemporary dictionaries define the word

anagoge as "the elevation of the mind [or the adept] to divinity" in early Greek philosophy and

the "interpretation [or explanation] of texts as having [or by inserting] a higher sense, e.g. the

interpretation that seeks to give a symbolic relationship to biblical words."[143] Both the German

word "*anagoge*" and the English word "anagogy" derive from the Late Greek word αναγωγη

(*anagoge*) as an elevation (mystical or ecstatic) and ultimately from the early Greek word

αναγειν (*anagein*) meaning "to lead," and "to elevate."[144] Amongst the most archaic meanings

of *anagein* is that associated with the launching of a ship in Homer's *Illiad* (700 BCE) as "to

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143. With my inclusion of "or the adept," "or explanation" and "or by inserting" into the second and third definitions of *'anagoge'* in the *Brockhaus-Wahrig* dictionary to make it correspond with the *Duden* definition. The *Brockhaus-Wahrig* definition of *'anagoge'* reads as: *"1. Zurückführen auf etwas Allgemeines, Geisitiges. 2. (griech. Philos.) Erhebung des Geistes zu Gott. 3. (Rhet.) Auslegung von Texten durch Hineinlegen eines höheren Sinns, z.b. die Auslegung, die den biblischen Worten eine symbolische Beziehung zu geben sucht."* (1. Lead back to something universal, intellectual. 2. (Greek, Philos.) Elevation of the mind / spirit to God. 3. (Rhet.) Interpretation of texts by inserting a higher sense, e.g. the interpretation that seeks to give a symbolic relationship to the Biblical words.). The *Duden* definition of *'anagoge'* reads as: *"1. (in der altgriechischen Philosophie) Das >>Hinaufführen<< des Eingeweihten zur Schau der Gottheit. 2. (in altgriechischen Rhetorik) Erläuterung eines Textes durch Hineinlegen eine höheren Sinnes."* (1. (In ancient Greek philosophy) The leading up of the adept to the view of divinity 2. (In ancient Greek Rhetoric) Explanation of a text by inserting higher sense). See: *Brockhaus-Wahrig: deutsches Wörterbuch in sechs Bänden*, ed. Gerhard Wahrig, Hildegard Krämer, Harald Zimmermann, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: F. A. Brockhaus; Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980-1984), 203, s.v. "Anagogy" and *Duden: Das grosse Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Manheim; Leipzig; Wein; Zürich: Dudenverlag, 1999), 193, s.v. "Anagogy"; Compared to the German dictionaries, the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* limits its definition and examples for the word "anagogy" to a description of the interpretation of Scriptures as a "spiritual elevation or enlightenment, especially to understand mysteries" and a "mystical interpretation, hidden 'spiritual' sense of words."See: *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). s.v. "Anagogy."

144. *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C.T. Onions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), s.v. "Anagogy."

send up [to high sea]."[145] In general, *anagein* meant "to carry to a place," and especially "to bring or lead up from a lower place to a higher, to raise up or to elevate."[146] The ancient Greek use of the word *anagein* to the describe the elevation of something "physically" was expanded when it became *anagoge* to include the elevation of something "intellectually" and later by extension, "mystically." The conception of an epistemological system in which one knows things by ascending from a contemplation of physical particulars to their higher invisible archetypes or *eidos* is attributed to Plato who, using a word with the same stem 'ana' as *anagein*, describes this movement as an ascent (*anabasis*).[147] The applications of anagogy in early Greek ontology hint at a beginnings for Schwitters' Merz method of interpreting natural and man-made things as models of architecture.

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145. Patrick H. Byrne, "To Reduce or to Elevate (*Anagein*)?," in *Analysis and Science in Aristotle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 25.

146. Ibid.

147. In Book VI and VII of the *Republic*, Plato presented two examples to illustrate his concept of reality and how we know things in it: a "divided line" and a "cave." In the example of a "divided line," Plato introduces two worlds, the sensible world and the intelligible world, each imagined to exist on a line divided in the middle: the lower part of the line consists of the visible world and the upper part, the intelligible world. Each half of the line relates to a certain type of knowledge: a visible world of which we can only have opinion while we can achieve "knowledge" of the intelligible world. Plato further divides the two worlds into their own upper and lower regions. In the lower region of the visible world Plato places "illusion," which consists of "shadows" and "reflections," while the upper region contains "belief," which refers to any kind of knowledge of things that change, such as "the animals about us and all plants and the whole class of objects made by man." Alternatively, in the lower part of the intelligible world Plato also placed "reason" as knowledge of things such as mathematics. By contrast, Plato placed "intelligence" in the upper part, which he considered to contain the highest and most abstract independently existing Ideas or Forms (*eidos*) of the changing visible world. Ultimately, at the highest end of the upper part of the intelligible world represented the understanding of a single unifying entity Plato only referred to as "the starting point of all." Following the example of the "divided line" in Book VI, Plato presented a second illustration of his ontological system in Book VII, a cave. In this example, Plato used the differences between the experience of sunlight outside of a cave and the artificial light, shadows and darkness in a cave, as an allegory for the metaphysical division between being and becoming. In this allegory, Plato presents the world of darkness inside a cave as an illusory stage where people are in chains and live in ignorance as prisoners of mere shadows. The cave for Plato symbolizes the realm of becoming while the sunlight outside of it us the transcendental realm of Being. Compared to the example of the "divided line," the cave corresponds to the realm of belief; the world of day corresponds to the realm of knowledge. Likewise, the objects that are visible in daylight are the Ideas or Forms. The sun stands for Plato's "the starting point of all" as an Idea of the Ideas, the Idea of the Good. For Plato, the mind that moves from a contemplation of visible things to knowledge of their intelligible Ideas is an "ascent" (*anabasis*). Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd. 1969), 109-129.

Unlike Schwitters' architect, Plato's humans do not create the invisible content of art or

architecture but can employ physical particulars as didactic tools for remembering the Ideas. In

the *Republic,* Plato developed an important description of the role that Ideas play in the creation

of man-made things using the example of a couch. For Plato, a couch first exists as an Idea "that

God produces."[148] The carpenter does not make the Idea of "Couch' but "fixes his eyes" on it in

order to create a particular physical couch.[149] Plato continues this discussion arguing that

knowledge of some utilitarian things, like a "flute," is connected to its use such that neither the

painter nor the craftsman may know the thing they are making, only the user.[150] Nevertheless, as

Plato explains, the user could help a carpenter create the thing by explaining to him the defects of

whatever they construct.[151] What the carpenter creates as a material flute is a visible particular of

the Idea of Flute. Conversely, for those seeking to ascend to a knowledge of the Idea for

something, Plato conceded in his discussion of the divided line that one may at times resort to

creating certain "visible forms" to give visible expression to their abstract ideas:

> And do you not also know that they [geometricians] further make use of the visible forms
> and talk about them, though they are not thinking of them but of those things of which
> they are a likeness, pursuing their inquiry for the sake of the square as such and the
> diagonal as such, and not for the sake of the image of it which they draw. And so in all
> cases. The very things which they mould and draw, which have shadows and images of
> themselves in water, these things they treat in their turn as only images, but what they
> really seek is to get sight of those realities which can be seen only by the mind.[152]

Plato's "visible forms" are not ends in themselves and can function as didactic tools for leading

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148. Ross argues that Plato's use of God in this instance should not be taken literally suggesting that Plato introduces God to give the ideal 'Couch' a maker so that it is prior to the ones created by the carpenter and the painter. William David Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 78-9.

149. Plato, The Republic, (597b), 427-32.

150. Ibid., 443-45.

151. Ibid., 445-46.

152. Ibid., 113.

the mind in its ascent from the lower to the higher – from material particulars to their invisible

archetypes. For Plato's geometrician, interpreting diagrams as particular squares leads their mind

to the contemplation of an Idea of Square common to them.[153] However, Plato never provides an

example of the use of constructed utilitarian things to aid in an ascent to the Idea.

For Aristotle, by knowing the principles of causation for all things, one could interpret

any object in such a way as to *anagein* or elevate it to these principles and gain an understanding

of them:

> For we aim at understanding, and since we never reckon that we understand a thing till
> we can give an account of its "how and why," it is clear that we must look into the "how
> and why' of things coming into existence and passing out of it, or more generally into the
> essential constituents of physical change, in order to elevate (*anagein*) any object of our
> study to the principles ascertained.[154]

This "understanding" was for Aristotle, the result of observing a thing's coming into existence

and passing away. All things, may be viewed as the result of Aristotle's four causes: material,

formal, efficient and end or final (*telos*) causes.

> (1) the existence of *material*, for the generating process to start from is one of the
> essential factors we are looking for. Such is the bronze for the statue, or the silver for the
> phial. Then naturally, (2) the thing in question cannot be there unless the material has
> actually receives the *form* (*eidos*) or characteristics of the type, conformity to which it
> brings it within the definition of the thing we say it is, whether specifically or generically.
> Thus the interval between the two is not an octave unless the notes are in the ration of 2
> to 1; nor do they stand at a musical interval at all unless they do conform to one or other
> of the recognized ratios. Then again (3), there must be something to initiate the process of
> the change or its cessation when the process is completed, such as the act of a voluntary
> agent, or the father who begets a child; or more generally the prime, conscious or
> unconscious, agent that produces the effect and starts the material on its way to the
> product, changing it from what it was to what it is to be. And lastly, (4) there is the *final*
> (telos) or purpose, for the sake of which the process is initiated, as when a man takes
> exercise for the sake of his health.[155]

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153. Ibid., 113-15.

154. Aristotle, *The Physics,* trans. Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Cornford (London: William
Heinemann; Cambridge, MA): Harvard University Press, 1980), 128-9.

155. Ibid., (194b.24-35), 128-31.

The four causes can be assembled for a house using examples from both the *Physics* and the

Metaphysics. In reference to the efficient cause, Aristotle explained in the *Physics* that it is the

builder who "caused the house to be built." Conversely, in the *Metaphysics* "the stones, bricks,

and timbers" are the material cause while the formal cause or the *eidos* (Idea) of House is in the

builder's mind and the final cause of the house is "a receptacle to shelter chattels and living

beings."[156] Following Aristotle's distinction, to interpret the how and why of a house was to

agagein or to elevate an understanding of it intellectually to its four levels of causation. For both

Plato and Aristotle, the Idea of a utilitarian thing and its purpose are connected to making a thing

what it is. However, contrary to Plato's carpenter who makes a couch by remembering the *a

priori* Idea of Couch, Aristotle's architect found the Idea within the house before he began to

transform material.

Compared to Plato and Aristotle, the Neo-Platonic philosopher, Plotinus (ca. 205–270),

conceived of the relation between material and Idea as not only intellectual but also mystical.

Plotinus continued to use the term *anagein* in its Late Greek form, *anagoge,* to describe the

elevation of the intellect as a means to understand physical things intellectually using the

example of a house. For Plotinus, the architect's Idea of a house is, like that of Aristotle, present

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156. Aristotle only gave an example for the efficient cause of a house in his discussion of the four causes in the *Physics* as: "Thus, we may say that 'the builder' caused the house to be built, meaning the man who knew how to build, but it was only when he was in the act of building that he was really causing the house to be built." Ibid., 137. However, one can find examples for the formal, material and final causes in other locations of the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*. In the Physics, the formal cause can be found as: "As the physician, for instance, must study health and also bile and phlegm, the state of which constitutes health; and the builder must know what the house is to be like (*eidos*) and also that it is built of bricks and timber; and so in all other cases." While in the *Metaphysics* Aristotle elaborates upon the location of the formal cause in the mind of the builder: "a house from a house, inasmuch as it is generated by the mind; for the art [of building] is the form (*eidos*) [of the house]". See: Ibid., 123 and Aristotle, *The Metaphysics,* trans. Hugh Tredennick, M.A. vol. 17 (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 351; For the material and final causes, in the *Metaphysics:* "Hence in defining the nature of a house, those who describe it as stones, bricks and wood, describe the potential house, since these things are its matter; those who describe it as "a receptacle for containing goods and bodies," or something else to the same effect, describe its actuality" Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 409.

in the mind of the architect before being translated into matter. However, contrary to Aristotle, for whom material was essential to the Idea of the architect, Plotinus' Idea of House was more perfect than the material it was stamped upon. As Plotinus asked in the *Enneads*:

> On what principle does the architect, when he finds the house standing before him correspondent with his inner ideal (*eidos*) of a house, pronounce it beautiful? Is it not that the house before him, the stones apart, is the inner idea (*eidos*) stamped upon the mass of exterior matter, the indivisible exhibited in diversity?[157]

In this quote, Plotinus described the method by which the architect could contemplate the *eidos* of a house that is "exhibited in diversity" as a mental process of gradually extracting from the multiplicity of sensible things, their invisible unifying principle.[158] The mind contemplating the unifying principle of sensible beauty would *anagoge* (elevate) to the intelligible realm containing the immaterial archetypes or Ideas.[159] Although Plotinus' Ideas had their origin in a supreme ineffable source he called "the One," the architect could contribute to the creation of new Ideas and "add where nature is lacking."[160] As Plotinus explained, works produced in the arts were "no base reproduction of the thing seen" but imitations of the way nature creates by going "back to the reason-principles from which Nature itself derives."[161] For Plotinus, this anagogical ascent of the mind could lead not only to the Ideas in the Intelligence but also to a rare mystical union with the "One" and it was this conception of his ontology that was incorporated into Christian

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157. Plotinus, "On Beauty," *The Six Enneads*, First Enenad, Sixth Tractate, Section 6. This English translation by Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page in Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, 22.

158. Plotinus, "On Beauty," First Ennead, Sixth Tractate, Section 6. This English translation by A. H. Armstrong in Plotinus, *Plotinus in Six Volumes; Enneads I 1-9*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, vol. 1 (London: Heinemann; Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1978), 241.

159. "First the soul will come in its ascent (*anabainon*) to intellect and there will know the Forms, all beautiful, and will affirm that these, the Ideas, are beauty." Ibid., 261.

160. Plotinus, "On the Intellectual Beauty," *The Six Enneads*, Fifth Ennead, Eight Tractate, Section I. This English translation by Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page in Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page (Chicago [etc.]: William Benton: Encyclopaedia Britannica, cop. 1952), 239-40

161. Ibid.

theology.

The Christian philosopher, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite built upon Plotinus' theory

to propose an invisible source for physical things as "the "Father of lights" or God.[162] As

mentioned in the previous chapter, the Pseudo-Areopagite sought to use the Christian conception

of all physical lights having a single source of Light emanating from God as a metaphor to

describe how one could interpret an invisible order for all things above the veil of visible reality.

The Pseudo-Areopagite's conception of visible and invisible depended upon the work of another

Neo-Platonic philosopher from the fifth century, Proclus, whose system is in close

correspondence with the one Plotinus presented in his *Enneads*. This change in the use of the

term anagogy from a description of human reason to an explanation of Christian ontology can be

attributed to Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185 - 254).

During the third century, Origen set out to explain the proper way to read Scriptures that

began with understanding it contained both literal and hidden meanings.[163] Origen found support

for this dichotomy of literal and non-literal meanings in the Bible through a passage from

Proverbs 22:20 of the Septuagint. He used the passage to explain Scriptures as an

anthropological division of flesh (body), soul and spirit or what scholars have identified to be the

literal, the moral and the mystical senses.[164] As with Philo and Paul before him, allegory was the

method of interpretation that was to yield the hidden, symbolic meaning and, as Robert Grant

162. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, Ibid., 145-6.

163. Origen, "How Divine Scripture Should be Read and Interpreted," *On First Principles*, trans. G.W. Butterworth (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1973), 275-276.

164. Ibid. See also: Jon Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 63. For the observation that scholars have identified Origen's flesh, soul and spirit of Scriptures as the literal, moral and mystical forms of interpretation see: Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hernmeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin - New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 40, n. 51-52 and Wai-Shing Chau, *The letter and the Spirit: A History of Interpretation from Origen to Luther* (New York; Bern [etc.]: Peter Lang, 1995), 22.

observed, Origen often spoke of the need to allegorize narratives from the Old and New Testaments.[165] In his treatise, *De principiis,* Origen preferred to use the term *anagoge* to describe the mystical sense of Scriptures and related it to *allegoria* in the *Commentary on John*.[166] In this context, Origen often spoke of allegory as a "leading up' of the intellect, such that in reading the Bible we are to "lift up (*anagoge*) and allegorize" expressions which may be seemingly literal.[167] Mark Julian Edwards saw this coalition of terms as an illustration of a cardinal premise of Origen's threefold exegesis: "that the text of scripture is itself the stair by which the reader climbs to a higher understanding of its contents."[168] For Origen, this journey began by overcoming sin and renouncing the world because the only true knowledge the soul seeks is to know its inner rationality, their *logoi* (forms) by allegorical interpretation.[169] The final stage of the anagogical progression of knowledge was that of God, which Origen described as "*theoria et intellectus dei*" (contemplation and understanding of God).[170] The "soul" in Origen like the "mind" in Plotinus attains perfection when it is able to know God or the One in a direct form. Origen's "soul" is able to achieve this resemblance to God (the One) through the exercise of its rationality in the direction of the intelligible *logoi*. One of the teachers that Origen knew during his formative years was the Platonic philosopher Ammonius Saccas (c. 175-242). Origen's debt to Ammonius and to Neo-Platonism appears in Origen's view of the way we come to have

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165. Robert M. Grant, *The Letter and the Spirit* (London: SPCK, 1957), 123.

166. Ibid.

167. Origenes, *Johanneskommentar*, ed. E. Preuschen, vol. 4 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899-1955), 33 and 23 after Grant, *Letter and the Spirit*, 98, n. 7.

168. Mark Julian Edwards, *Origen Against Plato* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2002), 142.

169. Origen, *On First Principles*, 5.

170. Origenes, *De Principiis*, Book II, Ch. 11, 7 in: *Origenes Werke*, Ibid., 192.11 after Torjesen, 84, n. 49. This English translation by G. W. Butterworth in Origen, *On First Principles*, 154.

knowledge of God.[171] In this regard, Henri Crouzel found that Plotinus, also a pupil of

Ammonius, share similar doctrines. Each divides matter from spirit as it descends in a

progression from individual unity.[172] Likewise, the ascension of the soul in Origen can be

compared with that of the mind in Plotinus through matter, Form(s), Intelligible and the One.

The close connection between the use of the term *anagogy* in early Greek philosophy and

its later development in Christian exegesis is best revealed in the thirteenth century with the

application of Aristotle's four causes to Scriptures as an exegetical procedure. In this regard,

Saint Thomas Aquinas is notable for having used Aristotle's concept of the four causes in his

Summae Theologica to describe Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite's "God" or "Father of Light"

as the "final cause." As Aquinas explained, "God" is "the causality of which is first among

causes . . . Hence the end is called the cause of causes."[173] Here, Aquinas used Aristotle's notion

of a final cause to posit God as the "ultimate cause."[174] Even though humans are not the origin of

a metaphysical Idea, they have the ability to create what has been labeled a "quasi-idea" and

Aquinas used this distinction to explain the difference between God's Ideas and those of

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171. Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-century Church* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox, 1983), 70.

172. Henri Crouzel, *Origene et Plotin: Comparaisons doctrinales* (Paris: Pierre Tequi, 1991) after Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 13, n. 45.

173. For this passage in the *Summa Theologica* see: Saint Thomas Aquinas, "Question V: Of the Good in General," *The Summa Theologica of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, rev. Daniel J. Sullivan, vol. 1 (Chicago: William Benton, 1952), Part I, Question V, Article II, Objection I, 24. Aquinas' Commentaries on Aristotle's Physics and Metaphysics have been translated into English see: Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, trans. R.J. Blackwell, R.J. Spath and W.E. Thirkel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963); Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans and intro. P. Rowan, (Indiana: Dumb Ox Books, 1961).

174. Aquinas argued that God is the "ultimate cause" in Part I, Question I, Article III of the *Summa Theologica*. See: Saint Thomas Aquinas, "Question II: Whether God Exists," in Saint Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of Saint Thomas Aquinas,* Part I, Question II, Article III, 13.

humans.[175] This division comes out clearly in Aquinas' use of a comparison between architect, house and Idea:

> [T]hus the likeness of a house pre-exists in the mind of the builder. And this may be called the idea of the house, since the builder intends to build his house like to the form conceived in his mind. As then the world was not made by chance but by God acting by His intellect . . . there must exist in the divine mind a form to the likeness of which the world was made. And in this the notion of an idea consists.[176]

Aquinas' contemporary, Saint Bonaventure, also saw an application of the four causes in Christian theology by applying them to the four forms of Biblical exegesis. For Bonaventure, the four levels of the "book of Scripture" – the literal, tropological, allegorical and anagogical could likewise be applied to interpreting nature as a "book of creation" having material, formal, efficient and final causes.[177] As Etienne Gilson observes, for St. Bonaventure, "the passage from one of these two spheres to the other is the more easily effected in that they are in reality inseparable."[178] In this sense, the four causes and the four levels of interpretation were held in correspondence:

Cause	Interpretation
Material	Literal
Formal	Allegorical (Figurative)
Efficient	Tropological (Moral)
Final	Anagogical

Despite Bonaventure's connection between the four forms of Biblical exegesis and the four

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175. Erwin Panofsky, *Idea, A Concept in Art Theory*, trans. Joseph Peake (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 40-41.

176. Saint Thomas Aquinas, "Question XV: Of Ideas," in *The Summa Theologica of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 91.

177. Saint Bonaventure, "Prologue," in *Breviloquium*, IV, 1 et 5; ed. min. 20-23; *In Hexaemeron*, II, 15-18, and XIII, 11-33, t. v, 338-339 and 389-392; *De reductione atrium*, 5, t. v, 321, et ed min., 372 after Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure*, trans. Frank J. Sheed and Dom Illtyd Trethowan (Patterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), 208, n. 38-9.

178. Gilson, 208.

causes, the interpretation of the final cause in nature meant something very different for Christian exegetes than it did for Aristotle. For Christian exegetes, to interpret an object's final cause was to anagogically elevate either a text or matter mystically to a contemplation of God as the ultimate cause for all things. Conversely, for Aristotle, the interpretation of an object's final cause was to elevate the mind to a contemplation of its intellectual Idea. By connecting the four forms of Biblical exegesis with Aristotle's four causes, Bonaventure did however, bring back back to light an original use of the term anagogy.

In the modern era, the term "anagogy" has maintained a use consistent with Schwitters' Merz interpretation of found objects: to describe the elevation of the mind from a perception of visible particulars to an interpretation of their common invisible content. Compared the Ideas of early Greek and Christian ontology, the "*Urbegriff*" that Schwitters conceived as unifying the assemblage of found objects in his Merz art, was not created God or emanating from an ineffable One, but by the artist in the "artistic evaluation" of found objects. While Schwitters' Merz art found its finality in the interpretation of an assemblage of found objects as art, the *Zweck* for his *Merzentwürfe* was its manifestation of this *Urbegriff* in the "real materials" and "constructive possibilities" of other structures as architecture.

The Zweck for *Die Merzentwürfe*

In *"Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hofbrunnen,"* Schwitters proposed the use of "arbitrary materials" for creating architecture in two contrasting ways: "1. The *Merzentwurf* for architecture. 2. The Merz use of architecture for new designs."[179] In the first instance, Schwitters presented his assemblage *Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hofbrunnen* as an example for the use of

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179. *"1. Der Merzentwurf für die Architektur. 2. Die merzliche Verwendung von Architektur für neue Gestaltung."* Schwitters, "Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hofbrunnen," 166.

"arbitrary materials" to create models of architecture. As Schwitters explained, the selection of

material for a *Merzentwurf* was determined by it's ability to suggest an "architectural feeling"

that could be transposed onto "representative material as well as constructive possibilities" of

architecture.[180] Conversely, in his second approach, Schwitters described "arbitrary materials" as

elements of existing buildings, parts of structures and city quarters in Berlin that could be reused

and transformed into an enormous Merz work of art.[181] For Schwitters, the use of a Merz

assemblage in these two ways did find an important application in his own work, the

construction of his *Merzbau* that presents a possible example for the application he intended a

Merzentwurf to have in practice. Despite being forced to relocate repeatedly during World War

II, Schwitters continued to construct *Merzbau* until the end of his life.

During the years leading to the formation of *Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hofbrunnen*,

Schwitters created a Merz assemblage he called a *Säule* (column) that became the model and

origin of his *Hannover Merzbau* project. Based on an account from Richard Huelsenbeck,

Schwitters began to construct the first of three columns as early as December of 1918. At its

inception, Schwitters had not yet come to an explanation for it except that it was "all crap," a

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180. "*Der Merzentwurf für die Architektur verwendet jedes beliebige Material nach architektonischem Gefühl [. . .] Das Transponieren des Entwurfs auf darstellendes Material sowie auf konstruktive Moeglichkeiten ist Sache der Durcharbeitung.*" (The Merz design for architecture uses any material according to an architectural feeling [. . .] The transposition of the draft onto representative material as well as constructive possibilities is a question of the working through it.). Ibid.

181. To explain what "Merz use of architecture" means, Schwitters states: *"Merz bedeutet bekanntlich die Verwendung von gegebenem Alten als Material für das neue Kunstwerk."* (As is well known, Merz means the use of a given 'old' as material for the new work of art). He then gives examples of how a similar reuse of materials were already occurring in the rebuilding of the destroyed German cities and that this presents an opportunity where "*Durch vorsichtiges Niederreissen der allerstörendsten Teile, durch Einbeziehen der hässlichen und schoenen Häuser in einen übergeordneten Rhythmus, durch richtiges Verteilen der Akzente könnte die Grossstadt in ein gewaltiges Merzkunstwerk verwandelt werden* (By carefully tearing down the most disturbing parts, by including the ugly and beautiful houses into a super-ordinate rhythm, by correct distribution of the accents, the big city could be transformed into an enormous Merz work of art)." Ibid.

depository for unused objects in his *Merzbilder*.[182] A few months later, in the spring of 1920,

Max Ernst also visited Schwitters and reported that he referred to it as a *"colonne de merz"*

("column of Merz" or "Merz-column").[183] Only a relatively poor quality photograph of this first

"Merz-column" remains today, published in Hans Arp and El Lissitzky's 1925 publication, *Die*

Kunstismem (The Isms of Art). In this publication, Schwitters did not refer to it as a "column" but

gave it the title *"Atelier"* (Studio), and dated it "1920" (fig. 89).[184] By 1923, Schwitters had

altered the first *Merz-column* and included his collage *Der erste Tag* (The First Day) from 1918-

19 on its base. The title can be considered a designation that, along with a statement from his son

Ernst, implies it may have been the initial point of Schwitters' inspiration for the construction of

the *Merzbau*:

> His pictures would decorate the walls, his sculptures standing along the walls. As
> anybody who has ever hung a picture knows, an interrelation between the pictures results.
> Kurt Schwitters, with his particular interest in the interaction of the components of his
> works, quite naturally reacted to this. He started by tying strings to emphasize this
> interaction. Eventually they became wires, then were replaced with wooden structures,
> which, in turn were joined with plaster of Paris. This structure grew and grew and
> eventually filled several rooms on various floors of our home, resembling a huge, abstract
> grotto.[185]

In 1931, Schwitters does mention the existence of ten columns including a third "great column"

in his article "Myself and My Aims" as the "*Kathedrale des Erotischen Elends*" (Cathedral of

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182. Richard Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, ed. Hans J. Kleimschmidt, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 66.

183. In the spring of 1920, Max Ernst visited Schwitters at his studio and claimed that Schwitters referred to it as a "Merz-column." Patrick Waldberg, *Max Ernst* (Paris: Pauvert, cop., 1958), 162-3 after Elderfield, Ibid., 146, n. 10.

184. El Lissitzky and Hans Arp, *Die Kunstismen = Les ismes de l'art = The isms of art* (Baden: Lars Müller, 1990), vi and 11.

185. *Kurt Schwitters*, (Tokyo: Seibu Museum of Art and Museum of Modern Art, 1983), 142. An exhibition catalogue.

Erotic Misery).[186] Although no photographic record remains of this "great column," the 1923

photo referred to as, *Der erste Tag Merz-säule* (The First Day Merz-column) by Gamard does

and it is to this date that Schwitters claims his *Merzbau* began (fig. 90).[187] It can be inferred from

Schwitters' statement that the *Merz-säule* from 1923 was one of the ten columns that his son

Ernst believes were sublimated into the *Merzbau* (figs. 91 and 92). In this way, Schwitters'

method of assemblage to create a part of the building became a model for what he sought to

employ in the construction of the entire edifice.

Schwitters' use of the *Merz-säule* in his *Merzbau* project reveals an important aspect

about his intended use for the assemblage of found objects in his architecture as both a model

and a part of the architecture itself. This dual application of a Merz assemblage as architecture is

reminiscent of the one Schwitters proposed for his *Merzentürfe* in *"Schloss und Kathedrale mit*

Hofbrunnen." However, compared to the sublimation of the *Merz-column* into his *Merzbau*,

Schwitters' intended his *Merzentwürfe* as assemblages that "architecture can copy/recreate." In

addition to Schwitters' use his *Merz-column* as a model for the principles of construction in the

Merzbau, it also became an actual part of the architecture itself. Conversely, the models that

Schwitters proposed architects construct in *"Schloss und Kathedrale mit Hofbrunnen"* were to

be transposed onto "representative material as well as constructive possibilities" of a planned

construction. This difference between models that are 'transposed onto' instead of 'sublimated

into' architecture is an important one. It implies Schwitters had a different set of criteria in mind

for his *Merzentwürfe* than for his *Merz-columns.* Instead, application that Schwitters proposed

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186. In Schwitters' article *"Ich und meine Ziele"* (Myself and My Aims), from 1931 he mentions a *"grosse Säule"* (great column) begun in 1923. Here, Schwitters' *Säule* is also called *"Kathedrale des Erotischen Elends"* (The Cathedral of Erotic Misery). See: Kurt Schwitters, "Ich und meine Ziele," *Merz 21: erstes Veilchenheft*, no. 21 (Hannover, 1931): 113-117. Reproduced with partial English translation by Eugène Jolas in: Kurt Schwitters, *LW*, vol. 5, 340-348 and 423-4.

187. Ibid., 345 and 424. See also: Gamard, 87-94.

for his *Merzentwürfe* as architectural models is comparable to the one the architect Callimachus had employed with a basket, roof tile and acanthus plant discussed in the introduction and first chapter of this dissertation. For Schwitters, the use of the assemblage as a model implied that the invisible content unifying the objects was not complete but becoming. It reached its completion in the "real materials" and "constructive possibilities" of yet another structure, ultimately developed as architecture. Nevertheless, Schwitters gave no indication that he intended the architect to use a *Merzentwurf*, like Callimachus' basket, as a visual model for architecture. Rather, the value of using an assemblage as a model of architecture was that it could remain open to different applications in the design and construction of architecture.

Conclusion

By assembling found objects into models of architecture, Schwitters' experimented with an anagogic conception of materials as a method for imagining new architectural ideas. As part of his Merz *oeuvre*, Schwitters created his Merz models following the same principles as his Merz art. For Schwitters, this meant the interpretation of an invisible content unifying an assemblage of otherwise unrelated natural or man-made things as art or models of architecture. Compared to the anagogic perspective of materials as a dichotomy of *a priori* Idea and physical form in early Greek philosophy and medieval Christian exegesis, the invisible content of Schwitters' *Merzentwürfe* was created in the selection and "artistic evaluation" of "arbitrary materials" as models for architecture. In this way, the application of Schwitters' Merz approach in the design practices of architects had the intention to encourage its user to enlist a creative mentality to anagogically imagine how the assemblage of "arbitrary materials" and their facture in a *Merzentwurf* could inspire the invention of new designs in the "materials and constructive

possibilities" of a planned construction.