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Sarah Wilson, Courtauld Institute of Art,

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'ANGLISM': THE DIALECTICS OF EXILE'

Three orthodoxies have dictated previous accounts of the life of Kurt Schwitters in England: that England was simply 'exile', a cultural desert, that he was lonely, unappreciated, that his late figurative work is too embarrassing to be displayed in any authoritative retrospective. Scholars ask 'What if?' What if Schwitters had got a passport to United States and had joined other artists in exile? He would have continued making Merz with American material. He would have had no 'need' to paint figuratively.¹ Would he have fitted his past into an even more 'modernist' mould like his friend Naum Gabo, to please the New Yorkers?² Surely not.

'Emigration is the best school of dialectics' declared Bertold Brecht.³ Schwitters' last period must be investigated not in terms of 'exile' but the dialectics of exile: as a future which cuts off a past which lives on through it all the more intensely in memory, repetition, recreation. 'Exile' moreover is a purely negative term, foreclosing all the inspirational possibilities of a new 'genius loci', a spirit of place: England. The Germany Schwitters knew was disfigured, disintegrating, self-destructing. His longing was for place which was no more. His Merzbau was destroyed by Allied bombing in 1943; Helma died in 1944: 'Hanover a heap of ruins, Berlin destroyed, and you're not allowed to say how you feel.'⁴ The English period was a both a death and a birth, a question of identity through time, of new and old languages. 'Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future / And time future contained in time past.' T.S. Eliot's nostalgic sonorities in the *Four Quartets*, 1936, must be substituted with Schwitters' rougher, more robust, more angular sounds and planes in the 'poeting and paintry' of the English period. 'Only the wrong material used in the wrong way will give the right picture, when you look at it from the right angle. Or the wrong angle. That leads us to a new ism: Anglism. The first art starting from England, except the former shapes of art.'⁵

THE MANX PERIOD, ISLE OF MAN: 1940-1941

Relief, safety. After an arduous escape from Norway, Schwitters and Ernst arrived in Britain on 19th June, 1940.⁶ There followed a succession of reception centres in Midlothian,

Edinburgh, York and Manchester. Schwitters found himself interned by late summer in Hutchinson Camp on the Isle of Man, as one of 'His Majesty's most loyal Enemy Aliens'. (His Majesty's family had been Hanoverian, let us remember, since 1714).

The Isle of Man, situated four hours from Liverpool in the Irish sea, is a fascinating place with its own ancient Celtic culture, language and archeological remains; traces of a Roman invasion, tailless cats, the three-legged 'triskele' emblem and a degree of autonomy from the British Government.⁷ It was used as a prisoner-of-war camp during the 1914-1918 war. The situation among the internees in 1940 was tense, and management problems amongst this segregated community led to very real injustices, challenging the prevalent decorum of 'fair play'. Nationally speaking, attitudes were complicated: unemployment had reached three million by 1933, a situation which had encouraged the excesses of the British Union of Fascists, led by Oswald Mosley. Immigration laws, subject to controls during the 1930s, were changed after the events of 1938, particularly Kristallnacht, and by September 1939, there were roughly 75,000 immigrants of Germanic origin in Britain, 60,000 being refugees from Hitler.⁸

Schwitters wrote to his mother on August 18th 'I hear lectures on philosophy and art and concerts and paint very interesting heads'⁹ A mystery surrounds a subsequent clue to his life at the time, the Players Navy Cut cigarette packet, decorated with eyes, a nose and two church steeples¹⁰, dedicated, in Schwitters' 'Artstutterer' mode, to 'mmmeinem Freunde, Roland Peppenrose...5.9.40.' This early token of friendship was addressed to the most active English collector of Dada and Surrealism who had co-organised the 'German art of the Twentieth Century' exhibition in 1938.¹¹

Both Kurt Schwitters and Ernst signed a protest letter from Hutchinson Camp, published during the internment debate by the *New Statesman and Nation* on August 28th, 1940: 'Art cannot live behind barbed wire... the sense of grievous injustice done to us, the restlessness caused by living together with thousands of other men... prevent all work and creativity.' They were joined by fourteen other artists from Germany and Austria.¹² Schwitters applied formally for release from internment in October, stating that he was registered to emigrate to the U.S.A. in December 1939 with son and daughter-in-law. - to no avail.¹³ Christmas was miserable: 'I go to our church unable to believe in the love of humankind;' his studio was swept by fire in early January 1941.¹⁴

Yet Schwitters' artistic activity in Hutchinson Camp countered the moments of 'painful disillusion', the 'unnecessary humiliation' and the epileptic fits returning for the first time since adolescence that his son recalled (Ernst was released four months before his father). In fact it was a fertile and stimulating time for Schwitters; while certainly the most celebrated modernist, he also painted remembered landscapes from Norway (despite wonderful local views down to the sea) and worked from postcards and photographs of Norwegian soldiers in England, sent to him via Esther, Ernst's wife who was working at the Norwegian embassy. Schwitters' portraits

of camp officials and internees allowed him the luxury of wine and cigars.¹⁵ He was able to work regularly every day and was given an attic studio in an administration building of the camp, outside the barbed wire.¹⁶ Despite a regimen of reveilles, roll-calls and curfews, it was also true that Schwitters had: 'No material worries, regular meals, rest at normal hours and, *nearly every evening*, re-unions of intellectuals exchanging views on art and philosophical matters. There Kurt shone in all his glory'¹⁷ Internee Fred Uhlmann's own memoirs, confirmed the 'embarras de richesse' of 'more than thirty university professors and lecturers mainly from Oxford and Cambridge' who provided intellectual fare in the evenings.¹⁸ The panoply of personalities and talents was such that the Isle of Man as a 'Menscheninsel' became the symbolic microcosm of internee, Richard Friedenthal's novel: *Die Welt in der Nussschale*, the world in a nutshell of good and bad, of man's existence through 'idyll and terror' in which Schwitters was comically parodied as the eccentric artist, Baby Bitter'.¹⁹

To many, Schwitters was primarily a performance artist, with a literally captive, German-speaking audience. Dada evenings were held and the *Ur-Sonate* and *Anna Blume* recited; performances of 'Leise' ('Softly') were given, the word repeated in a crescendo culminating in a saucer-smashing climax in the Artists' Café.²⁰ Performances were also semi-private, even more subversive: savage barking at twilight in response to the barks of an elderly Viennese businessman, when animals were not allowed in the camp for example.²¹ Schwitters wrote scurrilous rhyming ditties in English for the camp journal, and produced a roneotyped version of 'An Anna Blume' in 1941. He also had drawings and stories reproduced on the precious duplicating machine, such as 'The Story of the Flat and Round Painter' (translated by Heinz Beran); round figures drawn in the air, leading to an explosion and the necessity to paint 'plain, flat figures with flat brushes on flat canvas'.²²

Once Fred Uhlmann or Klaus Hinrichsen became subjects for portraits by Schwitters, however, they saw the curious conditions in which the artist worked, a garret adorned with collages, sculptures made partly of stinking porridge, old food and stolen bits of broken furniture on the floor used 'for the construction of a grotto round a small window', (another proto-Merzbau?)²³ Inevitably Uhlmann would have told Schwitters of his life in London, of his founding role in the F.D.K.B. (Freier Deutscher Kulturbund) organised with Oscar Kokoschka from his Hampstead home from February 1939, and its programme of lectures, cabaret, exhibitions, social meetings etc.²⁴ Uhlmann's English aristocrat wife, Diana, was Secretary of the Artists' Refugee Committee (founded in October 1938), forming a link with English exhibiting groups.²⁵ Camp mail arrived regularly from Liverpool (albeit censored). Whatever Schwitters' despondency, one must conclude that he had far more knowledge of a lively London war-time avant-garde before he left internment than previous accounts would suggest.

Anecdotes aside, in what ways was Schwitters' art significantly affected during the Manx period? Firstly, in internment conditions, circumstances created even baser forms of

Merz; before painting materials began to arrive from the Artists' International Association or island suppliers, crushed bricks were used for pigments; 'oil paint from crushed minerals and dyes extracted from food rations mixed with olive oil from sardine tins... gelatine from boiled-out bones [mixed] with flour and leaves to size newspapers'²⁶; ceiling squares, dismantled teachests and linoleum prized from the floor formed the crudest of supports for his art. In *Das Schachbild* (The Chess Picture) 1941, a frayed and jagged piece of cloth, stained with some pigment into squares - a rudimentary chessboard - becomes a Merz picture; in *Brown and Green*, 1941, an old shoe sole pierced with nails and a scrap of tweed is glued onto a salvaged square of lino, itself mounted upon a rough piece of wood. Schwitters' linguistic playfulness steals into these minimal compositions. An argument for dating *Bild mit Filmspule und Draht* (Picture with Film Spool and Wire) '1937-40' to the Hutchinson camp period is the way in which the bobbin creates an 'I' within the 'Q' of a twisted twig: 'I.Qs.' (intelligence quotients) were an obsessive concern amongst the classifiers and dividers of men into groups and statistics.²⁷ While Schwitters conserved his precious oil paints for portraits, the visible degradation of his Merz materials in camp conditions added a poignancy to his experimental work and its private status as a secret diary. The minimalism of these works speak of a dialectic between possession and dispossession, a form of collecting - in exile - 'as an existential project that seeks to lend shape to hapless circumstance'.²⁸

In parallel with the question of materials came the problem of language. Schwitters, as an international modernist, had had a preeminently polyglot past; the *Ur-Sonate* may of course be linked to utopian attempts to recapture a transcendental 'Ursprache', a state of harmony before Babel.²⁹ Yet now the German language itself became both a form of cultural heritage, binding the internees together, and, schizophrenically, a remembrance of time past to be rejected. As Fred Uhlmann put it: 'The language in which Goethe and Holderlin and Moencke had talked and written would be alien to me'³⁰ Klaus Hinrichsen, Schwitters' fellow internee confirmed that most prisoners refused to speak German: 'It hurt too much'; English, a new language, was part of the new world to be espoused; the camp *Almanach, 1941*, including Ernst Schwitters' caustic piece 'Bromeo and Julia or a mystic fairy tale', contains only one short poem in German. Schwitters would find himself betwixt and between: he wrote private, sentimental rhyming love poetry in German to Helma at this time, and the poem with the painful refrain: 'Denn ich bin gefangen, Im Kriege gefangen', (For I am a prisoner, imprisoned by war') which uses the trope of death itself to express his helplessness. The public Schwitters, however, found himself in a linguistic 'nomansland'. 'Roll-call', 'rations' 'coal-fetching' 'reading-room' 'parcel office' entered a German syntax; alternatively words like 'Kaffeewautscher' phonetically transcribed 'coffee voucher'. Michael Seyfert has discussed this problem of language and its relationship to internee identity, of personalities fluctuating in mood between distractions and 'resistance'. 'Schrifter ohne Sprache' ('Writers without a language') was the theme of a

discussion at a London P.E.N. club meeting in September 1941. Some writers subsequently spoke of this change of language as a symbolic destruction of the deepest kernel of their consciousness.³¹

There was surely a level of distress involved in this language change for Schwitters: after Ernst returned to Norway their correspondence was strictly in English, despite a whole previous 'German' life together. Schwitters' new friendships, new loves, his irrepressible sense of humour and the linguistic absurd would redeem the situation, as is evident through his consistently multiple practices - writing in English, in German and in his own phonetic 'Ursprache'. The 'nomansland' of an interlanguage becomes the principal of a collage such as *Mier Bitte* (Kendal Art Gallery) in which the English beer label 'Premier bitter' turns into Schwitters' German imperative 'Mir bitte' ['for me, please'], an ironic comment in an era obsessed with the scrambling and breaking of codes.³² Language, time, memory; Schwitters recreated the past in the present as his new present anticipated a future past.

MERZ IN THE BLITZ: LONDON 1941-1945

So Schwitters was friendless and unrecognised in London? It was his first experience, as an artist, of an immensely extended yet very private city, a 'collection of villages' with no obvious 'centre' or café life, totally unlike Hanover or Paris. He moved first to Bayswater, an area excellent for public transport, very close to Kensington Gardens and the West End. Here he lived with Ernst and Esther Schwitters; his romantic encounter with Edith Thomas or Wantee ('Want tea?') who lived in the same house, took place rather rapidly.³³

Schwitters' initial feelings of isolation in London on release from the camp must be respected: 'the houses were empty, partly bombed... Behind me there was lots of barbed wire, because it was a war on... Life is sad. Why did the director of the National Gallery not even like to see me? He does not know that I belong to the avantgarde in art. That is my tragie... I wait now already 7 months for work, and cannot wait with eating.'³⁴ Schwitters' spirits were instantly raised, according to this prose piece 'On the bench' by the gift of a Royal Sovereign red pencil. In fact, Sir Kenneth Clark, at the National Gallery was doing his best: President of the War Artists' Advisory Committee, he was coopting not only Academicians but surrealists and neo-Romantics into war art projects. It was one of the most creative moments for English art in the century, while literary life in war-time London was equally intense, competitive and colourful.³⁵ Besides the War Artists' topographic records and sketches, Henry Moore was producing his *Shelter Drawings*, and Graham Sutherland and John Piper their apocalyptic depictions of bomb damage in the Blitz. Refugee artists also contributed: Felix Topolski or Edward Ardizzone for example, but not Schwitters.³⁶

Artistic life in London had already been largely influenced by immigrant artists

before the influx of the 1930s.³⁷ It must be stated that cultural life between the wars was distinguished by the division among intellectuals between Francophiles and Germanophiles. Writers on art such as Roger Fry and Anthony Blunt were Francophile, as were Nancy Cunard, or Roland Penrose and subsequently the British Surrealists; alternatively D.H. Lawrence, the poets W.H.Auden, Stephen Spender and young artists such as Francis Bacon who had been drawn to Berlin in the late 1920s were Germanophile, as were sections of the British aristocracy such as the Mosley family with their fascination for Hitler, and even, it is argued, King Edward VIII (who abdicated in 1936). German expressionism was nonetheless considered embarrassingly raw and 'ugly' by the British public who were exposed to 'Twentieth Century German Art' at the New Burlington Galleries in July 1938; London's response to Hitler's Munich exhibitions of 'Degenerate art' included major works by Max Beckman, Oscar Kokoshka's *Portrait of a Degenerate Artist*, Schwitters' construction *The Golden Ear*, 1935 and an undated collage, both from private collections in London.³⁸ With the transfer of the Warburg Institute from Hamburg to London in 1933, German art history had transformed traditions of English connoisseurship and criticism; Ernst Gombrich was a Hampstead denizen - as indeed was Sigmund Freud from 1938 - and soon German and Austrian artists were well established amidst their English contemporaries.³⁹ In the Uhlmann's house the refugee photomontage artist John Heartfield was a guest for seven years: the presence of Francis Klingender or Friedrich Antal gave a distinctly Marxist tone to their discussions.⁴⁰ Despite the traditions of British liberalism, however, and propaganda exhibitions such as 'Allies inside Nazi Germany' (1942) which travelled throughout Britain as 'We accuse, Ten Years of Hitler Fascism' the following year, suspicions of the Jew, the Communist, the camouflaged Nazi, all affected perceptions of German refugees in exile - and Schwitters was no exception.

Given the Roland Penrose connection, and Schwitters' deep friendship with Fred Uhlmann from internment days, it could not have been too long before he established contact and was welcomed by the Hampstead artistic community. By February, 1942, Schwitters had become a member of the Artists' International Association (A.I.A.), exhibiting *Memory of a Lady we never knew* alongside works made by the very broadest spectrum of the left-wing London artists.⁴¹ By May, 1942, Schwitters had met Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth; a possible personality clash with Nicholson did not prevent the latter from making an homage to Schwitters in the form of a collage. Nicholson modified his rigorous Constructivist construction with cardboard, gauze and an exemplary bus ticket. The couple kept in touch during Nicholson and Hepworth's stay in Cornwall, where Nicholson made a small collage incorporating Schwitters-type ephemera - an envelope from Hampstead and a Post-Office telegram (he gave it to Hepworth as her birthday card, on January 10th, 1943).⁴² By June, 1942, Schwitters would surely have met most of the avant-garde intelligentsia still resident in London at a group exhibition held in refugee architect Erno Goldfinger's modernist buildings, Willow Road,

Hampstead, in aid of Allied Russia. Works from the School of Paris - some from Roland Penrose's collection, were shown together with the Nicholson, Hepworth, Henry Moore, the British Surrealists and neo-Romantics. Surprisingly Janco Adler was the only refugee artist together with Schwitters, who exhibited *Blue and Gold*, 1942, *Brown and Green*, 1941, and two sculptures: a bas-relief and *Mother with egg*.⁴³ *Artists Aid Russia Exhibition*, a more eclectic event, was held in the Wallace Collection from July 1st to August 4th, 1942. Here Schwitters exhibited with his friends Uhlmann and Georg Ehrlich from Hutchinson camp days, the Hungarian concrete sculptor Peter Peri (co-founder of the A.I.A.) and an array of English artists in a group show of Allied solidarity.

1942 was an extraordinary year for Schwitters' work in both collage and poetry. Perhaps because of the Victoriana of street and pub, the artlessness of furnished lodgings with their cheap prints and anti-macassars, the taste of a working-class girl like Wantee in the era of *Picture Post*, Schwitters' collages, in particular the series using reproductions of Franz von Drefregger's 'Galerie Moderner Meister' series, such as *Die Brautwerbung*, 1942, or *Merz 42, Like an Old Master*, were full of tenderness in the traditional scenes they revealed. Weddings, motherhood, childhood, days of yore, jostled, as in memory itself, contrasted with both the bus tickets of everyday life and the fantasy world of contemporary advertisements. While Dada had been obsessed with patriarchy and patricide, Schwitters here evokes a female world, and curiously anticipates the sentimentality of English Pop.⁴⁴ 'Old Master' that he was, with Wantee's help, Schwitters tuned his ear as well as his eye to London and his new environment; his poem, *London Symphony*, is a cacophony of advertising jingles, telephone numbers, small ads, war slogans: 'Dig for victory', 'ABC' (Aerated Bread Company) and the evidently self-referential cry of the rag-and-bone man:

`Sell us your waste paper
Rags and Metals
Any rag any bones any bottles today.'

These are verbal collages, but collages which immediately evoke visual equivalents in a tumultuous order. 'Bank' suggests the red, white and blue tube sign; 'Bovril is good for you ... What you want is Watney's' and every other familiar slogan would have had its own distinctive colours and lettering on familiar shop signs, and of course the billboards covered in posters, which sprang up almost daily to hide the ever-increasing number of bomb-sites.

Moreover, to interpret Schwitters' prose writings of this period as 'full of sadness...' about people 'frustrated by life...living without hope' is precisely not to 'hear' Schwitters: the wry ear for dialogue captured in 'Five Girls on the Switchboard', 1942, (discussing men of course) or the compassionate irony and humour in 'The Landlady', so proud of the match-saving methods she uses to cope with restrictions in austerity London.⁴⁵ Alternatively, there is the tenderness and fairy-tale element of stories such as 'Twopenny-Novel about an Ugly Girl',

which relates interestingly to an abstract sculpture of the same name.

In September Schwitters holidayed in the Lake District in its glorious autumnal colours; he wandered looking for motifs, resolving to return in February to paint snowscapes. 'It's like Norway there, but more romantic' he wrote to his friend Edith Tschichold.⁴⁶

By late December 1942, Schwitters had moved to another London 'village', leafy Barnes, south of the Thames, together with Ernst and with Gert Strindberg (a relative of August Strindberg). They had a radio, telephone and Schwitters bought a piano. Wantee would come to cook at weekends.⁴⁷ Life continued tranquilly; Schwitters exhorted new acquaintances to have their portraits painted.

Separate from the activities of official War Art commissions, the British Surrealist movement flourished with an incestuous intensity in London, its hostilities continuing with the generally Communist realists of the the A.I.A.⁴⁸ Each grouping was modified by the impact of colourful refugees - Jacques Brunius, Toni del Renzio, Felix Topolski - all managed to make their mark in the London art world. None more so than the extravagant Jack Bilbo, 'Al Capone's bodyguard', a Londoner since the late 1930s and a fellow-internee from the Isle of Man (Onchan Camp), who included Schwitters in his first group show in London. Bilbo's gallery became a 'home from home' for many refugee artists and a glamorous London elite of writers and film-stars; his soirées, which united a multitude of poets and artists saw Schwitters' first London poetry recitals: 'dadaist poetry, a mixture of illogical nonsense based on sound only, and logical lunacy. Kurt himself, being quite pathological enjoyed himself immensely. So did my guests, because outside the bombing went on, which seemed to be logical, and therefore wasn't so amusing, and inside the house Kurt Schwitters went on with his illogicality, which was amusing.'⁴⁹

Four works by Schwitters, including *Parrot*, *Stork* and *Tears*, were exhibited in 'The World of Imagination. An exhibition of "Oodles," Abstracts, Surrealism "Merz" Sculpture, Constructivism and Symbolism. The Most advanced and original Show in Town' in Bilbo's Modern Art Gallery, Haymarket, in January 1944⁵⁰. Bilbo's own introduction acknowledged Schwitters' historical position, while appropriating the Merz principle as an 'oodle.. a humorous creation made out of old rubbish, something positive out of something negative'.

The heaviest air raids since 1941 poured on London in February 1944; flying bombs started to arrive in June. In August, 1944, at an important international PEN Club conference - with 'writers from all over the world... and the sound of aeroplanes above the roof', Schwitters met two kindred spirits who had been involved with dada and avant-garde film in Poland since the late 1920s: Stefan and Franciszka Themersen.⁵¹ Their film, *Calling Mr Smith*, had been shown to great acclaim in London and Edinburgh at the end of the previous year. Just as Schwitters' most explicit anti-nazi collage, *The Hitler Gang* c. 1944, juxtaposes an advert for the Hitler film in gothic script with an evocation of the most famous of all fragments referring to the

invention of modernist collage - printed chair caning - the Themersens' *Calling Mr Smith*, while designed to appeal to 'the common man', denounced Nazi atrocity through fragmentary references to European culture, Germany and Poland in particular. It deployed all the experimental vocabulary of the art in a film-collage: art-objects, high-contrast photographs, silhouettes, coloured shadows, rhythmic repetitions.⁵² In September, Schwitters reported that social life was additionally improving thanks to his almost weekly visits to Dr Walter Dux, formerly from Hanover, now resident in Richmond, near Barnes. Dux would be a most generous patron sending Schwitters £5 every week 'for paints'.⁵³ At about this time, Schwitters made a collage in Franciska Themerson's studio, incorporating a photograph of Herbert Read, cut from a copy of *Picture Post*; the English gentleman, a floating bust, smiles urbanely as the mother-odalisque behind him is disfigured by menacing double male heads.

Herbert Read was the most influential English art critic working in London through the war. Imagist poet, surrealist novelist, adept of Worringer, editor of *Kropotkin*, Read had been arbiter between the warring factions of Surrealism and Abstraction in the London of the late 1930s. In a context of imminent war on the Continent, he had come to envisage London as the new world capital of the arts (*Living Art in England*, London Gallery 1939) agreeing to become the director of Peggy Guggenheim's proposed Museum of Modern Art for London, prior to the collapse of the project and departure from England of such international figures as Mondrian and Naum Gabo.⁵⁴ During the late autumn, preparations were underway with Read for Schwitters' first one-man show in London at Jack Bilbo's gallery in December 1944. It would be a substantial exhibition of eleven collages, eighteen oil paintings with constructions and ten sculptures, including the bomb-site *Air and Wire Sculpture* twisted out of a coathanger, surely, during the PEN Club conference. Herbert Read's preface added authority: 'Schwitters is the supreme master of the *collage*.' His historical introduction situated the artist and 'Merz' with the great 1920s modernists, yet, with characteristic sensitivity, Read perceived Schwitters' recalcitrance, his 'protest against the chromium-plated conception of modernism', his 'philosophical, even mystical' justification of the use of rejected materials, the love of beauty in 'a rock, a cloud formation or a human face'. The show received an enthusiastic review in *The Studio*, which contrasted the softly coloured collages with his uncompromisingly 'intellectual' wire and wood sculptures; Schwitters sold four works and received three commissions.⁵⁵ Prior to the poetry recital at the opening on December 4th, Read realised, crucially, that Schwitters' poetry was essentially an *oral* art, akin to Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*: 'to hear Schwitters recite his poetry is to be convinced that he has invented still another art form.'⁵⁶

Schwitters' happiness at his recognition by an expanding audience of friends and admirers was cruelly cut short by a telegram informing him of his wife Helma's death. She had died in October from breast cancer. He also learned that his house in Hanover and his Merzbau had been destroyed.⁵⁷ A stroke temporarily paralysed half of his body; Wantee was on the verge

of a nervous breakdown. At the end of the war, Ernst Schwitters returned to Norway and Schwitters could no longer afford to live in Barnes. With Wantee's savings and money from the sale of Schwitters' stamp collection they decided to go again to the Lake District. A new phase in Schwitters' life was about to begin.

ROMANTICISM REDISCOVERED: THE LAKE DISTRICT, 1945-1948

They arrived at Windermere on June 26th, 1945. Compared with a Norway of precipitous fjords and glaciers, the Lake District is a gentler, greener mountain area, colonised first by Romans, then by Vikings and converted by the northern saints. Far from a deserted, isolated spot, Schwitters found himself in a region impregnated with history and culture. The landscape was divided by 'dry stone walls' of slate and Lakeland greenstone, sometimes topped with fantastical, irregular lumps of limestone from river beds; these were carried into the gray and purple slate-built villages: see the wall in an early photograph of 2, Gale Crescent, Ambleside, where Schwitters and Wantee first had lodgings.

Life may have been austere, but Ambleside was surrounded by a landscape of sublime natural beauty that nearer their own time had inspired the great English Romantics, from Thomas de Quincey to John Ruskin and William Wordsworth.⁵⁸ It was not only a spot for Romantic pilgrims, but a centre for art during the war. The Langdale valley, where Schwitters would later work on the Merzbarn, was the focus of an artistic community, with lectures given by visiting professors from Liverpool, Manchester and Edinburgh.⁵⁹ And Ambleside itself was graced with the eccentrically dressed students from the Royal College of Art, London, who had been evacuated there to escape the bombing. A professor from the College, a portrait painter, lived in the same house as Schwitters, but was apparently too shy to be introduced; Schwitters had tea with one or two students; yet despite the fascinating potential for an exchange of culture and ideas, no important contacts were established.⁶⁰

In November, 1945, Schwitters and Wantee went to London to celebrate Ernst's remarriage. At this happy moment one supposes, in honour of Eve, Ernst's new wife, the English version of Anna Blume was transformed to 'Eve Blossom has wheels'. Eve was suitably palindromic and optimistic: 'E-V-E / Easy Victory Easy'.⁶¹ All four returned to the Lake District for a honeymoon period; Ernst and Schwitters went to Tarn Hows and climbed up to the 'saddle' of Old Man Coniston.⁶² New words from the Lakes crept into Schwitters titles such as *Windswept*, 1946; his colourful abstract paintings became filled with the curves and stippled shadows of the mountains and valleys (*Grasmere*); more domestic assemblages referred to local events such as *Y.M.C.A.*⁶³ All took place under the aegis of his muse; hence *Wanteeside*,

1945-6. And Schwitters - of course - resumed painting the motifs around him. Equal to the number of abstracts in Schwitters' life, were the number of naturalistic works, about 4,000 in all, Ernst Schwitters has calculated.⁶⁴ Should not these, too, attract some scholarly attention? As in Norway, Schwitters was happy to sell landscapes and portraits to local residents or passing tourists. Many were displayed at the picturesque Bridge House, which was an antique shop. Schwitters reiterated how he considered Rembrandt the greatest artist that ever lived.⁶⁵ The quality of the best portraits surpasses those done in Hutchinson camp. Despite his comment to Raoul Hausmann 'in England you must not even see any brushmarks on the surface of the picture. My picture have brushmarks and therefore I have difficulties'⁶⁶, these works are consistently expressionist. The portrait of Dr George Ainslie Johnston, his faithful doctor and an amiable chess partner is a triumph of energetic handling. It conveys a natural gravitas, while the predominantly warm tones of green and brown are counterpointed by the startling diamond formation of the chessboard.

The Dr Johnston portrait is a particularly important work: housed today in the Armitage Trust library, of which Dr Johnston was an active member, it belies the myth of Schwitters' intellectual isolation. Johnston was an expert on Ruskin, the great critic of *Modern Painters*, painter of Alpine landscapes and friend of Turner and Wordsworth. It was the Englishman, Ruskin, one could argue, who precipitated, with the famous Ruskin-Whistler trial, the originary point of departure for modernism, not merely in Anglo-american terms.⁶⁷ ('The dadaists belonged to a world which, still, remembered and read John Ruskin' wrote Stefan Themerson, explicating Schwitters.⁶⁸) The portrait was the subject of a typically whimsical letter to Christof Spengeman, relating Johnston's expression to whether Schwitters would allow him to win or lose the game of chess.⁶⁹ More significantly, the incongruous press-cuttings referring to Norway, pasted onto the back of the Dr Johnston portrait, mark a transitional stage, as it were, between figurative painting and the 'conventional' collage, *Norwegian Flag*, 1947. Time past contained in time present: Schwitters' continuing passion for his second lost country is contained in these curious, commemorative practices; clues to a dispersed autobiography.⁷⁰

As Schwitters would famously comment to Raoul Hausmann: 'In my soul live as many hearts as I have lived years. Because I can never give up or entirely forget a period of time during which I worked with great energy - I am still an impressionist, even while I am Merz. With the gangster Picasso you may ask - which artists does he copy today? With me you may ask- what developments has he gone through? I am not ashamed of being able to do good portraits and I do them still. But that is not avant-garde.'⁷¹

In similar fashion, Schwitters' landscapes of mountain and valley, of lake and rock, as with the best snowscapes of Norway, signal the rediscovery of his Expressionist roots: the energetic scribbles and dashes of his sketches, the fluid, bravado handling of the oils, where the purplish-green palette is flecked with the yellow of gorse bushes on the hills and the white of

impasted suns; Schwitters moving from Wordsworth back to Worringer.⁷² As Ernst Schwitters said: 'It was his often expressed conviction that the human mind eventually becomes stale if it does not receive new impressions constantly through the study of nature.'⁷³ The works were occasionally unsigned, when Schwitters could not find vermilion for his characteristic 'KS' signature - surely a mark by which he wished these paintings to be recognised and distinguished from local productions or his own unfinished exercises.⁷⁴

Expressionism in the hands of certain of its adepts - Edvard Munch, Oskar Kokoschka, David Bomberg in England - was a lifelong style; Kokoschka was a contemporary of Schwitters in London, becoming a British citizen in 1947. He continued to paint in London as well as Vienna and Italy, Germany and Switzerland after the war. The British expressionist tradition, generated by Bomberg, is at the origin of today's School of London, involving artists of the stature of Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff.⁷⁵ Indeed, while Kokoschka was painting landscapes in Scotland, Hilde Goldschmidt, his student between 1920 and 1923 at the Dresden Academy, was living and working alongside Schwitters in the Langdale Valley, making turbulent, Expressionist landscapes of Elterwater in oil or pastel. Immediately after the war, the emigré art critic J.P. Hodin theorised Expressionism as a constituent of modernism for the London intelligentsia. His articles took their place within a liberal reevaluation of twentieth century German culture in the literary magazine *Horizon*. 'The Expressionist artist is associated with the myth-building force, that truly creative, primordial, spiritual force out of which the symbols were created that gave form to men's conception of life and the world'. 'Modern art', Hodin argued, offered a way to escape from the 'complete disillusionment of the post-war period' with its existentialist, 'world-rejecting melancholy'⁷⁶ As ruins and bombsites were covered with green, and Europe entered its second period of reconstruction, the analogies with Schwitters' continuing Romantic empathies and Expressionist practices were obvious.

'POETING AND PAINTRY': THE ADVENTURE OF PIN, 1946-1947

'The phan atom bomb conquered by penn phan'⁷⁷

Even in the Lake District, Schwitter gave a recital of his Ursonate to Hilde Goldschmidt, and 'The Fury of Sneezing' apparently went down well in the local pubs.⁷⁸ More seriously, it was presumably through Goldschmidt's friendships from the wartime Langdale artistic community that the dancer and choreographer Rudolf von Laban visited Schwitters, proposing to create a ballet based upon Schwitters' new 'Scherzo'.⁷⁹

During 1945 and 1946, Schwitters' life broadened immeasurably as he regained postal

contact with friends in Europe and America. The international service was extremely efficient; Schwitters was a passionate correspondent. Just as he sent his collages to friends and left bundles of work in various places, posting for posterity as it were, so his poems were dispatched far and wide for safe keeping; he sent his 'Fury of Sneezing' to Kate Steinitz in August, 1945, and 'I build my time' to Nelly van Doesburg in May, 1947. He commemorated his friendships through collage-poems:

Par Avion
 Herbert Read
 Naoum Gabo
 Tuntagro
 Nelly
 My dear Friend
 Par Avion⁸⁰

He immortalised one Andrew Invergowrie in his delirious new sonata 'Ribble Bobble Pimlico (surely implying a visit to the newly reopened Tate Gallery)⁸¹ and other friendships with pictorial equivalents: fragments of correspondence transformed into collage (*G. Strindberg*, 1945). At the period of his correspondence with Raoul Hausmann, in 1946 -7, his optimism and enthusiasm are evident in the tensely constructed, banded collage with its central paper strip *De Stijl - Le Style - Der Stijl / le seul organe d'une nouvelle conscience plastique!* Ambleside envelope fragments jostle with French stamps, carrying the engraved and beautiful head in Phrygian bonnet of 'La France' / 'Liberté'.

It was tremendously exciting for Schwitters to reestablish contact with Raoul Hausmann in June 1946 and to hear of avant-garde developments in Paris.⁸² Schwitters' mind effervesced with ideas for a joint project - a 'phantasy' project, *Pin* on the curious, finally impossible axis between Ambleside and Limoges in France, where his companion of Berlin dada days was now living in poverty. It was the epistolary resumption of a friendship 'as though nothing had had happened' and yet, while he corresponded in German with Hanover friends, and wrote his play, 'Die Familiengruft' (The Family Tomb), in German in November 1946, Schwitters wrote to Hausmann mostly in English (with Wantee's help).⁸³ Again this was surely an implicit acknowledgement between the two men of all that had gone before, and likewise the urgency of 'time present' in their new lives.⁸⁴

At first they hatched grandiose plans. Hausmann suggested that Schwitters write an epic 500 page book of Merz: 'Just think of it: The Odyssey, Don Quixote, Ulysses, Merz.' But the *Pin* project took over, with an ulterior motive from Hausmann's point of view. Hausmann's 'FMSBW', a point of origin for Schwitters' 'Sonate in Urlauten' was entering a new arena of

controversy in postwar Paris: a second avant-garde was challenging the 'grandfathers'. The debate was sparked between Iliazd (Ilia Zdanevich, the emigré Russian Futurist and 'zaoum' poet) and Isidore Isou, promoter of the new 'lettrist' movement. Schwitters was certainly aware of the issues at stake, both via his letters and the antagonistic, phonetic counterprojects set up in PIN.⁸⁵ Hausmann was corresponding with Schwitters and with Isou simultaneously. He alerted the young Roumanian to the existence of his own 'poème-affiche' 'FMSBW' of 1918 (one was in César Domela's collection in Paris), and sent him Schwitters' address in Ambleside, saying:

'L' Ursonate de Schwitters se compose surtout de mon 'fmsbutézeu' qu'il a employé comme thèse de fond⁸⁶ Hausmann's initial proposal to Schwitters was for 'a thing of fantasy to be called 'Schwittmail' or 'Pinhole mail', to be published in Paris in four languages'. Suggested collaborators included Arp, Tristan Tzara and Ernst Schwitters (abstract photographs) Alas! it was far too ambitious. 'Pinhole' was a metaphor: Give up your human-controlled feelings and please creep through our pinhole and you will realise that it was worth while.⁸⁷ 'Pin' is the hole people have to creep through in order to see what art is all about.⁸⁸ Drafts passed between Limoges and Ambleside; production matters were left to Hausmann; the discipline of mutual editing sometimes led to complete rewriting in the case of Hausmann's phonetic 'Cauchemar' transformed to Schwitter's 'The real disuda of the nightmare'⁸⁹

The Belgian Surrealist, E.L.T. Mesens, promoter of pre-war dada and Surrealism in England, was the proposed contact point and publisher. Schwitters had known him since the 1920s, and visited him after a trip to Blackpool in July 1946, but Mesens was not keen on *Pin*. Finally penury and illness involving both collaborators - Schwitters with a broken leg between October and Christmas 1946 - put paid to the project. His proposal to sell the manuscripts to the Swedish collector Hjalmar Gabrielson came to nothing, and in mid-October Schwitters decided to withdraw his name from *Pin*.⁹⁰ Paradoxically it would not be formal or intellectual defeat but sheer physical exhaustion on the part of the older generation which would allow Isou and the Lettrists to triumph in Paris. Nonetheless the debate about the origins of the poetry of the letter was regulated for posterity by Iliazd's magnificent illustrated typographic production on parchment, *Poésie des mots inconnus*, 1949, which contained both Hausmann's 'FMSBW' and Schwitter's 'Fury of Sneezing' poem. The same year saw the publication in French in the review K of the 'Scherzo' of the 'Ursonate' ('Sonate Présyllabique').⁹¹

On March 5th and 7th, 1947, a postwar London public was treated to a small Schwitters exhibition plus two poetry recitals at the reopened London Gallery in Brook Street, the very street where Handel composed the Messiah, noted a critic in his review of the 'Surrealist Shakespeare'!⁹² 'Attendance first recital: 16, at second recital: 12' Mesens recalled.⁹³ B.B.C. notoriously refused to record Schwitters' so-called 'Primeval Sonate' and walked out - yet Schwitters certainly had an impact.⁹⁴ Mesens who 'adored Schwitters', according to his assistant

George Melly, had reverted to collage-making for a brief period with Schwitters' encouragement: his superb *Complete Score Completed* of 1945, using slogans on the musical staves such as 'Black-out' and 'On draught', is comparable with Schwitters' slogans 'Dig for Victory' and 'Watney's Ales' in the poem *London Symphony*.⁹⁵ Schwitters informed Hausmann of his March 5th performance, but at the end of that March conveyed Mesen's refusal to publish *Pin*.

Pin, which generated the immortal epithet 'poeting and paintry', was a self-consciously neo-avant-garde experiment, internationalist, formalist and pitched against the Zeitgeist: 'it has liberated itself of the world agony... Poetry of the PRESENT is outside the restrained history, outside the coward anthropophagous and anthropomorphous utilisations

...

Poetry Intervenes Now

Presence Is New

PIN⁹⁶

THE ELTERWATER MERZBARN, SWAN LAKE, 1947

A few miles from Ambleside, in the fertile valley of Great Langdale, was a village called Elterwater, in old Norse 'Elpt Vatn' or Swan Lake, rich in Lakeland greenstone and sheltered by woods. On part of the former site of the Ambleside Black Powder Works was a landholding named 'Cylinders' after the cylindrical charcoal furnaces on the site. Harry Pierce, a landscape architect, built a modest stone 'shippen' on the site. Around this he cultivated exotic plants: eucalyptus, rhododendron, weeping acorn and bamboo.⁹⁷ Further away, he constructed a stone-walled barn, built on old foundations during the war. This infinitely modest building would become Schwitters' final Merzbau, the Merzbarn, a madly heroic, calculated gamble with posterity.

Schwitters' correspondence reveals that despite his fragile bones and confinement to bed in late 1946, for some period he sustained fantasies of returning to Hanover and reconstituting the Merzbau from its existing ruins.⁹⁸ He was also increasingly excited about a proposed trip to New York, writing negatively about England, English art (and, significantly, his own portraits) for the first time to Katharine S. Dreier, aiming to reassure her of his still avant-garde, internationalist credentials.⁹⁹ These were to be contextualised for a London public by E.L.T. Mesens Dada exhibition, planned for June.¹⁰⁰ Schwitters was exhilarated when on June 20th, 1947, his sixtieth birthday, he received an award from the Museum of Modern Art, New York worth \$1,000 'to proceed with your plans for continuing your work in creative fields, including such such restoration of the Merzbau as is possible.'¹⁰¹ However, he reported to Christoph Spengeman on June 25th that his 'Herzasthma had become Merzasthma' and that his heart was bad; on July 15th, he suffered a twelve-hour lung haemorrhage. His health forced him to acknowledge that his horizons were now fixed by the mountain rims of Langdale. By this time,

Harry Pierce, who thanks to a portrait commission had become a good friend and charming host to Schwitters and Wantee, had already agreed that Schwitters might have his barn for a studio.¹⁰²

The first cheque for \$250 dollars arrived on July 31st.¹⁰³ The precise date at which Schwitters began the Elterwater Merzbarn is uncertain, but certainly arrangements for a 'Merzbarn' were formalised with Harry Pierce, a rent of £52 per annum agreed, and the purpose stated 'for the completion and exhibition of sculptures and pictures', while Schwitters wrote anxiously to New York for approval.¹⁰⁴

Schwitters could not wait for Mr Pierce to weatherproof the building, to glaze the holes that had served as windows for hay bales; light inside the barn was limited to a candle; heat to a paraffin stove. The sides of the barn were of typical 'dry stone wall' construction, rough, uneven and with no concrete or mortar to hold the local slates together; thus particularly difficult and expensive to fill and plaster in the attempt to create smooth surfaces. Schwitters applied commercial decorator's plaster with a spatula, table knife and hands in rough relief patches whose surfaces created a pattern of shadows like the stippled area on abstract paintings such as *Grasmere*. 'Relief parts were reinforced with garden canes, string, wire, small branches and anything else which came to hand'¹⁰⁵ Schwitters became wildly enthusiastic, despite the long daily journey and slow rate of progress: 'I am building a Merz Barn. In Elterwater. The greatest sculpture of my life... I hope to end my work in 3 years' he wrote to Ludwig Hilbersheimer in October.¹⁰⁶

Mr Pierce made a new roof for the building, and at Schwitters' request built a window in the top, right-hand corner above his relief. The light bounced down the wall, falling through a gap designed to illuminate the most carefully-composed, still-remaining centrepiece of the Merzbarn wall. Contrasting with the dry stone walls which served as a dark, 'rusticated' frame, the smoothed area - which required so much white paint sent, in part from Norway - thrust out wilfully into a relief comprising: 'A wedge of slate, small metal window frame, the rose of child's watering can, twigs, a piece of the rim of a cartwheel, a section of guttering, a china egg, a piece of an oval gold mirror frame, a metal grid, a piece of metal strip, a rubber ball, roots, stones, string, and some gentians which have, of course, now disappeared.'¹⁰⁷ Yet the wall that Schwitters, Wantee, Harry Pierce and Jack Cook all collaborated to make was but a part of the conception. Mr Pierce said that Schwitters intended completing all four walls of the barn as murals¹⁰⁸ Cave-like, rather than dominated by a central monument, it was nonetheless conceived as a completely three-dimensional environment.¹⁰⁹ As the painter Hilde Goldschmidt later recalled: 'High up in the wall he wanted a window placed, which was supposed to act both as the sole source of light and as the fulcrum of the whole conception. From there various strings were spanned throughout the room to indicated how the barn space would be interpenetrated. It was all so clear in his mind'¹¹⁰ Rough, free-standing sculptures were made for the Merzbarn,¹¹¹ but here as with his other Merzbauten, a system of shelves and niches were envisaged, in the

oblique wall that Schwitters built, for the display of his small sculptures.

While many of Schwitters' small sculptures of the later 1940s are characteristically eccentric, quirky 'bricolages', some remaining works - and indeed some works existing now only from photographs, are smooth curving, geometrical creations. Often the inspiration for a sculpture in base material, debris - a piece of bone for example - are built up so that they lose their characteristics of origin. They are then painted with constructivist colours: white with red and black; or red, yellow and blue. The most severe pieces such as *Cathedral*, 1941-2, or *Arabesque*, 1943-5 deliberately relate as microcosms and miniatures to the Merzbau conception as 'Zukunftskathedrale'; yet any architectural solemnity is contradicted by the reference to the organic in smooth, biomorphic works such as *Opening Blossom*, by the personal, emotional relationships intimated in the tiny coloured pieces like *Togetherness*, or by the sheer impudence of selected painted pebbles and striped stones. More particularly, *Fant*, (a Norwegian word for 'devil') 1944 and the magnificent later *Lofty*, are outrageously phallic: in *Lofty* those severe, constructivist colourings are comically challenged: a drooping, but impertinent penis, about to raise its head. However poor or ill Schwitters may have been or have become, *Lofty* and its sculptural brethren, envisaged in conjunction with the Merzbau, are not the works of a despairing man: but sculptural extensions of a personality acknowledging sexual desire, irony and an often scatological humour. The Elterwater Merzbau, made with Wantee in and with and surrounded by nature is no repetition of the Hanover Merzbau; not merely because of its rural aspects or connection with picturesque grottos, but because it is no longer a 'Cathedral of Erotic Misery'; it is a celebration of a mature sexuality and of an achieved love, as well as of life itself and the will to survive.

ON AND ON, 1947-1948

Alas, will was not enough - despite Schwitters' *Valentine Merz relief* of 1947: 'If you can't get a little SPARK /Out of life / C'mon Get Glowing/ Be my Valentine!' to which Kate Steinitz had added: 'and keep burning on and on;' *On and on* would be the title of his last collage.¹¹² On death itself, his play *Die Familiengruft*, (The Family Tomb), 1946, had given a parodic and pessimistic view of an after-life rife with old family rancours, a disturbing anomaly in the Lakeland oeuvre.¹¹³ As early as July, 1947, Schwitters drafted his last will and testament.¹¹⁴ In constant correspondence with the Museum of Modern Art, Schwitters was also in touch with the preparations for his New York exhibition at the Pinacothèque. Recognition in Europe at this time was not unforthcoming: he approved of Carola Giedion-Welcker's *Die Weltwoche* article that was published in Zurich, August 15th, 1947, which signalled his London Gallery performances, and his participation in the forthcoming collage exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. 'He must have been very satisfied that England, the land of

nonsense and the immortal Alice in Wonderland, appreciated his work as a poet and artist.¹¹⁵

Yet in September, Ernst wrote: 'It is so dreadful to feel the sadness underlying so many of your later letters... You write: "It is a wonder that I do live on, bodily and economically"', yet Ernst dispatched more zinc white for the Merzbarn, as requested, and proposed a visit to Lysaker.¹¹⁶ In late November, Ernst wrote 'I am very glad to read that your "Merz-barn" goes better than "Merzbau" I and II', thanking Schwitters for sending 'the very detailed descriptions of the Merzbarn with drawings, etc.'.¹¹⁷ However, a month later, with water coursing through the Merzbarn in a stream, the short days, the bitter cold, Schwitters became progressively weaker; he wrote an almost valedictory letter to Ernst in December 9th, acknowledging that he could die quite suddenly. Plans for a last visit from Ernst became urgent, desperate notes to Wantee detailed Schwitters' previous fits as the artist became delirious;¹¹⁸ Schwitters was finally moved to Kendal Green Hospital, where he died, destitute, on January 8th, 1948, with Ernst at his side. His choice of the sculpture *Autumn Crocus* (1926-8), to be erected at the head of his grave in Ambleside was not to be; yet a copy of the original - destroyed in a bombing raid in 1943 - stands over his final resting place in the Engsohder Friedhof, Hanover, as a monument to this 'Man without an Autumn'.¹¹⁹ As Kate Steinitz wrote to Wantee on March 24th, 1948: 'Our Pfitzer: Our Kurt! I wrote on this red Valentine: You burn on and on - and he does. He is alive for us and burns on and on.'¹²⁰

EPILOGUE

FROM NEWCASTLE TO NEW YORK: THE MERZBARN AND 'MODERNISM'

While preparations went ahead for Schwitters' New York retrospective at the Pinacotheca, in January, 1948¹²¹, the preoccupations of Wantee and Ernst focussed on their respective Merzbauten. Wantee informed Ernst of the tragic death of Mr Pierce's son, who had just finished remaking the Merzbarn floor. Mr Pierce 'finished' the walls, asking Wantee to go and help with the final touches;¹²² she withdrew her offer to help when she learned to her consternation that he had pulled down the oblique wall that Schwitters had erected. 'He felt that it spoiled the view of the most important work in the barn and had decided to pull it down. Whatever one feels it is too late.' She remained 'willing to help Mr Pierce by loaning him pictures and small sculptures.'¹²³ Ernst was not so distressed by the intervention, writing that 'finally, from a practical point of view, considering that the barn was to be made into a café, it [the wall] took quite a bit of the little room available, and the "café-idea" still seems to be the only practicable and also the best solution.'¹²⁴ A year later, Ernst's concerns were still with the Lysaker Merzbau: 'It is in a very bad state of repair, the house needing an entirely new roof... Still, this Merz-Bau is undoubtedly a supreme effort of Daddy's many remaining works... incomparably much richer and much more important than the "Merz-Barn'. It is my great hope

and wish to have it transferred to America to a 'Kurt Schwitters Merz-Museum' or, if that plan fails to a special 'Kurt Schwitters room' in the Museum of Modern Art.¹²⁵

Ten years later, after Schwitters' 'rediscovery' in London, thanks to Philip Granville's exhibition at the Lord's Gallery in 1958, a list preserved in the Wantee archives entitled 'Pictures taken from the Barn. 1959' reveals that nine abstract works, from 1940-1947, a portrait and four sculptures including *Chicken and egg* had obviously been left in the barn as part of the 'Schwitters installation' for over a decade.¹²⁶ However, the years and the weather took their toll. The decision had to be made: move the Merzbarn or allow it to perish. By May, 1963 the Trustees of the Tate Gallery had decided they could not make the necessary funds available.¹²⁷ Negotiations with the Gulbenkian Foundation to fund its transfer to Abbot Hall Art Gallery had also fallen through by early 1964. In October, 1964, the exhibition *Kurt Schwitters in the Lake District* held at Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, revealed the breadth of Schwitters' late output; the first of the British exhibitions which have been the only shows to reveal the range of figurative work.¹²⁸

Schwitters's heritage was acknowledged from the first by the 1960s generation of British artists. Through his correspondence with Kate Steinitz he had received American food, wrappers and comics (see *For Käte*, 1947) that in his last works anticipated the enthusiasms of British Pop - with a certain irony. *En Morn*, 1947 does not signal 'One Morning', a common mistitling, but 'Golden Morn cling peaches', which together with the Marilyn-like blond were labelled 'These are the things we are fighting for'. Edouardo Paolozzi, whose first one-man show was held in the Mayor Gallery in January 1947, showed similar fascinations in his 'Scrapbook' series, 1947-1953, crucial precursors of British Pop Art.¹²⁹ Nigel Henderson, protégé of the Guggenheim Jeune Gallery before the war, maker of collages and later a documentary photographer of the East End found in Schwitters a kindred spirit. And the Mass Observation project, born from Surrealism in pre-war and war-time London, which had investigated food, housing and industry, dreams, astrology, sexual behaviour, was extraordinarily akin in its anthropological sketches of 'real' English life to the world in miniature of Schwitters' collages.¹³⁰ It anticipated the researches into the widest implications of the new mass culture conducted by the 'Independent Group' in the 1960s.¹³¹ It was one of their most brilliant members, Richard Hamilton, who devised the rescue of the Merzbarn.

Hamilton, a lecturer at Newcastle working on Marcel Duchamp, was approached by the Arts Council of Great Britain. In May 1965, together with three students he undertook an extensive survey of the Merzbarn in drawings, measurements, casts, colour samples, photographs, the matching of the old plaster colours and so on, prior to the engineering feat which winched the Merzbarn wall from its uneven and protected site, and moved it by lorry, 120 miles across England to its current place of rest, the Hatton Gallery, at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.¹³² It was presented to the University in 1965. Fred Brookes, a member of

Hamilton's team would record the move in the greatest of detail, prior to his important article in *Studio International* of May, 1969.¹³³

A mere five months later, a young Englishman, John Elderfield, published 'Kurt Schwitters' last Merzbarn' - replete with an axonometric reconstruction - in *Artforum*.¹³⁴ It is Elderfield's subsequent article of 1973, however, that one should consider as both harbinger of Schwitters' New York apotheosis in 1985, and the sacrifice of almost half his work upon the altar of American modernism. 'Private objects, the Sculptures of Kurt Schwitters' rehearses the troubling relationship between German Expressionism and the organic, the return to an 'Urbegriff', the primeval origin of forms in Expressionist architecture and the Merzbauten. 'Hence Schwitters' Expressionist background is of crucial importance to an understanding of his uses of objects... The development of Schwitters' art culminates in the decidedly rural emphasis of his late style', Elderfield declares. He explores the dialogue between Expressionism and Dada, the urban, sadistically autobiographical aspects of the Hanover Merzbau versus its status as 'a primitivist or organicist architecture of mood'. Yet the 1940s sculptures he illustrates are not contextualised by bombsite or the stones and shards of Lake District life; readings of sexual imagery are tentative. Finally the anxiety of orthodoxy prevails over Elderfield's initial illuminations 'Escaping the dogmatic and the urban, he retreated to the permissive and the primitive. In the urgency of his flight he left behind the discipline that was not dogmatic *but on which the quality of his art depended*' [my italics]. 'His respect for tradition - for the purity of art -' is subtextually translated as 'modernism' a categorisation used to separate 'what held personal meaning and what was artistic.' 'Finally, however, a turn to the primitive was for Schwitters a turn against the tradition that nurtured him. The collages and constructions have all the charge of these sculptures, but far more besides because they hold their place in the modernist tradition.'¹³⁵

Perhaps analyses nearer Schwitters' time were more perspicacious, in their anxiety not about 'quality' but precisely in their attempt to account for multiple practices as a new historical phenomenon. In his 1949 *Horizon* essay: 'Expressionism. Style and Periodicity', one year after Schwitters' death, J.P. Hodin distinguished the characteristics of Expressionist and what he called Formalist art, their periods of transition and succession. These contrasted to the disturbing implications of contemporary pluralism: 'Two essentially different styles, different in technique and in tradition, in the artist's approach to his object and his psychological incentives, characterise modern art. Such a phenomenon has hitherto not been known. It is the expression of our rootlessness, when seen from the angle of established values, or maybe of our conquest of noval realms of human experience, when contemplated from the angle of a world-wide culture based on a new science of man.'¹³⁶

Schwitters' double practice in exile, must be seen - and must be exhibited - as such, 'the expression of our rootlessness', the beginnings of a postmodern sensibility. Expressionism and

Formalism in co-existence: an expressionism based on empathy, 'Einfühlung', in both the Norway of Munch's fjords and snowscapes, and the green, romantic Lake District, counterpointed by a metropolitan modernism, in London and by correspondence, in which the post-cubist practices of collage in both objects and poetry became ever increasingly dialogues with past, present and emerging avant-gardes.

His was, therefore, a contrapuntal conception of the history of modernism in the twentieth century; the Pop art of the 1960s followed by the neo-expressionism of the 1980s have confirmed his anticipations.¹³⁷ And as for his own 'Geistesgeschichte', his was a musical shaping of a life which ended, as it should, with recapitulation, the essence of the Sonata form. 'It is gay; it is vital; it is Schwitters'.¹³⁸

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1. Unaware of the corpus of figurative paintings of the English period, excluded from the New York and London retrospectives, Jan van der Mark in his review 'The Modernist Schwitters' for *Art in America*, October, 1985 could nonetheless praise John Elderfield's 'rehabilitation of the late work'! Siegfried Gohr's *Kurt Schwitters. Die Späten Werke*, Ludwig Museum, Cologne, 1985, again ostensibly 'comprehensive', included two small Norwegian landscapes - no figurative work from the English period or photograph even of the Merzbarn.

2. See Benjamin Buchloch: 'Cold War Constructivism' on Gabo's self-repression and travesty of his past to fit modernist canons in Serge Guilbaut ed: *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris and Montreal, 1945-1964*, Cambridge, Massachussets and London, M.I.T. Press, 1990, pp 85-110.

3. Bertold Brecht: *Flüchtlingsgesprache*, Frankfurt, 1961, p 112.

4. 'Hannover ein Haufen Ruinen, Berlin zertrümmert. Und sie durfte nicht sagen wie sie fühlte', spoken by Böckchen, in Schwitters' play *Die Familiengruft*, 1946, in

Friedhelm Lach ed., Das Literarische Werke, Band 4, Cologne, Du Mont Buchverlag, 1977, p 317.

5. Kurt Schwitters: 'My art and my Life', 1944, in Friedhelm Lach ed., Das Literarische Werke, Band 5, Cologne, Du Mont Buchverlag, 1981, p 387.

6. Schwitters 'Release from Internment' application form claims 19 June 1940 as both date of arrival in England and date of internment.

7. 'Manx' belongs to the Gadhelic branch of Celtic.

8. See François Lafitte: *The Internment of Aliens*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Special, 1940 and Connery Chappell: *Island of Barbed Wire. The Story of World War Two Internment on the Isle of Man*, Robert Hale, 1984; statistics from Chappell, p 25, presumably an update on the 55,000 figure of refugees from Germany Austria and Czechoslovakia quoted in Peter and Leni Gillmann: *Collar the Lot! How Britain interned and expelled its wartime refugees*, London, Quartet books, 1980, p 24. Of 27,200 internees, 7,350 were deported and 650 drowned (p 225).

9. Letter to Henriette Schwitters, dated 18.8.1940, [P. Camp]: 'Ich höre Verträge über Philosophie, Kunst und Konzerte, und male viele interessante Köpfe' in Ernst Nündel ed., *Wir spielen bis uns die Tod abholt, Briefen aus Fünf Jahrzehnten*, Frankfurt/M. Verlag Ullstein, 1974, p.161. An artist friend's wife was sending paintings from London.

10. Compare the motif with the similar eye and steeple in (*Yri's hotel*), untitled ink drawing dated 16.8.39, reproduced in John Elderfield: 'Private objects, the sculptures of Kurt Schwitters' *Artforum*, vol. 12 no 1, September 1973 p. 49. Hence the cigarette carton date 5.9.40 could not possibly be an error for 5.9.46.

11. The cigarette packet (7.1 x 14.5 cm, Penrose collection) is reproduced as fig. 318, with the caption: 'Kurt Schwitters. Drawn on a cigarette carton at 21 Downshire Hill. 5.9.40' in Roland Penrose. *Scrapbook*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1981, p 131. Klaus Hinrichsen suggests that the pianist, Maryan Rawicz, who was released at an early date and given a list of London contacts by Schwitters, may have taken it down to London (in conversation July 18th, 1994). Penrose organised the International Surrealist exhibition in London, 1936, and was a serious collector, acquiring Paul Eluard's complete collection by 1938; he already owned Schwitters' *MZ129*, 1920 at this time.

12. The other signatories were the sculptors Ernst M. Blensdorf, Siegfried Charoux, Georg Ehrlich and Paul Hamann, together with the painters and graphic artists Hermann Fechenbach, Carl Felkel, Erich Kahn, Fritz Fraemer, Herbert Mankiewicz, Hermann Roessler, Fred Solomonski, Erich E. Stern, Fred Uhlmann, Hellmuth Weissenborn. See Klaus E. Hinrichsen 'Visual Art Behind the Wire', in David Cesarini and Tony Kushner eds., *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain*, London, Frank Cass, 1993, p 188.

13. See 'Application for release for internment...' dated 20.10.1940, with his statements:

`Aryan (not Jewish) religion: Protestant ... artist, painter, sculptor, writer, member of the PEN club... I exhibited in London in the New Burlington Galleries and in the gallery Guggenheim Jeune.' Ernst's address is given as Peveril Camp, Isle of Man. Professor Arthur Segal, Oxford (a Rumanian-born, Zurich dada artist) is given as Schwitters' representative. A typed form of the same date gives 5 additional British referees, including the P.E.N. club.

In June and July 1941, letters show Schwitters still optimistic about emigration to the U.S.A; by September he thought the situation `too uncertain' (Nündel, op. cit., p 169).

14. Letter to Helma Schwitters, `Christabend 24.12.1940' and fire report, 8.1.41, in Nündel. op. cit., 161-2.

15. Interview with Klaus Hinrichsen, June 6th, 1994.

16. Ernst Schwitters: `Some points on Kurt Schwitters', letter of 16 October, 1958, *Art News and Review*, vol X, 20?, October 1958, in riposte to E.L.T.Mesens article (below) where he stated that Schwitters was `happy as a lark' in Hutchinson Camp.

17. E.L.T. Mesens: `A Tribute to Kurt Schwitters', *Art News and Review*, vol X, 19, October 11th, 1958, p 6.

18. See Fred Uhlmann: *The Making of an Englishman*, London, Victor Gollancz, 1960, p 232. For Uhlmann's drawings of camp life see *Captivity* introduced by Raymond Mortimer, London, Jonathan Cape, 1946.

19. Richard Friedenthal: *Die Welt in der Nusschale*, Munich, Piper Verlag, 1956, preface.

20. Uhlmann, 1960, op. cit., p 238, The extracts concerning Schwitters in both Friedenthal and Uhlmann are reproduced in Gerhard Schaub, ed. and introduction: *Kurt Schwitters: Burger und Idiot. Beitrage zu Werk und Wirkung*, Berlin, Fannei and Walz, 1993, pp 197-207.

21. Uhlmann, *ibid.*, p 236. Schwitters apparently retired to a home-made kennel.

22. See `An Anna Blume', 1941, roneotyped, Klaus Hinrichsen collection, and `The Flat and Round Painter', roneotyped, reproduced in *Portfolio* no 8, Spring, 1964.

23. Uhlmann, op. cit. 1960, p 235.

24. Uhlmann's house in Downshire Hill, near Penrose and the Hampstead artists of the 1930s, had been frequented by the artist Dante Gabriel Rosetti and his circle, and subsequently owned by the painter Stanley Spencer. For the FDKB see the information leaflet for the `Free German League of Culture in Great Britain' in *Kunst im Exil in Grossbritannien, 1933-1945*, Neue Gesellschaft fur Bildenden Kunst, Berlin, 1986, p 76.

25. The Artists' Refugee Committee united representatives of the New English Art Club, the London Group, the A.I.A. and the Surrealists, represented by Roland

Penrose. See David Brown: 'Refugee Artists in Britain', *Art and Artists*, April 1984, no 211, p 7.

26. Klaus E. Hinrichsen: 'Visual Art behind the Wire', *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain*, op. cit., pp 192-3.

27. M. Philip Granville first alerted me to the young David Hockney's immediate reading of this work as 'I.Q.' when it was in his own collection. See Uhlmann, 1960, op. cit. p 232: 'All except the low I.Qs. agreed that it was better to be bombed in London than safe in Douglas.'

28. See Roger Cardinal: 'Collecting and collage-making: the Case of Kurt Schwitters' in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal eds.: *The Cultures of Collecting*, London, Reaktion Books, 1994, p 70.

29. See Martin Jay on how the 'utopian reconstitution of a divine *Ursprache*' entered 1920s debates in Germany, in this case concerning the 'Politics of Translation: Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin on the Buber-Rosenberg Bible' *Permanent Exiles, Essays on the Intellectual Emigration from Germany to America*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1985, p 198 ff.

30. Uhlmann, op. cit. 1960, p 134.

31. See M. Seyfert: *Im Niemansland: Deutsche Exilliteratur in britischer Internierung. Ein unbekanntes Kapital der Kulturgeschichte des Zweiten Weltkriegs*, Berlin, Das Arsenal, 1984, pp 74, 76, 91.

32. Peter de Mendelssohn: 'Schriftsteller ohne Sprache', (PEN conference, London, September 1941) , *Die Zeitung*, October 9th, 1941; and Henry Kriesel's memories, both as cited in Seyfert, op, cit., pp 69-70, 236.

33. See Edith Thomas, undated manuscript and formal testimony for proceedings regarding the Estate of Kurt Schwitters, 1958, Wantee archives. See also 'Wantee' Michael Erlhoff and Klaus Stadtmuller, *Kurt Schwitters Almanach* no 8, Hanover, Postskriptum Verlag, 1989, pp 175-180.

34. Schwitters: 'On the bench' quoted from the manuscript reproduced in Stefan Themerson: *Kurt Schwitters in England*, London, Gabberbochus Press, 1958, p 59, (for 'corrected' version see p 43).

35. See Robert Hewison: *Under Siege: Literary Life in London, 1939-1945*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977. John Lehmann's *Penguin New Writing* and Tambimuttu's *Poetry London* were illustrated by avant-garde artists such as Sutherland and Freud.

36. Compare the cheaply-produced series *War Pictures by British Artists: Air Raids*, 1941; *Blitz*, 1942; *War at Sea*, 1942; *RAF*, 1942; *Army*, 1942; Second series: *Women*, 1943,

Soldiers, 1943, *Production*, 1943, with the famous monographs by Penguin Modern Painters produced during the war and edited by Sir Kenneth Clark such as Geoffrey Grigson's *Henry Moore* or Edward Sackville-West's *Graham Sutherland*, both of 1943. For the Blitz see photographer Lee Miller's *Grim Glory, Pictures of Britain under Fire*, London, Conde Nast publications, 1941.

37. From the East End had come artists such as Jacob Kramer; the second generation produced Mark Gertler. Other immigrants such as Jacob Epstein and Henri Gaudier-Brezska chose to make London their artistic home before 1914. It was the East End of London which would be the focus for British fascism in the 1930s.

38. For a full account of emigré influence on the London cultural scene including photography and the press see *Kunst im Exil in Grossbritannien, 1933-1935*, op. cit., particularly Cordula Frohwein: 'Austellungsaktivitäten der Exilkünstler', pp 35-58.. A small English catalogue with an introduction by Monica Böhm-Duchen was produced for the modified show, *Art in Exile in Great Britain, 1933-45*, held at the Camden Arts Centre, London in July, 1986. See also conference papers on exile in England edited for *Third Text*, no 15, London, 1991.

39. German scholars such as Nikolaus Pevsner, George Zarnecki, Rudolf Wittkower, Johannes Wilde and Gombrich himself transformed the atmosphere of the Courtauld Institute of Art (founded in 1932) concurrently with the impact of Warburg scholarship. See Professor Michael Kitson: 'A New Professionalism' in *Art and Artists*, op. cit., pp 11-13.

40. See, however, Schwitters' opposition to the Communistic tone of a questionnaire sent to him by the 'Artists Section of the Free German League of Culture' in Nündel, op. cit., p 182, letter from Ambleside dated 1.9.45.

41. See *AIA 1942*, Artists' International Association, members' exhibition, R.B.A. Galleries, Suffolk Street, London, February 7th - 27th, 1942, no 224 (268 numbered exhibits, works by Eileen Agar, Paul Nash, John Tunnard etc.).

42. The friendship must have continued for several months, Nicholson presenting and dedicating the first collage 'Für Kurt Schwitters, 1943' the following year. See entry for Ben Nicholson, 1942 (*bus ticket*) (exhibited elsewhere as *Für Kurt Schwitters*), in Jeremy Lewison: *Kurt Schwitters*, Tate Gallery, London, no 77 p 223. Letters from Barbara Hepworth of 2 May 1942 and letter to E.H. Ramsden 15 May, 1943 witness the friendship and clash). See also entry for *Collage, 1942, Modern and Post War British and Irish Art*, Sotheby's Sale catalogue, for June 22nd, 1994, no 117, p 110.

43. Ernst and Ursula Goldfinger lived at 2, Willow Road in the centre of a modern block he had designed (now the property of the National Trust). See *Exhibition of Modern Paintings and Sculpture*, 2, Willow Road, on behalf of the 'Aid to Russia' fund of the National Council of Labour, June 4th, 1942 (33 artists mentioned, nos 53, 54, 67 & 68

by Schwitters). Lectures and discussions of Soviet music, architecture and cinema were held on June 11th, 16th and 18th. Ernst Schwitters archives.

44. See the fascinating reconstruction and analysis of the elements of *Musestunden*, 1942, and *Merz 42* (Like an old master), in Andrea El-Danasouri: 'Vermerztes altmeisterliches Zitat', *Kunststoff und Müll. Das Material bei Naum Gabo und Kurt Schwitters*, Munich, Scanig Verlag, 1992, pp 204 ff. See also the section 'Fragmente der Kunst', *Kurt Schwitters 1887-1948*, Sprengel Museum, Hanover, 1986, op. cit p 182 ff. Later 'old master' works such as *Der Heilige Nacht von Antonio Allegri, worked through by Kurt Schwitters*, 1947, use the same principle for works on a greater scale with more bravura.

45. See 'Englische Prosa', *Kurt Schwitters Das Literarische Werke*, Vol 3, Cologne, Du Mont Verlag, 1975, p 281 ff and the negative interpretations of Schwitters' London prose pieces by Friedhelm Lach: *Der Merzkünstler Kurt Schwitters*, DuMont Dokumente, 1971, p 155.

46. Letters to Helma Schwitters, dated 22.9.42 and to Edith Tschichold, dated 30.12. 42, in Nündel, op. cit., pp 172-3.

47. Letter to Edith Tschichold, 30.12. 1942 (from Westmoreland Road, Barnes) *ibid.* See also Edith Thomas, as note 32, together with 'Barnes, 39, Westmoreland Road'; Joyce Kahn: 'Schwitters in Barnes', (*Oasis* 6, pp 52-4) and 'Dada man lived here' in *Kurt Schwitters Almanach* no 8, op. cit., pp 34-40.

48. See Sarah Wilson: 'En Angleterre', *La Planète Affolée, Surréalisme, Dispersion et influences, 1938-1947*, Marseille, La Vieille Charité, 1986, pp 159-167; *Angels of Anarch and Machines for Making Clouds. Surrealism in Britian in the Thrities*, Leeds City Art Galleries, 1986; *The Story of the Artists International Association 1933-1953*, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1983.

49. Berlin-born Jack Bilbo [Hugo Baruch] founded the Modern Art Gallery in 1941. Schwitters was joined by Simon Schames, Schiele, Kokoschka and a mixture of 'modern master's in his first group show. See *Jack Bilbo. An autobiography*, London, the Modern Art Gallery, 1948, pp 259 and 264, where Schwitter's recital is described part of a group evening in Bilbo's first premises, 12, Baker Street, W1.

50. 'The World of Imagination' catalogue, sales to the Artists' General Benevolent Institution, January 19th-February 29th, 1944 including Bilbo, Max Ernst, Rita Kernn Larsen, Lazlo Moholy Nagy (two *Aluminium Pictures*) and Simon Schames.

51. See 'The P.E.N., London Centre, Conference 22nd - 26th August to commemorate the Tercentenary of the publication in 1644 of Milton's *Areopagitica*, 1944' (French Institute, Sourth Kensington) flysheet and conference programme, Schwitters archives, Hanover. Speakers included E.M.Forster, Arthur Koestler, Stephen Spender, Herbert Read, and Olaf Stapeldon (also lecturing at Langdale, see below).

52. *Calling Mr Smith* was produced by the Polish Ministry of Propaganda and Documentation. See Andrzej M. Borkowski: *Stefan and Franciszka Themerson - Avant-Garde Filmmakers*, M.A. Report, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1989, pp 51-4.
53. See letter in Schwitters archive, Hanover 'Liebe Herr, Libe Frau Rose...' dated 8.9.44, concerning visits to Dux: 'Ich habe dort richtig gute Freunde gefunden'; see also 'Dr Dux', *Kurt Schwitters Almanach* no 8, op. cit., pp 74-5.
54. See *Living Art in England*, London Bulletin nos 8 and 9, January-February 1939. Guggenheim opened the gallery Guggenheim Jeune in Cork Street in 1938. For the Museum of Modern Art project and a lively account of Read's place within the London intelligentsia during the war, see James King: *The Last Modern. A Life of Herbert Read*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1990, chapters 11 - 14.
55. See Merry Kerr Woodeson: *Jack Bilbo und seine "Modern Art Gallery". London 1941-1946', Kunst im Exil...* Berlin, 1986 op. cit., pp 50-1. Her statement that no works were bought contradicts Schwitters' letter to Marguerite Hagenbach, dated 27.2.45, which incidentally mentions a visit from Naum Gabo and Read to Schwitters, (Nündel, op. cit., p 179).
56. Herbert Read: 'Kurt Schwitters' preface to *Paintings and Sculptures by Kurt Schwitters*, December, 1944, held in the excellent company of *Masterpieces by Great Masters*, Modern Art Gallery, Haymarket.
57. Letter to Marguerite Hagenbach, 27.2.45., Nündel, op.cit., p 179.
58. The 'Opium Eater', Thomas de Quincey was first editor of the Westmoreland Gazette! Thanks to Philip Dalziel, Abbot Hall Art Gallery for much Lakeland lore.
59. See J.P.Hodin: 'Hilde Goldschmidt and the Lake District', *Hilde Goldschmidt, Paintings, pastels and monotypes, 1935-1971*, Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, 1973, unpaginated. Mr Dick Hall who owned the Langdale estate set up a drama studio, woodwork classes etc; the philosopher Olaf Stapledon and the dancer Rudolf von Laban became friends. See also George Eustance: 'The Langdale Group' and 'Schwitters in Langdale' typescripts, Wantee archives, for *Quarto*, Abbot Hall Art Gallery Quarterly Bulletin, July 1st, 1988.
60. See Christopher Frayling: 'The Potato-Loft University', *Designer*, May-June, 1987, pp 33-4. Schwitters' doctor, Dr Johnston, looked after many of the students.
61. Friedhelm Lach in *Das Literarische Werke*, Band 1, Cologne, Verlag M. Du Mont Schauberg, 1973, p 150-1 indicates the first English translations of 1922 and 1927, gives an English version 'Anna Blossom has Wheels' dated '1942'. His variant, 'To Eve Blossom', p 294 is cited as the translation by Ernst and Philip and Ursula Grandville for their recording made in London in September 1958. It differs significantly from 'Eve Blossom has Wheels' as printed in Stefan Themersen's *Kurt Schwitters in England 1940-*

1948, London, Gabberbochus Press, 1958, p 25 (not in Lach). In Ernst Nündel's edition of the letters, op. cit., p 193, 'Wantee - Anna Blume - Eve Blossom has wheels - is printed at the end of a letter to Christoph Spengeman dated 3.4.46, which might argue for a later dating.

62. Perhaps Ernst's most precious last memory of Schwitters before his fatal illness, recalled in a tender Christmas letter of December 19th, 1947, Wantee archives.

63. Y.M.C.A. (*Official Flag*), commemorates the flag day held in aid of the the Ambleside Young Mens' Christian Association in 1947 (Kendal Art Gallery).

64. Of the 4,000 abstract works approximately 2,500 remain, while 2,000 remain of the 4,000 naturalistic works and 30 of the 400 sculptures according to Ernst Schwitters' estimate cited in John Elderfield: *Kurt Schwitters*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 1985, p 393, note 17..

65. See Harry Pierce: 'Kurt Schwitters', *Prospects*, University of Lancaster, October 1965, p 16. According to Hilda Goldschmidt Schwitters 'charged `5 guineas for a head, 10 to the breast and if the hands come in, 15 guineas,' quoted in Richard Caseby: 'Free and Happy in Lakeland Exile', unsourced and undated newspaper cutting (*Westmoreland Gazette?*), Wantee archives.

66. Letter to Raoul Hausmann, June 27th, 1946, quoted in Jasia Reichardt ed.: *Pin. Kurt Schwitters, Raoul Hausmann and the story of Pin*, London, Gabberbochus Press, 1962, p 5.

67. The Armit Trust Library founded in 1912 by the Victorian scholar Mary Armit, incorporated the Ambleside Book Club and the Ambleside Ruskin Society, and became a depository for antiquarian books, Lakeland literature and art. Schwitters was possibly too poor to join but Dr Johnston was highly active. See Mark Thomas: 'Learned Lakelanders. The Armit Trust Library, Ambleside', *Country Life*, November 6th, 1986, pp 1424-1425, and Sidney T. Chapman: 'Schwitters' portrait - link in Art history', *The Westmoreland Gazette*, July 10th, 1987. Dr Johnston (d.1949) inherited not only his practice from Dr George Parsons of Hawkshead, Ruskin's physician, but papers relating to the Ruskin-Whistler libel trial, provoked by Ruskin's notorious accusation that Whistler had 'flung a pot of paint in the public's face' - a trope used by Camille Mauclair to condemn the fauvist Salon d'Automne of 1905.

68. See Stefan Themerson: 'Kurt Schwitters on a time-chart', *Typografica* 16, London, December 1967, p

69. The letter to Spengeman dated 'Monday 27.5.46' is translated by Jean-François Poirier in Jean Christophe Bailly: *Kurt Schwitters*, Paris, Hazan, 1993, p 163-4.

70. Press cuttings such as 'King of Norway inspects Balham', *Balham News*, 2.7.43 and 'The Mountain Wait' by Theodore Broch, Mayor of Narvik, Norway', on the back of the portrait (compare 'Norwegian girls play mud football' with other cuttings pasted on the back of the *Portrait of Mrs Crossley*, Wantee collection) are irresistibly comic. Ernst

Schwitters sent long recollections of Norway holidays by letter to cheer Schwitters (Sept. 21st, 1947, Wantee archives). His photographs were published as *This Norway*, with a text by Roi B. Nyquist, London, Hutchison and co., 1947.

71. Letter from Schwitters to Hausmann, mid-1946, in *Pin*, op. cit., p 15.

72. For a brief treatment see also 'Landschaft und Porträt', *Kurt Schwitters, 1887-1948*, Sprengel Museum, Hanover, p 188 ff (very little concerned with the English period).

73. Ernst Schwitters: 'Some points on Kurt Schwitters', *Art News and Review*, op. cit., 1958.

74. See letter from Klaus Hinrichsen, to a Mrs Kassabian at Phillips (Wantee archives): 'Schwitters insisted on signing and dating with Vermilion paint which in 1945 was unobtainable in the Lake District'.

75. For the background to this tradition see Brian Keith-Smith ed.: *German Expressionism in the United Kingdom and Ireland*, University of Bristol, 1986.

76. J.P. Hodin, 'Goethe's Succession' *Horizon*, London, April 1949, reproduced in J. P. Hodin: *The Dilemma of being Modern. Essays in Art and Literature*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956, p 158, together with contemporary articles on Munch, Kokoschka and Expressionism.

77. From a letter from Schwitters to Hausmann, manuscript fragment reproduced in *Pin*, p 7.

78. William Feaver: 'Alien at Ambleside', *The Sunday Times Magazine*, August 19th, 1974, p 32 (from interview with Hilde Goldschmidt).

79. Harry Pierce: 'Kurt Schwitters', *Prospects*, op. cit., p 18, with mention of Leban's visit and proposal. 'In addition to his writing he was very fond of music and wrote a Scherzo' suggests a misunderstanding of the status of the poem on Pierce's part. Was this 'Scherzo' in fact 'Ribble Bobble Pimlico'? Surely not the short 'Neue Sonate', *Das Literarische Werke*, Band 1, p 272, reproduced (in a curiously variant form) by Marc Dachy in 'L'Ursonate de Kurt Schwitters', *Poesure et Peintrie*, Marseilles, La Vieille Charité, 1992, pp 151, 153 ?

80. 'Opinion', 1946, reproduced in Friedhelm Lach ed., *Kurt Schwitters Das Literarische Werke*, Band 1, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, Cologne, 1973, p 270. Nelly = Nelly van Doesburg.

81. See Ribble Bobble Pimlico / Andrew Invergowrie', 1946, in *Kurt Schwitters Das Literarische Werke*, Band 1, *ibid.*, pp 256-266. 'Ribble' was local river and northern bus company. 'Pimlico' was surely a word in Schwitters' mind because of the Tate Gallery's location. See Sir John Rothenstein: *Brave Day, Hideous Night. Autobiography, 1939-1968*, London, Hamish Hamilton 1966, for the Tate's reopening exhibitions, in

April 1946 (Braque, Rouault, Cézanne's watercolours, Modern English painting, French paintings from Courbet to Seurat and a selection of Turners) pp 175-6.

82. Lazlo Moholy-Nagy sent him Hausmann's address. See *Pin*, op. cit., p 3.

83. *Pin*, *ibid.*, was constituted by Jasia Reichardt from copies of correspondence between Hausmann and Schwitters sent to her by Hausmann in English, not entirely corresponding with fuller versions Schwitters' letters to Hausmann published in German translation in Nündel, op. cit.

84. 'I think that you, like me are in a state that you can no longer speak german properly or any other language for that matter' Schwitters to Hausmann, dated 25.7.46, quoted in *Pin*, op. cit., p 6.

85. See Hausmann's 'B.T.B.', 'telebrain' interview with the 'two dozen french and foreign upstarts [who] have founded the "dictature lettriste" in Paris', his 'Phonetic Declaration' and 'Sonorité lettrique française' and Schwitter's 'Key to Reading Sound Poems' in *Pin*, op. cit, pp 48, 53, 54, 52.

86. A collector showed me typed versions of letter from Hausmann to Isou dated 17 and 18 August, 1946 and his poem 'Oiseautal' of July 31st, 1946 which possibly accompanied one of the letters. The original manuscripts were apparently destroyed. Domela owned the records, "An Anna Blume" (disc no 221) and "i-sonate mit Urlauten" (disc no 222). Schwitters was aware that Domela played them occasionally to visitors - see letter to Domela dated 24.7.46 in Nündel, op. cit.

87. Letter to Hausmann, August 15th, 1946, cited in *Pin*, p 8.

88. Letter from Schwitters to Hjalmar Gabrielson, Gotheborg, March 29th, 1947, cited in *Pin*, op. cit., p 17, (Nündel, op. cit., p 267).

89. Hausmann: 'Cauchemar', Schwitters : 'The real disuda of the Nightmare' (facsimile of manuscript) reproduced in *Pin*, *ibid.*, pp 41 and 50.

90. See letters to Hausmann and Gabrielson, March 29th, 1947, in *Pin*, op. cit., pp 12-17, Nündel, op. cit., pp 265-7..

91. Raoul Hausmann: 'fmsbwtozau' and 'Cauchemar', 1938-46; Schwitters: 'Gedichte' *De Stijl*, 1927, 'Skerzo'(sic) *Merz*, 1931, 'Fury of Sneezing' 1946, Superchanson d'oiseau, illustrated with orange 'Merz'print by Hausmann, in Iliazd: *Poesie des mots inconnus*, Paris, Le Degré 41, 1949, In the same year *K*, *Revue de la poésie*, no 3, 'De L'Humeur à la Terreur', Paris, April 1949, contained a Schwitters dossier with texts by Arp, Carola Giedion's article, Schwitters' 'La loterie du jardin zoologique', 'Anna Mafleur' 'Automne' and 'Scherzo 1', pp 33-42.

92. Ian Mackay: 'Diary', *News Chronicle*, March 6th, 1947, Schwitters' archive, Hanover, and list of works in Schwitters writing: 'In Mesens Gallery 10.3.47' on blue paper, 1-5

and 6 a) b) c), plus letter from Robert Melville of May 6th, 1947 about prices, Wantee archives.

93. E.L.T. Mesens, preface to catalogue, *Kurt Schwitters, Merzbilder, Reliefs, Constructions, Sculpture*, London Gallery, 1950.

94. The programme for the two evenings, the first mainly in English (but with Eve Blossom following Anna Blume) the second mainly in German is reproduced in Stefan Themerson: *Kurt Schwitters in England*, op. cit., p 28.

95. Confirmed by Jacques Brunius - compare also Brunius's own hyperrealist, 'commodity-conscious' collages of 1942.

96. See 'A fancy' for 'poeting and paintry' and 'Present Inter Noumenal', reproduced in *Pin*, op, cit, pp 23, 25.

97. For Langdale during the war and the conversion of *Cylinders* se W.R. Mitchell: 'Jack Cook's Lakeland', *Cumbria*, July, 1987 pp 227-229. Cook lived and worked as a landscape Gardener with Pierce for 10 years and helped with the Merzbarn.

98. See letter to Katherine Dreier dated 31.12.46 (Nündel, op. cit., p 258) where Schwitters declares he would agree to visit New York only after the essential planned trip to Hanover. He proposes a fourteen day visit to New York, including recitals in English of poems and the 'Ursonate'.

99. Ibid., Despite declaring the genius of Herbert Read here, he writes that Gabo is the only *artist* in England; far behind come Ben Nicholson or Henry Moore; English writers have lost the spirit of Shakespeare. Schwitters states he can only live by portrait painting and would give up if he could make [ie live from making] real art.

100. See letter to Raoul Hausmann, written from Schwitters' holiday residence , Broadstairs, Kent, dated 16.2.47. Schwitters says he will exhibit a sculpture, '24 MZ' and eight paintings (presumably contemporary abstracts) in Mesens' show. Wantee archives [? CH]

101. Letter from the Museum's Assistant Secretary, June 16th, 1947: see related correspondence, Museum of Modern Art archives, New York.

102. William Feaver, op. cit., p 33. While Nicholas Wadley and other sources say that Pierc saw a portrait displayed in Ambleside, and enquired about the artist prior to commissioning his own portrait, Feaver writes here that Hilda Goldschmidt (whom he interviewed) introduced Schwitters to Harry Pierce.

103. Fred Brookes: 'Schwitter's Merzbarn', *Studio International*, vol 177, no 911, May, 1969, p 224, gives this date, implying that Schwitters would not have been able to afford to begin hitherto.

104. Undated contract between Pierce and Schwitters, Wantee archives. See letter to Otto Ralfs, dated 3.7.47, in Nündel, op. cit., p 283, saying that the M.O.M.A. grant is 'zur Vollendung des Merzbaues in Oslo gegeben'. An unsigned, undated copy of the contract between Pierce and Schwitters, exists in the Wantee archives. An anxious note from Schwitters to the M.O.M.A. of which page 2 only, undated, remains in the Tate Gallery archives, asks them to confirm that the change of plan to working on the Merzbarn with the money is acceptable. (K.S. 7212.1 23060): 'I am no more very strong. The condition is that I am the proprietor of my work for the 50 years, and after that time it belongs to the national trust (or Mr Pearce [sic]). It is a good idea to give it to the national trust. I work so, that it fits in the ideas also of Mr Pierce. / *Now I want you to state me, that your scholarship is to help me for that purpose.*' Schwitters thus worked on the Merzbarn between late July and December 1947 only.

105. Fred Brookes: 'Schwitters in Exile. The Rural art of Kurt Schwitters, 1937-1938', B.A. dissertation by Fred Brookes for the Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art, University of Newcastle on Tyne, 1967, p 26, an extremely fresh account, based on Brooke's work with the Merzbarn and interviews with Edith Thomas, Harry Pierce and Jack Cook.

106. Letter in English to Ludwig Hilbersheimer, dated 25.10. 47, (Wantee archives) and Nündel., op. cit., p 292.

107. Fred Brookes, 1967, op. cit., Part II, p 43, note 8.

108. Harry Pierce to Daily Telegraph reporter: 'Mural removed in one piece from off barn' *Daily Telegraph*, September 23rd, 1965. This quotes Pierce as having rejected an offer of £10,000 from a commercial gallery in London.

109. See Dorothea Dietrich's admirably theoretical study *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters. Tradition and Innovation*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p 178, on the significance of central, columnar monuments as signs of triumph over dead enemies.

110. William Feaver, op. cit., p 33 (interview with Hilde Goldschmidt). See also Fred Brookes, manuscript, 1967, op. cit., nnote 9, on the layout as explained by Mr Pierce and Mr Cook.

111. See the two plasters illustrated as 'Plaster and bamboo sculptures from Mr Pierce's collection, in *Kurt Schwitters in the Lake District*, Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, 1964, which reappeared in *Kurt Schwitters. Die Spaten Werke*, Museum Ludwig, 1985, nos 98, 99.

112. See Kate T. Steinitz: *Kurt Schwitters: A Portrait from Life*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968, p 109. When she reproached Schwitters for 'burning the candle at both ends' he had replied 'No, I'm not an old fashioned candle, I'm an electric bulb burning on and on.'

113. 'Die Familiengruft', *Kurt Schwitters, Das Literarische Werke*, Band 4, DuMont

Buchverlag, Cologne, 1977, pp 308-320, 368-370. The play refers to the destruction of Germany, Hitler's death and the Nuremberg trials. Nora, a parody of his late German mother-in-law, resolves to replace God with Hitler, dispatching the deity to a concentration camp, and preferring to wait 1000 or 2000 years for the return of another Hitler.

114. Handwritten note dated 15.7.47., the cause of much contention; see Thomas V. Schwitters, original correspondence, Wantee archives.

115. Carola Giedion-Welcker `Kurt Schwitters', *Die Weltwoche*, Zurich, August 15th, 1947. The collage exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, September 21st - December 6th, 1947 contained 19 works by Schwitters including eight works from 1946-7, lent by the Estate of Kurt Schwitters.

116. Letter from Ernst to Schwitters and Wantee, September 21st , 1947, Wantee archives.

117. Letter from Ernst to Schwitters and Wantee, November 23rd, 1947, subsequently describing the beauty of the Lysaker Merzbau: `So clear and fine in line! I do wish you would finish it once!!!', Wantee archives.

118. Letter from Ernst to Wantee, December 27th, 1947, Wantee archives.

119. See letter from Sean Rainbird to Edith Thomas, June 27th, 1988, Wantee archives.

120. Letter from Kate Steinitz to Wantee, March 24th, 1948, Wantee archives.

121. *Kurt Schwitters*, The Pinacotheca, New York, January 19th- February 1948, texts by Kate Steinitz, Naum Gabo and Charmion Wiegand. Fifteen of the twenty six works exhibited were from 1946-7.

122. Undated letter (early 1948) from Wantee to `Eve and Ernst' from Old Mill House, West Drayton, Middlesex, Wantee archives.

123. Letter from Wantee to Ernst Schwitters, February 1st, 1948, Wantee archives: Of Pierce: `His decision never-the-less has shaken my faith in him. After all, the work which he has destroyed was a symbol of Jumbo's last hard struggle and energy...'

124. Letter from Ernst Schwitters to Wantee, February 12th, 1948, Wantee archives.

125. Letter from Ernst Schwitters to Wantee, dated February 12th, 1949, in which he refused to collaborate on `the printed booklet, proposed to be printed by Mr Themesson (sic) ' in the light of a proposal he had received for an illustrated biography from Wittenborn. Inc., New York. Wantee archives.

126. `Pictures taken from Barn 1959' "A", list, Wantee archives. Philip Granville got to know Schwitters's poetry while working for the British forces in Hanover in 1945; he

discovered the art subsequently and independently in London. Ernst Schwitters helped with the exhibition - a complete surprise for Wantee. See *Kurt Schwitters*, Lords Gallery, October-November, 1958, preface by Alan Bowness; coincident with the publication of Stefan Themersen's *Kurt Schwitters in England*, by the Gabberbochus press.

127. Kurt Schwitters. 1887 - 1948. The Merzbau at Langdale', Typscript dated 13.5.63, Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal.

128. *Kurt Schwitters in the Lake District*, Abbot Hall Art Gallery, October 24th - November 29th, 1964; Mary E. Burkett: *Kurt Schwitters, Creator of Merz*, Abbot Hall Art Gallery, 1979; *Kurt Schwitters in England*, Abbot Hall Art Gallery, 1982; 'Kurt Schwitters in Britain, 1940-1948', centenary exhibition organised by the Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield, and Abbot Hall Art Gallery Kendal, featuring Schwitters' Manx and British work, 1987, (no catalogue).

129. Nigel Henderson's collages (incorporating Players Navy Cut cigarette packets) shown at Guggenheim Jeune in 1938 where Schwitters also had work were purportedly also influenced by Laurence Vail. See Dr Chris Murray: *Heads Eye Wyn*, Norwich School of Art Gallery, 1982, and for Paolozzi the famous Scrapbooks of 1947-53 (Victoria and Albert Museum).

130. See *The Mass Observation archive - a guide for researchers*, compiled by Dorothy Sheridan and Colin Dixon. The Tom Harrison Mass Observation archives, University of Sussex Library, 1985.

131. *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, the M.I.T. Press, 1990 admirably contextualises the situation.

132. Conversation with Richard Hamilton, October 12th, 1993. The sculpture was received under the 1% provision for the new extension. Mark Lancaster, Fred Brookes and others were involved in the student survey of Easter 1965. The transportation took place after three months of preparation and restoration by Fred Brookes and David Wise, in October 1965, but the wall had to dry out, the Hatton Gallery prepared, and Hamilton had left prior to the Merzbarn's reconstruction and installation in 1966.

133. Grants from the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Rothley Trust are mentioned in 'The Elterwater Merz construction by Kurt Schwitter', Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, undated typescript. See Fred Brookes: 'Moving the Merzbarn', typescript, Department of Fine Art, Newcastle University, November 30th, 1966, reproduced as 'Moving the Merzbarn', *Quarto*, Abbot Hall Art Gallery Quarterly Bulletin, vol. V no 1, April 1967; and the detailed technical reports on moving, and necessary restoration in 'Schwitters's Merzbarn' *Studio International*, 1969, op. cit. Lucia Moholy-Nagy's article, 'Der Dritte Merzbau von Kurt Schwitters', *Werk Chronik* 3, March, 1966, pp 110-112 was the first German-language publication.

134. John Elderfield: 'Kurt Schwitters' last Merzbarn', *Artforum*, Vol., 8, no. 2., October,

1969, pp 56-65. Elderfield had submitted a thesis on Schwitters to the Fine Art Department, University of Leeds , and his doctorate on Schwitters' collage to the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. He was currently a lecturer at Winchester school of Art, Hampshire, England.

135. John Elderfield: 'Private Objects. The Sculpture of Kurt Schwitters', *Artforum*, vol.12, no 1, September 1973, pp 256-261.

136. J.P. Hodin: 'Expressionism : Style and Periodicity. The Psychological background of Expressionism', i London, January, 1949, reproduced in J.P. Hodin : *The Dilemma of being modern*, op. cit., p 59. See Dorothea Dietrich op. cit., p 61 ff stating the artist's 'ongoing conception of oppositional pairings in art.'

137. See Kate T. Steinitz: 'Kurt Schwitters and America' Chapter 16 in *Kurt Schwitters: A Portrait from Life*, op. cit., pp110-121 and Gillian Bailey: *The impact of Kurt Schwitters in England, France and America*, B.A. report, Courtauld Institute of Art, December 1988.

138. Harry Pierce: *The Abstract Art of Kurt Schwitters*, 'The Story of the Merzbarn', brochure, Cylinders Farm, Elterwater, Ambleside, May, 1948.