Modern Intellectual History, 11, 1 (2014), pp. 237–252 © Cambridge University Press 2014
doi:10.1017/S1479244313000413

ARTISTS AS AVATARS

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Bettina Gockel, *Die Pathologisierung des Künstlers: Künstlerlegende der Moderne* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010)

Matthew Biro, *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Germany* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)

James A. van Dyke, *Franz Radziwill and the Contradictions of German Art History, 1919–45* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011)

Are artists crazy? Are creators more likely to be mad, or madder, than the rest of us? Does mental distress deepen artistic vision? Correlate to genius? Is the drive to fashion a personal pictorial or plastic universe pathological? Bettina Gockel's hefty Tübingen *Habilitationsschrift*, "The Pathologizing of the Artist: Artist Legends in Modernity," documents the significant amount of mental energy expended exploring these and related questions from the mid-nineteenth century into the 1920s. Matthew Biro's *The Dada Cyborg* argues that the Dadaists' montages, assemblages, and raucous agitational activities in the public sphere of World War I-era Berlin indicate modernity's disruption of stable subject positions and suggest instead hybrid, "cyborgian" identities. These included challenges to normative notions of sanity, but also to those of gender, ethnicity, race, and national and political allegiance. James van Dyke's study of the Weimar- and Nazi-era career of painter Franz Radziwill, a World War I veteran and self-taught reactionary modernist realist, provides a detailed case study of an artist whom one might, in retrospect, suspect of a degree of grandiosity and careerism bordering on the pathological, but who was driven by a complex of motivations as political as they were personal.

Together these three studies provide evidence of the methodological "return of the artist" in art history, as declared by the recent German anthology *Die Wiederkehr des Künstlers: Themen und Positionen der aktuellen Künstler/innenforschung* (The Return of the Artist: Themes and Positions in Contemporary Research on Artists), ed. Sabine Fastert, Alexis Joachimides, and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244313000413 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Verena Krieger (Cologne, 2011). However, this is not the return of the isolated, Romantic "genius" that developed the darker aspects—including an interest in artistic insanity—of the Enlightenment's celebration of individualism. The books under consideration here, to the contrary, seek to locate their subjects, whether artists or artworks, as "actors in a cultural field" (Gockel). Gockel, as with many contemporary art historians and critics, draws on recent analytical models developed by the philosopher Bruno Latour (b. 1947) and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) that have encouraged a return to the lived experience of the artist in order to explicate his or her work. Such experience is often conceived in terms of "networking," the imbrication of the artistic career with those of his/her contemporaries, none of whom are fully independent subjects, but rather representatives of various social, political, and ideological positions. Attention to the network is no doubt related to its ubiquity in our contemporary life when scholars, artists, politicians, and others must mind and develop their online, networked identities and activities both to get ahead and to avoid disaster.

In addition to these contemporary approaches, the classic textual study by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Die Legende vom Künstler: ein geschichtlicher Versuch* (Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment, Vienna, 1934), provided Gockel a model for looking at literary tropes that could condition artistic behavior and reception—so that an artist might seek to live out his own biographical legend, which had already been scripted in traditions handed down through accounts of the lives of both saints and sinners. While liberally borrowing from anthropology (and Gockel notes an "anthropological turn" in contemporary art history), history, sociology, literary and critical theory, and psychology, Gockel, Biro, and van Dyke all also employ "traditional art historical practices, such as formal analysis, biography, social history, and the analysis of the work's contemporaneous critical reception" (Biro, 17).[1]

By Gockel's count, some three hundred pathographic studies of artists were written in the first decade of the twentieth century, about 175 in the 1910s, and about 110 in the 1920s. Many of these studies provided affirmative answers to the questions with which this essay began. They were not the work of art historians,

[1] The "anthropological turn" is particularly evident in the German concept of *Bildwissenschaft*, as especially advanced by Hans Belting of the Center for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, and Horst Bredekamp of the Humboldt University in Berlin, where the art history seminar has incorporated that term into its name. The goal is to create an all-inclusive "science of images" that extends its purview beyond artworks and relates to Anglo-American "visual-culture" studies, but with less restriction to the contemporary world and primary theoretical debt to cultural studies, in favor of a broader chronological scope (as in Belting's *Likeness and Presence: The History of the Image before the Era of Art*, Chicago, 1994) and attention especially to anthropology and the natural sciences as cognate fields.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244313000413 Published online by Cambridge University Press

though, but of psychologists, doctors, philosophers, cultural historians, and others who analyzed artists' styles to assess their mental states and employed art and artists as evidence supporting their theories of widespread social sickness and decline. At the same time, influential art historians, founders of the modern discipline such as Heinrich Wölfflin and Alois Riegl, rejected the Romantic emphasis on individual subjectivity in favor of impersonal categorizations and explanations of the variety of artistic styles. The projects of both the pathologists and the art historians bore a relation to the rapid, radical, and disconcerting changes evident in modern art and in the modern world. The art historians operated parallel to, while largely withholding comment on, modern artists and art, as both art and art history strove for professionalization, secularization, and immersion in their primary areas of competence. Cultural commentators, on the other hand, and as Gockel very thoroughly documents, expressed alarm at the "distortions" they observed in modern art and what it suggested to them about the perils to perception and mental processes fostered by modernity's increasingly secular and urban world.

Feminist art historian Amelia Jones (following John Jeffries Martin) has recently argued that the foundational nineteenth-century cultural-historical work of Jakob Burckhardt projected Romantic notions of individualism onto Italian Renaissance artists, and established a paradigm for art-historical studies.[2] At the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, the Germanic founders of modern art history, certainly inspired by Burckhardt, but seeking to break with Romanticism and align their theories more closely with artworks than with individual artists, conceived of an "art history without names" that could move away from biography, hagiography, and pathography, and instead understand change across Western art history in terms of impersonal stylistic schema and/or as the expression of super-personal "spirits"—whether of nations, periods, or peoples. The Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, working in Basle (where he attended Burckhardt's lectures), Berlin, and Munich, in such books as *Renaissance and Baroque* (1888) and *Principles of Art History* (1915), detected five ever-recurring formal dichotomies ("painterly/linear," "closed form/open form," etc.) as the stylistic principles governing all of art's history as a pendulum motion between the classical and the baroque. His pioneering of the dual-projection slide lectures also came to govern the teaching and conceptualizing of art history by means of comparisons. While Wölfflin restricted his attention to European art, some of his followers adopted his principles to categorize periods

[2] Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification in the Visual Arts* (London and New York, 2012), 24. Jones draws on the critique of Buckhardt, and of Stephen Greenblatt, in John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (New York, 2004).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244313000413 Published online by Cambridge University Press

beyond the West, as did Paul Westheim in his history of pre-Columbian art of Mexico.[3]

Contemporaneously with Wölfflin, Alois Riegl, a founder of the Vienna school, in such studies as *Stilfragen* (The Problem of Style, 1893) and *The Late Roman Art Industry* (1901), theorized a metaphysical, Hegelian "artistic will" (*Kunstwollen*) winnowing its way through all historical periods and civilizations, compelling them to their distinctive styles. The stylistic nuances detected by these and other art historians were often ascribed to national schools or temperaments (most notoriously in the racial theories of Vienna school art historian Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941); in his later work Wölfflin also ascribed form to national character) rather than to individual artists, as art history allied itself with the building of the modern nation-state. The founding of national museums as civic institutions, beginning with the Altes Museum in Berlin (1823–30), provided imposing, state-sanctioned edifices in which the time and place of art's history was institutionalized and spatialized, with artworks ordered and classified as exemplars of various nations, periods, and schools—and offered to the public as an essential civic resource and experience.

At the same time art criticism did concern itself with contemporary art, and also developed formalist means to evaluate it. In the early twentieth century, Bloomsbury critic Clive Bell searched for the "significant form" that would consummate a cultured viewer's communion with artworks growing increasingly abstract and resistant to iconographic analysis, the other dominant strand in art-historical methodology prior to the 1970s. At mid-century the American Clement Greenberg, writing first in the Marxist cultural journal *Partisan Review*, then in the left-wing political magazine *The Nation*, as well as in art magazines, developed descriptions of and laid down Kantian prescriptions for modern art's self-critical progression, based on medium-specificity and culminating in abstract expressionism and color field painting, that would not only accomplish an all-over optical "presence," but "keep culture moving" in opposition to what he called "kitsch"—whether that of fascist or socialist realism or popular culture. All of these approaches professionalized art history and criticism—focusing attention on artworks as primary sources. Form ascended over content, visual literacy over textual literacy, and those trained in visual analysis secured a place as arbiters of past artistic significance and present quality and as the keepers of national collections and heritages. Art history and criticism were thus often aligned more with Hegel, Kant, and Idealism than with von Ranke's positivism, though the

[3] Westheim was an influential art critic in Weimar Germany and a Jew who fled Nazi Germany, first to Paris and then to Mexico, where he became a leading writer on Mexican art, as in *The Art of Ancient Mexico* (Garden City, NY, 1965; first published in Spanish in 1950), in which he employed Wölfflinian categories.

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field also developed more empirical and document-based approaches. These ranged from technical studies, often undertaken in museums, that attempted to reconstruct exactly how artworks came into being, to the iconographic and iconological approach of Aby Warburg, Fritz Saxl, Erwin Panofsky, and others, that focused on how artworks were perceived and interpreted by their contemporary audiences. This approach is briefly discussed below following consideration of the place of the "Warburg case" in Gockel's text.

By the end of the twentieth century, iconography was out of style, and the formalism of Wölfflin, Riegl, Bell, or Greenberg had largely given way to those derived from anthropological and literary structuralism, semiotics, and post-structuralism, whereby art historians and critics, most prominently the early Greenberg disciple and later apostate Rosalind Krauss—since the 1970s the most influential historian/critic writing about contemporary art in the English language—would place artworks within or without systems of signification, interrelation, signs, codes, and the artistic implementation or subversion of them. As Ann Middleton Wagner has recently written about Krauss's famous application of the semiotic Greimas Square to the analysis of earth art and site-specific sculpture, in the 1979 essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," "the wish is that art history might yet become a human science, on a par with others."[4] This too was the ambition of Wölfflin and Riegl, and has been for the relatively young discipline of art history since its inception.

Most recently, as in the books under consideration here, art historians have returned to artists and to artistic identity. The artist has returned not only as an individual psychologically motivated agent, but also as a player within a complex of cultural, political, economic, and sociological forces. In Germany, the land of "thinkers and poets" whose art, artists, and scholarship form the primary objects of study of the books under consideration here, visual artists had previously often been drafted to embody in their work and personae the "spirit" (*Geist*) of various notions of Germanness. Thus Albrecht Dürer could represent for German Romantics the Renaissance spirit of experimentation coupled with Protestant industriousness, or Caspar David Friedrich and his Romantic land- and seascapes a pantheistic yearning for an authentic and autonomous German spirit and nation.[5] It was to this kind of exemplary national, and nationalistic, status that Radziwill aspired. Not so the Berlin Dadaists studied by Biro, who revolted against

4 Ann Middleton Wagner, *A House Divided: American Art since 1955* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2012), 50.

5 In his monograph on Dürer, his only on an artist, Wölfflin wrote, "It's popular to think of Dürer as the most German of German artists … The Romantics developed this conception. It is false." Heinrich Wölfflin, *Albrecht Dürer* (Munich, 1908; first published 1905), v. Erwin Panofsky published a classic iconographic monograph on Dürer in 1943.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244313000413 Published online by Cambridge University Press

nationalism, spirituality, and World War I and torpedoed inherited conceptions of Germanness and of art: one of their 1920 publications was titled *Deutschland muss Untergehen!* (Germany Must Go Under!).

Gockel, Biro, and van Dyke all eschew the hagiographic tendencies that were current in art history prior to Wölfflin's generation, and that enjoyed a revival in heroic accounts of modern artists struggling against an uncomprehending contemporary public that would later be proved obtuse by museums and markets. They do, though, name names, inscribing their subjects into social, professional, and personal networks, rather than semiotic diagrams. As van Dyke points out, and demonstrates, "building a successful career as a modern artist in early-twentieth-century Germany required good tactics and the development of strong networks" (120). Rather than saints, one might say that the artists under consideration by these authors serve as avatars—screens onto which their supporters, their detractors, and they themselves projected ideas quite specific to their time and place that came to define the contours of their personae and their work. For art historians today, too, they are avatars, now to be reanimated according to contemporary concerns and conceptions such as the "network," the "cultural field," and hybrid, rather than normal/abnormal, identity.

Across two detailed chapters Gockel argues that in the spirit of positivism nineteenth-century researchers sought to systematize the study of artistic genius, ground it biologically, and, like the Romantics, link it to mental illness. Jacques-Joseph Moreau published a study in 1859 that evaluated 180 case studies of the highly gifted (*Hochbegabter*) and found that they were prone to nervous disorders. Anthropologist and psychologist Bénédicte Auguste Morel viewed mentally ill artists through a religious lens, as the spawn of original sin leading to "degeneration"—a term he popularized and which he used to separate mankind into "healthy and sick, degenerated races, that, unlike primitives or wild men, were no longer even human." Richard Frieherr von Krafft-Ebing's forensic effort to catalog physical signs of degeneration—misshaped facial features, unusually large ears, and the like—paralleled contemporaneous efforts in the art world by another doctor, Giovanni Morelli, who attempted to establish through his "method" of "scientific connoisseurship" a catalogue of minor details—ears were again important—that he thought revealed artistic identity. Criminologist Cesare Lombroso, while looked at skeptically even in his own time, had greater influence in the cultural sphere, especially through the work of the Austrian cultural pessimist and Zionist Max Nordau, whose 1892 book *Entartung* (Degeneration) was dedicated to Lombroso and diagnosed a general *fin de siècle* enervation—a biologically determined cultural malaise evident in literature and art that needed to be trained out of the culture and its cultural workers. It was Nordau who advanced the ideal of the *Muskeljuden*, the muscled Jew, as an antidote to a sickly café society, hyper-intellectual Jewry that he hoped to rehabilitate. Gockel,

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though, concentrates on Nordau's 1905 treatise *Vom Kunst und Künstler* (On Art and Artists). Nordau condemned an urban, distracted, effeminate existence and art—which he diagnosed in Impressionism and Rodin—while praising that which he saw as more organic, agrarian, and masculine. Seventeenth-century Dutch artists were an ideal, as were the nineteenth-century artists Millet and Meunier, whose depictions of workers he admired, and whom he claimed also lived like workers: the life of the artist supposedly being organically bound up with the artist's work.

Wilhelm Lange-Eichbaum, author of a 1909 pathography of Hölderlin, declared in his 1928 *Irrsinn und Ruhm* (Insanity and Fame) that any woman exhibiting "genius" must be half-male, as the normal female brain was too small and simple to generate the "courage" necessary for true genius—which was also a form of madness, afflicting, for instance, Socrates, Swedenborg, Nietzsche, Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Wilhelm II, Faraday, Darwin, Helmholtz, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Shakespeare, Hölderlin, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Andrea del Sarto, and, of course, Van Gogh.

Heinrich Stadelmann took up these theorists' ideas, modified them, and sought to apply them to contemporary artists. His 1908 *Die Stellung der Psychopathologie zur Kunst* (The Relationship of Psychopathology to Art) featured a dust jacket reproduction of Munch's *Scream*—in its many iterations as painting and print and literary subject, as Reinhold Heller has demonstrated, likely itself a case of careerist self-fashioning of Munch as mad genius. Stadelmann rejected Nordau's biologically based diagnosis of a degenerated culture that needed to be whipped into shape, in favor of the idea that artists, including those subject to mental distress, were particularly sensitive *psychological* and creative souls who operated on a continuum with "normals," and exposed conditions for them aesthetically. Van Gogh's mental "weakness" (*Schwäche*) was not biologically determined and was, in fact, a source of his strength as an artist. Here, Gockel identifies a turn from the biological/anthropological to a psychological/phenomenological approach that would find major expression in Karl Jaspers's 1922 *Strindberg und van Gogh: Versuch einter pathographischen Analyse unter vergleichender Heranziehung von Swedenborg und Hölderlin* (Strindberg and Van Gogh: An Attempt at a Pathographic Analysis with Comparative Reference to Swedenborg and Hölderlin), and in the work of psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger the Younger, whose family pioneered the humane treatment of the mentally ill.

Binswanger ran the Bellevue Sanitorium in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland. The painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, a founder in Dresden in 1905 of the Nietzsche-inspired expressionist group, *Die Brücke* (the Bridge), spent time at Bellevue in 1917–18, recuperating from traumas induced by World War I. The cultural historian Aby Warburg was a patient there from 1921 to 1924, and delivered

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his legendary lecture on the Hopi snake dance to other patients in April 1923. As Gockel studies in chapters 4 and 6, Bellevue was a cultured, intellectual environment, that provided Kirchner with ideas and with a degree of artistic autonomy—like Van Gogh at San Remy—while also providing the often depressed Warburg with an intensely self-reflective environment and audience for his anthropological iconographic study of expressive culture.

Warburg, and his library, formed a major source for the important strain of art history less concerned with style than with the interpretation of symbolic and narrative content—iconography and iconology (as well as contemporary *Bildwissenschaft*; see note 1 above). In its most developed form, iconology, as defined but never fully achieved by Panofsky, this approach would extrapolate from the prevalent symbolic forms of a culture, while tempering national and sociological factors with individual artistic outlooks, to discern "underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion—qualified by one personality and condensed into one work."[6] Thus Meyer Schapiro, in his famous 1945 reading of the Master of Flémalle's *c.*1430 Mérode altarpiece, focused on the figure of Joseph in a side panel, drilling holes in a wooden board, interpreted by Schapiro, drawing on Augustine, as making a mousetrap in which to bait the devil. Onto this iconographic reading he grafted materialist, Marxist-inspired social analysis, *and* a Freudian concern for individual subjectivity and gendered desire, to produce an iconological evaluation. Thus this and other strikingly realistic depictions of holy scenes (Panofsky's "disguised symbolism"—by which symbols of the supernatural may escape notice as such, appearing instead to be normal elements of the natural world) become for Schapiro "a latent battlefield for the religious conceptions, the new secular values, and the underground wishes of men, who have become more aware of themselves and of nature."[7] Joseph is thus to be understood not only as a symbolic devil-catcher, but also as a fifteenth-century craftsman demonstrating his techniques and displaying his products and possessions in his petit bourgeois workshop, *and* as the frustrated husband of a virginal wife, relegated to solitary sublimation—boring repeatedly into that board—of his "underground wishes."

Schapiro's work inspired a generation of "social art historians," most notably T. J. Clarke, whose influential 1984 book *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in*

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6 Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art", in Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NY, 1955), 30. The first version of this essay included the word "unconsciously" before "qualified". Panofsky, "Introductory", in Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 1939), 7.

7 Meyer Schapiro, "'Muscipula Diaboli, The Symbolism of the Mérode Altarpiece" (1945), in Schapiro, *Late Antique, Early Christian, and Medieval Art* (New York, 1979), 10.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244313000413 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the Art of Manet and His Followers takes a short passage on Impressionism from Schapiro's essay "The Nature of Abstract Art," first published in 1937 in *Marxist Quarterly*, to re-view Manet and Impressionism through the lens of bourgeois social life and French class and gender relations at the end of the nineteenth century. Social art history now comes in many forms, with the most important strain being feminist scholarship (or gender studies), kick-started by Linda Nochlin's brilliant and provocatively titled 1971 essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?". Nochlin employed very straightforward social-historical information to explain this apparent lack (access to studios, resources, models, patrons, etc.)—debunking the idea that some biological lack or intellectual failing, as figures such as Lange-Eichbaum had argued, explained the absence in Western art history of female equivalents of Michelangelo or Rembrandt. The work of the great (male) artists, though, could and should also be examined in relation to gender, as creations by men for use in a male-dominated society. In doing so, though, she also helped to launch the search for the neglected *very good* and interesting women artists throughout history, in which she herself also extensively engaged, for instance as co-curator and catalogue author of the 1976 Los Angeles County Museum exhibition Women Artists: 1550–1950.

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Given the pivotal importance of World War I in Gockel's case studies of Kirchner and of Paul Klee, in chapters 4 and 5, where she shows that their tortured self-conceptions and portrayals were driven not only by internal but also by external, historical forces, as well as her concluding remarks in chapter 6 on Warburg, her book also dovetails somewhat with Biro's intriguing study, in which we encounter the Berlin Dadaists' willful acts of "schizoid" behavior, modeling hybrid identities in revolt against a crazy war and pointing the way to a less straitjacketed social existence. From the present perspective, the discourse on all these modern artists' madness is haunted by the Nazi "Degenerate Art" campaign—which drew on Morel, Lombroso, and, perversely, especially on Nordau, in identifying modernist abstraction, distortion, and, in the case of the Dadaists, behavior, as evidence of a cancerous artistic insanity that needed to be excised from the body politic.

Gockel's chapter on Klee (1879–1940) takes up the question whether genius is a form of madness. As Biro points out in connection with the institutionalization, in "private facilities where the conditions were fairly comfortable," of Klee's Dadaist contemporary, Johannes Baader (61), the examples of Hölderlin and Nietzsche had contributed to insanity being "romanticized in German artistic

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culture at the time as both antibourgeois and creative."[8] Klee, on the other hand, was never institutionalized and did not suffer from any psychotic disorders or any extreme forms of neuroses. Late in his life he did suffer from a physiological wasting disease, scleroderma, but still enjoyed a remarkably productive career as an artist, a teacher at the Bauhaus and elsewhere, and as an art theorist. Despite such obvious evidence of his social functionality, a 1922 Jena dissertation by Willi Rosenberg, *Moderne Kunst und Schizophrenie: Unter Besondere Berücksichtigung von Paul Klee* (Modern Art and Schizophenia: With Particular Consideration of Paul Klee), while, according to Gockel, not providing a cultural diagnosis like Nordau or attempting a typology like Stadelmann, concluded that the artist *must* be schizophrenic, as evidenced by the author's inability to see a clear connection between the titles, such as the drawing *Animal Souls*, and the abstracted imagery of the pictures. Such a perceived affinity was widespread, and not only among modern art's enemies, but also among modern artists themselves, including Klee and many others who much admired the art produced by patients of the Heidelberg psychologist Hans Prinzhorn, published in 1922 as the hugely influential *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken: Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und Psychopathologie der Gestaltung* (Artistry of the Mentally Ill: A Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Form). While not claiming that his patients were geniuses, Prinzhorn, like Rosenberg, tied creativity to insanity.

Gockel shows Klee developing his themes in concert with his materials and his working procedures—she draws here on Latour's notion of the researcher as imbricated with his/her research instruments—and moving between the poles of the objective and the subjective, observed reality and fantasy, as either the apotheosis of a cool, scientific, *Sachlich* investigation of visible reality, or as surrealistic explorations of the world of demons and dreams inhabiting the everyday world. Or both? Perhaps Klee sought, actually, to reconcile these? And he did so very much through an exploration of self and of material. Gockel emphasizes a motto that Klee wrote down in 1902: *Ich bin mein Stil*, "I am my style," a belief that led pathographers to conclude that he suffered from an inability to differentiate subject from object, a form of schizophrenia.

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[8] This legacy continues today, encouraged by the general reverence and fascination accorded Van Gogh as an individual and cultural figure, and the record prices for his works, leading to the suspicion that other artists might at times feign madness to enhance their careers. A summer 2012 review of the long-institutionalized, eighty-three-year-old Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama's exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, tied in as it was with massive advertising and commissions from Luis Vuitton, noted that some have questioned her insanity, seeing her "self-proclaimed psychosis" as "little more than savvy self-mythologizing." Holland Cotter, "Vivid Hallucinations from a Fragile Life", *New York Times*, 12 July 2012.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244313000413 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In the three case studies Gockel presents, on Kirchner, Klee, and Warburg, she also is careful to consider her subjects in political and social contexts. Thus Klee's self-portrait of 1919, *Versunkenheit* (Absorption), which employs "mad genius" representational tropes, is also a response to the end of World War I and the chaotic and threatening political situation arising from it. One might note that it was at that time that Klee was put forward for a professorship at the Stuttgart Art Academy, a proposal attacked by a conservative newspaper columnist who bolstered his case by referring to the Protestant Klee as "Paul Zion Klee," while also condemning the irrational style and content of his work. Thus Klee was put in the position of defending himself against the double charge of being a Jew and being crazy—neither of which corresponded to any objective reality.

Biro's book focuses on the Berlin Dada group that formed during World War I and dissolved, as a group, within three years of the war's end. Major figures included George Grosz and John Heartfield (born Helmut Herzfeld), who with Heartfield's brother Wieland founded the communist Malik Verlag that published the Dadaists' pamphlets, broadsides, and books, and the non-party-affiliated, more anarchistic Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch (whose later Weimar photomontages Biro also studies), Richard Huelsenbeck, and Johannes Baader, who was institutionalized seven times between 1899 and 1932. While he clearly suffered considerable mental distress, as Biro points out, Baader's insanity probably also "contained an element of artistic self-fashioning" (61). The Dadaists presented themselves not as mad geniuses, but as mad at Germany and insanely hostile to propriety.

For Biro, the Berlin Dadaists sought to challenge notions of fixed identity—often nationalist and ethnically exclusive—with that of a new hybrid that could exist simultaneously as human and machine, male and female, German and transnational, and, in some of Höch's brilliant and provocative collages of the 1920s, a racially mixed being. Right away, Biro admits the anachronism of his conceptualization of these hybrid creatures as "cyborgs" since the term did not exist as such in the World War I or Weimar eras. Norbert Wiener developed the modern concept of cybernetics while doing World War II-related research. More recently, Donna Haraway has adapted it to the discourse on the postmodern, posthuman subject. Biro claims "the term is useful, because it suggests how the interwar artistic and visual cultures in Germany anticipated much of the cultural discourse around the cyborg and cybernetics in the United States and Europe since the 1940s, both theoretical and practical as well as popular" (2). Concentrating his greatest attention on the artistic couple of Hausmann and Höch, he finds Hausmann's work to be "conceptually situated between Wiener's more mechanistic view of the cyborg and Haraway's radically postmodern view," while it is Höch "whose works dovetail most closely with Haraway's thinking . . . photomontages that explicitly undermined clear distinctions between the

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different genders and ethnicities as well as the divide between human and animal" (150–51).

To dismiss Biro's subtle study on the grounds of its anachronistic central conceit would be wrong, suggesting, for instance, the impossibility of interpreting the premodern world using terms and concepts derived from, say, Marxism, Freud, or feminism. However, as other scholars have argued, most importantly Hanne Bergius, models and terms that *relate* to the later concept of the cyborg, such as the Mécano (a mechanized body and the title of a Dutch Dada journal edited by Theo van Doesburg) or Magnus Hirschfeld's "third sex," and Nietzsche's concept of the new hybrid European being, a modern *Mischwesen* or chimera, existed at the time and directly influenced and were reflected in the Dadaists work.[9] These contemporaneous discourses, while present in Biro's book, tend to get relegated to secondary status by statements such as, "In the end, the new woman as cyborg appears to have been Höch's primary concern" (202). Rather than presenting *arguably* cyborgian images and identities as a supplement to the contemporary identity politics—and concrete political actions—with which they were involved, and which Biro discusses, these all become, most importantly, anticipations of later conceptions of human/posthuman hybridity: "sometimes human beings give visual form to ideas before they become conceptualized in language" (257). True as this may be, and Ernst Bloch's concept of "not yet conscious knowledge" might have been useful here, as it was for Maud Lavin in her important 1993 book on Höch, there were specific contemporary issues with which the Dadaists consciously and irritatingly engaged—certainly class and gender, and man and machine, but also ethnicity, specifically German Jewish identity, which Biro mentions at a couple of points, but which remains largely unexplored in favor of the free-floating and omnivorous cyborg.[10]

Biro's study is rich in theoretical references, insight, and strong contextual analysis of the artworks discussed. In addition to cybernetics/cyborg scholars, he draws on, among others, Adorno, Benjamin, Kracauer, Simmel, and Theweleit. The greatest debt is to Benjamin, with whom Biro wishes to "'brush history against the grain' . . . focus on the past through present concerns" (17), and whose theory of allegory he draws on to view Dada works "as mournful representations . . . that were violent and weakly redemptive" (159), particularly of war-induced traumas. Biro is particularly fine at situating the Dadaist's work, from art objects

9 Hanne Bergius, *Montage und Metamechanik: Dada Berlin – Artistik von Polaritäten* (Berlin, 2000). Translated into English by Brigitte Pichon as *"Dada Triumphs!" Dada Berlin, 1917–1923, Artistry of Polarities, Montages – Mechananics – Manifestations*, vol. 5 of *Crisis and the The Arts, The History of Dada*, ed. Stephen Foster (Farmington Hills, MI, 2003).

10 See chapters 2–3 of my *Objects as History in Twentieth-Century German Art: Beckmann to Beuys* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 2010).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244313000413 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to what he refers to, with a nod to Allan Kaprow, as "happenings," within the expanding and increasingly sensational mass media and visual culture—including magazines, postcards, advertisements, and films—an environment in which they too flourished, especially through the Malik Verlag and the various staged events and hoaxes they perpetrated. He also calibrates the traumatic effects of World War I in a series of well-taken allegorical analyses of works that will be essential reading for anyone writing on or teaching these artists, as will the discussion of Höch's ethnographic museum series in connection with the racist discourse on the French occupation of the Rhineland involving colonial troops of color.

The culminating event of Berlin Dada was the First International Dada Fair, staged in the summer of 1920. The Dada Fair's installation was untraditional and, indeed, anticipatory of later exhibitions from the Nazi's "Degenerate Art" shows to Kaprow's 1962 "Words"—featuring hortatory posters ("Take Dada Seriously, It's Worth It!"), collages, paintings, prints, and the *Prussian Archangel* hanging from the ceiling: a mannequin in a soldier's uniform with officer epaulets added and a pig snout for a face. This construction and the Grosz portfolio *Gott mit Uns* were the evidence presented justifying the arrest and trial of a number of the Dadaists on charges of insulting the military.[11] The police certainly got it right, and served as a significant portion of the event's public reception. While only 389 tickets were sold to the show the event did receive considerable press coverage, much of which has since been republished.[12]

Biro often suggests possible effects of the Dadaists' works and activities on contemporary spectators. As part of his detailed reading of Höch's masterpiece, the large collage *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany*, shown in the Dada Fair (and not again until 1961): "By presenting Hindenburg as a hermaphrodite, Höch's photomontage could potentially have triggered an investigation of such [Jungian] concepts in the minds of some of its spectators" (103); on the *Prussian Archangel*: "audience members might have been inspired to think about connections between the military and the church" (174); on Hausmann's *Self-Portrait of the Dadasoph* (the book's cover image): "Hausmann's self-portrait could also have potentially reminded its spectators of the long invention of autogenic training by German psychiatrist Johannes Schultz" (125); on Höch's 1926 collage *The Sweet One*: "By making the conflation of the modern woman and the 'primitive' art object

[11] "Die Auswüchse der Dadamesse: Ein Prozeß wegen Beleidigung der Reichswehr – Der 'Oberdada' vor Gericht," *Berliner Tagblatt*, 21 April 1921.

[12] See Hanne Bergius, "Dada Berlin and Its Aesthetic of Effect: Playing the Press", in Harriet Watts, ed., *Dada and the Press*, vol. 9 of *Crisis and the Arts: The History of Dada*, ed. Stephen C. Foster (Farmington Hills, MI, 2004), 67–152.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244313000413 Published online by Cambridge University Press

so explicit, the photomontage—once it was shown in the late 1920s and early 1930s—could have potentially inspired reflection on this deep-seated convention in modern art" (243). Thanks to Biro, *we* certainly will think of these discourses, as well as the cyborg, in relation to these works. One would be thankful for some first-hand testimony—whether recorded in reviews, court records, letters, diaries, novels, or reminiscences—to support the idea that the works' contemporary spectators could or might have seen them similarly.

The mighty disruptions experienced by the generation born in the waning nineteenth century—automobiles and airplanes, movies and wireless communication, machine guns, tanks, relativity theory—bred not only the willful chaos that Dadaists espoused, or the expressionist distortions of Kirchner or fantastic oscillations between fantasy and reality of Klee. This altered landscape of existence against which, in Benjamin's famous line, "nothing remained unchanged" but "the tiny, fragile, human body," also induced reactionary—Romantic, conservative, and often anticapitalist—attempts to use art not to reflect or catalyze such changes, but to defend against them. Franz Radziwill's work, though, was not purely defensive. It embraced both the modern and the reactionary. In a fisherman's cottage in the northwestern city of Dangast, he produced highly *worked* realist paintings harkening back to pastoral precedents, but presenting the fields of northern Europe threatened by dive-bombing planes (*The Death Dive of Karl Buchstätter*, 1928), or harbors choked by massive modern ships (*Harbor with Two Ocean Liners*, 1930). The red brick townscape *The Street* (1928) presents eerie juxtapositions of the familiar and the strange, so that, as van Dyke states, it cannot "be understood simply as the materialization of a reactionary rejection of the historical conditions of the present and the achievements of modern art" (4). Shown in the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1934, and reputed to have been admired there by Hitler, *The Street* is, as van Dyke argues, an example of Weimar modernism but also of "Nazi Art" which does not conform to the stereotypical themes and styles associated with that sobriquet.

Radziwill's supporters, critics, and businessmen in Oldenburg, "the provincial capital of the area that included Dangast," seem to have been responding to Lombroso, Nordau, and even Julius Meier-Graefe on Van Gogh—who claimed Van Gogh must have some "Russian blood" in him to explain his robust style, which was also claimed of Radziwill—in promoting the artist's health, strength, and work ethic as an antidote to sickly, slacker expressionism and nihilistic Dadaism. Sympathetic critics, such as Wilhelm Niemeyer and Werner Meinhof (father of the RAF leader Ulrike Meinhof) presented him as a "worker of painting" rather than the type of "pale aesthete" condemned by Nordau, or mad genius studied in so many pathographies. And van Dyke's study is anything but that: he provides a vivid cross-section of primary source materials to produce a picture

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244313000413 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of a culture of crisis and contention with a variety of actors playing shifting roles across the cultural–political field.

Van Dyke's book achieves a deepening, broadening (beyond Berlin and Munich, to include places like Oldenburg and Düsseldorf) and thickening of our understanding of art under National Socialism by challenging the stereotypical view pitting Weimar modernism squarely against retrograde National Socialist art, characterizing the World War I veteran Radziwill as a member of "a right-wing avant-garde, a new professional and personal community opposed to the contentious, fragmented modern artistic culture he increasingly perceived as something distasteful and alienating" (75). Radziwill eagerly accepted a professorship at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in 1933, after the Nazis dismissed Klee from the post. He felt he richly deserved this appointment and could use it as a platform from which to reinvigorate German art. As van Dyke begins his Conclusion: "In 1933, Franz Radziwill was a successful modern artist who became a National Socialist activist in the belief that he was contributing to a revolutionary transformation of the German nation" (165). His party membership, like that of the expressionist Emil Nolde, for a time confirmed his bona fides as an adherent of the "movement." It would not prove enough, though, to confirm him as a "Nazi Artist" to the party leadership, as his work did not fit into the rustic realism favored by one wing of the party (associated with Alfred Rosenberg and the Combat League for German Culture), or the expressionism that Goebbels preferred and that for a time was considered the proper expression of National Socialist Germanness, or the pseudo-classicism that Hitler ultimately favored as the expression of his imperial ambitions. Here, then, is one of the "contradictions" of German art history referred to in van Dyke's title. Subject to denunciation in 1935, Radziwill was dismissed from his professorship, and, like Nolde, played no role in the official artistic life of the Third Reich after the "Degenerate Art" action—the purging of public collections of expressionism, Dadaism, and much New Objectivity—that climaxed in a large touring exhibition that opened in Munich in 1937, and that borrowed derisive, anti-aesthetic installation ideas from the Dada Fair. He grew increasingly embittered, and created several works that it can be argued—as the artist did relatively successfully after the war—expressed criticism of the regime and of the war. In light of this history, van Dyke made the rather remarkable decision to include as his first footnote a two-page statement by the artist's daughter that disputes his thesis—in her words, "that Radziwill made something like atypical Nazi art"—and promoting the view that he was another victim of the regime.

Van Dyke shows through this case study that diverse local variants of National Socialist cultural ideologies existed simultaneously, and that disputes over the status of the art produced in service to them continue today, as confirmed by his first footnote. He does so by skillfully blending current historiographical

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approaches, especially Jeffrey Herf's concept of "reactionary modernism," with deep archival research, bringing us into the inner workings of artists' groups such as the Romantic conservative "Community" of 1933–4 with which Radziwill was involved, and scouring local and national newspapers to provide us with a synthesis of the shifting discourse on art in National Socialist Germany. In conclusion, he suggests—and, alas, this reviewer must agree—that this case study has relevance not only for Radziwill, or for artists, but for many Germans who negotiated the Nazi period to as great personal advantage as they could, and then resumed their professional careers thereafter—often invoking a nebulous victimhood. "Yet for all his idiosyncrasies and distinctiveness, Franz Radziwill was in many respects utterly typical ... the particulars of a life and career are constructed within and limited by an array of historical forces, social institutions, and ideological discourses" (169).

While the focus of van Dyke's book is a single artist, its significance both for its immediate area of study—art in Weimar and Nazi Germany—and for art history in general extends well beyond Franz Radziwill. Here we encounter and learn much about an artist as a perhaps somewhat delusional—or, at the least, deluded—individual. And we learn how intense study of a single artist can incorporate strands of stylistic analysis, iconography, and a questioning of received notions of historical development or, in the case of the prevalent idea of "Nazi art," regression. Radziwill returns in the present as a multidimensional subject and object of historical analysis, possessed of individual subjectivity but also responding to many concrete historical and ideological exigencies. Van Dyke provides a vivid demonstration of his claim that "building a successful career as a modern artist in early-twentieth-century Germany required good tactics and the development of strong networks" (120). Then, as today, it seems to *me* that an artist, or anyone, would be crazy not to keep this in mind.

The artist always returns in a form shaped by the concerns and conceptions of that period, historically and intellectually, into which s/he reemerges. Whether as inspired and/or crazed "genius" presenting a challenge to "normal," less insightful or genuine, contemporaries; faithful follower of a cultural or national "artistic will"; expressive individual communicating "significant form"; subtle and sophisticated manipulator of symbolic content; prescient precursor of future hybridity; or networked player calculating moves within a cultural and political field: our artists serve as avatars for *us*.

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