

“Meine Kunst kriegt hier zu fressen”

The influence of the First World War on German art and film



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Preface

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who supported me during the writing of my thesis. First of all, the staff of the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent deserves a special mention for their endless enthusiasm during my internship, with which they inspired my fascination for the First World War. Furthermore, I want to thank my supervisor, Sandra Kisters, for her great support during all stages of research and writing, for showing great interest in the subject matter and for encouraging my unconventional approach. A thank-you also goes out to Joes Segal for being second reader.

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Introduction

“Wieviele und schreckliche Verstümmelungen mag dieser grausame Krieg unsrer zukünftigen Kultur gebracht haben? Wie mancher junge Geist mag gemordet sein, den wir nicht kannten und der unsre Zukunft in sich trug.” [...] “Aber sein Werk ist abgebrochen, trostlos, ohne Wiederkehr. Der gierige Krieg ist um einem Heldentod reicher, aber die deutsche Kunst um einen Helden ärmer geworden.”

Franz Marc, Hagéville, 25. X. 14.¹

¹ Macke, August, Franz Marc, *Briefwechsel: August Macke - Franz Marc*, Cologne 1964, pp. 196-197.

² Vriesen, Gustav, *August Macke*, Stuttgart 1953, pp. 171-172.

Already in the first months of the First World War, most likely on 26 September 1914, German painter August Macke was killed in battle in Northern France.² His longtime friend Franz Marc commemorates him in a text in which he describes the influence the death of Macke will have on the future development of painting in Germany, as well as the way the war is crippling culture in general. According to Marc, young minds or spirits are murdered in the war, in a way that was not expected.

Although at first the war was received with optimism and even enthusiasm, of the numerous soldiers, including artists, that did return from the war, many were in one way or another broken in their spirits. Both during and after the war the psychological problems of soldiers formed a subject of heavy debate; culminating in the trial of soldier Walter Kauders against professor in psychiatry Dr. Julius Wagner-Jauregg, for his use of extreme methods in treating soldiers who sustained shell shock.³ From this trial it becomes clear in which way war neurosis had become a part of society and in which way the opinions on this subject were divided. Some were convinced shell shock had a physical cause, while others, including Dr. Wagner-Jauregg, considered it to have a mental cause and that believed shell shock was a product of the weak-minded or even faked by those wishing to avoid military service. The latter concluded that by the use of torturing methods these men could be scared back into war. And, although

³ Kaes, A., *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War*, Princeton/Oxford 2009, pp. 46-48.

Dr. Wagner-Jauregg was cleared of all charges, the fact remains that in Germany, which had two million soldiers killed and four million return disabled, the traumatic experiences of the war were omnipresent.

Film theoretical studies on the subject of Weimar cinema show great interest in the influence of trauma and war neurosis on expressionist filmmakers shortly after the First World War. During the hundred years since the start of the war, several publications have appeared which connect the consequences of the war to the development and production of mass entertainment and high art. Film theorist and cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer is the first to relate the psychological development of the German nation to the production of expressionistic film in his film theoretical publication *From Caligari to Hitler: a psychological history of the German film*, from 1947.⁴ However, he rarely discusses the personal issues that may have interested filmmakers, for he is more concerned about general psychological developments which, in the end, have led to the rise of National Socialism. The more recent publication of film historian Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (2009), discusses the depiction of personal trauma in German cinema after the First World War in great detail, but does this only within the film theoretical framework.⁵ Therefore, in his publication, the connection with

artistic development in general is almost constantly ignored, despite the fact that visual artists were vital to the production of expressionist films, since the design of the visual aspects (such as sets and lettering) was almost always done by artists outside of the cinematographic field, such as painters or architects. In Kaes' opinion, themes of mass death, madness and the terrors of modern urbanization, present in these films, were first and foremost a result of personal trauma and much less the expression of a cultural development in general. Looking at these publications from an art historical perspective, the missing connection with artistic development provides a different situation. If we examine the development of expressionistic art before the war, it seems that topics of death, destruction and decay were already existent, as a result of philosophical concerns about the meaninglessness of modern life. Nevertheless, a change of direction in artistic style and subject matter can also be seen in the works of the visual artists and filmmakers who participated in the war. Therefore, I consider it vital to investigate to what extent personal war experience influenced the work of expressionist visual artists and filmmakers, in order to be able to determine how the First World War has influenced the artistic production of the period during and after the war.

In this thesis it is my aim to examine this missing link between the two disciplines. In reference to the influence the First World War had on visual

⁴ Kracauer, S., *From Caligari to Hitler: a psychological history of the German film*, Princeton 2004 (second revised edition) (1947).

⁵ Kaes 2009 (see note 3).

artists and filmmakers in the years immediately after the war, I consider, as my main question, which connections, related to mutual war experiences, can be detected between the expressionist art and film of that period? This question introduces sub-problems that have to be solved in order to come to a satisfying answer. In general, I will examine what the influence of the First World War has been on the art scene. Since this would be an extensive subject to treat completely, I will only shortly pay attention to the developments throughout Europe and will mainly focus on the German art scene, and the expressionist art scene in specific. Since I examine both art and film, I have to determine in which ways these two can be compared and what the difficulties are in doing so. The technical qualities of the medium differ and therefore, the possibilities of the medium are different. Still, by looking at the similarities several aspects remain comparable. In this matter it is also important to consider the difference in production and the intended public of the works. Moreover, since I examine the expressionist movements in both art and film, in order to make a sensible comparison I need to determine if the term ‘expressionism’ has the same connotations for both and if not, how this will affect my research.

As early as 1926, film critic Rudolf Kurtz writes in his publication on expressionism and film about the problematic nature of the term. According to him, “Die Psychologen, Ästhetiker, Historiker des Begriffs ergehen sich mehr in stimmungsvollen Beschreibungen als in nüchternen Definitionen.”⁶ Furthermore, he states that the main aspect that unites the artists is their opposition against Impressionism. In his (posthumous) publication *Expressionism: Art and Idea* from 1987, art historian Donald E. Gordon notes that the term expressionism does not signify a well-defined group or movement, but instead is used as an indication for visual artists from various, mostly German-speaking, countries, working in different styles and under different conditions, and from several ideological perspectives.⁷ For instance, during the first years of expressionism, before the First World War, artists were convinced that their experiments with art could bring about moral change and could realize their utopian visions.⁸ After the war, these moral ambitions remained, but the artists’ style changed with the aggression of current events. Moreover, other artists worked in similar styles, but renounced the ideology of other artists after the war. With this in mind, it would be overly ambitious – and naïve – to attempt to redefine this label. Nevertheless, I will argue that it is, for this purpose, a usable term for it is still widely used in publications on my

⁶ Kurtz, R., *Expressionismus und Film*, Berlin 1926 (edition Zurich 2011² (2007)), p. 9.

⁷ Gordon, Donald E., *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, New Haven/London 1987, pp. xv-xvii.

⁸ Washton Long, R.-C., *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the rise of National Socialism*, Berkeley 1993, p. xxi.

intended subject matter. The indistinctness of the term means that I will have to clarify the specific style or ideology I refer to. Moreover, from these countless other publications and exhibitions it is possible to create a shortlist of visual artists that can be seen as expressionist, within this certain period.

Throughout my research I also discuss several specific sub-problems. Firstly, what kind of symbols or themes represent war experience or trauma, or are specifically related to the period? Some film theoretical publications interpret recurrent symbolism in expressionist films from an almost psychoanalytical perspective, however, in current art historical research this no longer seems to be an acceptable method. Therefore, to avoid the interpretation of images to come from just a psychoanalytical point of view, I look at autobiographical material (i.e. letters, diaries, autobiographies etc.) of specific visual artists and filmmakers to detect a more direct and conscious influence of (war) experiences on the artist's life and art. Combined with the previously mentioned interpretations this may provide a more workable perspective. However, when using this type of sources it has to be kept in mind that they may provide an edited or subjective view of events. The author may want to present a certain image of himself to the recipient, in the case of letter writing, or to a general audience, when the writing is intended to be published. In all cases I will consider these sources in the light of its historical context. Secondly, from this perspective and based on a selection of films and artworks, what is the visual and thematic relationships between the two mediums? And, in the

case of the visual artists, can the development of the style and subject matter of their art be related to the experience of war? In the case of filmmaking this is much more difficult to do, since it underwent great technical and production related changes during the war and therefore could not develop into a more creative medium until after the war. Nevertheless, I will study the films in the context of contemporary film and art production to see what the connections with war experience could be.

In the first chapter, *The idea of expressionism in art and film*, I will discuss the use of the term 'expressionism' and I will provide the theoretical framework on which this thesis will depend. First, I will discuss the ideological background on which German expressionism was based and the way in which this affected the visual artists before, during and after the First World War. Moreover, since expressionist filmmaking is of great importance to this research, it is vital to consider the ideas on the meaning of 'expressionism' in film and the development thereof, by examining the most important publications within film theory, including the above mentioned publications of Kurtz, Kracauer and Kaes. Since expressionism in film originated at a different time than in arts, I will also consider the conditions that were necessary for this development. Finally, since the examination of the main subject is reliant on the interaction between social circumstances and art, the assumption has to be made that historical and personal events had a direct influence on the development of art; this makes it necessary to consider social art historical theory of the twentieth

century. From this theory I take that the perception, reception and acceptance of the art by the public is also influenced by social circumstances.

In chapter two, *The First World War in art and film*, I will discuss the general development of the depiction of war in art, the state of art during the First World War and the participation of specific artists and filmmakers in the First World War. In my selection of artists I choose to examine the life and work of German artists who were involved with expressionism both before and after the war and who also participated in the war itself. This still leaves a great number of artists, since dozens of Germany's most influential artists were in military service in one way or another: drafted or voluntarily, as a medic or at the battlefield, or not even at the front.⁹ My selection is based on the quality and availability of (auto)biographical documents: as visual artists I will discuss Max Beckmann, Otto Dix and Georg Grosz, as filmmakers Fritz Lang and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. In doing so, I not only discuss their biographical information, but also their art in which they depicted the war in a direct and figurative manner. It has to be noted that the nature of these sources are quite different. For example, the publication of Beckmann's letters uses the original, unedited text, whereas the publication that includes some fragments of letters by Dix uses an English translation and gives just a small selection. In the case of Grosz, only a Dutch translation of his autobiography was available, but to

improve the readability of the text I chose to translate my citations to English. Of the three main visual artists, print series are included as an appendix, since they have to be considered together. Although Dix's series *Der Krieg*, consisting of fifty etchings, proved to be too extensive to be included as a whole, the selection that is included gives a comprehensive view of the complete collection.

In the third chapter, *Madness, morbidity and metropolis*, I examine the similarities between the post-war artworks of Dix, Grosz and Beckmann, in relation to their contemporary artistic context, as well as in relation to films from Lang (*Der Müde Tod*, 1921, and *Metropolis*, 1927) and Murnau (*Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens*, 1922). I will also pay attention to two other films that have proved to be essential in this context: Robert Reinert's *Nerven* (1919), which is considered to be the first expressionist film, and Karl Grune's *Die Straße* (1923), for which expressionist painter Ludwig Meidner created set designs.

In short, with this thesis, I hope to create new insight into the connections between the visual arts and film, by paying attention to a period in which the visual arts and film could not remain autonomous from forceful social and historical events and therewith were both affected by similar experiences.

⁹ Gordon 1987 (see note 7), p. 153.

Chapter one: the idea of expressionism in art and film

Defining expressionism

“Der expressionistische Film erscheint nicht beziehungslos in Deutschland, als leerer Zufall. Vielmehr bedurfte es einer bestimmten Disposition der Zeit, um die Anregungen auf fruchtbarem Boden fallen zu lassen.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Kurtz 1926 (see note 6), p. 61.

¹¹ In this respect, Donald E. Gordon’s *Expressionism: Art and Idea* is an important source. In his publication he considers expressionism from different perspectives,

German film critic Rudolf Kurtz wrote in his publication of *Expressionismus und Film* (1926) that expressionist film is a manifestation of the mindset of the times, which could only be created under the right circumstances. For film, the time was right in 1919, but the visual arts had already known expressionism for at least a decade.

To find out why expressionism developed in both art and film, but at different moments, it is important to consider the intellectual and artistic climate in Germany around the turn of the twentieth century.¹¹ By doing so, expressionism can be seen as part of a movement that aimed at the renewal or even rejection of the principles of an older generation. At the turn of the century, life had been determined by a combination of principles of positivist science, capitalism and conservative views on social behavior, which resulted in, according to its opponents, decadence, materialism and the general decline of society. Moreover, recent scientific developments had raised questions about the meaning of human existence, resulting in an overall sense of insignificance, pessimism and nihilism. The younger generation, that would later form the expressionist movement, sought out intellectual support which would underwrite their moral obligations against this decadent state of society. This support was, for the greater part, found in the late nineteenth-century writings of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), whose solution for nihilism was the renewal of

including not only style and iconography, but also its intellectual milieu (pages 1-25). Gordon 1987 (see note 7).

society through art. He proposed that objective knowledge should yield to subjective creation and thereby gave the artists the responsibility to reinvent society.¹²

According to art historian Donald E. Gordon, “Expressionism can be described most broadly and simply as a response to the fear of decline.”¹³ Moreover, he continues, “Nietzsche’s importance for Expressionism was precisely his *double* insistence on the reality of decline and the necessity of renewal.”¹⁴ This renewal or reevaluation of values, could only come out of nihilism. That is, revolution is only made possible in decline. Not only expressionist artists were indebted to Nietzsche; his theories were also widespread within French fauvism, and early futurism. The difference in interpretation of these ideas, among other factors, led to a difference in style and execution.¹⁵

The expressionist artists, in their quest for renewal, did not look at contemporary art of their era, for they saw this as an expression of the cultural degeneration of their time, which had been formed by its positivism and decadence. Especially impressionism, with its scientific approach to colors and depiction of the superficial, photographic reality, was rejected. The medium had to be renewed through the vitality of

painting. Inspiration had to be found in art that had not been affected by modern society and for that reason artists looked at pre-modern (predominantly German) art, the art of primitive tribal cultures and art of the innocent, that is, children and psychiatric patients.¹⁶ In addition, in a publication of art historical documents from the period, art historian Rose-Carol Washton-Long claims that “the belief that artistic innovations could bring about moral and ethical change encouraged the experiments of the Expressionist painters with color, line, space, and texture to spread into other arts.”¹⁷ What is more, these artists did not only influence other art forms, but in these experiments the expressionist painters themselves got involved in the production of literature, poetry, theater and, most importantly to this study, film. In this way, expressionist artists worked towards the creation of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in which all arts could be combined or work in unison towards a particular goal: cultural renewal.

Although all on the basis of ideological principles, the attempts to achieve this cultural renewal differed greatly: artists expressed themselves in themes of religion, theosophy, death, transcendence and sexual liberation. Under the influence of Berlin cultural interpreter Stanislaus Przybyszewski the issue of intellect against instinct was turned into an

qualities. This debate shows widespread response to Nietzschean thought as well. However, according to Gordon, the publications of Freud and Jung were unknown to expressionist artists, so their ideas should entirely be contributed to Nietzsche. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

¹⁷ Washton Long 1993 (see note 8), p. xxi.

¹² Ibid., p. 4.

¹³ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁶ A similar response to Nietzsche can be found in the psychiatric debate between Freud and Jung on instinctive thought which was supposed to possess primitive

important influence on cultural renewal; in his interpretation sex was turned into an artistic ideal.¹⁸ Therewith, importance of primitive qualities was transformed into something that was applicable to modern, western culture: the still remaining urges of human instinct.

“If Expressionism is an art of ideas [...] it distinguishes itself from other ideational art movements in one particular respect. This is its ambivalence or contradiction in matters of content. For Expressionist art does not evoke ideas unequivocally; when it does, in fact, it is no longer Expressionist.”¹⁹

Gordon continues to explain that expressionism provides an attitude towards ideas, instead of ‘embodying’ or ‘reflecting’ them, and thus creates a subjective view of these ideas. According to him, without this ambivalence, expressionist art does not exist. It comes to expression by creating art through duality: remaining reactionary while striving for harmony, creation through destruction, etc. Through this differentiation, the great variety of subject matters could be applied.

Not only the philosophical theories of Nietzsche gained support in expressionist circles, (social) Darwinism also had its followers. Again, their support was based on fear of the decline of society, however, this time physical rather than intellectual, leading eventually to support for the

First World War. For, by taking care of the weak in contemporary society, people feared that a human devolution would take place. Following that line of thought, war would be a means for human evolution, through its elimination of the weak. However, most expressionist artists had reservations towards certain parts of Darwin’s theory. Although this fear of physical devolution existed, most expressionists opposed the scientific and pseudo-scientific view of male superiority and instead, asserted male-female equality.²⁰ While these Darwinist views were mostly supported on the grounds of the necessity of war, the expressionists opposition against gender principles shows their lack of conviction in the theory as a whole. Moreover, most artists who supported the war when it began, dismissed these ideals when it turned out not to be a solution to the negative effects of modern industrialized society, but a manifestation of it and a waste of human lives at that. And not only in art, according to Gordon, since “[b]y the early postwar years there were important areas of German science and pseudo-science where pessimism swallowed up earlier hopes.”²¹

In this light, and since expressionism until the war remained separate from politics, the voluntary participation of artists in the war must not be seen as emanated from a political point of view, but rather as an individual stance against the corruptness of society. At this point, expressionism represented an ideological conflict, not a political one.

¹⁸ Gordon 1987 (see note 7), p. 21.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

²¹ Ibid., p. 24.

Prewar, wartime and postwar expressionism: similarities and differences

The development of prewar expressionism is marked by the foundation of platforms or societies for the distribution of artworks and artistic and ideological ideas, as will be discussed below. Notably, artists were not limited to one group or society, but instead were involved in more; showing their works at different exhibitions, leading to a great spread of artistic ideas. Renewal of values was attempted through the destruction of old power structures, by which the younger generation actively opposed the older generation. At the time, within the Brücke, the Blaue Reiter and by independent artists, expressionist art was recognized and identified as such, though not clearly defined as stated above.²²

The Dresden based group the Brücke was founded in 1905 on the fundamentals of Nietzschean theory (especially *Also sprach Zarathustra*, from 1883-85), by Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Fritz Bleyl.²³ They aimed at detaching themselves from the middleclass environment in which they were raised, as stated by Kirchner in the Brücke manifesto:

“With faith in evolution, in a new generation of creators and appreciators, we call together all youth. And as youths, who embody the future, we want to free

our lives and limbs from the long-established older powers. Anyone who renders his creative drive directly and genuinely is one of us.”²⁴

Moreover, the artists of the Brücke used the celebration of sex through art and sexual liberation in general as a form of protest against German bourgeois society, derived from a desire to succumb to primitive urges. Within the group, various styles coexisted, with, for example, an angular style that was influenced by the primitivism of tribal art (specifically art from the German colony of Palau). For example, *Mädchen unter Japanschirm* (1909) by Kirchner shows this angular style in the entire painting, but the tribal influences are especially prominent in the male figures in the background (fig. 1).

In 1909, the Neue Künstler-Vereinigung München was founded, including, among others, painters Gabriele Münter, Marianne von Werefkin (seen as equal, owing to the expressionist’s position towards male-female equality) Alexei von Jawlensky and Alexander Kanoldt, as well as people from different fields, including writers, theoreticians and dancers. Wassily Kandinsky, who had previously worked under the influence of the fauves in France, wrote in the foreword to the catalogue of its first exhibition:

²² Ibid., p. 91.

²³ Ibid., p. 14.

²⁴ E.L. Kirchner, et al., ‘Program of artist group, Brücke, 1906’, reprinted and translated in: Washton Long 1993 (see note 8), p. 23.

“Our point of departure is the belief that the artist, apart from those impressions that he receives from the world of external appearances, continually accumulates experiences within his own inner world. [...] This seems to us a solution that once more today unites in spirit increasing numbers of artists [...]”²⁵

Under the leadership of Kandinsky, theosophy was of great influence on the group and focused on the synthesis of inner and outer worlds (see, for example Kandinsky’s oil painting *Berg* (1909, fig. 2) in which he used colors to depict a synaesthetic experience). By the third exhibition several significant members of the group left, including Kandinsky and Marc who not long afterwards founded the Blaue Reiter in 1911.

The main objective of the Blaue Reiter was creation through destruction, since when old values are destroyed, man turns to himself and thereby creates a focus on the inner world of the artist.²⁶ Therefore, art was to have an important role in changing society and the members of the Blaue Reiter wanted to have an influence on ordinary people outside the art world, and make them critical towards established thought. By doing so, they intended to not separate low art from fine art, and exhibited their own work together with examples of folk, children’s and tribal art. Overall,

²⁵ Kandinsky, Wassily, K.C. Lindsay (ed.), P. Vergo (ed.), ‘Foreword to the Catalogue of the First Exhibition of the Neue-Künstler-Vereinigung, Munich, *Neue Künstler-Vereinigung München E.V.*, (Turnus), 1910’, in: *Kandinsky:*

Marc’s primitivist work (e.g. fig. 3) was extremely influential both inside and outside their own art circles.

Finally, *Der Sturm* journal (fig. 4), appearing between 1910 and 1932, was vital in the spreading of ideas on expressionist art in the prewar and war years, by publishing a periodical on new art and literature, and at the same time by running an art gallery, publishing company and art school. Its traveling exhibitions, from 1912 onwards, were central in the spreading of both international modernist and German expressionist ideas, art and theories across the country. In this way, *Der Sturm* was important in introducing the work of Italian futurists, French cubists and fauvists, and Russian art to German artists and audiences. The title of *Der Sturm* refers to the struggle against conservative values of society, that was essential in the establishment of the four above mentioned German societies. The journal did not take a political stand, not even during the war years, until 1919, when the original founder Herwarth Walden began to use the journal for spreading of his communist ideas in the journal, after which it lost its influence in artistic matters.²⁷

Although the initial principles that supported the war were quickly diminished, as we have seen above, they did intensify the artists’ desire to change society. It is important to note that no date can be claimed for the

complete writings on art: volume one (1901-1921), London 1982, pp. 52-53. Translation by editors.

²⁶ Gordon 1987 (see note 7), 14.

²⁷ Washton-Long 1993 (see note 8), pp. 55-56.

end of wartime and the start of the postwar era in expressionist art. Although the war itself ended officially on 11 November 1918, it ended differently for every artist and sometimes years apart (see chapter 2). Therefore, wartime and postwar developments could even occur simultaneously. Nevertheless, according to Washton-Long, in general it can be said that:

“the new Weimar Republic wanted to build upon the most innovative style before the war – Expressionism – and use its freshness and aggressiveness to stimulate art forms, which, being freed from the imperial and materialistic past, could unify mankind.”²⁸

The war proved to be a catalyst for taking a more politically involved stance for many artists and forced the artists to choose between patriotism and pacifism; fighting or taking flight. However, like most struggles in expressionism, the result was often ambivalence.

According to Gordon, another factor that transformed the expressionist style and ideals, was the absurdity of the war and the way it destructed common ideals and invaded the artists' personal lives.²⁹ This threatening force functioned as an event against which their ambitions for spiritual renewal had to be measured.

The new insights into the role of art in society gave a cause for, yet again, the establishment of new artists' societies and movements. These groups were not all involved in the making of expressionist art, on the contrary, some even strongly opposed expressionist art, but they were all founded by artists who were involved in the prewar expressionist movement. The purposes and aims of these groups show that during the war artists had become much more politically conscious. Whereas before the war the aims for cultural renewal had been confined to the use of art itself, after the war the artists shifted into the political framework. In this way, art worked towards a palpable goal, instead of an abstract utopian vision.

The periodical *Die Aktion*, founded in 1911 by Franz Pfemfert and the main competitor of *Der Sturm*, was contrary to its rival politically engaged, with its stated focus on politics, literature and the arts.³⁰ Its orientation was socialist and pacifist, increasingly represented throughout the war years, when it published social critical prints of expressionist artists like Schmidt-Rottluff and Conrad Felixmüller. (One of the wartime covers of Felixmüller can be seen in fig. 5.) Its political focus inspired many other magazines to use expressionist art to convey ideals and thereby showed its ability to inspire change in society.

²⁸ Washton-Long 1993 (see note 8), p. xxiii.

²⁹ Gordon 1987 (see note 7), 107.

³⁰ Figura, Starr, *German Expressionism: the graphic impulse*, exh. cat. New York (MoMA) 2011, pp. 19-24.

The artists' group *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* was founded in November 1918, under the leadership of architect Bruno Taut, with the intention to represent all workers in arts and crafts, regardless of their specialization or training, and was modelled after the *Arbeiterräte* that represented the workers in the Russian communist government.³¹ Thus, the *Arbeitsrat* identified with the political, socialist ideology and promoted this actively through publications and exhibitions. Most members had been engaged in other expressionist groups before and during the war, including the New Secession and the *Brücke*. Furthermore, the *Arbeitsrat* was largely based on architectural principles aimed at constructing a new society, as formulated by Taut in their manifesto of 1918: "Art and people must form a unity. Art should no longer be the pleasure of a few but should bring joy and sustenance to the masses. The goal is the union of arts under the wings of great architecture."³² Taut continues that the unity in art must be carried out through all visual aspects of society. Although this art was still supposed to carry spiritual value, its focus had shifted from cultural renewal to social renewal.

The *Novembergruppe* (or *Novembrists*), sharing many goals and members with the *Arbeitsrat*, was founded in December 1918. This group of painters intended the *Novembergruppe* to have an advisory function

³¹ Gordon 1987 (see note 7), p. 64.

³² Taut, Bruno, "'Arbeitsrat für Kunst' in Berlin", *Mitteilungen des deutschen Werkbundes*, no. 4 (1918), 14-15, as published in Washton-Long 1993 (see note 8), p. 193.

towards society and, in this role, they created a list of demands and guidelines for the role that art should have in society. They intended to create a symbiotic relationship with the working class: the workers were responsible for the external political revolution; the artists for the internal, spiritual one.³³ Or, as was stated in the manifesto: "We consider it our noblest duty to dedicate our best energies to the moral reconstruction of a new, free Germany."³⁴ In the manifesto, the cubist, futurist and expressionist artists were specifically addressed and asked to join forces. This notion of a spiritual revolution was based on the idea that cultural decline had come from the west, and that, therefore, the growth must come from the east and create spiritual rebirth. Like the *Arbeitsrat*, the group supported all artforms, including experimental filmmaking and music. In time, most of its political aspirations disappeared and the original, radical members left. In 1921, a group of artists (mostly Dada-members), wrote an open letter to the *Novembergruppe* in which they accused its members of neglecting its original political goals. Among the signatories were George Grosz and Otto Dix.

The *Dresden Secession Gruppe 1919*, under the leadership of Felixmüller and cofounded by Otto Dix, was strongly supported by the established expressionist community in Dresden. It found its origins in the

³³ Washton-Long 1993 (see note 8), p. 210.

³⁴ 'Draft of the manifesto of the *Novembergruppe*, 1918', as published in Washton-Long 1993 (see note 8), p. 212.

Brücke (also based in Dresden) as well as other avant-garde movements as cubism, futurism and mysticism. Although its original intentions were based on the November revolution, as was the case with the Arbeitsrat and Novembergruppe, no consensus could be achieved among the members on how to incorporate their political aims in their program. Therefore its purpose was stated in terms of a general ideology. “The founding of the Secession “Gruppe 1919” is a natural consequence of a long-felt inner need to finally part with old ways and procedures and, with complete respect for personal freedom, to look for and find new expressions for this, our world.”³⁵ These expressions were relevant to the future development of art, but not necessarily of society.

Unlike the above mentioned postwar groups, the Berlin Dada movement (derived from the Zürich Dada movement, where it was founded in 1916 by Hugo Ball) vehemently rejected its expressionist heritage. Moreover, Dada was not a clearly structured organization with its own set of guidelines; in their own words, it was a club. It was a rebellious group of people, with anti-militarist and anarchist sympathies. The members were let down by expressionism’s progress in the renewal of culture. In 1918, the writer Richard Huelsenbeck wrote a manifesto, in

which he strongly expressed his disappointment: “Under the pretext of turning inward, the Expressionists in literature and painting have banded together into a generation which even now is longingly expecting its historical validation and is campaigning for honorable bourgeois recognition.”³⁶ However, although they rejected the expressionists’ presentation in the art world and its transcendental and utopian ideology, they did believe in the power of art to destroy old morals, create new values and restructure society. Moreover, the Zürich movement had earlier had exhibitions of expressionist, children’s and primitive art.

Finally, Franz Roh’s publication of *Nachexpressionismus* from 1925 signaled the true ending of expressionism.³⁷ As with the beginning of expressionism, its end would not be marked by the foundation of a group or a clearly defined movement, but by a style based on ideas about the function and production of art. As Gordon explains: “As with Expressionism’s birth, so with its decline: a change in attitude dictated a change in style.”³⁸ This new attitude was already detected by art critics from 1922 onwards, when they signaled art to take a more naturalist turn. This attitude was an expression of the mindset of many artists: with expressionism there was a tension between gloom and hope, with new

³⁵ ‘Statement of purpose, March 1919, *Sezession Gruppe 1919* (Dresden: Emil Richter Verlag, 1919), 6’, as published in Washton-Long 1993 (see note 8), pp. 224-225.

³⁶ Huelsenbeck, Richard, “Dadaistisches Manifest”, *Dada Almanach*, ed. Richard Huelsenbeck (Berlin: Erich Reiss, 1920, 36-41), as published in Washton-Long 1993 (see note 8), pp. 266-269.

³⁷ Roh, Franz, *Nach-expressionismus, Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei*, Leipzig 1925.

³⁸ Gordon 1987 (see note 7), 121.

objectivity there was just pessimism and disillusionment, and therefore, the vitalist properties disappeared. The hopes for renewal were now in sobriety, as was reflected in the rejection of expressionism's exuberant and abstract experiments, created by the necessity of the new style to express the harshness of reality. Therefore, the change in mindset eventually created a stylistic transformation. In *Nachexpressionismus*, Roh published a scheme in which he opposed the stylistic qualities of expressionism and post-expressionism: for example rhythmic versus representative, dynamic versus static, and primitive versus civilized.³⁹ Through these clear oppositions it can be seen how expressionism was finally abandoned by many artists as an artistic ideal.

Expressionism in film

If expressionist film was founded on the same principles as expressionist art, it would interpret the same ideas and show the ambivalence, that, according to Gordon, is necessary within the movement. However, the foundations of expressionist film are much less visible than those of art, where these can be traced through the foundation of groups and societies. Therefore, it is necessary to examine several publications on expressionist film; all displaying a different perspective on the manifestation of expressionism in film.

³⁹ Plumb, Steve, *Neue Sachlichkeit 1918-33: Unity and diversity of an art movement*, Amsterdam 2006, pp.44-45.

A year after Roh's influential publication on the end of expressionism in the visual arts, in *Expressionismus und Film* (1926), literary and film critic Rudolf Kurtz starts by explaining the meaning of expressionism, its 'weltanschauung' (roughly translated as worldview) and its manifestation in all arts, before he continues to film itself.⁴⁰ In doing so, he uses a definition that is much broader than is used in later literature, that is, it includes the art of Pablo Picasso, Fernand Léger, Francis Picabia and Alexander Archipenko, and also treats absolute art and film. In essence, he gives a similar interpretation as Gordon: expressionism originated as an opponent of impressionism and it covers an attitude, instead of a specific issue. According to Kurtz, expressionist artists are defined as people of their time and expressionist art is characteristic of its generation. They mean to show the reality of their worldview, beyond its visible reality. In this way they attempt to not show just a transitory moment, like the impressionists did, but the eternal moment. This immediately shows the paradox that is central to Kurtz's publication: film, of all art forms, is most related to nature, since the medium's technique is essentially photography.⁴¹ It mechanically transforms the transitory moment of the visible reality to recorded image. Therefore, the director has to reverse the facts and keep the viewer away from real life by reshaping this reality. According to Kurtz, what is photographed is not the object itself, but the

⁴⁰ Kurtz 1926 (see note 6), pp. 9-13.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

art form of cinematography. However, film still should, in principle, be true to nature, and must therefore make compromises in the freedom it can take. Then, if used right, it can show the spirit of the surroundings, instead of the surroundings itself. Essential in conveying a message to the viewer is the idea of psychological aesthetics, namely that shapes can create a reaction in the soul and thereby create the mood of the viewer.⁴²

In *From Caligari to Hitler: a psychological history of the German film*, first published in 1947, Siegfried Kracauer, sociologist, cultural critic and film theorist, does not discuss the films that are now seen as expressionist, as expressionist films. Instead, he discusses the entire scope of films made in the Weimar Republic, from the beginnings of the German film industry at the start of the nineteenth century until the propaganda films of the Nazi regime during the Second World War. Since he treats these films as expressions of a nation, style or movement, they do not have to be qualified, as expressionist or anything else, since the contents of these films are determined by psychological outlooks. That is, according to Kracauer, these German films do not answer to specific principles, but rather to psychological dispositions. In this way, they show the ‘collective mentality’ of the nation, whether conscious or unconscious. Although this mentality may be strongly related to the mentality of the expressionist generation and their ideology, this claim is unnecessary in his argumentation. Moreover, by mostly ignoring the qualification of

expressionism he is able to proceed his analysis beyond the scope of the expressionist era.

However, Kracauer does recognize that certain films have formal expressionist aspects, which he refers to as expressionist staging (see, for example, fig. 6). In the case of *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (1919) he discusses the set design in detail and the involvement of expressionist artists in its production. “By making the film an outward projection of psychological events, expressionist staging symbolized [...] that general retreat into a shell which occurred in postwar Germany.”⁴³ From this quote it becomes clear that Kracauer considers the set design to be expressionist, but the film in itself not. However, in the following chapter, Kracauer does, on a few occasions, refer to expressionist films, but never gives a clear indication of what he means by that.

Having considered Kracauer’s use of terminology, his discussion of themes shows great similarities with the theoretical background we have seen regarding the visual arts. In Kracauer’s examination of the postwar period he divides the films following *Dr Caligari* into several categories, based on their thematic contents. In this way he shows the multitude of films from that period that rely on themes related to either the omnipresence of death, destiny and faith; the solution of spiritualism; the glorification of the pre-modern past; the redeeming qualities of love; the liberation in returning to nature; the ruling of instincts and passions; and,

⁴² Ibid., p. 55.

⁴³ Kracauer 1947 (see note 4), p. 71.

most importantly, rebellion against the bourgeois society. On the last he notes that, at the end of his designated postwar period in 1924, this rebellion began to show signs of defeat. Instead of using rebellion against the older generation as a way towards becoming the ‘new man’, it formed the start of submission, with which the rebel would only reinforce the older generation.⁴⁴ In this comment, Kracauer notes the power as well as the signs of the decline of expressionism.

Lotte Eisner, film historian and critic, discusses expressionist film from an entirely different perspective in *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt* (original French edition, Paris 1952). Instead of analyzing the phenomenon of expressionism from the perspective of the visual arts, like Kurtz did, or as a psychological phase of the German nation, as Kracauer did, Eisner states that it is necessary to examine its manifestation in contemporary literature. She reasons that this is justified since “for the Germans, that ‘race of thinkers and poets’, every manifestation in art is immediately transformed into dogma: the systematic ideology of their *Weltanschauung* is wedded to a didactic interpretation of art.”⁴⁵ Although this is not as generally said for the visual arts, it does show an inclination towards the

explicit use of ideology as typical for the defining qualities of expressionism.

The literary connection is stressed when Eisner takes her definition of expressionism from Edschmid’s *Über den Expressionismus in der Literatur* (Berlin, 1919): expressionism is a reaction against the positivism of impressionism, naturalism and neo-romanticism and is characterized by the depiction of interior vision. “Facts and object are nothing in themselves: we need to study their essence rather than their momentary and accidental forms.”⁴⁶ Expressionists seek the eternal, permanent meaning of objects, and, according to Eisner, thereby make use of a language of obscure symbols and metaphors. In doing so, they aim to detach themselves from the bourgeoisie and lose their individuality.

“The contrasts and contradictions in all of this will be readily apparent. On the one hand Expressionism represents an extreme form of subjectivism; on the other hand this assertion of an absolute totalitarian self creating the universe is linked with a dogma entailing the complete abstraction of the individual.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 117-118.

⁴⁵ Single quotation marks are Eisner’s. Eisner, L.H., *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the influence of Max Reinhardt*, London 1969 (1952), p. 10.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

In the end, according to Eisner, the way expressionism can be characterized in films is through its atmosphere, which is based on its incorporation of expressionist ideology.

“[...] Mind, Spirit, Vision and Ghosts seem to gush forth, exterior facts are continually transformed into interior elements and psychic events are exteriorized.”⁴⁸ According to Eisner, this fits right in with the Germans’ predisposition for the dark, coming from a brooding, speculative kind of reflection (German: *Grübelelei*). Eisner states that this culminated in the ‘apocalyptic doctrine’ of Expressionism. This shows a different perspective than we have seen before, since the artists’ principles were based on the destruction of the old society, the creation and renewal that followed was equally important. In an apocalyptic world creation and renewal is meaningless. Moreover, Eisner argues that German cinema is mainly a development of German Romanticism, shaped by modern technique, which manifests itself in the use of lugubrious characters and macabre themes and an overall fascination with death.⁴⁹

The atmosphere of these films is then of vital importance: “In any German film the preoccupation with rendering *Stimmung* (‘mood’) by suggesting the ‘vibrations of the soul’ is linked to the use of light.”⁵⁰ The use of light then becomes an application of psychological aesthetics, as proposed by Kurtz: it has the possibility to change the atmosphere, and

thereby influence the mood of the film as well as of the viewer. The possibilities of rendering light in this way and bringing across psychological content, makes Eisner include ‘Kammerspielfilms’ as well as psychological dramas.

As a concluding remark, interestingly, in her introduction Eisner defines expressionism completely on the basis of its atmosphere and ideological content, as is done by art historians in the definition of expressionism in the visual arts. With these principles in mind, she devoted the main part of the book to formalist characteristics of expressionist film and thereby she derives visual aspects from these films and applies the ideological principles to them in her analyses.

On grounds of its focus on psychological content, Eisner marks *Der Student von Prag* (1913) as a prophetic work.⁵¹ The film, with a script by Hanns Heinz Ewers and directed by the Danish director Stellan Rye, tells the story of a young student who sells his mirror reflection to a sorcerer in return for the marriage with a countess and unlimited wealth. But of course, this goes horribly wrong when the reflection exits the mirror and manipulates the events. The film ends when the student attempts to shoot his reflection, but in the process only kills himself. In its story, the film borrows from the German legend of Faust and several other topics from

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 113.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 199

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 7.

Romantic storytelling, including doppelgängers, phantoms and murder. Moreover, it is thematically strongly related to prewar expressionism, in the sense that it focuses on the questions of identity, challenges to structures of society and conveys a general sense of nihilism. This is largely expressed in the atmosphere of the film, which by Eisner is seen as the defining quality of expressionist cinema (see fig. 7-8).

Conversely, visually the film is not quite there yet. Although light was used to create part of the atmosphere, the manipulation of the image, that proved to be so important in expressionist filmmaking is not used to a full extent. In his cinematography, Rye used a more naturalist approach, by filming in natural surroundings. Moreover, remembering Kurtz' account of the origins of expressionism in film, the decorative elements have not yet been transferred from the visual arts. It is important to note that, in this time, by many avant-garde artists film was regarded as a commercial mass product, a manifestation of the decline of culture, which had hitherto not shown its full potential as a means for expression in the high arts.

Conditions for development of movement in film.

The most important precondition for the origin of expressionism in film was the reorganization of the German film industry during the First World War.⁵² The full extent of this reorganization will be treated in the next chapter, however, in general it can be said that through the foundation of government agencies aiming at the creation of screen propaganda and the

prohibition of the import and screening of foreign films, the German film industry received the boost that it needed to develop itself to the level that can be seen in postwar expressionist films. This newfound isolation forced the film industry to become fully autonomous, which created a pool of talent and knowledge on film production that could be used after the war. Moreover, since the aim of these agencies was also the promotion of German high culture through film, at home as well as abroad, experimentation and implementation was, to a certain extent, encouraged. Of course, limitations were set since the main objective was still propagandist and a group of experts (mostly military) determined the contents of what would be released. After the revolution this censorship was abolished by the Council of People's representatives.

Significant, in this respect, is the German idea that high art is more valuable than low art and that German culture represents this high art, in contrast to the low, commercial art of the West; Germany siding itself with the East. Problematically, film was seen as a product of low art, to which the solution was to enoble it by involving it in high art, meaning meaning that commercialism had to be mixed with art. Even commercially, this was intended to increase its value or, as Eisner puts it: "German industry immediately latched on to anything of an artistic kind in the belief that it was bound to bring in money in the long run."⁵³ This application of artistic values meant that German cinema aimed at the depiction of psychological

⁵² Kracauer 1947 (see note 4), pp. 35-39.

⁵³ Eisner 1952 (see note 45), p. 19.

issues, whereas western, for instance, American cinema is focused on entertainment, continuity and a family audience.

After the revolution, avant-garde art became related to revolutionary vision. This relationship can be defined, according to Kracauer, with the term ‘Aufbruch’, which

“[...]meant departure from the shattered world of yesterday towards a tomorrow built on the grounds of revolutionary conceptions. [...] People suddenly grasped the significance of avant-garde paintings and mirrored themselves in visionary dramas announcing to a suicidal mankind the gospel of a new age of brotherhood.”⁵⁴

In short, according to Kracauer, to society expressionism represented the revolutions, as an artistic avant-garde related to the political avant-garde. In this process, cinema became a method to convey ideas to the masses and expressionism the means to do so.

By using sets made of painted canvases the link with expressionist visual arts was directly communicated, but it was also efficient in times when money and material were scarce: it could facilitate an entire production. Moreover, combined with the use of cinematography they were supposed to have a psychological effect on the viewer, like anxiety or

terror, and thereby be representative of the aims of German cinema. As a consequence they were able to use a commercial product to criticize bourgeois decadency. The films present visions of terror which underscores the demoniac qualities of the bourgeois.

Eisner attributes much of the technical developments that made the creation of an expressionist image in film to the implementation of techniques from the theaters.⁵⁵ In early cinema it made sense to borrow from its pool of actors, writers and directors as well as from its staging of dramas. In particular, Eisner gives much credit to the theater of director Max Reinhardt and his inventiveness in the staging of his plays. During the First World War, when money shortage affected his capacity for creating extravagant sets, he experimented with the use of light as a structuring tool and as the main instrument for the creation of a suitable atmosphere. Moreover, he was able to use the changes in light to create a certain dynamic within the play.

As explained by Eisner, the creation of a dynamic image with light relates to the use of editing techniques in film, in the sense that editing combines the use of light with the use of camera in order to create rhythm and narrative. In combination with the achievement of more mobile cameras it could be used to show the essential qualities of objects or people, as well as distorting them for artistic purposes, by using varying or extreme shooting angles or merely tracking details or persons. Moreover,

⁵⁴ Kracauer 1947 (see note 4), p. 38.

⁵⁵ Eisner 1952 (see note 45), p. 44-56.

the inventiveness that was encouraged by the German government during the war years provided a climate in which German filmmakers continuously sought to experiment with new methods, that in the postwar era shifted to the invention of methods for the depiction of the psychological images the filmmakers wanted to create.

Finally, this also gave rise to the application of special effects. By using superimpositions, negative images, stop motion techniques and the speeding up or slowing down of images, filmmakers were able to create a convincing impression of apparitions of ghosts, hallucinations, the use of magic, objects that appear to move on their own, and almost anything imaginable.

In hindsight, all these developments have contributed to the formation of the expressionist German films. Since several of its defining qualities depend on the ability to render a certain atmosphere or create subjective visions, expressionist film could not have been made without these innovations. This may explain why the origins of expressionism within the visual arts and film did not occur simultaneously. Moreover, the creation of a film is much more dependent on the demands of an audience and therefore would need more public support and the cooperation of a production company.

Comparison different media: problems and advantages

The problems pertaining to the differences in media and the way these media relate to each other, do not necessarily mean that they cannot be discussed in the same context (which is the aim of this thesis). On the contrary, as is discussed above, they can be based on similar ideological principles. Nevertheless, when film began to make artistic claims, it entered a field of art historical discussion on its position within the arts.

Angela Dalle Vacche's *The visual turn: classical film theory and art history*, from 2003, provides an anthology of publications on subjects that in some way apply to the interrelation between painting and film.⁵⁶ These are mostly key art historical publications on film itself or applicable to film, which are, in this anthology, intended to broaden the horizon of understanding and viewing film. By using canonical publications of twentieth century art history, it becomes clear in what way art historical methods can be used in film theory, while at the same time introducing art historians to film theory. The selected topics vary from iconography to the use of cognitive explanations in classical film theories, but they have in common that they consider the interrelationship and hierarchy of various arts. Moreover, these comparisons show how film and, for instance, painting are comparable and what are the theoretical and practical

⁵⁶ Dalle Vacche, Angela, *The visual turn: classical film theory and art history*, New Brunswick 2003.

problems in doing this. Relevant to this subjects are the selected writings of Walter Benjamin, Erwin Panofsky and Rudolf Arnheim.

The selected excerpt of philosopher and critical theorist Walter Benjamin's essay *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* (1935-36) examines the treatment of reality in film and the illusionary qualities of a movie scene.⁵⁷ Although a film, as opposed to other artworks, is thought to be a mechanical reproduction of reality, it is always artificial since it never shows the reality of a set with the presence of mechanical equipment. The editing of the film creates an illusion. In Benjamin's words: "The equipment-free aspect of reality here has become the height of artifice; the sight of immediate reality has become an orchid in the land of technology."⁵⁸ To illustrate this, Benjamin compares the circumstances of painting and filmmaking, by comparing the cameraman with the painter. According to Benjamin, this is the comparison of a surgeon with a magician: the cameraman performs an operation on reality, whereas the painter extracts from reality, retrieving an image while maintaining a distance. The cameraman permeates reality with his equipment. Benjamin argues that this means that the created image, for film, is made up from fragments, whereas it shows its totality in painting.

⁵⁷ Original publication: Benjamin, Walter, "L'œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée", *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* vol. 5 (1936), pp. 40–68. As published in: Dalle Vacche 2003 (see note 56), pp. 33-34.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Likewise, art historian Erwin Panofsky's essay *Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures* from 1934, also discussed the treatment of reality in films.⁵⁹ However, according to him it is not the cameraman or the editing that transforms reality into art, but the medium itself. In his words:

“[The composition] receives its style, and may even become fantastic or pretervoluntarily symbolic, not so much by an interpretation in the artist's mind as by the actual manipulation of physical objects and recording machinery. The medium of the movies is physical reality as such [...].”⁶⁰

Therefore, Panofsky argues, the prestylization of sets, that is often seen in expressionist film, should be seen as an evasion of the actual issue, which is, the manipulation and shooting of unstylized reality in such a way that its result has style. Arguably, this holds true for older art forms as well.

In addition, Panofsky examines the two aspects that present themselves when discussing the position of film as art: the relationship between production and consumption and the space-time relations in moving pictures. On the first topic Panofsky argues that because film, as a

⁵⁹ Original publication: Panofsky, Erwin, 'Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures', *Bulletin of the Department of Art and Archeology*, Princeton University 1934. As published in: Dalle Vacche 2003 (see note 56), pp. 69-84.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

commercial art form, has to be able to effectively communicate with its audience, it has the ability to be much more effective. Therewith:

“[Films] have reestablished that dynamic contact between art production and art consumption [...] Whether we like it or not, it is the movies that mold, more than any other single force, the opinions, the taste, the language, the dress, the behavior, and even the physical appearance of a public comprising more than 60 percent of the population of the earth.”⁶¹

On the second topic Panofsky states that film could be transformed into a higher quality product, by using and modifying its own specific possibilities and characteristics: the control over space and time. Or, as Panofsky puts it, use the ‘dynamization of space’ and the ‘spatialization of time’.

Similarly, art and film theorist Rudolf Arnheim also discusses the relationship between time and space, as a characteristic specific to film: “It is possible that the factor which determines actual film talent is not so much the creation of the image in space as the creation of a series of dramatic events that develops over time.”⁶² However, although he stresses

the importance of the developments of the content matter of the film here, he is mostly interested in the creation of the image. The selected essay, discusses specifically the influence of painting on film. According to him, painting has, via photography, affected film in terms of composition and the division of space. Moreover, painting has in this respect been more influential than graphic arts, since it is likewise involved with the creation of space, rather than definition by lines. Additionally, both use light in a similar way: to direct the eye across the surface. Like Panofsky, Arnheim also discusses the use of painted sets. According to him this should be possible. However, if the objects on the sets actually look like they are painted (that is, stylized or not realistic) it comes across as unreal and distracting. He argues that, since there are actors present, who actually are real, they compromise the world that is created by the painter. “Thus, one can paint for film, and one can paint things that do not exist in reality, but they must always be painted so that we believe that we are seeing these things ourselves, rather than just copies that can be recognized as such.”⁶³

In 1958 Arnheim published a collection of his writings on the relationship between film and the visual arts: *Film as art*. In the personal introduction to these essays he makes an observation which is key to understanding the possibilities of understanding film as art. He states that:

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 70.

⁶² Arnheim, Rudolf, ‘Painting and film’, in: *Film essays and criticism*, Madison 1997(originally published in 1933), pp. 86-88. As published in: Dalle Vacche 2003 (see note 56), pp. 151-153.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 153.

“[...] the work of art, too, is not simply an imitation or selective duplication of reality but a translation of observed characteristics into the form of a given medium. [...] I undertook to show in detail how the very properties that photography and film fall short of perfect reproduction can act as the necessary moulds of an artistic medium.”⁶⁴

Thus, the characteristics of film that differ from reality can be used to make film into art, be it the fragmentation of reality created by the cameraman, or a transformation inherent to the medium.

One of the essays published in *Film as art* is *Film and reality* (1933), in which Arnheim examines six basic elements of film with the corresponding elements in reality.⁶⁵ Through these elements Arnheim shows the opportunities for artistic interpretation. The first element is the projection of three-dimensional objects upon a plane surface, meaning that the entire image is determined by the chosen perspective, and that, thus, the creation of an image is determined by the operator who controls the angle of the shot. Second is the reduction of depth: creating a sense of depth in a two-dimensional image, for which film can, except in movement, use the same devices as a painting. Thirdly, is the use of the

lighting and absence of color (in either black and white or monochrome colored film) as a partial illusion. Then, lighting is used to create shapes and spaces. The fourth element is the delimitation of the image and the distance from the object. Meaning that, according to Arnheim, “The limitation of film picture and the limitation of sight cannot be compared because in the actual range of human vision the limitation simply does not exist.”⁶⁶ That is to say, human vision has the ability to get a clear image since it can control the focus within the entire field of vision; this cannot be done with a fixed film image. Furthermore, film image is also restricted by the edge of the screen. Fifth, the absence of space-time continuum means that space and time can be freely manipulated in film. And finally, the absence of the non-visual world of the senses and the fact that, thereby, the eye cannot depend on the other senses. In conclusion, these aspects, specific to the medium, can all be controlled by the filmmaker and can be used to give the image style. With the exception of the control of space and time, these qualities have their equivalents in painting and the graphic arts, and are therefore comparable on these aspects.

In the making of expressionist film, or film in general, the responsibility for the finished product lies with the author, designer, director and technical staff. Moreover, in expressionist filmmaking technical harmony was attempted by having long meetings with all

⁶⁴ Arnheim, *Film as art*, London 1969 (first edition Berlin 1932), p. 12.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 17-36.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

technical staff members, in which mise-en-scene and cinematography were discussed.⁶⁷ According to Eisner, this formed the key to success of the expressionist films. However, Kurtz states that the director is central in the making of film and has the task to bring everything together. “In seiner Hand ruht das System von Unterstreichungen, Auslassungen, Tönungen, Färbungen, Temporegulierungen, Betonungen, die Geist und Gefüge des Films ausmachen.”⁶⁸ That is, he in the end creates the mood or the spirit of the film. In a few cases, the director is also involved in the writing of the manuscript, which forms the intellectual foundation of the film. If a film script has not used psychological methods, it cannot be used to create an expressionist film. Although this is not an aesthetic guideline, it is used by the director to create forms and spaces.

This, in the eyes of Kracauer, forms the reasons why film reflects the mentality of the nation. Firstly, since they are not the product of an individual, but rather of a team. Secondly, they address the “anonymous multitude”, which, if successful, means it has to answer to mass desires.⁶⁹ This is comparable to the argument Panofsky made on the accessibility of film in general: a film has to be able to communicate to its mass audience and therefore also has the ability to affect them.

For expressionist art in the form of a film, according to Kurtz, the question of the relatability by the audience poses a problem: although film

has become a phenomenon for the masses, for expressionist film it is hard to find an audience.⁷⁰ For an audience, a film has to be relatable to be commercially viable. However, according to Kurtz, this means that it can never be a true art form and thereby denies commercial art its possibility to be regarded as real art, as opposed to painting which he considers to be non-commercial. His reason for this consideration is that, according to him, film always has to make concessions by creating a link between the film and public on a psychological level. Moreover, the viewer has to be able to integrate the film into his own social and psychological environment. He proposes that absolute or abstract film eliminates this possibility and thereby eliminates the psychological link between viewer and film. This means that, unlike with expressionist visual arts, expressionist film must always, on some level retain the link with reality. But, considering Arnheim’s analysis of films relationship with reality, it seems that this existing link does not necessarily deny film its position within the arts, provided that its opportunities to use artistic methods are effectively used.

The link between film and reality, its application in film, and the ideology of expressionism are provided by expressionist filmmaker and director Paul Leni (1885-1929):

⁶⁷ Eisner 1952 (see note 45), p. 37.

⁶⁸ Kurtz 1926 (see note 6), p. 110.

⁶⁹ Kracauer 1947 (see note 4), p. 5.

⁷⁰ Kurtz 1926 (see note 6), pp. 126-129.

“If the designer merely imitated photography to construct his sets, the film would remain faceless and impersonal. There has to be the possibility of bringing out an object’s essential attributes so as to give the image style and color. [...] He must penetrate the surface of things and reach their heart.”⁷¹

In this way, he rejects the positivist, scientific approach (similar to the aim of the expressionist visual artists before the war), here signified by photography, and proposes an expressionist approach in which the internal qualities of the object are shown. Taking into account Kurtz’ claim that painters have not only initiated expressionism in the visual art, but also in film, it can be argued that filmmakers aimed at applying the transposable elements of painterly expressionism in film. The knowledge of art history or the practice of painting itself was widespread in the field of filmmaking. For example, before the First World War, Fritz Lang received training as a painter in Paris, and F.W. Murnau studied art history and was involved with the painters of the Blaue Reiter. According to Eisner, this presented itself in their films as follows: “Lang attempts to give a faithful representation of the famous paintings he sometimes uses, Murnau elaborates on the memory he has kept of them and transforms them into personal visions.”⁷²

⁷¹ Leni Paul, in *Kinematograph* no. 911, 1924. Quoted from Eisner 1952 (see note 45), p. 127.

However, the controversial element has proven to be the use of painting itself in expressionist décor and set making. As listed above, Panofsky and Arnheim argued against this type of application, claiming it would be a mere avoidance of the properties of the medium, or would even create a distraction to the audience. It seems that expressionist film found a solution to the problem proposed by Arnheim, the presence of actors in stylized and painted decors, by creating a harmony between them and stylizing the actors as well. For example, in Karl Heinz Martin’s *Von Morgens bis Mitternachts* (1922, based on an expressionist play from 1912), the actors as well as their clothing are treated to make them blend in with the painted backgrounds and eliminate the visible contrast between the reality of the film and the photographic reality. Several other films have used this methods, although it has to be noted that some failed to make this a convincing harmony.

Another way to show expressionism through actors was through the style of their acting. In these films, they often use overacting and exaggeration of gestures, using elements from theater performance (most had a background in stage acting) to show the excitement of the times.⁷³ It was thought that a large gesture was more meaningful and emotional: a display of passion. The actor was meant to depict the psychological disposition by the use of methods that were shaped around the new ideals

⁷² Eisner 1952 (see note 45), p. 98.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

of expressionism.⁷⁴ According to Panofsky, the actor determines the aesthetic existence of the character, meaning that the existence of the character is only determined by the presence of the actor on screen.⁷⁵

Moreover, directors were able to use the human body for the formation of space. Either by using the gestures of single actors to define lines or using the grouping of actors to create geometric patterns and make them a part of architecture, or ornamentation.⁷⁶ Even by showing a close-up of a face, the director has the ability to transform the face into the field of action. Already in 1916 actor and filmmaker Paul Wegener had given a lecture in which he explained the transformation of lines into something with meaning: “You have all seen films, in which a line appears, then curves and changes. This line gives birth to faces, then disappears.” In this way, objects and actors possess graphic qualities and lines contain meaning. According to Wegener, this would even mean that the depicted scenes are a part of the natural world and but simultaneously transcend it. This longing for transcendence, for surpassing the temporary meaning of events, is one of the key objectives of expressionism.

To summarize, during the 1910s and 1920s German film was able to make great progress by, on the one hand, investing financially in the field and, on the other hand, experimenting with techniques, designs and ideas

from the other arts. The fact that established art historians wrote on the relationship between the visual arts and film shows the influence this had on the development of contemporary culture.

Psychological and social perspectives

As we have seen above, the avant-garde ideas of art in relation to society was very much affected by the events of the First World War. Thus, “How do societies cope with the lingering effects of war? How does the shock of humiliating defeat affect a nation’s identity? And what part do movies play in making trauma visible?”⁷⁷ In *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (2009), film historian and theorist Anton Kaes argues that classical Weimar cinema (note, not specifically expressionist cinema, although he later mentions that the discussed films have become synonymous with expressionist cinema) is thoroughly preoccupied with the memory of the First World War, or the trauma it inflicted on the entire nation. That is, not only soldiers were traumatized by the combat at the battlefield; the effects on the home front were equally devastating. The main point of departure for Kaes is the notion that during the aftermath of the war, films found an artistic expression to the psychological wounds of the nation. “They were post-traumatic films, reenacting the trauma in their very narrative and images.”⁷⁸ With regards to their imagery, Kaes writes

⁷⁴ However, according to Kurtz, this proposes a paradox. Essentially, if someone acts in expressionist style, (human) nature is enacting expressionism, when expressionism itself attempts to break with nature. Kurtz 1926 (see note 6), p. 122.

⁷⁵ Dalle Vacche 2003 (see note 56), p. 80.

⁷⁶ Eisner 1952 (see note 45), p. 160.

⁷⁷ Kaes 2009 (see note 3), p. 2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

that the aesthetics of these postwar films is derived from the need for finding a means to express this trauma. The extremity of this trauma required the pushing of the boundaries of visual presentation, to create shock and violence in film, to represent it. In terms of its relation to the visual arts it can then be deduced that the desolation of times required the renewal of culture, just as the expressionist visual artists aspired to do shortly before the war. This specific artistic and ideological context, however, remains greatly neglected in Kaes' analysis, since the main objective of his study is to show the internal psychological effects of the war on filmmakers and the nation alike. His aim is to expose the new meanings of these films, that can be gained when analyzing these works in the context of the war experience, and thereby specifically challenging the pre-fascist meaning of the films that was established by Kracauer's sociopolitical reading. This, however, does not mean that other readings must be rejected completely. On the contrary, according to Kaes, films are fractured entities that never carry but a single message. The particular message he is looking for, is the message that is implied, but not articulated.

Throughout the chapters, Kaes analyses different manifestations of war trauma, embodied through the essential Weimar films: *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920), *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922), *Die Nibelungen* (1924) and *Metropolis* (1927). "Articulating an indirect,

but more poignant understanding of trauma than many traditional war movies, these films translate military aggression and defeat into domestic tableaux of crime and horror."⁷⁹ Specifically in this reading, *Dr. Caligari* signifies the treatment of war trauma or neurosis itself, the treatment of war neurotics in asylums (and the simulation of neurosis by political opponents), the position of psychiatrists and the memory of murder. *Nosferatu* stands for the encounter with mass death, either on the battle field or through the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918, and self-sacrifice. Moreover, the repeated encounters with the living dead, sleeping in dirt and surrounded by rats, signifies the experience of trench warfare. Fritz Lang's *Nibelungen* (consisting of two parts: *Siegfried* and *Kriemhilds Rache*) is dedicated to the German people and serves as a reminder to the people lost in the war. The first part shows the tragic death of the hero, whereas the second depicts the unfortunate destructive potential of the obsession with revenge and thereby the deathly consequences of wartime diplomacy. Finally, in *Metropolis* Kaes recognizes the industrialization that made technological warfare possible, with the workers signifying the anonymous soldiers.

Through these kind of interpretations, specific themes are made visible that are not only predominant in Weimar films of postwar years, but also in the work of significant visual artists, which will be discussed in chapter 3. Taking into account the ideological similarities between expressionist film

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

and art, it is possible to transpose Kaes' interpretation of the detected themes in film to the visual arts. In his analyses he makes the constant comparison between social and political events, the personal experiences of those involved in the film industry and the formal and intrinsic qualities of the film at hand. Therefore, to use this type of interpretation, those aspects must also be investigated within the visual arts.

The interpretation of art on the grounds of its sociopolitical context is a method related to the social history of art or Marxist art history. The definition of the social history of art, provided in *The dictionary of art* (1996), states that:

“The social history of art starts out from the premise that art is not autonomous but is inextricably linked to such social factors as morality, governed by laws, trade and technology, as well as politics, religion and philosophy. Thus, a change in society is always accompanied by a change in art, although not necessarily in a simple or direct way. The social history of art endeavours to discover the factors that had a special influence in a given case, even if the influence took a somewhat circuitous route.”⁸⁰

Since, as argued above, expressionism is based on ideological principles and is very much involved with the artists position in society, a social approach to art history seems to be a crucial perspective to consider. Moreover, by attempting to renew the values of society through art, expressionist artists became involved as influential social factors themselves; they recognized their role in creating a dialogue (albeit, at times, a harsh and destructive one) between art and society. Although influential on the writing on the social history of art, Marxist art theory will be less relevant for this study, since the economical qualities of the artwork (or the artwork as a commodity produced in capitalist society) will be emphasized less than its personal psychological qualities.

Concerning the development of film, a more obvious relationship with society exist, since it is essentially a commercial product. Moreover, it is never the product of a single artist, and according to Kracauer film is therefore able to reflect the mentality of society. Consequentially, changes in society will directly be reflected in the production of a film. Furthermore, as a commercial product that is more dependent on economic factors, these factors should not be left out completely. Kracauer's publication is completely reliant on a sociopolitical point of view, since his main objective is showing the way in which Weimar filmmaking reflected the collective mentality of the German nation. Therefore, he focuses on the changes or events in society, politics and economy and the way they

⁸⁰ Turner, Jane (ed.), *The dictionary of art*, New York 1996, vol. 28, p. 915.

affected the national disposition. Of course, the First World War was an event that affected society as a whole and thus affected film production as well. Kracauer continues this mode to detect the causes that eventually led to the rise of the Nazi regime, but this track goes beyond the analysis of the immediate consequences of the First World War on the artists and art.

Returning to the history of the visual arts, although it received criticism from numerous scholars, Hauser's *Social History of Art* (1951) is in this context a valuable publication, by providing a study of the development or changes within art in relationship to (significant) changes in society.⁸¹ More specifically, Hauser treats the twentieth century in his chapter 'The Film Age', focusing on a variety of topics, from 'The crisis of capitalism' to 'Anti-impressionism' to 'Space and time in film'. Through his analysis of art, Hauser tracks not only the development in terms of social or political history, but also significant changes in the fields of philosophy and literature, aside from the visual arts and film, which gives it contextual depth that is useful in this discussion. Moreover, film is awarded a vital position within this social history of art, as its technical and formal developments reflect the times in an unequivocal way and is therefore given a thorough theoretical analysis into its characteristics. Since the concept or representation of time has become so important in the arts, "one is inclined to consider the film itself as the stylistically most

representative, though qualitatively perhaps not the most fertile genre of contemporary art."⁸²

For Hauser, the twentieth century begins after the First World War, since it marks a turning point in the development of art by providing an opportunity to choose between existing modes: the dominant trends within the arts. The war provided a change in society: the end of high capitalism, the decline of decadence of the bourgeoisie and a boost for socialism. He detects that the confident attitude of the bourgeoisie continues until the start of the economic crisis of 1929, which explains the extremes of decadence found in postwar Germany; in the years directly following the war only the lower middle classes suffered. The tendency towards socialism, and the support for the lower classes, is reflected in the foundation of artists groups with a socialist background, as discussed above.

The postwar years are also defined by a counter-revolution, which is, according to Hauser, the "mobilization of the 'spirit' against the mechanism and determinism of the natural sciences, nothing but 'the beginning of the great world reaction against the democratic and social enlightenment'."⁸³ Simultaneously, a great contrast exists between the East and West, representing order and chaos, authority and anarchy, stability and revolution, disciplined rationalism and unbridled mysticism

⁸¹ Hauser, Arnold, *The social history of art*, London 1951.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 939-940.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 929.

respectively.⁸⁴ In Hauser's writings, the East is seen as specified as Russia and Asia, but the Germany should also be included in this, since the German artists saw themselves as a part of the East. The Novembergruppe is one of the examples of a group of artists that was determined to fight against the perceived decline of the West, and create a spiritual rebirth from the East.

Hauser continues that in the arts, the reflection of these sentiments is expressed by the rejection of impressionism. "Post-impressionist art can no longer be called in any sense a reproduction of nature; its relationship to nature is one of violation."⁸⁵ Or as we have seen before, creation through destruction. Then, the real signifier of a break with artistic tradition is marked by the foundation of Dada, not a mere artistic movement, but a social movement protesting against the civilization that caused the war. "Dadaism, therefore, replaces the nihilism of aesthetic culture by a new nihilism, which not only questions the value of art but of the whole human situation."⁸⁶ The bitterness of society is eventually reflected by the unification of contradictions in the arts or as the ambivalence that was, according to Donald E. Gordon, the essential quality of expressionism.

To conclude, from both a psychological and a social perspective, the First World War is a turning point in German art and film production.

Psychologically, both individuals and the nation as a whole were traumatized by experiences of technological warfare and its excrescences. Socially, artists experienced class struggle, a declining economy, and overall pessimism.

Since the First World War had such an enormous impact on the production and experience of culture, it is vital to consider in what particular ways artists were affected. In chapter two, the war experience of specific artists and filmmakers and their treatment of this experience in their work (if applicable), will be placed in the larger historical context of the war itself as well as that of the visual traditions of depicting war in art. In this way, common trends can be found that apply to both art and film.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 930.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 930.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 933.



Fig. 1. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Mädchen unter Japanschirm*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 92 x 80 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

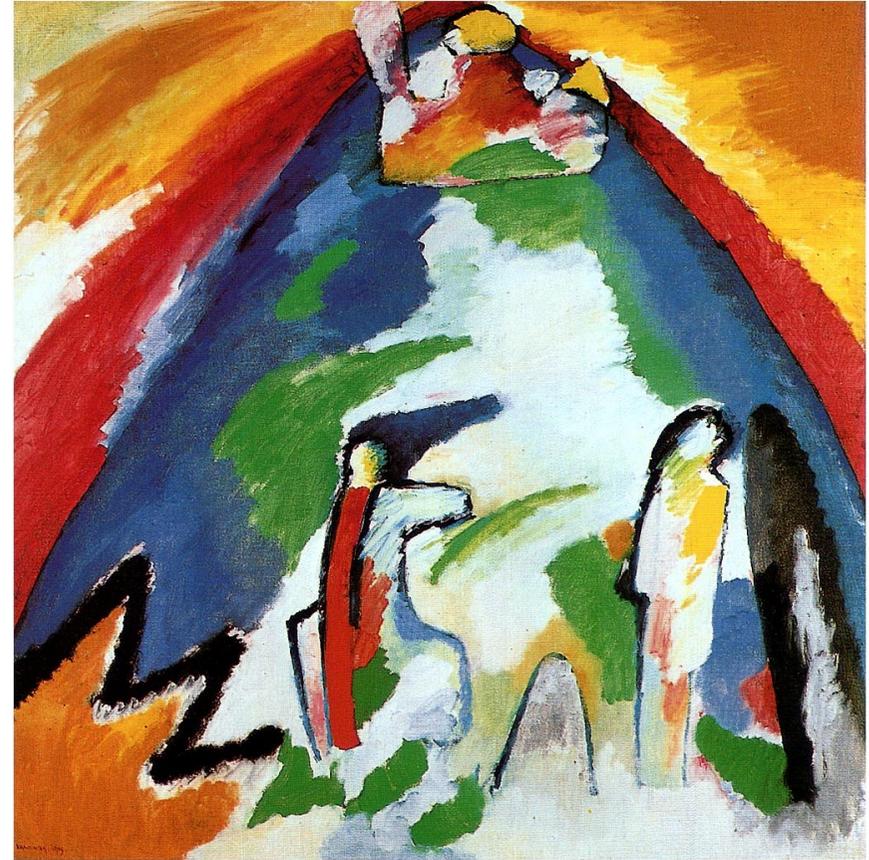


Fig. 2. Wassily Kandinsky, *Berg*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 109 x 109 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich.



Fig. 3. Franz Marc, *Gelbe Kuh*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 140.5 x 189.2 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

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JAHRGANG 1910 BERLIN/DONNERSTAG DEN 14. JULI 1910/WIEN NUMMER 20

INHALT: OSKAR KOKOSCHKA: Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen /
der Frosch / PAUL LEPPIN: Dürst Jesus / Roman /
ALFRED DOBLIN: Gespenste mit Kalypso über die
Musk / SIEGFRIED PFANKUCH: Liegt der Priester in
der Luft / PAUL SCHEERBART: Gogol'scher Brief /
KARL VEDDT: Nüsse als Tasterstein / MINIMAX
Kriegsbericht / Kalligramm

Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen
Von Oskar Kokoschka

Personen:
Mann
Frau
Chor: Männer und Weiber.

Nachhimmel, Tau mit großer roter kleiner Kiff-
stie, Fackeln das ständige Licht, schwarzer Boden,
so zum Terra aufsteigend, daß alle Figuren relief-
artig zu sehen sind.

Der Mann
Weißes Gesicht, blauepauzert, starrt das eine
Wunde bedeckt, mit der Scheit der Männer
weike Köpfe, grose und rote Kopflücker, weike,
schwarze und braune Kleider, Zickeln auf den
Kleider, nackte Beine, hohe Fackelstangen,
Scheitel, Geisse), linschen hornt mit vor-
gedröckten Stängen und Lücken, verischen maide
und wängig den Abenteuerer zuckelstücker, reiten
sich Pferd nieder, er geht vor, sie lösen die Knie
an ihn, während sie mit langsamer Stegweg auf-
schreiten.

Männer
Wie waren das flammende Rad um ihr,
Wie waren das flammende Rad um dich, Bestürmer
verschlossener Ferkungen!
gehen zögernd wider als Kette nach, er mit dem
Fackelträger vor sich, geht voran.

Männer
Fäh' uns Basser!
Während sie das Pferd niederreißen wollen, steigen
Weiber mit der Fährten die linke Stege herauf.

Frau rote Kleider, offene gelbe Haare, groß.

Frau laut
Mit welchem Atma erlindert die blonde Scheibe
der Sonne, mein Auge sammelt der Männer Fack-
löcker, ihre stammelnde Lust Arreit wie eine
Bestie um mich.

Weiber
Esstet aus von ihr los, sehen jetzt erst den Froschen.
Erweis Weibe Inzest
Sein Atma saugt sich grüßend der Jungfrau an!

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Fig. 4. Cover of *Der Sturm, Wochenschrift für Kultur und die Künste*, 1910 no. 20 (Berlin, 14 July 1910), with illustration: Oskar Kokoschka, drawing for *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*.



Fig. 7. Film still from *Der Student von Prag* (Stellan Rye, 1913).

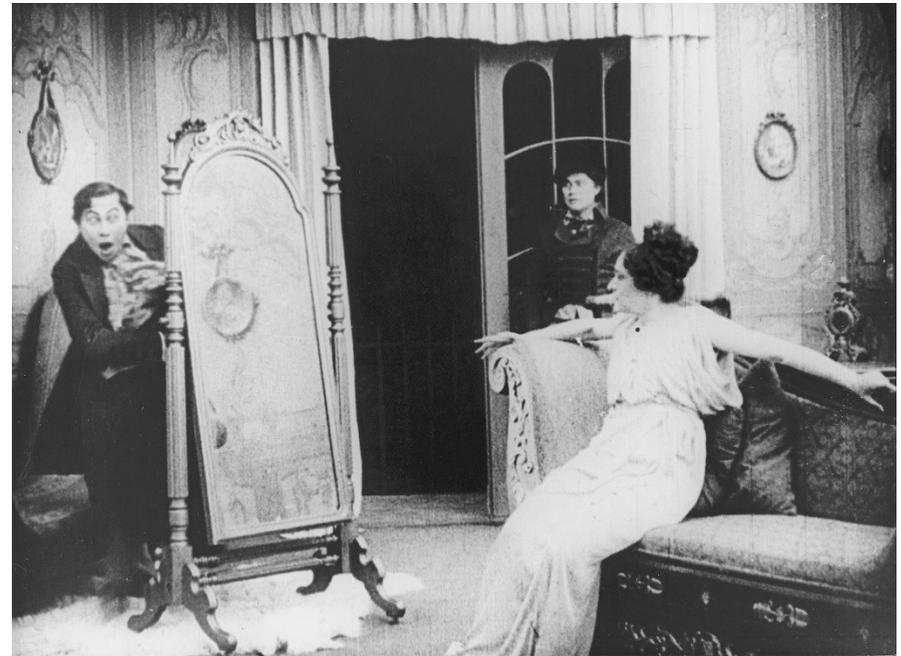


Fig. 8. Film still from *Der Student von Prag* (Stellan Rye, 1913).

Chapter two: the First World War in art and film

Introduction

“More, perhaps, than any other conflict, the Great War had such a powerful effect on its participating artists that many of them produced an extraordinary range of eloquent work from the event.”⁸⁷

With this sentence, Richard Cork signifies, in *Bitter truth: avant-garde and the Great War* (1994), the importance of the First World War in the lives of avant-garde artists. Of the young generation of artists many participated

⁸⁷ Cork, Richard, *A bitter truth: avant-garde and the Great War*, New Haven 1994, p. 8.

actively in the conflict, which profoundly affected the depiction of the war in their work as well as their work after the armistice.

The depiction of war in art, through the means of battle or history painting, was at a peak in the period between the French Revolution and the First World War. In *Imagined Battles: reflections of war in European art* (1997) art historian Peter Paret discusses that this period did not only see a high amount of paintings on the subject of war, but also significant developments that would greatly affect the depiction of war during the modern age.⁸⁸ This surge was driven by a new found interest in history, with the inclusion on contemporary history, the growth of nations and the spread of politics through different layers of society. These kinds of paintings could then serve as a validation of political views; the depiction of suffering soldiers showed the common man’s devotion to society and his nation.

Thus, in academic painting at the end of the eighteenth century two types of battle art existed: classical depictions of the commander as a hero, or the newer type of depicting the masses. In both types arose a new awareness of the human cost of battle, which was sometimes explicitly shown, as Paret argues, “even if this new emphasis is sometimes little more than a device to elevate the superhuman leader for whom men are sacrificed and sacrifice themselves.”⁸⁹ Very rarely, and often not officially

⁸⁸ Paret, Peter, *Imagined battles: reflections of war in European art*, Chapel Hill 1997

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

supported, painters would depict just the human suffering, unheroic, without showing the greater cause that their death served. These were not acceptable subjects for an academic painter in the Napoleonic age. Moreover, these works were not made from own experience, but rather in studios with the use of models to fill in the details. However, changes in warfare and the expansion of the battlefield due to technical progression would, in time, require a different approach to the depiction of the subject. According to Paret, “[c]hanges in warfare, changes in aesthetic theory and taste, the new importance of the common soldier – all affected and gradually altered the character of battle painting.”⁹⁰ A solution was found in the depiction of a smaller segment that would stand for the whole.

A change in a truly different direction came with the soldier portraits of Géricault, in the early nineteenth century. Géricault painted these works, not to show the heroic aspect of battle, but merely to show the humanity of these men, to show the social aspect behind the warfare. Moreover, Paret argues, that:

“[the] acknowledgement of the human cost of war, which fit easily into celebratory and exhortative images, and was a major element in Géricault’s analyses of French soldiers and veterans at the end of the empire, could also become the basis for criticism of

its inevitable cruelties and even for the condemnation of war itself.”⁹¹

Like the depiction of heroic leaders could inspire dedication to the nation, the tragedy of war could inspire antiwar sentiments. This would remain true, even throughout the modern era.

Another example of works that showed the human, darker side of war, is Goya’s series *The disasters of war* (created 1809-20, first published, posthumously, in 1863). This large collection of prints shows specific historical events while simultaneously showing universal themes, common themes in war art. According to Paret this forms a bridge between early nineteenth century and the modern depiction of war.⁹² Moreover, Goya brings in a new element: the suffering of society through war, by showing the involvement of women and children in military scenes or as victims of the war in general. He depicts the flaws in human nature, leaders and commanders not excluded. Aside from some distinction, both sides of the conflict are equal in displaying cruelty towards their opponents.

By and large, these same characteristics are seen in depictions of the First World War. Although propagandistic imagery would oppose a patriotic hero with a barbaric offender, independent artists now showed soldiers from both sides as equals. These painted and graphic interpretations remained an important source for information, although

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 68.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 69.

⁹² Ibid., p. 70.

photography and film were already available during that period, they were not used to show actual combat. Most photographs and films of this war are either staged or show just the aftermath of a battle. The numerous artists on the battlefields had the opportunity to sketch from reality and create works of real events. However, these works were not necessarily realistic, artists experimented with ways to depict the war, which could also be in a symbolical or allegorical way, or with any degree of abstraction.

The drastic change of the depiction of warfare in the nineteenth century gave these artists during the First World War more freedom in their choice of subject matter, point of view or style. It is noteworthy that these developments are not only achieved by intrinsic changes within the arts, but also by changes in society, and political and military systems. According to Paret, these changes are largely depended on the position of the soldier with society.⁹³ The reasons why these men have been drawn into war have changed from a professional choice to a necessity that is either demanded by a military system or expected by society. Many of the volunteers that entered into the First World War did this because they knew that they eventually would be drafted anyway. These changes explain the shift from the depiction of heroism to the stress on the war's human cost.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 112.

In the following chapter we will see how some of the involved artists were initially attracted to the grandness of the war, as a subject that would inspire great art. However, with their involvement, by realizing the reality of the events, their interpretation and treatment of the subject would change. According to Paret, in whatever manner the subject is ultimately represented, the artist must confront the physical and emotional reality of the war to be able to recognize all involved factors.⁹⁴ The following artists did this, all in a different way and depicted their understanding and interpretation of the reality of the events in their artwork.

Artists and the First World War

In 1914, Max Beckmann showed the people's reaction to the declaration of war (*Kriegserklärung*, 1914, see fig. 9). He depicts a group of people that have gathered at the Kronprinzenpalais in Berlin, in early August 1914. He shows that the responses to the decision varied greatly, from indifference to curiosity and disconcertment. Germany's involvement in the First World War started when they officially declared war on Russia on 1 August 1914, following its mobilization in support of Serbia, which was in war with Austria-Hungary after the assassination of archduke Franz Ferdinand. Two days later, Germany also declared war on France and invaded Belgium, France, Luxembourg and Poland. As a response, Great Britain declared war on Germany and send its troops to France.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 113.

These first few days already show the sheer complexity of the conflict and the fragmentation of activity. For this reason, it would be impossible to discuss the war in great detail, except when in the accounts of specific painters these details have proven to be significant to their experience.⁹⁵

It is important to consider that, by the end of August 1914 the greater part of Europe was involved in the war and many other countries followed in the next years – including, for example Italy in May 1915 and the United States in April 1917. For the art scene this meant that a generation of young artists from all participating countries, of which many were part of various avant-garde movements, were involved in the war, one way or another. Most of these artists were fit for active duty and either volunteered or were drafted into military service, but not all in fighting positions. This meant that on the side of the Allied (Entente) Powers, for instance, C.R.W. Nevinson, Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash and Wyndham Lewis were part of the British army, Fernand Léger, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Guillaume Apollinaire were in the French army, Umberto Boccioni and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti joined the Italian army, and Kasimir Malevich and Mikhail Larionov were in the Russian army. The enemy, the Central Powers, included Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele with Austria-Hungary and, most importantly, many of the previously mentioned artist

⁹⁵ For a comprehensive survey of the involvement of artists in the First World War, see: Cork, Richard, *A Bitter Truth: avant-garde art and the Great War*, New Haven 1994. A compendious survey of the First World War (Dutch): Koch, Koen, *Een kleine geschiedenis van de Grote Oorlog, 1914-1918*, Amsterdam 2010. Detailed studies of Germany's involvement in the First World War, see:

for Germany: founders and members of the Brücke Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Pechstein and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner; August Macke and Franz Marc of the Blaue Reiter; and other artists who participated in expressionist exhibitions and publications, including Ernst Barlach, Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz and Ludwig Meidner.

These artists, who were already involved in revolutionary movements before the war, sought for a way to depict their experiences, which sometimes required an adaptation of style, and thereby challenge the images of official war propaganda. Many were angered by the view of events that was presented in propaganda imagery and aimed to convey the reality of the war to the public. Although active service would sometimes interfere, they attempted to continue their work during their deployment. Moreover, their revolutionary styles, including cubism, futurism and vorticism, were already quite suitable to depict modern, technological warfare with its cannons, explosions of shells, tanks, machineguns, trenches, poison gas, trains, airplanes and the desolation of cities and landscapes that was caused by the destructive power of this technology.

They also used their art for the depiction of specific events, that were distorted or trivialized by official sources and therefore were not fully comprehended by the home front. Since the greater part of the avant-garde

Chickering, Roger, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918*, Cambridge 2004. Herwig, Holger H., *The First World War : Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918*, London 1997. Hewitson, Mark, *Germany and the causes of the First World War*, Oxford 2004.

artists served on the Western Front, these events have been depicted most. Scenes of Flanders show the battles of Ypres and Passchendaele, which was the stage of five battles between the allied troops of France, Belgium and Great Britain, and the German Empire, and took place throughout the entire war and was the site of great losses and destruction. Then, 1916 can be seen as the year of the great battles and massive losses in France. The French Champagne region saw the Battle of Verdun from February to December 1916, where France fought Germany, with a total of casualties of over 700.000. Simultaneously, in the Battle of the Somme, which lasted from July to November 1916, the British Empire and France opposed Germany and over a million were killed. To a lesser extent artists were active at the Eastern front, Italian front and in the Middle East (e.g. Gallipoli in 1915-16). Representation of the war was not limited to land: air raids were depicted as well as battles at sea, noting their importance for the progression of the war. That is, for instance, Germany's resumption submarine warfare in 1917 formed a cause for the United States to finally enter the war.

As Beckmann depicted in *Kriegerklärung*, the war was received with mixed emotions by the German population, as well as artists in particular. By some it was greeted with enthusiasm and was believed to be an opportunity to fight against the decline of society. However, later in this chapter we will see how the active experience of the destruction at the

front turned this optimism around in the cases of Beckmann and Otto Dix. An unlucky few even fell victim to the destructive force of battle. August Macke was one of the first artists to sign up and among the first to be killed, in the second month of the war in the French Champagne region. Max Ernst later recalled that Macke saw war as a grandiose manifestation of modernity and a philosophical necessity, however, after some time at the front Macke wrote to his wife that the reality of war was much more terrible than the people at home could imagine.⁹⁶ His friend Franz Marc, who volunteered with enthusiasm in September 1914, and was saddened but not thoroughly disillusioned after Macke's death, fell at the battle of Verdun in March 1916. In the Austrian army, Oskar Kokoschka entered the war already depressed. He narrowly escaped death when he was severely wounded and stabbed in the chest with a bayonet at the Eastern Front. Finally, after serving some time as a prison guard, Egon Schiele fell victim to the Spanish flu pandemic, in October 1918.

Meanwhile, at the home front, the war began to manifest itself as well, either through the return of artists, the grief over the death of family members and friends, or through the growing scarcity of resources, causing artists to engage in political activities (see chapter 1). Käthe Kollwitz tragically lost her youngest son Peter, who entered the war as a volunteer and fell in Flanders in October 1914 (as she depicted in *Die Freiwilligen*, 1922-23, fig. 10). Even before war she had made socially engaged work

⁹⁶ Cork 1994 (see note 87), pp. 42-43.

and the theme of the unlucky, grieving mothers and wives now became an obsession, and show the permeation of the war into the home front.

The start of the defeat of Germany is marked by the Battle of Amiens, on 8 August 1918. In the beginning of 1918 they had been able to gain terrain on the Allied troops by means of a campaign of spring offensives, which had been made possible by the redistribution of troops following the armistice with the Bolsheviks at the end of 1917. However, in August at Amiens, Germany had to yield to the Allies superior numbers of tanks, artillery and air force, which enforced great gain of terrain for the Allies, and great losses, losing morale and capitulation of soldiers on the German side. This was the start of a forced retreat of Germany, which finally ended with the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II on November 9th and the signing of the armistice of November 11th.

As a consequence, losing the war for Germany meant taking the blame for the war and suffering heavy penalties enforced by the Treaty of Versailles, signed in June 1919. These war settlements included Germany's acceptance of its responsibility for the war, imposition of payment of the reparations of war damage (established at a sum of Dm132 billion, which never was paid off), a territorial settlement with the redistribution of Germany's colonies, measure of arms control and the establishment of the League of Nations. This had devastating consequences for the German society, which had millions of men killed, even more

wounded and disabled and now faced large economic problems. This caused the artists to become even more politically and socially engaged, expressing socialist pacifist or anti-militaristic ideals.

During the war, the German authorities intervened in the production of films in order to restrict the influence of foreign anti-German films as well as to stimulate domestic films in terms of quality and patriotic content. However, the mere scale of film production (creation, distribution, exhibition) made it impossible to react as quickly to the war as other art forms. Moreover, governmental involvement meant that these films were more limited in terms of its content.

The first step was taken in 1914 with the ban on the import of films from enemy countries. Although older foreign films were still shown and some countries (like the USA) were not officially enemies of Germany at the time, this created a boost for the Germany based film industry, which had only made up a small part of the entire German film market before the war. The government involvement into the production of films started in 1916, with the foundation of the film company Deulig (Deutsche Lichtspiel-Gesellschaft), which was to create appropriate documentary films, meaning films that were able to represent Germany at home as well as abroad.⁹⁷ These documentary films formed a contrast with the foreign films that had come to Germany before the war, which were considered to

⁹⁷ Kracauer 1947 (see note 4), p. 35.

be representative of mass entertainment. The public began to see these foreign films as a product of the decline of Western culture and what was wrong with contemporary society. In January 1916 Bufa (Bild und Filmamt) was founded, which was a government agency with the objective to coordinate film initiatives and stimulate the use of the medium as a propagandist tool, for example, by making documentaries of military activities. Moreover, they were also occupied with distributing films and even supplying the frontlines with film theaters. At the end of 1917, major steps were taken by creating another company, UFA (Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft), which was initiated by military commanders and financially backed by large companies, with the purpose of rising the domestic production by creating large screen propagandas, with educational purposes, that were to represent German culture. However, this real purpose and the involvement of the government was hidden from the public, to hide its propagandistic nature.

The documentary films were supposed to serve as an authentic product that was able to show the reality of the war to the homefront. However, actual battle was usually not allowed to be filmed, and since these films had a specific purpose, they were staged and edited in a way that would increase the public's support of and involvement in the war. Moreover, the sheer nature of modern warfare made it impossible to capture this reality on film (see the 'depiction of war in art'). But the importance of the

illusionistic qualities of this material is illustrated by the representation of the Battle of the Somme in a British film from 1916, which inspired the surge in German interest in propagandist film. In a 77 minute film they used authentic footage of batteries in action, combined with staged footage of an attack. And although the deaths were staged, the wounded from both sides were real, and thereby provided a glimpse into the real events on the battlefield. The British War Office used the film as anti-German propaganda, which was very effective. After its release it was not only viewed by millions of Brits, but was distributed widely among allied countries.⁹⁸ The effectivity of this film could not be equaled by the German domestic propaganda before the investment and the foundation of the Bufa and UFA, that studied the Somme film was studied and attempted to copy it. After the war, the UFA remained, but the depiction of war had become taboo, as was the case with other film production companies after the armistice.

The German cause

Max Beckmann

Max Beckmann's life, specifically his war experiences, are well documented. Through his paintings, sketches, diaries and letters the painter can be followed from the start of his career until his death in 1950. Especially the period in 1914 and 1915 when he was sent to the Western

⁹⁸ Kaes 2009 (see note 3), p. 30.

Front during the First World War, the letters to his first wife Minna Beckmann-Tube, quoted below, show the psychological impact this firsthand experience of the war had on him.⁹⁹

At the start of the war, Beckmann was immediately interested in being involved and looked forward to the excitement of the experiences of the war, and the way in which this would inspire his art. Although he writes in August 1914 to his publisher that he was employed as Landsturm (infantry), he enters the war in September as a medical orderly.¹⁰⁰ His first impressions were those of the German enthusiasm for the war, the soldiers anticipating the arrival at the front, singing.

“Sie [das Wetter] ist aber vorüber, und mein Lebenswillen ist augenblicklich starker als je, trotzdem ich schon furchtbare Sachen miterlebt habe und selbst schon einigemal mit gestorben bin. Aber je öfter man stirbt, um so intensiver lebt man. Ich habe gezeichnet, das sichert einen gegen Tod und Gefahr.”¹⁰¹ “Draußen das wunderbar großartige Geräusch der Schlacht. Ich ging hinaus durch verwundeter und maroder Soldaten, die vom Schlachtfeld kamen und hörte diese

eigenartige schaurig großartige Musik. Wie wenn die Tore zur Ewigkeit aufgerissen werden ist es, wenn so eine große Salve herüberklingt. Alles suggeriert einem den Raum, die Ferne die Unendlichkeit. Ich möchte, ich könnte dieses Geräusch malen. Ah, diese Weite und unheimlich schöne Tiefe!”¹⁰²

In March 1915, he writes of the beautiful variety of faces.

“Er sind wunderbare Menschen und Gesichter darunter. Viele, die ich liebe und die ich alle zeichnen werde.”¹⁰³ Intelligent faces, primitive faces, grotesk and wild faces. “Ich selbst schwanke andauernd zwischen großer Freude über alles Neue, was ich sehe, zwischen Depression über den Verlust meiner Individualität und einem Gefühl tiefer Ironie über mich und auch gelegentlich über die Welt.”¹⁰⁴

This letter shows that although the war remains an inexhaustible source of inspiration, its horrors are starting to affect Beckmann’s spirit.

⁹⁹ Beckmann, Max, Uwe M. Schneede (ed.), Klaus Gallwitz, *Briefe, Band I: 1899-1925*, Munich 1993. Following notes contain the notation of dates as used by Beckmann.

¹⁰⁰ Beckmann to Reinhard Piper, Hermsdorf 15. August 14. In: *ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁰¹ Beckmann to Minna, M. den 3. Okt. 1914. In: *ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

¹⁰² Beckmann to Minna, G. den 11 Okt. 1914. Probably in Belgium. In: *ibid.*, pp. 98-100.

¹⁰³ Beckmann to Minna, Courtray, d. 2.3.1915.. In: *ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

¹⁰⁴ Beckmann to Minna, Courtray, d. 2.3.1915.. In: *ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

At the end of that month Beckmann is employed by a chief medical orderly to decorate the walls of a bathhouse in Wervik, near the front at Ypres. In this occupation he seems to be detached from the actual fighting, but in his letters can be seen that for him the war is still very present through his continuing work in the field hospital. In most letters of this period he speaks of the omnipresence of gunfire and the thunder of the large cannons. On April 12th he writes that he is lucky to be able to experience this much under such agreeable conditions. By acknowledging this he seems to realize that his experience is an exceptional one, to be without risk, so close to the battlefield. But however ‘inconvenient’ the war is, he considers it to be food for his art: “Meine Kunst kriegt hier zu fressen”.¹⁰⁵ This is especially evident to him, since he is still involved with the military hospital to which a constant stream of heavily wounded soldiers is brought from the Second Battle of Ypres (21 April-25 May 1915). During this period his letters become more and more melancholic: “Zähne zusammenbeißen und durchhalten, durch den Krieg und durch das Leben, was ja gar nicht so verschieden ist.”¹⁰⁶ Therefore, his experiences have not only affected his views on the war, but also on life in general.

On April 28 he writes to Minna that he has been to the real front for the first time and of the gruesome things he drew while being there. “Ich

habe eigentlich wenig Angst gehabt, ein seltsam fatalisches Gefühl von Sicherheit umgab mich, so daß ich ruhig zeichnen konnte, während nicht allzu weit von mir Schwefelgranaten einschlugen, und sich die giftig gelben und grünen Wolken langsam vorbeiwälzten.”¹⁰⁷ This shows that although being involved he remained oddly detached. This changes, however, a few days later, as he writes on 4 May: “Nun habe ich fürs erste Mal genug bekommen.” He writes this after he went to a medical post on the edge of the trenches. In a long letter he gives a detailed account of his experiences of a place where the dying and heavily wounded are brought, while around them grenades explode. After this, he gladly retreats to work on his paintings in the bathhouse. Weeks later he finally enters a trench and writes to Minna of the fear he experienced, in a place where men live between the countless graves of other men. “Hier war die Existenz des Lebens wirklich zum paradoxen Witz geworden.”¹⁰⁸

The war began to take its toll on Beckmann: “Was würden wir armen Menschen machen, wenn wir uns nicht immer wieder eine Idee schaffen würden von Vaterland, Liebe, Kunst und Religion, mit der wir das finstre schwarze Loch immer wieder so ein bißchen verdecken können. Dieses grenzenlose Verlassensein in der Ewigkeit. Dieses Alleinsein.”¹⁰⁹ In the

¹⁰⁵ “Für mich ist der Krieg ein Wunder, wenn auch ein ziemlich unbequemes. Meine Kunst kriegt hier zu fressen.” Beckmann to Minna, V., d. 18.4.1915. Throughout the following letters, Beckmann refers to Wervik with “V.”. In: *ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

¹⁰⁶ Beckmann to Minna, V., d. 24.4.1915. In: *ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

¹⁰⁷ Beckmann to Minna, V., d. 28.4.15. In: *ibid.*, pp. 123-124.

¹⁰⁸ Beckmann to Minna, V., d. 21.5.15. In: *ibid.*, pp. 133-135.

¹⁰⁹ Beckmann to Minna, V., d. 24.5.15. In: *ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

same letter he writes that he has had nightmares of the end of the world for the twentieth night.

In June he describes the town of Ypres as a *fata morgana* with the skeleton of a church tower, destroyed houses and vast plains with graves, crosses and helmets.¹¹⁰ At this point he seems to be less able to work and wishes for the war to be over so he can paint again.¹¹¹

There is a gap in the letters from the middle of June onwards, which is the period in which Beckmann is dismissed for medical/mental reasons. Not much is known of the following months, but in September he has been restationed to Strasbourg and writes Minna again.

“Für mich ist jeder Tag ein Kampf. Und zwar ein Kampf mit mir selbst und den bösen Träumen die um mein Haupt surren wie die Mücken. »Wir kom[m]en doch noch, wir kom[m]en doch noch!« singen sie. [...] Arbeit hilft mir im[m]er über meine verschiedenen Verfolgungswahnsinsanfalle fort.”¹¹²

His letters shows his pessimism about life, the continuous struggle with bad dreams, thoughts and paranoia. This state of mind is far removed from

the optimism with which he entered the war. During this period in Strasbourg, Beckmann probably conceptualized his *Selbstbilnis als Krankenpfleger* (1915, fig. 11), which he painted later in Frankfurt.¹¹³ He depicts himself while painting, which helped him through his period in Belgium as well as his nervous breakdown.

In most of his letters, Beckmann mentions how he is often drawing other soldiers, towns or landscapes. However, the published sketchbooks do not show as much as he must have made during this period. Sketchbooks 6 contains only two studies of military cannons, made in Boyen Fortress, where he was stationed in September 1914, before being sent to the Western Front.¹¹⁴ Sketchbook 8 was used in the Spring of in Flanders and contains a few written notes and several studies of situations in the military hospital and soldiers outside the battlefield.¹¹⁵ These corresponded to the fact that, apart for a few instances, Beckmann did not spent any time at the frontline, but was mostly involved with either work in the hospital or painting the frescos. Sketchbook 9 consists mainly of notes made during his stay in Strasbourg in the summer of 1915, among them lists of etchings and an overview of his accommodations during his deployment. The few sketches, mostly plans for etches, are more rough and

¹¹⁰ Beckmann to Minna, V., d. 7.6.15. In *ibid.*, p. 140.

¹¹¹ Beckmann to Minna, V., d. 8.6.15.. In: *ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

¹¹² Beckmann to Minna, Straßburg, 5. Sept. 15. In: *ibid.*, pp. 143-145.

¹¹³ Schulz-Hoffmann, Carla, Judith C. Weiss, *Max Beckmann Retrospektive*, exh. cat. Munich/Berlin/Saint Louis (Haus der Kunst/Nationalgalerie/Saint Louis Art Museum) 1984, p. 200.

¹¹⁴ Zeiller, Christiane, *Max Beckmann: Die Skizzenbücher / Max Beckmann: the sketchbooks*, Ostfildern 2008, vol. 1, p. 230.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.1, pp. 259-267.

contain more gruesome scenes than the previous books. One shows a speared head surrounded by people with slit throats, another a scene of rape. The list of etchings includes *Die Granate* (1915 (published 1918), fig. 12), which depicts a chaotic scene of a grenade exploding among soldiers, possibly recalling Beckmann's experiences of 4 May 1915 (as described above).¹¹⁶ While one soldier turns his back and runs away, other remains in position and aim their rifles, and three figures in the foreground already appear to be dead or dying, their corpses bloody and mutilated. The central figure's cheek has been blown off, but he still stares coldly at the viewer.¹¹⁷ Remembering Beckmann's disturbed state of mind in that period, his change to this terrific subject matter is hardly surprising.

Otto Dix

Contrary to the case of Max Beckmann, few ego-documents of Otto Dix have been published. Moreover, Dix actively experienced the war for its entire duration, in several locations, from his training in 1914 and 1915 in Germany until his dismissal from the Eastern Front, after the armistice, in 1918. Dix's original war journal still exists, but has not been published as such, still, fragments are quoted in several publications.¹¹⁸ The most useful publication in this respect, is Linda McGreevy's *A bitter witness: Otto Dix*

and the Great War (2001), in which she follows Dix's experiences on the Western as well as the Eastern Front and his involvement in several major campaigns and battles, while simultaneously placing this in the context of the war as a whole, in order to examine whether Dix's paintings and print-cycle about the war correspond with his own experiences.¹¹⁹ This is done in great detail, with attention to historical facts, the details of warfare and tactics, accounts of eyewitnesses from both sides and the experiences of other artists, which has the disadvantage that it makes it hard to trace the information that applies specifically to Dix's war experience, since it is shattered throughout the book.

Dix entered the war as a volunteer, in August 1914, and was placed in the reserve corps for the field artillery regiment. "Ich bin ein Wirklichkeitsmensch. Alle Untiefen des Lebens musste ich selber erleben. Deswegen ging ich in den Krieg."¹²⁰ This reflects the same sentiments as were expressed by Beckmann: only through intense experiences the reality of the world can be understood. Moreover, Dix was an adherent of Nietzsche's writings (Nietzsche's *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882) was one of the two books he brought to the front) and therewith a believer in the theory of creation through destruction. In that respect, the firsthand experience of battle was a great opportunity. In the first year of the war

¹¹⁶ Ibid., vol.1, p. 306.

¹¹⁷ Exists in different states.

¹¹⁸ The diary is presented by Veronika Mertens, curator of Galerie Albstadt, in a video: 'Otto Dix. Das Kriegstagebuch' [dctp.tv]: <http://kunstschau.netsamurai.de/2014/04/04/otto-dix-der-krieg/> on 05-06-2014.

¹¹⁹ McGreevy, Linda, *A bitter witness: Otto Dix and the Great War*, New York 2001.

¹²⁰ From video about diary (see note 118).

Dix received training on the use of modern weaponry after which he was transferred to an infantry regiment as a machine-gunner, and received specific training to fight in the frontline trenches. Machine-gun companies were not permanently attached to the same regiment, but moved around to regions where the gun-power was needed most. Consequentially, the remainder of Dix's war record is very fragmented. Still, in some cases, these orders for moving to other regions or positions sometimes removed Dix from the most heavy battles, to be restationed in much more quiet regions. During his training period, Dix painted three self-portraits, all showing him as a different type of soldier. *Selbstbildnis mit Artelleriehelm* (1914, fig. 13), painted in the bright colors and rough brushstrokes of expressionism, shows Dix in a dignified uniform with the distinctive German Pickelhaube, looking composed and confident. The second, *Selbstbildnis als Soldat in rotem Hemd* (1914, fig. 14, painted on the back of *Selbstbildnis mit Artelleriehelm*) is much more dynamic. He has lost the elements which defined him as a German soldier and is depicted bald, with no distinctive uniform. His neck is twisted, his face distorted and the red, yellow and blue streaks across the canvas make it seem like he already is engaged in a bloody battle. Finally, the *Selbstbildnis als Mars* (1915, fig. 15) was made shortly before Dix left training. It is painted in a combination of futurist and expressionist elements and anticipated the

frontline battle experiences in the trenches.¹²¹ Although he shows himself again with Pickelhaube and uniform, this time he is surrounded by exploding shells, fiery horses, a skull with gleaming red eyes and mouths with bloody teeth.

In September 1915 Dix was posted to troops in the Champagne region, and was promoted to lance-corporal. About his first arrival at the frontline Dix wrote in 1949:

“Then we went into the beastly trench system of the front, into the soft white chalk trenches of Champagne, where one was tormented by the stench of the dead all around, crouching all day in a muddy corrugated foxhole, at best emerging at night. [...] Endless and bleak [trenches], running this way and that before a pair of dark, shot-up broken-down pines, a white, grey, yellow landscape of death extended.”¹²²

He also writes that, before he even saw the trenches, he already saw the wounded retreating. Shortly after his arrival at the front, Dix painted his *Selbstporträt als Schießscheibe* (1915, fig. 16). He stares blankly at the viewer, waiting to be executed, with the bright red of his uniform catching attention. It seems that Dix was well aware of the position he was in and

¹²¹ Dix used a similar style in his painting *Der Krieg (Das Geschütz)*, 1914 (Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf) in which he showed a large cannon as the symbol of destruction.

¹²² McGreevy 2001 (see note 119), p. 37.

that it was only a matter of time before he too would leave the battlefield wounded.

In early 1916, Dix's division participated in heavy battles in the Champagne region (in Sainte.-Marie-à-Py and Tahure) near Verdun. These battles and their consequences are depicted in prints in Dix's *Der Krieg*-cycle from 1924: *Verschüttete (Januar 1916, Champagne)*, *Tote vor der Stellung bei Tahure* and *Die Irrsinige von Ste-Marie-à-Py* (see appendix A, fig. 1-3).¹²³ Later, in May 1916, he is posted near Reims, which was a quiet region at that moment, where Dix was able to occupy himself with drawing and reading, while the Battle of Verdun took place some hundred kilometers to the east. The relative calm of those months is reflected in *Trichterfeld bei Dontrien von Leuchtkugeln erhellt*, *Granattrichter mit Blumen (Früling 1916 vor Reims)* and *Gefunden beim Grabendurchstich (Auberive)* (appendix A, fig. 4-6), and which do not reflect on active battle, but on the traces left afterwards.

Dix's division was restationed in the Somme region in July 1916, based mostly at Monaçu Farm, near Cléry-sur-Somme, where he would stay until after the fall and winter campaigns. The strikingly positive outlook on the situation that Dix seemed to have in this period, was possibly only maintained to keep up appearances for the censors: every letter sent from the front was read and checked by military officials. A few

days before he would become involved at the Somme, he wrote in Esperanto "I strongly hope that peace will come soon, but I don't believe it."¹²⁴ This corresponds with the diminishing hopes of soldiers and civilians, throughout the year 1916, which saw some of the greatest catastrophes and heaviest losses of the war. Dix experienced one of the heavy fights of the Battle of the Somme at Monaçu Farm, where he was stuck for three weeks and lived through a seven day barrage during which their position was constantly shelled. In his own account, the constant bombarding caused the trenches to collapse, he was partly buried, weaponry was lost, soldiers fled, and because of fog, German batteries shelled their own men. "Frightful confusion, terrible losses."¹²⁵ After the war, in an interview, he commented on the experience and the feeling of being in a barrage.

"I was afraid as a young man. Naturally, when you moved slowly forward [...] to the front [...] the heavy barrage was like hell. Oh well – it's easy to laugh about it now – there was some shit in people's pants, I tell you. But the farther up you moved, the less afraid you were. At the real front [...] you weren't afraid at all. [...] These are all the phenomena that I absolutely had to experience. I [...] had to see how someone next to me suddenly fell and was gone, the bullet

¹²³ The prints of this cycle that are discussed in the text are included in appendix A. All prints: McGreevy 2001 (see note 119), pp.241-271.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 57.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 60.

hitting him right in the middle. I had to experience that all very precisely. I wanted to. In other words, I'm not a pacifist at all. Or maybe I was a curious person. I had to see it all for myself. I am such a realist, you know, that I have to see everything with my own eyes in order to confirm that that's the way it is."¹²⁶

After this battle Dix took a leave and when he eventually returned to the front he experienced a relatively quiet few months. He would join the fight again in October. During his period at the Somme, Dix started his war journal, which contains lists of duties, the men in his corps, sketches and personal comments.¹²⁷ Some of the comments in the journal reflect the prewar Nietzschean perspective on battle, on the contrast between life and death, to perceive the fights as merely a part of a dialectic, on order to make it manageable. As McGreevy states,

“[Dix] long declared that he said ‘yes’ to his situation; as he put it in his daybook, he embraced ‘... the abhorrent: lice, rats, barbed wire, fleas, grenades, bombs, caverns, corpses, blood, brandy, mice, cats, gases, cannons, shit, bullets, mortars, fire, steel, that is War! All Devil’s work!’”¹²⁸

These true consequences of the war, most of all, the omnipresence and number of corpses, are clearly depicted in most of Dix’s prints that portray that period. The reality was that the fields were effectively covered by the decaying bodies of the passing months. In a journal entry Dix wrote that “corpses are impersonal”,¹²⁹ a statement very much related to the numbing of senses caused by the enormous amounts of bodies constantly surrounding the soldiers.

Many prints in the Krieg-cycle show the horrific situations Dix found himself in during the months at the Somme: the collapsing trenches (A fig. 1, fig. 7), the severely wounded (A fig. 8-9), the battle at Monaçu Farm (A fig. 10), the retreat of weary soldiers (A fig. 11) and the ubiquity of corpses (A fig. 12-13).

At the beginning of 1917, Dix remained in the region near Artois, except for a short period along the Dutch-Belgian border (effectively missing great losses near Ypres), moving along different positions. During this same period, at the home front, the opposition against the war grew, due to the great loss of lives, the lack of resources, and poverty. Although Dix had returned in time for the Battle of Passchendaele (Third Battle of Ypres), starting in July, he was quickly ordered to return to the northern border for two months, again missing great losses.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 274.

¹²⁷ As discussed in: *ibid.*, p. 73.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 73.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

October brought a great change when Dix was moved to the Eastern Front: the worn-out divisions from the West were moved east and replaced by the more fresh troops who were stationed there. In Northern Belarus, Dix experienced an almost peaceful time, described by him as:

“Finally there’s a definite cease-fire! Yesterday our regimental choir stood at the edge of the trenches in a forward line concert. The Russian troops crowded through our barbed wire and applauded our soldiers. An historic moment for movies!”¹³⁰

Unfortunately for Dix, he was sent back to the Western Front in the middle of December that same year, and he arrived in France in March 1918, after a short illness. He was again stationed in the Somme region near Arras, but not at the places where the heaviest battles took place, which left him time to continue his drawing. He was wounded when he was struck in the neck by a fragment of a shattered machine gun and was again sent to a field hospital. He returned to Flanders and saw and encountered several battles while retreating through Flanders. In November he was sent east again, this time to West Prussia. Here Dix was qualified for observer status in the Fortress Flying Sections, for which he had applied a year earlier. But at this point in the war, it was too late to start training. According to McGreevy, “he would speak of his wish to see the landscape of the front

from the air, and it is likely that the mythos surrounding the elite aviators, whose high moral qualities embodied the ‘new man’, was attractive to the ambitious Nietzschean artist.”¹³¹

When the armistice came, troops prepared for demobilization and Dix was discharged 22 December 1918. Following the statements Dix made after the war, it becomes clear that he needed time to come to terms with the experienced horrors and attempted to use his art to do so.

“All art is exorcism. I paint dreams and visions too; the dreams and visions of my time... of all people! I painted many things, war too, nightmares too, horrible things... Painting is the effort to produce order; order in yourself. There is much chaos in me, much chaos in our time.”¹³²

His true comprehension of the influence of these experience on his mental state came later.

“As a young person, you don’t even notice that it has been weighing on you inside. Because for years, at least ten years, I kept having these dreams where I would have to crawl through the ruins of houses, through corridors hardly wide enough for me to get

¹³⁰ Dix in a letter to Helene Jacob. Ibid., p. 101.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 115.

¹³² Ibid., p. 201.

through. The ruins were always in my dreams. Not that painting was a release for me.”¹³³

That the war had this enormous impact on Dix’s state of mind can be seen in the fact that in the years after the war, he painted his experiences in the trenches several times: first, *Der Schützengraben* (1920-23, destroyed during the Nazi regime, old photograph fig. 17), second, *Der Krieg* (Dresden triptych, 1929-32, fig. 18), *Flandern, zu Henri Barbusse ‘Le Feu’* (1934-36, fig. 19). Of these works, Dix has said that he did not paint them as a general anti-war statement, as to prevent or warn for future wars, but to banish war (from himself). *Der Schützengraben* (with a composition very similar to the central panel of the Dresden triptych) received many negative reaction in the press to its horrific and graphic imagery, when it was first shown in 1924, but within months it was bought by the director of the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne. An insightful critic, Ernst Kállai, wrote in *Das Kunstblatt* that “[t]he entire debate missed the true significance of the painting, which can be understood neither purely aesthetically nor totally in terms of content. Rather, it represents a deeply rooted spiritually contradictory unity of adulation and revulsion.”¹³⁴ Thus, although in its realistic depiction the painting is a long way from the

subjective imagery of expressionism, it still is a depiction of an internal condition within Dix: his obsession with the war.

George Grosz

The preface of George Grosz’ autobiography starts with a clarifying statement about the contents: “This is an attempt at an autobiography – and the reader should know that what I don’t say, I don’t want to say...”¹³⁵

This statement shows the complexity of dealing with an autobiographical source: on the one hand, it can be used to gain insight into the experiences and thoughts of the author, on the other hand, the author knows that what he writes will be read by a larger audience and edits his work accordingly. In this case, other publications that will be discussed below, have shown that Grosz sometimes dramatizes his own experiences.

Grosz’s experience of the First World War is told in the chapter ‘De ontdekking van de gemene Grosz’ (‘The discovery of the mean Grosz’), which covers the entire duration of the war. In the introduction to this chapter Grosz insightfully explains the mixed emotions about the war in intellectual and artistic circles. The enthusiasm and ideals disappeared when the reality of the war became clear.

een autobiografie – en de lezer dient te weten dat ik dat gene wat ik niet ook niet wil zeggen...” Grosz, George, Hans Hom (trans.), *Een klein ja, een groot nee*, Amsterdam 1978 (original english: New York 1946), p. 7.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 233.

¹³⁴ Ernst Kállai, ‘Dämonie der Satire’, *Das Kunstblatt* (1927), quoted in Mc Greevy 2001 (see note 119), p. 232.

¹³⁵ To improve the readability, Dutch citations from Grosz’s autobiography have been translated to English. My own translation from Dutch: “Dit is een poging tot

“What should I tell about the First World War, in which I took part as infantryman? About a war which I did not like from the outset and that remained alien to me? Admittedly, I was apolitical, but nonetheless grew up in a sort of humanitarian mindset. To me, war was abominations, mutilation and destruction. And did many great and intelligent people not think the same at the time?

Certainly, initially a wave of zeal spread through the country. That was a fact at the time. However, it subsided quickly and all that was left was a big void. The flowers on the helmet and in the gun barrel withered soon after. War turned out to be anything but the zeal with which it started; it became mud and lice, stupidity, disease and mutilation. The heroism of a few idealists, the absolute submission to the homeland – those things did occur, but these virtues also had a

downside, and eventually they balanced each other out.”¹³⁶

Although, in this paragraph, he states that he was on active duty in the infantry, in *Bitter Witness*, Linda F. McGreevy argues that in the period from November 1914 until May 1915 he could not have made it through basic training yet.¹³⁷ In May 1915 he was released on medical grounds: a sinus infection.

Grosz continues that the war had a profound negative influence on him and that he never, not even initially, saw it as the liberation it was supposed to be. He writes that he never believed in the things that were defended and fought for by the German army. According to him, these things were the industry, capitalists, generals and the glory of the home country. Over ten years later, Grosz depicted this very effectively in his painting *Sonnenfinsternis* (1926, fig. 20), where a rich industrialist whispers in the ear of laurelled generals in a meeting with headless ministers, while the sun is being eclipsed by money. Grosz loathed and feared the things he saw around him during his training, but instead of writing about them, he

¹³⁶ My own translation from Dutch: “Wat zou ik moeten vertellen over de Eerste Wereldoorlog waaraan ik als infanterist deelnam? Over een oorlog waar ik van meet af aan weinig mee ophad en die me steeds vreemd bleef? Ik was weliswaar apolitek, maar toch in zoiets als een humanistische geest opgegroeid. Oorlog was voor mij gruwelen, verminking en vernietiging. En dachten heel veel grote en intelligente mensen er destijds niet net zo over? Zeker, aanvankelijk sloeg er een golf van geestdrift door het land. Dat was op dat moment echt zo. Maar die roes was al spoedig vervlogen, en wat er van overbleef was een grote leegte. De

bloemen op de helm en in de geweerloop verwelkten snel. Oorlog, dat was toen allesbehalve de geestdrift van de eerste ogenblikken; het werd modder en luizen, stompzinnigheid, ziekte en mutilering. Het heldendom van een paar idealisten, de absolute overgave aan het vaderland – die dingen kwamen wel voor, maar deze deugden hadden ook hun keerzijde, en uiteindelijk hielden die elkaar in evenwicht.” Ibid., p. 127.

¹³⁷ McGreevy 2001 (see note 119), p. 160.

referred to his drawings. He depicted one of his superior officers in the drawing *Der General* (ca. 1916, fig. 21). The general, wearing the Iron Cross and spurs on his boots, stands grinning, with a distorted skull-like face, in front of a ruined city. The work of Grosz illustrates how with the position of the soldier, the depiction of war in art changed. While in premodern battle paintings the commanders were depicted as heroes, they have now become the inflictors of human misery.

Grosz continues his story at the point where he was temporarily demobilized in 1916: he was sent on leave but could at any moment be called back again. He describes the atmosphere in Berlin during his leave in 1916, the contrast of the crowded bars with the poverty and desolation of the residential areas. “The same soldiers that sang, danced and drunkenly clamped themselves to prostitutes, could later be seen discouraged, packed to the brim and covered in mud from their shifts in the trenches, walking the streets from one station to the next.”¹³⁸ According to Grosz, this showed heaven and hell’s proximity on earth. He drew, with the aid of his sketchbook from his service, the drinkers, murderers, scenes

¹³⁸ My own translation from Dutch: “Dezelfde soldaten die daar zongen, dansten en dronken aan de armen van de prostituées hingen, zag je een tijdje later weer mismoedig, gepakt en gezakt en nog met modder besmeurd van de dienst in de loopgraven door de straten trekken, van het ene station naar het andere”. Grosz 1946 (see note 135), p. 128.

¹³⁹ My own translation from Dutch: “Ik tekende soldaten zonder neus, oorlogsinvaliden met kreeftachtige stalen tentakels, twee hospitaalsoldaten die een

with soldiers, sex, dirt and the graphic and gruesome sights that were caused by the war: the war cripples.

“I drew soldiers without noses, war cripples with lobster-like tentacles, two medics wrapping a by rage overcome infantryman in a blanket, a one-armed man who, with his healthy hand, salutes a decorated lady, when she places a cookie from a bag on his bed. A colonel who embraces a fat nurse with pants undone. A medical orderly emptying a bucket filled with human body parts in a ditch. A skeleton in recruit livery being tested on his military virtue...”¹³⁹

The last one can be seen in Grosz’s print *Die Gesundheitsbeten* (*Kriegsverwendungs-fähig: fit for active duty*, B-5), which was published as part of the series *Gott mit uns*, published 1920 (see appendix B). The other eight prints in the series equally show his hate of the military commanders and their repression of common soldiers and civilians. They are shown having dinner while soldiers kill unarmed protesters in the background (*Blood is the best sauce*, B-8), standing on in a city where

door razernij aangegrepen infanterist in een paardedecken wikkelen, een eenarmige die met zijn gezonde hand een met onderscheidingen behangen dame, die een koekje uit een zak op zijn bed legt, een saluut brengt. Een kolonel die met losgeknoopte broek een dikke ziekenzuster omarmt. Een lazarethulp die allerlei menselijke lichaamsdelen uit een emmer in een kuil kiepert. Een skelet in recrutenuitmonstering, dat op zijn militaire deugdelijkheid wordt beproefd...” Ibid., p. 129.

corpses walk the streets (*Pimps of death*, B-6) and guarding men who walk in circles in a prison courtyard (*The workman's holiday*, B-4).¹⁴⁰

On leave in 1917-18 he also painted *Widmung an Oskar Panizza* (fig. 22), previously dated 1916, which shows that same chaotic atmosphere he described in his autobiography. In general, this period proved to be very fruitful for creating art. Grosz talks about meeting with other artists, writers, philosophers and other intellectuals and their discussions on politics. Although their opinions varied, the common feeling was contempt for the (military) leaders and the fear that the war could only end badly. McGreevy writes that during the war, Grosz was also actively involved in anti-war activities.¹⁴¹ In 1915, with John Heartfield (at the time still Helmut Herzfeld: fellow artist, anti-war activist, and, later, one of the key figures in the Berlin Dada movement), he sent provocative packages and postcards to soldiers at the front, in order to tempt them to desert.¹⁴² The postcards were able to pass censorship by use of non-verbal messages. He continued with this anti-militarism in his published prints from 1917 onwards, and continued with this during his period with the Berlin division of Dada.

¹⁴⁰ It is not surprising that these works were not well received by military leaders. In 1920, Grosz and his publisher were fined and the litho stones were ordered to be confiscated and destroyed. Schuster, Peter-Klaus, *George Grosz: Berlin, New York*, tent. Cat. Berlin (Neue Nationalgalerie) 1994, p. 450.

¹⁴¹ McGreevy 2001 (see note 119), pp. 159-161.

¹⁴² Both Grosz and Heartfield changed their name during the war in protest of the war and anti-British propaganda. Before this, Grosz went by Georg Ehrenfried

Then, he writes that, he is called back to arms in the middle of 1917, to train recruits and organize transportation for prisoners of war. However, this does not correspond with the dates on his letters, and the following actually took place in January 1917. Nevertheless, he writes that he couldn't cope and was found unconscious. (According to McGreevy, this is a distortion of the facts and that instead, he suffered again from a sinus infection.¹⁴³) He is hospitalized, but when he is declared healthy, his nerves are shattered and he attacks a medical orderly. "In a fit of rage I assaulted a medical orderly – and I will never forget the pleasure, yes, the cardinality with which about seven other sick 'comrades', those who were able to walk, voluntarily threw themselves on me."¹⁴⁴ This shows the intensity of the response to resistance of service, whether for good reasons or not. After this incident, Grosz stays at the hospital, suffering from depression, which he writes about to his friend Otto Schmalhausen:

“Dunkel ist um mich alles, und beinschwarz flattern die
Stunden fort. [...] Mir scheint es, als werde ich
langsam den Trübsinnswahn entgegengehen. Ich muß
hier die Sünden büßen, die mein zweiter unterbewußter

Grosz.¹⁴² Doherty, Brigid, ““See: We are all Neurasthenics!” or, the trauma of Dada montage”, *Critical Inquiry*, 24 no. 1 (autumn 1997), p. 87.

¹⁴³ McGreevy 2001 (see note 119), p. 160.

¹⁴⁴ My own translation from Dutch: “In een vlaag van woede vergreep ik me aan de hospitaalsergeant – en ik zal nooit vergeten met hoeveel plezier, ja, wellust een stuk of zeven andere zieke ‘kameraden’, lopende patiënten allemaal, zich vrijwillig bovenop me stortten.” Grosz 1946 (see note 135), p. 139.

Mensch begeht – ich durchschreite die blanke
Hölle.”¹⁴⁵

He signs this letter with “Ihr G. gestorbener”. A month later he writes again:

“Oft rasen die Melancholien, ich, ein Tantalus,
Sturzseen der Wut (hintergründig Tobsuchtszelle) und
Verzweiflung [...] jetzt gehe ich durch Höllen, und
alles Erleben in mir wurde Verwesung, Gift, und die
Kadaver dampfen – um mich sind scheue Tiere, oft
mich grinsend ansehend.”¹⁴⁶

In his autobiography he also writes how he meanwhile is surrounded by badly wounded soldiers. “All of us missed something. One his leg, another one or both eyes, a third his belly, a fourth his shin, a fifth his memory.”¹⁴⁷ By relating the stories of various patients, Grosz shows that mental problems are just another aspect of war injuries.

He writes that, during this hospital experience, his art served as a vent for his anger; he transformed his anger in drawings of everything and everyone he disliked. However, his mental problems must not have been taken seriously, for at a certain moment he was sentenced to death for

desertion. With help of his friend and art collector, count Kessler, Grosz was brought to an institution for the war neurotics instead, in Görden. He was eventually dismissed in April 1917. In a drawing from 1917, *Sanatorium* (fig. 23), Grosz depicted a sanatorium that probably represents the place in Görden. The sign on the building actually reads ‘HOTEL’ and a group of confused people, one wearing a pointed hat and screaming, another playing a trumpet, hang out in front of the entrance. He ends this chapter on the war with the statement that, at the time, he thought the war would never end, and he still questions whether it really did end: peace was declared, but everyone had changed.

In 1917-18, after his final dismissal from the hospital and military service altogether, Grosz worked with John Heartfield for the German film production and distribution companies Bufa and, later, UFA.¹⁴⁸ Although, at that moment, he was already politically opposed to the war and militarism in general and two years earlier with Heartfield was involved in an anti-militarist campaign, they both became engaged in the production of propagandist and patriotic films, since it gave them the opportunity to try out new ideas and to experiment, as well as earn money. This experimental input was especially appreciated in the production of films meant for distribution abroad. In November 1917, Grosz and Heartfield presented the

¹⁴⁵ Letter to Otto Schmalhausen, 18.1.1917, published in: Grosz, George, Herbert Knust (red.), *Briefe: 1913-1959*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1979, p. 46.

¹⁴⁶ Letter to Otto Schmalhausen, 18.2.1917, Lazarett “Kronprinz”, Guben, published in: *ibid.*, p. 46-47.

¹⁴⁷ My own translation from Dutch: “Bij ieder van ons ontbrak er wat. Bij de een zijn been, bij de ander een of allebei zijn ogen, bij de derde zijn buik, bij de vierde zijn scheenbeen, bij de vijfde zijn geheugen.” Grosz 1946 (see note 135), p. 142.

¹⁴⁸ Goergen, Jeanpaul, “Filmisch sei der Strich, klar, einfach”, George Grosz und der Film”, in: Schuster 1994 (see note 140), pp. 211-218.

ideas for four film projects reflecting pro-German sentiments: the filming of a soldier puppet show, a periodic presentation of news depicted by a drawing hand, an expressionist film with satirical tinges, and a filmic interpretation of the soldier song.¹⁴⁹ In December 1917 they started working on several projects at once: a drawing hand, an animated soldier film and a puppet film.¹⁵⁰ Although a few of these films appear to have been finished, as can be read in the correspondence of the involved people, it remains unclear whether these were actually shown in film theaters: at least one's release appears to have been blocked by censors of the UFA, in the summer of 1918, due to recent developments in the war.

In the late 1920s, Grosz was involved in the production of two other films. First, *Die Weber* (directed by Friedrich Zelnik, 1927), for which he was employed as a painter, responsible for creating designs, costumes, intertitles and decorations. The film is a historical, social drama set in the nineteenth century, in which weavers protest against exploitation and industrialization. Second, Grosz provided drawings for Erwin Piscator's *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* (1928), an animation film based on the 1923 novel of Jaroslav Hašek. The novel, as well as the film, tells the satirical story of a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War and protests the power of the military force, the church

and the police. According to a contemporary film critic, Grosz managed to transform these historical events in such a way that they were also a depiction of contemporary events.¹⁵¹ The finished product consisted of an experimental combination of photographic footage and animations of drawings, merged into an organic whole. In spite of its controversial contents, the film was approved by the censorship committee in January 1928, although it was labeled to be unsuitable for youthful viewers. Unfortunately, the film is now lost, but the general idea of the film can still be seen in the remaining drawings (fig.24-25).¹⁵² In a publication in *Blätter des Piscator-Bühne*, Grosz writes that for artists, film provides a great opportunity for reaching the masses and that animation films can be seen as "ganz große Wirkungsfläche für neue Graphik".¹⁵³

Filmmakers at the front

The war experience of German, and in Lang's case Austrian, filmmakers is not very different from those of the previously discussed painters. However, two factors prevent them to be treated in the same way. Firstly, less documentation of their war experiences is published, since scholars have mostly paid attention to their lives as filmmakers which only began after the war. Secondly, the paintings and drawings of the artists discussed

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 212.

¹⁵⁰ It is unclear whether these were the proposed projects or different ones.

¹⁵¹ Gasbarra, Felix, 'Dramaturgie am laufenden Band', in: *Erwin Piscator: Das politische Theater*, Reinbek 1963. Quoted by Goergen, in: Schuster 1994 (see note 140), p. 215.

¹⁵² Now in the collection of Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

¹⁵³ Grosz, George, 'Randzeichnungen zum Thema', *Blätter des Piscator-Bühne* January 1928; as quoted by Goergen in Schuster 1994 (see note 140), p. 217.

above gave additional insight into their experiences, but a similar direct registration is impossible in film, since it is dependent on the involvement of a large crew and the cooperation of a production company.

Nevertheless, through discussion these filmmakers experiences can be seen that these were comparable to those of the artist, which could explain the similarities in their postwar work.

Fritz Lang

The work of Austrian filmmaker Fritz Lang makes for an interesting case. In an autobiographical introduction, which he himself cut short, in Eisner's publication on his work, Lang stated that: "A chapter like this would delve deep down into one's private life. And I have always insisted that my private life has nothing to do with me or with my films."¹⁵⁴ Although frequently cited by film historians, this quote is mostly ignored or dismissed: contemporary film theory often discusses Lang's work from the perspective of his personal experiences.¹⁵⁵ Lang's concluding remark aside, he writes in this same introduction about his youthful preference for the writings of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, his architectural education and his ambition to become an artist. From archival documentation it can be seen that in early 1914 Lang was enrolled in the Académie Ranson, in

Paris, where one of his main teachers would have been the French painter and Nabis member Maurice Denis.¹⁵⁶ At the end of July, with the murder on socialist leader Jean Jaurès, the mood in Paris shifted to outspoken anti-Germanic/Austrian, which caused Lang to flee the city in a hurry.

According to his own statements, he was one of the last people to leave Paris: the very next day Germans were arrested and deported to Spain. At the end of August he writes a friend from Paris, Julius Singer, that he feels bad for not being involved in the war. "Ich bin tieftraurig; kann nicht mittun und möchte so gerne."¹⁵⁷ In January 1915 he signs up for the army as a volunteer.

The following years of Lang's military career are mapped out in the publication of documentation on the life of Fritz Lang, from 2001.¹⁵⁸ Through military archives his movements through ranks and battles are made clear, with the help of Lang's military diary. Unfortunately, this diary includes few personal notes which could give insight into Lang's opinions on the war, but it does give a good idea of his military activities and general interests (with this, a list of literature, which includes books of Goethe, Eichendorff and, most significantly, *Satan's Kinder* (1897) by Przybyszewski (see chapter 1).

¹⁵⁴ Eisner, Lotte H., *Fritz Lang*, London 1976, p. 15.

¹⁵⁵ For example, Patrick MacGilligan opens his biography of Lang with this quote. MacGilligan, Patrick, *Fritz Lang: the nature of the beast*, London 1997.

¹⁵⁶ Aurich, Rolf, et. al., *Fritz Lang: Leben und Werk, Bilde rund Dokumente 1890-1976*, Berlin 2001, pp. 17-20.

¹⁵⁷ Fritz Lang in a letter to Julius Singer, 29 August 1914. Quoted from Aurich 2001 (see note 156), p. 17.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 22-26.

At the start of 1915 he joined the Landwehr-Feldkanonendivision Nr. 13 and was quickly promoted from volunteer private in the artillery to gunner. During the war he continued to move through the ranks until he was finally promoted to lieutenant of a field artillery division. His whereabouts during the period of his training are unclear, but he seems to have been stationed in Ljutomer, Slovenia. During a part of this period he stayed there as a guest of Karol Grossmann, where he, still preoccupied about becoming an artist, was able to create several sculptures. Lang entered combat in October 1915 and the trenches in the following December, where he spent a long time working in reconnaissance missions, for which he received various decorations. This work was a very risky and heroic affair, since he had to go into hostile territory under heavy fire of the Russians. He spent hours in these attacks, sometimes repairing malfunctioning equipment, but mostly to send back reports and sketches to his own division, with which he was able to inform them of the location of unknown, specific targets. A few of these sketches have survived in his war diary (fig. 26). In one of these battles, June 1916, he received a shoulder injury, for which he shortly left the battlefield. A year later, a piece of shrapnel injured his eye, after which he was sent home to Vienna to recover. During this period he enrolled in the Academy of Fine arts, took on the role of a wounded soldier in a theater production (April 1918) and came into contact with Erich Pommer who would introduce him into

the Decla film production company in Berlin. A year after he left the battlefield he applied for an official discharge to be able to make a trip to Saint Petersburg to continue with his art studies. In this letter, he not only drew attention to his valiant performance on the battlefield, which earned him many medals, but also to his health problems contracted during combat, which included a heart condition, rheumatism and problems with his nerves ("*mein Nervenleiden*"). According to Anton Kaes, this was a common euphemism for shell shock.¹⁵⁹ It is striking that he himself used a nervous condition as a reason for medical discharge, since war neurosis was a controversial topic during the First World War (this is discussed further in chapter 3). He got permission for this trip (of which no records remain) and discharge for active service at the end of June 1918, after which he could only be deployed for home duties.

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau

During the First World War, probably in 1915, filmmaker F.W. Murnau was drafted for military service (the First Regiment of Foot Guards) and fought on both the Western front and the Eastern front.¹⁶⁰ During his time in the west, he was quickly promoted to officer and took part in the battle of Verdun. Hereafter he was sent to the region of Galicia in Eastern Europe

¹⁵⁹ Kaes 2009 (see note 3), p. 152.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 92.

and to Latvia, where he became a company commander.¹⁶¹ In Latvia he spent over a year, of which eight months continuously, in trenches, which greatly affected his morale. In a letter to his actor friend Lothar Müthel he wrote in the beginning of this period: “Ich bin so unendlich allein daß es fast schön ist, aber leider steht hier der Zwang dahinter; dass ich dies Alleinsein nicht plötzlich ändern kann, hinder den Genuss.”¹⁶² And over a year later:

“Von Monat zu Monat hab ich auf Urlaub gehofft, dann am Tage al shier die russische Offensive losging war ich schom beim Abreisen, nun gibt’s zunächst auf lange Zeit keinen mehr. Acht Monate ununterbrochener Schützengraben; das ist fürchterlich. Ich bin so müde, ich könnte wie Hamlet mich in einer nusschale für einen König von unermesslichem Gebiet halten wenn darin Friede wär, aber hier sind die – wirklich gewordenen – bösen Träume! –“¹⁶³

Strikingly, in many of the letters from this period in Latvia he writes of the beauty of the surrounding nature, which is comforting in its contrast with the reality of the battlefield.

“Draussen vor unserm Drahtverhau blüht die Heide, lange Violette Wellen und dahinter die blaugrünen Kiefernwälder, und die Sonne im Untergehen; dass man nicht aus dem Graben steigt und das Wandern beginnt, hutlos, kleiderlos: nur ein Mensch ohne Nation, ich glaube nicht dass jemand schiessen würde; aber nachts die verirrtten Kugeln würden über ihn herfallen, das er verblutete im schweren Nebel über der Heide.”¹⁶⁴

Although Murnau himself seems to suffer from this period in the trenches, he attempts to reassure Müthel, who is living in fear of finally called into service (“Ich soll ein Mörder werden!”) and vehemently opposes the idea of war itself.¹⁶⁵ Murnau urges him to just make the best of it and to switch of his intellect and to submit to animal urges.¹⁶⁶ Moreover,

¹⁶¹ Quote by Otilie Plumpe. Eisner, Lotte H., *Murnau*, London 1973, p. 18.

¹⁶² Murnau in a letter to Lothar Müthel, 8. Septb. 1915, ‘Im Schützengraben zwischen Mitau u. Friedrichstadt’ (Latvia), published in: Spiess, Eberhard (ed.), *Wenn Ihr Affen nur öfter schreiben wolltet: Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau und Lothar Müthel, 1915-1917*, Bielefeld 1991, p. 19.

¹⁶³ Murnau in a letter to Lothar Müthel, 26. Januar 1917, published in: *ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁶⁴ Murnau in a letter to Lothar Müthel, 14. August 1916, published in: *ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁶⁵ Full quote: “Man will mich einziehen, man will mich zwingen, auf Menschen, die mir nichts getan haben, zu schiessen. Ich soll ein Mörder werden. Dass Menschen, Millionen von Menschen Jahre lang wahnsinnig waren, ist kein Grund, dass ich auch wahnsinnig werde.” Müthel in a letter to Murnau, Berling 25 Mai 17, published in: *ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁶⁶ Murnau in a letter to Müthel, 11. Juni 1917, published in: *ibid.*, p. 56.

he feels that, for young men who are only preoccupied with intellectual matters, physical work can be a liberation.

In 1917, he joined the German Air Force and served as radio operator. According to his mother, he crashed eight times without being wounded. Major Wolfgang Schramm remembers him, from when he was stationed near Verdun in 1917 with a regiment of flyers, as a thoughtful young actor, who, in spite of the war, managed to “bring to things a touch of beauty, even tenderness.”¹⁶⁷ He was one of the few of the group who survived this period at Verdun, and was eventually transferred to another section. Finally, he was taken as prisoner of war in Switzerland (Andermatt), after making an emergency landing when his plane got lost in thick fog, and remained there until the armistice.

Murnau’s friend and lover, Hans Ehrenbaum-Degele, joined the army as a volunteer, but did not survive the first year of the war at the Eastern front. In his correspondence with Müthel echoes his desire, but inability to contribute to a commemorative evening for Hans. In several letters he begs Müthel to organize such an event, in collaboration with his poet friend Elske Laske-Schüler.

The death of his friend seems to have made such an impression on Murnau that, after the war, he moved in with the Ehrenbaum’s family as their substitute son. Kaes argues that this experience made Murnau very

much aware of the human cost of war and has influenced his making of the film *Nosferatu* (1922): “It may have been the trauma of his friend’s death that led Murnau to revisit the scenario of a young man eagerly departing for a long journey.”¹⁶⁸ Moreover, his brother writes that his connection to his own family also changed after the war. When before he acted very evasive towards his family, afterwards he took initiatives to regain contact. “But certain things that had happened during the war, and other experiences such as the solitude of his internment, and perhaps even his new activity in the freer atmosphere of film-making gradually brought about a change in Wilhelm and reawakened his family feeling.”¹⁶⁹

Murnau’s personal experience of the war has inspired author Jim Shepard to write a fictional account of these events. In the short story ‘Flight officer F.W. Murnau’s fifth crash, aircraft unsalvageable, February 1917’ he uses a fictive diary to describe Murnau’s thoughts and actions as he recovers from the crash.¹⁷⁰ Later, this short story is expanded into a full account in *Nosferatu: a novel*, from 1998.¹⁷¹

The First World War in German cinema

Unlike with the artists who were involved in the First World War, the work of these two filmmakers does not include any literal reference to the war itself. Moreover, the depiction of the war in film became a taboo in German cinema in the years immediately following the war. First of all,

¹⁶⁷ Eisner 1973 (see note 161), p. 18.

¹⁶⁸ Kaes 2009 (see note 3), p. 93.

¹⁶⁹ Eisner 1973 (see note 161), p. 21. Quote by Robert Plumpe Murnau.

¹⁷⁰ Shepard, Jim, ‘Flight officer F.W. Murnau’s fifth crash, aircraft unsalvageable, February 1917’, *Southwest Review* 79 (spring-summer 1994), p. 457.

¹⁷¹ Shepard, Jim, *Nosferatu: a novel*, New York 1998.

after the war the UFA came under control of the right-wing, which effectively blocked the production of anti-war films. Second of all, although during the 1920s a few films did criticize the war, these did not attract large audiences, since the German filmgoers preferred escapist films (mountain and nature dramas, biopics, horror), without confrontation with the devastation of the war. This was also the case in other countries, but was intensified through the trauma of defeat and its social, political and economic consequences. This confirms the idea that film production, more so than the visual arts, are depended on the desires of the mass audience: a film has the ability to affect its audience, but only if it is able to communicate with it; its ability for communicated ideas is dependent on its relatability. Moreover, a film can only be produced when it has the potential to attract an audience, that is to say, if it is commercial viable.

The first real success in anti-militaristic war films in Germany came with G.W. Pabst's *Westfront 1918* (1930, fig. 27).¹⁷² Unlike Lang and Murnau, Pabst did not serve in the trenches, but was taken prisoner of war in 1914 and remained in captivity for the remainder of the war. However, he was able to show the reality of the war, including its destruction and suffering as was years before already seen in the visual arts, which were in production less dependent on the sentiments of mass audiences. He followed this film with the politically critical film *Kameradschaft* in 1931, which showed German miners saving French miners in distress.

Simultaneously, *Niemandsland* (1931, fig. 28), directed by Victor Trivas was released, which showed the development of comradeship between five soldiers from completely different backgrounds, stuck in the ruins in no-man's-land. However, this period of anti-militaristic filmmaking was short lived, since the Nazis would take control of filmmaking in Germany later in the 1930s.

Perhaps this lack of opportunity to produce films that provided direct criticism on the war spiked the production of indirect allusions to the subject. The films that will be discussed in the next chapter provide allusions to similar subjects that were depicted in literal depictions of (anti) war subjects of Beckmann, Dix and Grosz, related to the struggle with power and authority, shellshock, death and the destructive qualities of modern technology.

¹⁷² Kelly, Andrew, *Cinema and the Great War*, London 1997.



Fig. 9. Max Beckmann, *Die Kriegserklärung*, 1914. Drypoint print, 19.8 x 24.8 cm (unique state proof), Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 10. Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Freiwilligen*, 1921-22 (published 1923). From woodcut portfolio *Krieg*, plate 2, 34.9 x 49.5 cm, edition of 400, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 11. Max Beckmann, *Selbstbildnis als Krankenpfleger*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 55,5 x 38,5 cm, Von der Heyt Museum, Wuppertal.

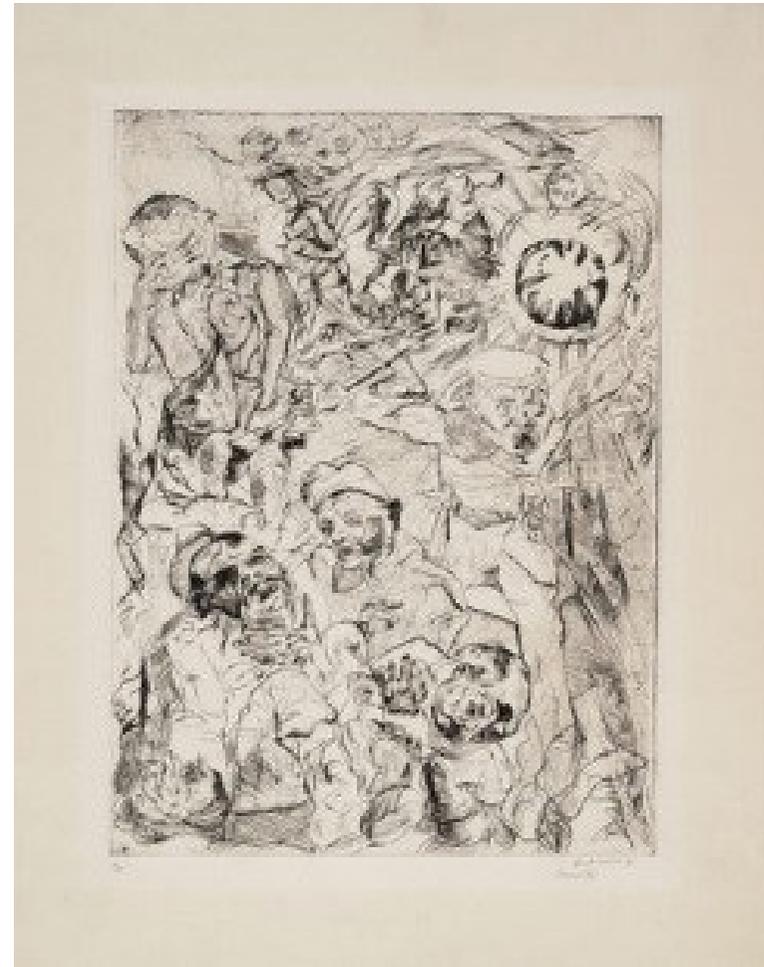


Fig. 12. Max Beckmann, *Die Granate*, 1915 (published 1918). Drypoint print, 38.9 x 28.9 cm, edition of 20, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 13. Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis mit Artilleriehelm*, 1914. Oil on paper, 68 x 53,5 cm, Galerie der Stadt, Stuttgart.



Fig. 14. Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis als Soldat in rotem Hemd*, 1914. Oil on paper, 68 x 53,5 cm, Galerie der Stadt, Stuttgart.



Fig. 15. Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis als Mars*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 81 x 66 cm, Städtische Kunstsammlung Haus der Heimat, Freital.

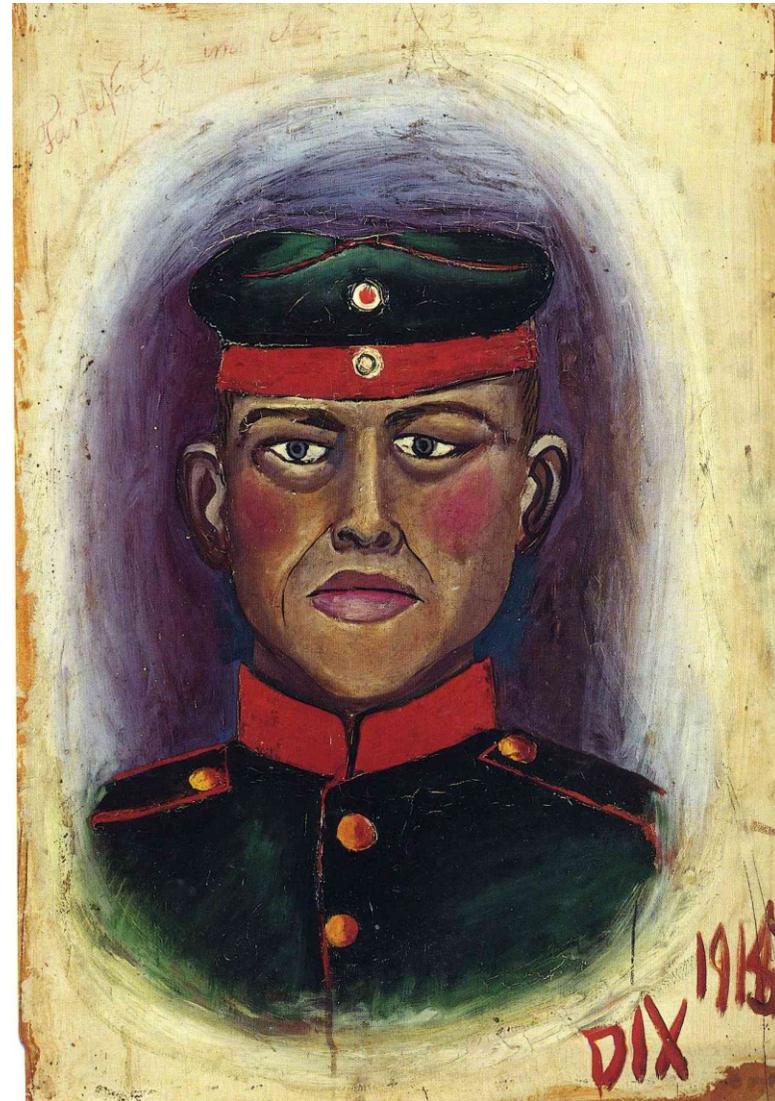


Fig. 16. Otto Dix, *Selbstporträt als Schießscheibe*, 1915. Oil on paper, 72 x 51 cm, Otto-Dix-Stiftung, Vaduz.



Fig. 17. Otto Dix, *Schützengraben*, 1920-23. Oil on canvas, 227 x 250 cm, destroyed during the Second World War.



Fig. 18. Otto Dix, *Der Krieg*, 1929-32. Mix technique on panel, middle panel 204 x 204 cm, left 204 x 102, right, 204 x 102, predella, 60 x 204 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.



Fig. 19. Otto Dix, *Flandern*, zu Henri Barbusse 'Le Feu', 1934-36. Mix technique on canvas, 200 x 250 cm, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie, Berlin.

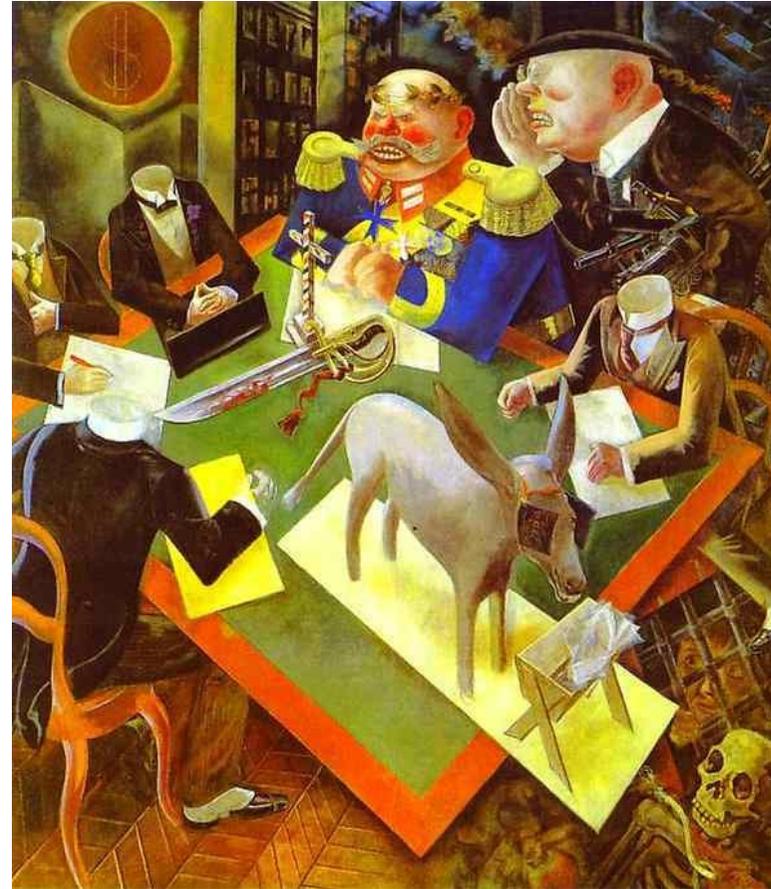


Fig. 20. George Grosz, *Sonnenfinsternis*, 1926. Oil on Canvas, 207,3 x 182,6 cm, Heckscher Museum, Huntington (NY).



Fig. 21. George Grosz, *Der General*, ca. 1916. Drawing, dimensions and material unknown, Archiv Roland März.

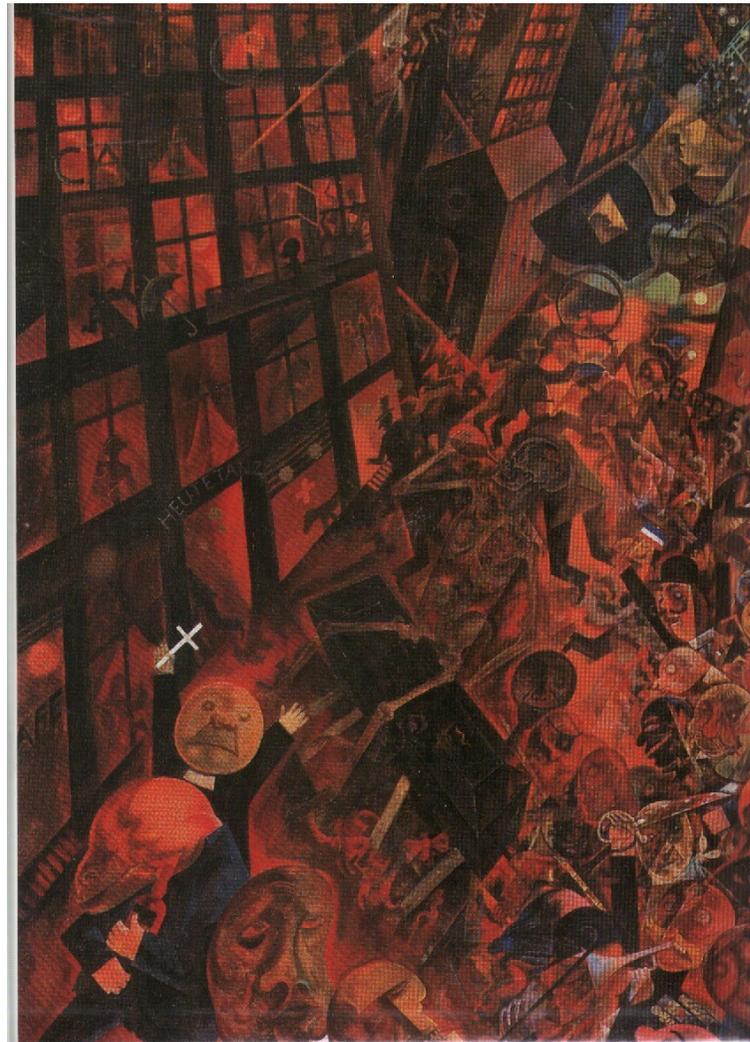


Fig. 22. George Grosz, *Widmung an Oskar Panizza (Das Begräbnis des Dichters)*, 1917-18. Oil on canvas, 140 x 110 cm, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.

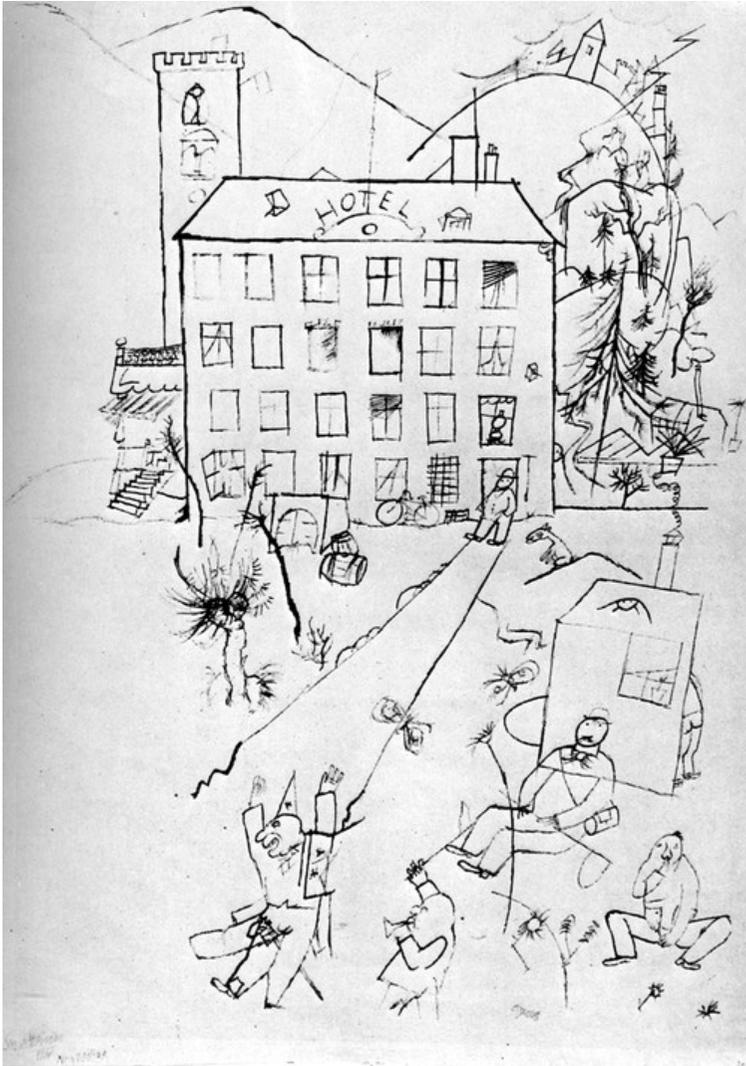


Fig. 23. George Grosz, *Sanatorium*, 1917. 61,4 x 43,3 cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne.



Fig. 24. George Grosz, sketch for scene in *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* (Erwin Piscator, 1928).



Fig. 27. Film poster for *Westfront 1918* (G.W. Pabst, 1930). Design by Fritz Weber.



Fig. 28. Film poster for *Niemandland* (Victor Trivas, 1931).

Chapter three: madness, morbidity and metropolis

Madness: the treatment of war neurosis in postwar Germany

“Mutter! Tausend Meilen von der Heimat stirbt Dein Sohn”¹⁷³

With this line, filmmaker Robert Reinert opens his film *Nerven*, from 1919. It is the start of a dramatic scene, which shows a soldier dying on the battlefield, who seems to form a mental connection with his mother at home. The battlefield is expressively depicted: smoke blows over a field covered with corpses with artificial lighting. The bodies are positioned around a tree trunk, in uncomfortable positions, that are reminiscent of

Theodore Gericault’s painting of *The raft of the Medusa* (*Le radeau de la Méduse*, 1818-1819). Then, a close-up of the soldier: his face is in a grimace of pain and his hands grasp over his body at his injuries (fig. 29). His mother hysterically collapses, while he dies in the arms of his comrades.

One of the first expressionist films, released only a year after the end of the war, Reinert’s *Nerven* tells the story of the influence of war, destruction and revolution on the sanity of individuals and society as a whole. This makes the film exceptional, since it directly addressed the consequences of the war and actively takes a stance against militarism. This is done by drawing parallels between various traumatic situations and the way in which these events are dealt with, Reinert is able to show a chain reaction of insanity within a group of people. Unfortunately, there is not much known of the personal life and experiences of Reinert, except that he achieved success in the early twentieth century as a novelist, continued script writing in the 1910s and from there became involved as writer and director for the production company Decla-Bioscop in Berlin. It is not known if he was, in any way, involved in the First World War, but it is striking that this film stands as an isolated case by explicitly addressing the war shortly after the armistice.

The film opens with a prelude, in two parts, hinting to the content of the rest of the film. The first part is the scene of the soldier, as described

¹⁷³ Quote from: *Nerven* (Robert Reinert, 1919).

above. The second part shows a man who strangles a woman and afterwards shows concern for the wellbeing of her bird, which surely will die if it is not taken care of. With these two examples, the film gives a warning of the disturbed nerves of society.

The main story tells the complex account of the downfall of a major industrialist Roloff, his sister Marja, his wife Elizabeth and revolutionary leader Johannes. Roloff's factory is destroyed in an explosion, after which he starts to be haunted by visions of the dead, other hallucinations and paranoia. When Marja, rejected by Johannes and about to marry someone else, lies to Roloff that Johannes raped her, and Roloff believes that he has witnessed this himself and testifies in court. Johannes is sentenced to six years in prison and Marja starts to lose her mind from guilt. After a fight she convinces Roloff of what has actually happened, resulting in the release of Johannes, and Roloff seeks psychiatric help for his visions. The psychiatrist tells him that, although his patients may appear healthy to the outside world, they are truly ill. This, he explains, can be caused by: "Die fortschreitende Zivilisation, der Kampf ums Dasein, Angst und Schrecken des Krieges, die Sünden der Eltern..." Roloff runs away from the psychiatrist, but his hallucinations become worse, which scares his wife. Roloff claims that in his mental state, he recognizes the mental state of the world: "Die Nerven der Welt Sind krank". Meanwhile, the psychiatrist tells Elizabeth that only death can liberate Roloff. He finally asks Johannes for help, and tells him that he fears that he cannot escape the terrors within himself anymore and begs him to release him from his suffering. "Laß

mich nicht verkommen, ehre den Menschen in mir... laß mich nicht zum Tier werden." Johannes finally gives him poison and Roloff dies. After more dramatic events Johannes and Elizabeth escape to the mountains together where they live a primitive life surrounded by nature. The final lines from the film read that love has the ability to heal humanity.

"Liebe [...] Vor der Gesundung des Menschheit [...] durstig nach Schönheit und Wahrheit in reiner Liebe sich vereinigen [...] Stammeltern eines neuen, glücklichen Geschlechts werden [...] Zurück zur Natur! Arbeite! [...] Neue Nerven – Neue Menschen!"

Reinert shows in his film that the only solution for the illnesses of modern life, the influences of industrialism and war, is for society to be healed by returning to primitive life and primal urges. Hereby he shows a strong connection to the artistic groups before the war, i.e. the Brücke and the Blaue Reiter, who proposed a return to primitive urges to heal the sickness of society that was caused by modernity (see chapter one). These primitive elements can also be seen in the style of the film's intertitles and intermezzos that depict scenes outside of the reality of the film and show nude figures in nature (fig. 30).

Furthermore, according to Kaes, *Nerven* shows the way in which the trauma of war is brought to the home front and is affecting the entire nation. "War and revolution are portrayed as events that have disturbed the natural, cosmological order, such that human beings seem no longer in

charge of their own lives. Buffeted by malevolent historical forces, they struggle to understand what is happening to them.”¹⁷⁴ In the year that was marked by the return of many men, marked by war either physically or mentally, and the fact that many men did not return at all, the trauma of the war was effectively brought home.

In the same year, 1919, Beckmann published his print-cycle *Die Hölle* (see appendix C), which depicted life in Berlin after the end of the war and sheds light on the various aspects of life in which the war resonated.¹⁷⁵ The life of people was, at the time, especially important to him, as he described in *Schöpferische Konfession* (published in *Tribune der Kunst und Zeit*, 1920):

“Der Krieg geht ja nun seinem traurigen Ende zu. Er hat nichts von meiner Idee über das Leben geändert, er hat sie nur bestätigt. Wir gehen wohl einer schweren Zeit entgegen. Aber gerade jetzt habe ich fast noch mehr als vor dem Krieg das Bedürfnis unter den Menschen zu bleiben. In der Stadt. [...] Unser Herz und unsere Nerven müssen wir preisgeben dem schaurigen Schmerzensgeschrei der armen getäuschten Menschen. Gerade jetzt müssen wir uns den Menschen so nah wie möglich stellen. Das ist das einzige, was

unsere eigentlich recht überflüssige und selbstsüchtige Existenz Einigermaßen motivieren kann. Daß wir den Menschen ein Bild ihres Schicksals geben [...]”¹⁷⁶

The print-cycle, from 1919, confronts the people in the city with the misery of the life that they have created for each other. The first print, *Der Nachhauseweg* (C, fig. 1), shows a veteran who is thoroughly marked by the war: his face is disfigured, his remaining eye looks confused and he is missing a hand. The veteran forms a great contrast with Beckmann’s self-portrait, who attempts to steer him in the right direction. Three other prints in the cycle depict scenes that are related to the November revolution: a demonstration ending in death in *Die Strasse* (C, fig. 2), the murder of Rosa Luxemburg in *Das Martyrium* (C, fig. 3) and a violent uprising in *Die Letzten* (C, fig. 9). All scenes show the direct effects of militarism on the behavior of regular people. The remaining prints render the consequences of the defeat: *Der Hunger* (C, fig. 4) shows the scarcity of food with ordinary families; *Die Ideologen* (C, fig. 5) presents a meeting of intellectuals; *Die Nacht* (C, fig. 6) the brutality of violence in the city; *Malepartus* (C, fig. 7) the forced nature of the pleasure seeking bourgeoisie; *Das patriotische Lied* (C, fig. 8) the defeated state and irony of patriotism; and finally, *Die Familie* (C, fig. 10) shows Beckmann’s own

¹⁷⁴ Kaes 2009 (see note 3), p. 43.

¹⁷⁵ Schulz-Hoffmann 1984 (see note 113), pp. 402-405.

¹⁷⁶ Beckmann, Max, Edschmid, Kasimir (ed.), *Schöpferische Konfession, XIII, Tribune der Kunst und Zeit*, Berlin 1920, pp. 63-64.

family, where his son's innocence, presented by the son joyfully playing with war attributes, contrasts sharply with the grim faces of the adults.

While, like Beckmann, *Nerven* shows the direct results of war and revolution on society, it also shows mental illnesses caused by traumatic events. Madness is affecting all characters, but mostly Roloff and Marja. Marja represents the stereotypical traits of female hysteria, induced by her unrequited love for a charismatic visionary, and Roloff shows signs of trauma induced paranoia, being haunted by his worst fears and guilt for things he has only imagined. These hallucinations are created through distorted images and superimpositions (fig. 31). Remembering Beckmann's letters from Strasbourg, Roloff symptoms are quite similar: paranoia, being taunted by visions and a diminished will to live. According to critics, the burden of Roloff's illness on the people around him, signify the effect of war neurosis on German society.¹⁷⁷ This burden was intensified when during and after the war, the idea also emerged that the return of the neurotic soldiers would create a risk for contamination of the people at the home front. The line "Die Nerven der Welt Sind Krank" suggest that an illness of the nerves is able to spread through a population. In fact, already in the first scene, *Nerven* shows how the events of the war can cause hysterics at home. Insanity spreads through family: both siblings Roloff and Marja are unstable, which is inherited from their unhappy

alcoholic father, as the film reveals through a letter. In another scene, a gardener, who is wounded in his pride by Marja, takes an axe and kills a random man in the street. Upon his execution it becomes clear that he was the brother of the dying soldier in the prelude.

In Germany after the First World War, doctors and psychologists differed in opinion about the diagnosis and treatment of these mental illnesses. For instance, Freud argued that war neurosis was caused by the internal struggle between an instinct to fight and the apprehension to do so, while others claimed that it was merely a sign of the weak-willed.¹⁷⁸ Freud's argument is reminiscent of the discussion Murnau had with his friend Müthel (see chapter 2): to be able to fight one has to yield to primal instincts, instead of being blocked by moral obligations. According to the opposition, the susceptibility towards neurosis was caused by an inherent sensibility, neurasthenia, which was thought to be sign of the weak-willed. Eventually resulted in the use of 'coercion therapy', to shock the patient into the will to fight. The idea that the inclination towards neurosis was biological, meant that it could be inherited, as was seen with Roloff and Marja. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Beckmann, Grosz and Lang all felt the need to leave their service on grounds of psychological problems, and that Dix, although he was able to complete his service, experienced psychological trauma for years following the war. Leaving aside whether

¹⁷⁷ Hales, Barbara, 'Unsettling Nerves: Investigating war trauma in Robert Reinert's *Nerven* (1919)', in: Rogowski, Christian (ed.), *The many faces of*

Weimar cinema: rediscovering Germany's filmic legacy, Rochester NY 2010, p. 33.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

or not this was caused by a biological predisposition, their accounts of their experiences show the impact of the war on its participants.

Because of the presence of neurosis and the debates on that subject in society shortly after the war, it is not surprising that it became an important theme in art and film. Moreover, treating this subject gave the opportunity to obliquely criticize the war.

Already during the war, expressionist artist Conrad Felixmüller, who cofounded Gruppe 1919 with Otto Dix after the war, addressed the issue of mental illnesses affecting soldiers. Although the details of his experiences during the war years are vague, his letters evince that he was a conscious objector to the war, which he showed actively through publications of anti-war prints in *Die Aktion* (see chapter one, fig. 5). Therefore, he was deployed as a medical orderly in an asylum in 1917-18. In two prints of this period, he depicted soldiers, locked in cells in this institution: *Soldat im Irrenhaus I* and *II*, both from 1918 (figs. 32-33). The first gives an indication that this is an interpretation of a situation in the asylum, since it is signed with the name: ‘Res. Laz. Arnsdorf’. The soldier, a red Iron Cross stamped across his chest, is sitting on a bed in his cell, holding on the bars in the window with one hand and twisting his body to look at the man who is staring in through the hatch in the door. The combination of distorted, angular lines and the contrasted red and dark violet ink emphasize the

soldiers expression of desperation and exhaustion. The soldier in the second print claws his hand through the bars, grimaces his face and contorts his body. In his hand is an envelope which has writing on the back ‘A.W. Felixmüller Res Laz’. In a letter to his brother in law he writes of the people he encounters there:

“[...] im Irrenhause war ein großer Teil, die ihre Vorgesetzten verhauen haben, oder nicht mehr schießen wollen, oder einfach auskniffen: die riskieren etwas: sitzen dafür erst im Gefängnis, dann Irrenhaus, dan wieder Gefängnis [...]”.¹⁷⁹

That is to say, not all patients were there for treatment of their illnesses, some were imprisoned for disobeying their superiors, in a way reminiscent of George Grosz: soldiers being dragged back and forth and doubt cast on their illness. Nevertheless, the soldiers depicted in Felixmüller’s prints look truly haunted by their experiences and the first soldier has the Iron Cross to testify for his heroic deeds at the front.

The fear of injury that might have caused some of these cases or the trauma that is a result of injury, is a theme that is treated in Robert Wiene’s film *Orlacs Hände* (1924, fig. 34). This film shows the reality of injury and the loss of control over one’s body that is caused by that, by telling the

¹⁷⁹ Felixmüller to P.A. Böckstiegel on 14.6.1918, as published in: Guenther, Peter W., et. al., *Conrad Felixmüller, Werke und Dokumente*, exh. cat. Nürnberg (Germanisches Nationalmuseum) 1981-82, pp. 66-68.

story of a pianist who loses his hands in an railroad accident. Although they are replaced by other hands, he never gains full control over them – they even turn out to be murderous hands – and thereby loses the ability to perform in the way he did before the accident: he loses his defining quality. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner applied this theme similarly in his *Selbstbildnis als Soldat* (1915, fig. 35), which he probably painted during a short leave from his deployment in a field artillery division.¹⁸⁰ He effectively depicts the duality of the situation: on the one hand, he is still a painter in a studio (signified by the canvas and the nude model), but on the other hand he is in full uniform of the German artillery. Moreover, where his right hand, his painting hand, should be, is only a bloody stump, which shows his fear of losing his ability of being an artist, be it physically or mentally. The reality of these fears, becomes clear when he has a breakdown after just two months of active service and spends the remainder of the war in various sanatoriums and asylums. “Ich fühle mich halbtot von geistigen und körperlichen Qualen.”¹⁸¹

The direct influence of the war on soldiers and society was, on two occasions, also depicted by Dix in his Krieg-cycle: *Nächtliche Begegnung mit einem Irrsinnigen* (A fig. 14) and *Die Irrsinnige von Sainte-Marie-à-Py* (A fig. 3). They show two different aspects of the war; the soldier who lost his mind on the battlefield and now roams the no-man’s-land at night,

and the woman who turned mad when her village was destroyed and manically tries to feed her dead infant. This shows how not only the soldiers were affected, but also the civilians. The death of the child is mirrored by the mothers who lost their sons in battle, of which the psychological effect on the home front was depicted in *Nerven*, as well as in the work of Käthe Kollwitz.

Other artists depicted the madness in society, outside of the military world. Already during the war, Grosz depicted how the madness of the war was transferred into the daily life in the cities. In the drawing *Krawall der Irren* (1915-16, fig. 36) he depicted a street scene where the insane cause a riot, with fighting men, burning buildings, shattered windows, assaulted women (one dragged along naked through the streets, another is dangled from a window by her hair) and one man has hanged himself from a lamppost. Recalling that, at the time, soldiers had already returned from the battlefield or were simply on leave (as described by Grosz in his autobiography (see chapter two)), the immersion of war neurotics into everyday life would not have waited until the official end of the war. Years later, with *Grauer Tag (Magistratsbeamter für Kriegsbeschädigtenfürsorge*, 1921, fig. 37) he depicted how years after the war these experiences still resonated on its participants. A disabled veteran

¹⁸⁰ Henkel, Katharina, Roland März (eds.), *Potsdamer Platz: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner und der Untergang Preußens*, exh. cat. Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Neue Nationalgalerie) 2001, pp. 178-179.

¹⁸¹ Kirchner to Karl Ernst Osthaus on 07.12.1915, in: Kirchner, Ernst Ludwig, Hans Delfs (ed.), *Der gesamte Briefwechsel: "die absolute Wahrheit, so wie ich sie fühle", Band I. Briefe von 1901 bis 1923*, Zürich 2010, p. 117.

walks with his head down through a grim, industrialized city, still wearing his uniform, which serves as a constant reminder of the war.

Dix depicted an externalization of inner turmoil in his painting of *Die Irrsinnige* (1924, fig. 38). The woman shows physical signs of madness: her dress is opened and reveals her naked scrawny body, her hands claw at the air and she looks cross-eyed at nothing. Her clothes show that she knew better days, they look expensive and well taken care of. Her hat has a mourning veil that indicates that she might have turned mad after someone's death, possibly as a result of war. Dix did not only show her physical deterioration into madness, but also the mental state that caused this. The veil is carried by the wind and reveals the visions in her mind: disfigured, skull-like faces.

Even before the war, expressionist artists were very much interested in psychiatry and psychiatric patients, and the effects of insanity on creativity, related to nineteenth century publications. The art of psychiatric patients, mostly schizophrenics, was seen as an expression of the innocent and their style was studied and imitated. However, at a certain point this led to confusion with critics that all artists painting in this style must be mentally ill as well.¹⁸² But although some were indeed treated for their war neuroses, the similarity of the style, which is created by imitation, does not

mean, in this case, that the illness is similar too. This interest does, however, establish the link between expressionism and psychiatry.

In the early 1920s several other films addressed the issue of madness and the treatment thereof, such as Fritz Lang's *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* (1922, fig. 39), and, most importantly, *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (1919-20, fig. 40). In almost every survey of Weimar cinema it serves as the first and foremost example of expressionist cinema, because of its completely artificial, expressionist set design. In short, in the film the main character Francis tells the story of mysterious murders that took place in his town, which turn out to have been carried out by the hypnotized patient of the director of a psychiatric institution, disguised as the owner of an exhibition in the traveling fair. Both Kracauer and Kaes have argued that, to a certain extent, the film can be seen as an attack on the use of psychiatric treatments of military authority. Kaes interprets its use of flashbacks as a variation on the forms of psychoanalysis that were used to confront soldiers with their traumas.¹⁸³ To Kracauer, *Dr Caligari* (the character) is a characterization of the idolization and misuse of power, by someone with unlimited authority. That is, he uses his hypnotized, powerless patient as a tool to conduct murders, just as soldiers were pressured into killing during their military service.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, in Lang's film, *Dr Mabuse* uses

¹⁸² Gordon 1987 (see note 7), p. 151.

¹⁸³ Kaes 2009 (see note 3), pp. 53, 75.

¹⁸⁴ Kracauer 1947 (see note 4), p. 65.

disguises, hypnosis and mind control for his own criminal activities, but is later haunted by his own victims.

The misuse of power by psychiatrists is strongly related to the misuse of power by the military command, which was powerfully depicted by Grosz in *Gott mit Uns*, where soldiers are forced to do the killing of others (see the discussion of *Gott mit Uns* in chapter two and appendix B).

These prints were first shown at the First International Dada Fair that was held during the summer of 1920. The fair displayed many depictions of soldiers (for example Dix's *Kriegskrüppel*, 1920, fig. 41) and officers (like the puppet of a pig-headed officer *Preußischer Erzengel* by Heartfield and Schlichter (1920, also fig. 41), that was tied to the ceiling as a form of protest against the military command). Grosz was not the only one who received charges for military slander. In her article "See: We are all Neurasthenics!" or, the trauma of Dada montage' art historian Brigid Doherty argues that Berlin Dadaists attempted to induce traumatic shock in its audience, as well as represent trauma and its treatment itself.¹⁸⁵ It can be seen as a manifestation of the public interest in psychiatric illnesses and practices of the time, but also as a depiction of personal war neurosis that some members of Dada (especially Grosz and Heartfield) had sustained during the war. According to Doherty, especially photomontage was able to reflect both the physical (e.g. shaking, paralysis, blindness) and

psychological aspects of war neurosis (e.g. depression, anxiety, anger).¹⁸⁶ Moreover, their interest in madness in general can also be seen as part of the fascination with modern life and the problems resulting thereof.

In a poem from mid-1917 Grosz wrote of the sensation of the modern city after having sustained neurosis from his war experience, by describing the intensity of visual and audial impulses on a sensitive mind. He compares these impulses to those of the war: "Und Noten werfen wie Schrotschüsse kleine Löcher in mein Gehirn."¹⁸⁷ He concluded with: "Siehe: wir sind allzumal Neurastheniker!"¹⁸⁸, asserting the collectivity of neurasthenia and its omnipresence in German society at that time.

Morbidness: preoccupation with death

A striking characteristic of the films discussed above, is the fact that they all involve murder, whether forced or voluntarily, suicide or homicide: the random act of a madman and the suicide of Roloff in *Nerven*; the loss of control over the hands of a murderer in *Orlacs Hände*; the murders of the hypnotized patient in *Dr Caligari*; and the taunting victims of murder in *Dr Mabuse*. Moreover, many of the artworks treat violent subjects as well. In the previous chapter we have seen that Otto Dix and George Grosz, and Beckmann to a lesser extent, gradually grew obsessed with the idea of death and killing. Dix spoke of the ubiquity of corpses and the sensation of

¹⁸⁵ Doherty 1997 (see note 142), pp. 82-132.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁸⁷ George Grosz, "Kaffeehaus", *Neue Blätter für Kunst und Dichtung* 1 (nov. 1918), p. 155. As cited in: *ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

¹⁸⁸ Grosz 1918, p. 155. As cited in: *ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

someone being killed nearby, visions that would continue to haunt him for years. Grosz, on the other hand, was obsessed with his own death during his times of depression: signing his letters with “the late Grosz” and decorating them with crosses (see ch2). During this period he was fixated on the idea of suicide, depicting the subject twice in one year, both in large paintings: *Der Liebeskranke* and *Selbstmord*, both from 1916 (figs. 42-43). In *Der Liebeskranke* Grosz presents himself as one of his alter egos: the dandy Graf Ehrenfried.¹⁸⁹ Although this work does not show the suicide itself, it anticipates the moment heavily with the fish bones on the table, the bones in front of the dog on the floor, the pistol painted over the heart and the figure of death in the corner of the café. The other, *Selbstmord*, is the sequel to this work and shows what follows when the man leaves the café. He lies spread-eagled on the pavement, with the gun by his head and the dog by his side. His fascination lasted through the twenties, when he during his period with Dada appeared dressed in various death-costumes on several occasions.¹⁹⁰

The previously discussed print-cycle *Die Hölle*, by Beckmann, showed how the violence of the war had spread into the daily lives of the people living in the metropolis Berlin, leading to chaotic social instability. Moreover, the violence had not only entered lives literally, but also figuratively in the sense that violence was the cause of the absence of

many men. The loss of all these lives could still be felt. Already in 1914 (*Weinende Frau*, fig. 44), Beckmann had depicted his mother in law, mourning the death of her son Martin, who fell at the front in October 1914.

Similarly, for Käthe Kollwitz the mourning mother became a recurrent theme in her work after her youngest son died in the first months of the war. Of her print-cycle *Der Krieg* (1922-23) just one print (symbolically) depicts the battlefield (*Die Freiwilligen*, fig. 10), while the others show grieving parents and widows (figs. 45-46). Her work in the years following often show mothers protecting their infants.¹⁹¹

Similarly, the film *Der Müde Tod*, from 1921, shows the struggle of dealing with death. The film, written and directed by Fritz Lang, tells the story of a young couple that encounters death and the woman’s following struggle to get her fiancé back. Literally, for Death is personified by a stranger who just bought the land next to the graveyard. When the young couple arrives in town, the town council is just debating the enormous wall that the stranger built around his land. Strangely enough, they had been unable to find an entrance or gate. The couple goes to a tavern and there Death sits with them. When the woman goes out of the room for a moment, her fiancé and Death disappear. She looks for him all over town, but is unable to find him until she arrives at the wall. There a procession of

¹⁸⁹ Schuster 1994 (see note 140), p. 320.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 227-228.

¹⁹¹ Hülsewig-Johnen, Jutta, *Käthe Kollwitz: das Bild der Frau*, Bielefeld 1999.

ghosts approaches her and walks past her through the wall, her fiancé among them (fig. 47). She collapses in tears and is found by the apothecary who takes her to his pharmacy where she secretly takes poison. She wakes up near the wall, where she suddenly can enter the gate that leads to Death.

The following scene is a beautifully shot symbolic interpretation of the concept of death. Death is surprised to see her since he did not summon her; her time had not come yet. She replies that she is looking for her beloved. Then he shows her a room that is filled with burning candles, one for every living person: “Here you see the lives of men. They flicker and burn for a time - - and flicker out when God decides so.” He demonstrates the workings: he picks up a flame, which transforms into a baby (fig. 48). The baby disappears and the flame has gone as well. He seems to be embittered: “Believe me, my task is hard! It is a curse! I am wary of seeing the sufferings of man and of earning hatred for obeying God [...]” The woman says she believes that love is stronger than death and asks if there is a way to revive her fiancé’s light. Death grants her three chances: if she is able to prevent one flickering flame from extinguishing she will get him back.

Then three episodes follow, all set in different times and places, but in every one of them the woman must try to save her fiancé from his imminent doom, every time personified by a tyrannical leader. The first story is set in an Islamic country, where she is the sister of the caliph who has to save her western lover from being killed by her brother. She fails: Death as the figure of the gardener executes him. The second story is set in

renaissance Venice, where the woman attempts to have the tyrant killed, but accidentally kills her lover. The third story is set in China where the woman and her lover attempt to escape by magic, but the man is killed by Death as the figure of the archer.

Failing on all three attempts, the woman returns to Death. He pities her and gives her one more chance: if she can bring him a living soul within an hour, whose time has not yet come, she will get her loved one back. In a burning hospital she finds a baby, but cannot bring herself to give it to death and instead dies herself. But by dying, she is reunited with her fiancé.

Lang’s story has several aspects that relate to the First World War. Firstly, the desperation of a woman who unexpectedly loses her fiancé and is unable to find peace in his death. Secondly, the figure of Death is forced to carry out orders that lead to the death of many, similar to the soldiers who were forced to kill on the battlefield. Finally, in all of the three short episodes the act of killing is ordered but not executed by the tyrannical leaders.

The story also very much relates to the wave of interest in occultism after the war, that was the result of families longing to make contact with their fallen loved ones. According to Anton Kaes, especially the sense of powerlessness that was the result of the confrontation with technological

warfare led to a surge of superstition.¹⁹² In *Der Müde Tod*, All three episodes, framed by the main story in some way involve rituals that eventually lead to the death of the young man: honor killing, the carnival of Venice and magic. Moreover, in the main story, in her desperation to find her fiancé, she eventually finds him in a procession of ghosts and is eventually reunited with him in death. The entire film illustrates that if someone dies, it is part of a greater plan or God's decision, and nothing can be done to reverse that. It was simply fate or destiny, something that family members of soldiers also wanted to believe.

During the war, but after his own period of service, Max Beckmann worked on his own interpretation of the return of the dead, or the dead walking the earth. From 1916 until he worked on his massive *Auferstehung* (fig. 49), which he never finished.¹⁹³ Instead of a classical resurrection, like the one he painted in 1908-09, in which the dead had the chance to receive salvation and ascend into heaven, the second version should a world where the dead simply had risen and moved along the living. Hereby he just showed the desolation of the human fate, with no chance of finding peace in death, reflecting the nihilistic thoughts on the meaningless of life of the period and his personal mental crisis, with which he left the war.

A year after *Der Müde Tod*, the legendary horror film *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922, fig. 50), from director F.W. Murnau,

premiered. According to Anton Kaes, the film is mainly an allegory of an encounter with mass death, with references to the resurrection of the dead.

Nosferatu tells the story of a young man, Hutter, who is sent to Transylvania to meet with the mysterious Count Orlok who is interested in buying a house in their town, the fictitious Wisborg. Along the way he receives many warnings, but chooses to ignore them. At the castle, Hutter discovers that Count Orlok actually is Nosferatu, a vampire, who attacks him at night. When Hutter is attacked, his wife Ellen, still in Wisborg, has a nightmare about him and panics. When Nosferatu sees a picture of Ellen, he decides to buy the house and leaves in his coffin, filled with dirt and rats. Hutter attempts to follow him, but gets wounded, wakes up in a panic in a hospital and begins to race Nosferatu to his hometown. Nosferatu travels by ship and murders the entire crew, turning the ship into a ghost ship without a captain. Meanwhile, the victims of Nosferatu are mistaken for plague victims, and when he has arrived in Wisborg, the rats that traveled with him in his coffins are thought to be carriers of the plague. In town, a plague epidemic is proclaimed. A doctor marks the doors of the victims with white crosses, making painfully visible how many lives have been claimed. Later, when a procession of coffins is carried through the streets, this idea is again emphasized. The stream of death is stopped when

¹⁹² Kaes 2009 (see note 3), p. 121.

¹⁹³ Schubert, Dietrich, *Max Beckmann: Auferstehung und Erscheinung der Toten*, Stuttgart 1985.

Ellen, inspired by a book, sacrifices herself to Nosferatu. He then dies in the first rays of the rising sun (fig. 51).

Apart from it being an adaptation to Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), according to Kaes, on the grounds of several aspects, the film can be related to the events of the First World War. Firstly, in its relationship to the spread of war trauma, as discussed above. Like the woman and her son in *Nerven*, Ellen and Hutter seem to have a telepathic connection: she fears for his life from the moment he leaves and when he is hurt, she knows it instantly. Her awareness of the danger Hutter is in even forces Nosferatu to withdraw. According to Kaes "Murnau constructs the character of Ellen as the prototypical female hysteric of the period. [...] Ellen's hysteria is based on the secondary trauma that afflicted the home front."¹⁹⁴ Meaning, of course, that Hutter's experiences would represent the primary war trauma: sustained far away from home in eastern Europe, through the confrontation with an unstoppable destructive force. Even before he leaves, Ellen treats him like a soldier leaving for the front, anxious to let him go. The war neurosis is even more reflected when he wakes up in the hospital, terrified and screaming about coffins. Secondly, the film indicates events involving mass death in two ways. The markings of the victims of Nosferatu on the doors in town can be related to either be seen as an indication of the families that had lost a man at the front, or as an indication of the contamination with illness, as experienced shortly before the film came out

with the Spanish flu pandemic. The combination of both events, made the experience of mass death a current topic. Thirdly, the figure of Nosferatu himself would represent an eerie state of life and death, experienced by soldiers who spent weeks in trenches, cut off from the world and deprived of food and sleep. Nosferatu, sleeping in his coffin filled with dirt and accompanied by his rats, could represent this state. Murnau himself knew this state well, having spent eight consecutive months in the trenches in Latvia, in 1916-17. Moreover, he experienced the impact of the loss of life on the world around him, as a soldier at the front and through the loss of his friends Franz Marc and Hans Ehrenbaum-Degele. The impact of the death of a young man on his family was underlined when he moved in with Ehrenbaum's family. Finally, Kaes suggests that the name Count Orlok might be a play on the Dutch word 'oorlog', meaning war.¹⁹⁵ Then, *Nosferatu* would be a depiction of how war came to the home front, represented by an average village, and effectively destroyed and traumatizing an entire community.

Murnau adapted the originally British novel to German culture, by focusing on psychological aspects of the story, most clearly the strong mental connection between Hutter and Ellen, but also in the fact that almost all scenes of terror are merely suggested, rarely depicting the horror itself, calling upon the imagination of the viewer, and by using a visual language that made use of German romanticist imagery. Specifically the

¹⁹⁴ Kaes 2009 (see note 3), p. 114.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

scenes that show lonely figures in the overwhelming vastness of nature, filmed on location, recall the images of Caspar David Friedrich and show Murnau's knowledge of art (fig. 52). For instance, one scene shows Ellen overlooking the ocean at an empty beach, surrounded by graves and crosses that already foreshadow the many deaths that are to come. This type of images creates an uncanny atmosphere throughout the entire film, which, even when *Nosferatu* is not around, gives the viewer an uncomfortable sensation.

Directly after the end of the war, the censorship on filmmaking was abolished, which gave rise to a new type of film: films promoting sexual enlightenment or liberation, with alluring titles like *Frauen, die der Abgrund verschlingt* (William Wauer, 1918), *Hyänen der Lust* (Otto Rippert, 1919) and *Das Mädchen und die Männer* (Manfred Noa, 1919). Before the war, these themes had already been addressed by expressionist artists, especially the Brücke, who used sexual liberation as a form of protest against the bourgeois society (see chapter one). After the war, this type of films proved to be commercially viable. According to Kracauer, these films particularly attracted demobilized soldiers who had not yet adjusted themselves to standard civilian life at home.¹⁹⁶ The attraction of these films was that they complied to primitive urges and were a means to

release pressure from those who had been under the stress of facing death for years. The fascination with death and sex can be seen in many paintings of the postwar period. Both related to the submitting to primitive impulses, they combine in the theme of lust murders. According to contemporary criminologists, the growing numbers of these murders were a symptom of the poor living conditions in the large cities: the essence of the malfunctioning society and related to the mass murder of the war. Although the depiction of the murder of women was also prevalent in art before the First World War, the graphic details and the frequency of the occurrence of the theme were heightened after the war.¹⁹⁷ In the work of all three artists discussed in chapter 2, this theme is treated.

One of the most graphic depictions of the subject is George Grosz's drawing *Lustmord in der Ackerstraße* (1916/17, fig. 53). On the sofa lies the mutilated body of a woman, half naked, with a bloody axe lying on the place where her head should be. In the corner of the room, a man tries to wash the blood of his hands, while he anxiously watches the body. This drawing is of the same period of which Grosz describes as heaven and hell's proximity on earth: the soldiers on leave longing for prostitutes on the desolate streets of the big cities. In 1918, Grosz used the same theme in two paintings: *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* (1918, fig. 54) shows the murder in progress, while *John, der Frauenmörder* (1918, fig. 55) shows a similar

¹⁹⁶ Kracauer 1947 (see note 4), p. 45.

¹⁹⁷ For instance, Klee, *Du Starker, o – oh oh du!*, 1919. Erich Wegner, *Mord 6*, 1922. Rudolf Schlichter, *Lustmord*, 1924. Max Beckmann, *Der Mord*, 1933.

Beckmann, *Die Nacht*, 1918-19. Heinrich Maria Davringhausen, *Die Träumer II*, 1919. See: Hoffmann-Curtius, Kathrin, *Im Blickfeld George Grosz, John, der Frauenmörder*, Stuttgart 1993.

man fleeing the place of the crime. Finally, a photograph from 1920 shows Grosz himself in his atelier approaching his model Eva with a knife (fig. 56).

Similarly, Otto Dix put himself in the position of the murderer in his painting *Der Lüstmörder (Selbstdarstellung)* from 1920 (now missing, old photograph remains, fig. 57). It shows the gruesome sight of Dix, neatly dressed, holding a bloody knife and throwing around body parts of a naked woman. His face is scratched and tooth is missing; a detached arm in the upper left corner still holds on to it. In his painting from 1922, *Lustmord* (fig. 58), a woman is depicted, hanging over the edge of a bed, with her intestines falling out, much like the fallen soldiers that were depicted in his large paintings of the trenches. Again, the violence of the battlefield has moved to the home front. Moreover, both Grosz and Dix portray themselves as the murderer, which might reflect the sensation of feeling like a murder caused by being forced to kill during the war.

Beckmann's depictions of the subject are thoroughly different. His painting *Die Nacht* (1918/19, fig. 59), similar to the etching of the same name in *Die Hölle*, shows a scene that might end in murder. A family is held captive and tortured, with the mother stripped and tied down in a revealing position. Although the situation at hand shows the effects of the aggressive state of society, Beckmann does not resort to depicting the gory details that were so prominent in the work of Grosz and Dix. In 1933,

Beckmann depicted another murder scene in the watercolor *Der Mord* (fig. 60). Here, he depicted the situation after the murderer had already left: just the scene of the crime. Of the victim are just the feet shown, sticking out from underneath some bloody sheets on the floor. Although this does not necessarily have to be a sex murder, the bare feet and the blood on the bed suggests that might well be the case.

Metropolis: the city as the new battlefield

In many films of this period, the streets of the city form the backdrop of the narrative. But, instead of just creating a suitable atmosphere, the street, especially at night, is transformed into a character that influences the storyline. According to Eisner, "In German films the street represents the call of Destiny [...] it is the lure and enticement of all poor devils who, tired of their dull homes and monotonous lives, are out for adventure and escape."¹⁹⁸ Moreover, the dynamic lights of a city at nighttime, give the filmmaker the perfect opportunity to create expressive light effects.

Especially after the war, cities were seen as the place where the negative effects of the war were most visible. Beckmann, for instance, saw the struggles of society especially in the cities and depicted them accordingly in *Die Hölle* (as discussed above). In this way, it formed an attractive subject matter for artists and filmmakers who were interested in depicting the true nature of human suffering, that had continued after the

¹⁹⁸ Eisner 1952 (see note 45), p. 251.

war. Filmmaker Karl Grune, who in 1918 had arrived in Berlin after being wounded while fighting at the Eastern Front, directed *Die Straße*, which premiered in 1923.¹⁹⁹ The film tells the story of a man who is tempted by the street. He has no name, nor do any other characters in the film. The first scene shows the man at home, bored, sitting on his couch while his wife makes soup: showing the uneventful repetitiveness of bourgeois life. Then, when lights from the street cast shadows on the ceiling (fig. 61), he becomes mesmerized and leaves his protected, sheltered life and runs out onto the street. The destructive capacity of the temptations of the street are quickly revealed when the face of the first woman he meets turns into a skull. Apparently, the bourgeois man stands out and a young woman tries to make him give her money. To the viewer is revealed that she probably is a prostitute and is not operating alone: two shady men follow her. The woman and the bourgeois man walk into a café, where they meet another outsider and possible victim: a rich man from the countryside. Both men are tempted to play cards and gamble with the shady men, and the bourgeois man loses all his money and wagers his wedding ring to win it back. He is so relieved when he wins that he stops playing immediately. When all of them leave, the woman manages to get both the bourgeois man and the rich man in her house, without them knowing the other is there. While she distracts the bourgeois man, the two shady men attempt to rob

the rich man, but when he turns out to have a pistol, they stab him and run away with the woman. The child of the woman, who lives in the apartment as well, warns the police. The bourgeois man, who had grown impatient waiting for the return of the woman and just entered the room with the stabbed body, when the police arrives. He is suspected of committing the murder and is arrested. He is taken to the police station where the woman testifies that he killed the rich man out of jealousy. One of the shady men walks in and is asked whether he knows anything about the murder that took place in his home, but he claims he has not been home all night. However, he is exposed when the child asks him why he ran away from home. The bourgeois man is released, right before he attempts to kill himself in his cell. He walks home through the deserted streets and finds his wife asleep at the table back home. She wakes up, comforts him and serves him the soup she has kept warm all night.

The film essentially is about a man who is questioning the meaning of his repetitive bourgeois life and his attempt to escape to something that seems to be more vibrant, only to be terrified by the violence of the poverty on the streets. He is unable to really leave his life and returns home disillusioned. His story is analogous to that of the men enthusiastically entering the war in 1914. It seemed to be attractive, sensational and a solution to the emptiness of bourgeois life, but turned out

¹⁹⁹ Ashkenazi, Ofer, *Weimar Film and Modern Jewish Identity*, Basingstoke 2012, p. 50

to be cruel and the cause of suffering. Like could be seen from the personal experiences of artists and filmmakers in chapter two, the witnessing of human misery, death and destruction, would turn enthusiasm into terror and trauma every time.

Expressionist painter Ludwig Meidner was responsible for the set design of this film. Interestingly, nine years earlier, he had published an essay on the depiction of the city in the expressionist periodical *Kunst und Künstler*.²⁰⁰ In this, he argued that the metropolis is the real expression of the modern times and should therefore be captured by all modern painters. Since the metropolis is part of a completely new world, it should be painted correspondingly, with new techniques. According to Meidner, impressionism is only suitable for the countryside. The main aspect to consider, he argues, is the use of light, not evenly distributed, but with attention to its dynamic qualities. Moreover, while nature did not have straight lines, the metropolis does: “Are not our big-city landscapes all battlefields filled with mathematical shapes?”²⁰¹ Therefore, it is not only justified, but also necessary to display the harshness of the straight lines and geometric patterns of the city. Additionally, Meidner writes, primitivism has no place in the city, since the painters are truly a product of the modern metropolis and not of tribal or medieval times.

²⁰⁰ Meidner, Ludwig, ‘Anleitung zum Malen von Grosstadtbildern’, from ‘Das Neue Program’, *Kunst und Künstler* 12 no. 5 (1914), pp. 111-115. As published in Washton-Long 1993 (see note 8), pp. 101-104.

Meidner’s painting *Ich und die Stadt* (1913, fig. 62) is a great illustration of his theory: he depicts himself as part of the city. The architecture of the city is painted with harsh, straight lines, distorted perspective and high contrast in light, which makes it look like it is moving or collapsing. In contrast, although stylized, the sections of the painting that are nature (the clouds and Meidner’s own face) are softer. A drawing from that same year, *Betrunkene Straße mit Selbstbildnis* (fig. 63) depicts a street that almost attacks the lonely figure. By shaping the architecture in a certain way, Meidner makes the street as much a character in the story as it is in *Die Straße*.

Many aspects Meidner sets forth in his essay on painting, can be found in the sets and cinematography of *Die Straße*, especially concerning his treatment of light. All architecture seen in the film is made to create harsh lines and shadows, but the contrast between the buildings of the bourgeoisie and the poor is made clear through the use of ornamentation. The building of the bourgeois man is respectable, clean and geometrically sound, but in the building where the woman lives, nothing is straight or parallel and the surfaces have the dullness of something covered in dirt (figs. 64-65). Thereby, Meidner gave the buildings aspects that reflect the characters’ dispositions. Eisner writes that Meidner was able to transform the brutal dynamism of the city into a vision of light, which echoes the

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

aims for painting the metropolis. By focusing on light, shadows and lines, he used aspects that are especially suitable for implementing aspects of painting in film.

Several films from the postwar period used more extreme expressionist designs to construct streets and cities. By constructing a city in a studio, the director gained full control over the end product, for which they all had different intentions. First, in *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari*, Robert Wiene used expressionist staging to depict the memories (or fantasies) of a man that turns out to have mental problems. The distortion of the city could then just be in his mind. Nevertheless, these representations have a lot in common with the art as well as the theory of Meidner: lines and light are used to create dynamic geometric shapes. Second, Karl Heinz Martin's *Von Morgens bis Mitternachts* (1920, fig. 66) told a story similar to *Die Straße*: the main character experiences the emptiness of his life and attempts to escape it. However, Martin's methods are more extreme than Grune's were: the characters and their surroundings are connected in style since they both are designed to look painted. Unlike with *Dr Caligari*, Martin's use of distortion is more ornamental than meaningful. Finally, for *Raskolnikow* (1923, fig. 67), a filmic interpretation of Dostoyevki's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), Wiene again used expressionist staging. This time, however, he employed the Russian architect Andrei Andreiev to create the right setting for the Russian

characters, in a hallucinatory universe. According to Kurtz, the design of these sets stressed the intensity of the story and the characters.²⁰²

Already before the war, when expressionist artists vehemently opposed the state of society that was formed by modern materialism, the city provided a means for expressing these concerns. Although the artists were attracted to the vitality of the city, on the one hand, as expressed by Meidner, on the other hand, urban life was perceived to be the culmination of industrialism and a place that was alienating and caused insanity. The anonymity of the individual in this urban life is expressed in *Die Straße* through the lack of names for the characters: the bourgeois man could represent all bourgeois men, reflecting the dehumanization in urban modern life that Nietzsche had identified.²⁰³

In prewar expressionist painting Kirchner already frequently depicted the interchangeability of urban residents in his paintings of prostitutes in Berlin (*Strasse, Berlin* (1913, fig. 68) or *Potsdamer Platz, Berlin* (1914, fig. 79)) to which he had moved in 1911, from the smaller city of Dresden. Striking is that the women have some discernible facial features, whereas the men often have no face at all. In 1912, he wrote to his friend Luise Schiefler about his adjustment to the metropolis: "Es liegt das an der unsteten Art, in der man in Berlin lebt, wenn man um das Leben kämpfen

²⁰² Kurtz 1926 (see note 6), p. 75.

²⁰³ Figura 2011 (see note 30), p. 174.

muß. Es ist schrecklich ordinär hier.”²⁰⁴ The women, like the prostitute in *Die Straße*, are both a product of the decadency of bourgeois life, as well as a social group excluded from real participation in bourgeois life.

Although he expressed the excitement and vitality of city life through his dynamic representation of architecture and figures, at the same time he expresses the agitation and harshness of life in his angular style and the interchangeability of the male figures.

During the war years, Grosz depicted the violent atmosphere, of soldiers and drunks, that invaded the cities, as he described in his autobiography (see chapter 2). This atmosphere is reflected in the threatening character of the architecture in his paintings. In *Metropolis* (1916-17, fig. 70), Grosz specifically depicted the modern aspects of life, through the rustling crowds, electric lights, trolley, flashy advertisements and an entrance to a *Lichtspiele* (cinema). All these aspects create an overabundance of impulses and even suggest the noises of the city. Similarly, in cooperation with Heartfield, Grosz created a collage in which all these sounds and visual impulses of the city are reflected: *Leben und Treiben in Universal-City, 12 Uhr 5 mittags*, 1919 (fig. 71). In these collage the human figures are overshadowed by these other impulses.

²⁰⁴ E.L. Kirchner to Luise Schiefeler, 28.2.1912. Quoted from: Krämer, Felix, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Retrospektive*, exh. cat. Frankfurt am Main (Städel Museum) 2010, p. 99.

²⁰⁵ McGreevy 2001 (see note 119), p. 198.

During this postwar period, Grosz’s style transformed. He set himself up against the expressionism, which he previously supported, dismissing its ideologies and utopianism.²⁰⁵ “Dada [was] an organic product, which arose in reaction to the cloud-wandering tendencies of the so-called sacred art which found meaning in cubes and gothic, while the field commanders painted in blood.”²⁰⁶ That is, the idealism and spiritualism of expressionism had become useless against the bloodshed of the war.

Therefore, after the war, Grosz became much less interested in the specific human aspects of life in the streets. In an article in which he set forth his new approach to art he wrote: “Man is no longer an individual to be examined in subtle psychological terms, but a collective, almost mechanical concept.”²⁰⁷ This can be seen in a change in his style of painting, which developed from depicting specific distinguishing characteristics of people in the streets, to a style in which people were depicted in a uniform manner (inspired by the metaphysical style of Carrà). In his own way, he demonstrated the anonymity of modern urban life. Exemplary of this is his painting *Ohne Titel*, from 1920, in which a faceless figure walks between the generic buildings of a city (fig. 72). The city is fully industrialized, with its concrete architecture and smoking chimney in the background. Even by not designating the work with a

²⁰⁶ Quote from McGreevy 2001 (see note 119), p. 198. Originally in an article in *Das Kunstblatt*, 1924.

²⁰⁷ Grosz, ‘My New Pictures’, *Das Kunstblatt* V (1921) no. 1, Berlin. Quoted from: Harrison, Charles, Paul Wood (ed.), *Art in theory: 1900-1990, an anthology of changing ideas*, Cambridge MA 1992, pp. 270-271.

proper title, he takes away from the individual meaning of the figure. In the watercolor *Republikansiche Automaten* (1920, fig. 73) he indicates that his style, although inspired by metaphysical painting, does not carry that meaning. The patriotic figures are revealed to be mechanized, which was underlined by his statement above.

Correspondingly, the anonymity of the mass in the cities relates to the anonymity of soldiers during the First World War. The vast numbers of soldiers being killed or wounded may have decided the course of the war, but also reflect the anonymity of the soldiers that they represent. In modern, technological warfare a single soldier had no influence on the course of events on his own, but only by being part of the mass. Although many artists turned to representing the human suffering behind these numbers, they would never be able to completely remove this anonymity. Much like Beckmann intended to depict the human fate in the big cities after the war, other artists realized that they were all part of the larger system, the modern society.

Similar to Grosz's depiction of people as part of a mechanical concept, Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927, fig. 74) shows the lack of individualism in a machine controlled city, which was presented as the city of the future in the film's publication materials.²⁰⁸ Although the film is, dating from 1927, farther removed from the war than the other films

treated here, the narrative is fitting for the themes that are discussed in this chapter. In short, *Metropolis* tells the story of a young bourgeois man, Freder, who rebels against his father, Joh Fredersen, when he falls in love with the lower class Maria. He leaves his decadent world of his Eternal Gardens (a place his father built for him) behind and descent into the factory world that exists below the modern city. He is shocked when he discovers the dangerous conditions in his father's factory. Freder finds Maria, who functions as a prophet for the worker's revolution and is captivated by her message. Meanwhile, the mad scientist Rotwang presents father Fredersen with a female robot that can be adapted to take on the likeness of a specific human being. They decide to turn her into Maria, in order to be able to control the revolutionary tendencies. However, after a series of events, the workers destroy the machines in the factory, led by robot-Maria, flooding their own houses in the process and almost drowning their children. Fortunately, Freder and Maria are there to save them. After a chase through the streets and some confusion over the identity of (robot-)Maria, the robot is burned at the stake, Rotwang falls to his death and Freder serves as a mediator between his father and the workers.

Although the film does not use the stylistic elements from expressionism, Anton Kaes analyzed the narrative in a way that is reflective of the (prewar) expressionist ideology. He states that, "On the

²⁰⁸ Kaes, Anton, "Metropolis: City, Cinema, Modernity", in: Benson, Timothy O., *Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, metropolis, architectural fantasy*, exh. cat. Los Angeles (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) 1993-1994, p. 150.

most obvious narrative level, *Metropolis* is an account of the young generation's rebellion against the cynicism of its elders, who have usurped technology for their own oppressive purposes."²⁰⁹ The dismissal of the values of the older generation, that led to the creation of a materialist, industrialized society, was one of the main points against which the renewal of cultural principles was set. Moreover, elements of the film reflect the idea of mechanized warfare. The workers are shown marching to and from their shifts in the factory, in union and completely anonymized. Moreover, inside the factory the destructive force of the factory is seen when one of the workers is unable to perform his repetitive task, which causes an explosion and the death of several workers. Before Freder's eyes the machine transforms into a monster, through whose opened mouth group after group of marching men disappear (fig. 75).

Recalling Grosz's statement on the loss of individuality and humanity as a mechanized concept, this can be seen in *Metropolis* in the metaphorical and literal symbiosis of man and machine. Metaphorically, since men lose their individuality in their work in the factory where they are employed as part of a fully standardized working force; literally, obviously, in Rotwang's the creation of robot-Maria. The representation of the city itself also reflects Grosz's 'metaphysical' paintings (fig. 76). The buildings are as generic as the people, losing all characteristics that reflect the human aspects of a city.

Although the script of the films was not written by Lang himself, but by his wife Thea von Harbou, representation of the story gives the most powerful sensation of the dystopian future of an industrialized city. By presenting the city as the main subject (i.e. the title of the film) one can imagine that it represents some sort of prototype of the future in a modern city, and that the city might be a cause for human suffering and anonymization.

Finally, Otto Dix's monumental triptych *Großstadt*, from 1928 (fig. 77), shows the influence the war had on the life on streets in contemporary cities even ten years afterwards. The middle panel depicts the extravagant and decadent aspects of the bourgeoisie, in a dancing with jazz music and people dressed in luxurious fabrics. However, the side panels show how the poverty and the struggle of the lower classes still prevailed on the streets, by both showing hectic scenes with prostitutes and war cripples. On the left panel a veteran with two wooden legs, still in uniform as if the war never ended for him, roams between the prostitutes and tries to make it past a collapsed drunk. The right side shows a beggar, also a war veteran, with a disfigured face and no legs, on the ground, begging. The dirt of the streets on the sight panel contrasts with the polished floor in the center that reflects the feet of the dancers. Although he depicts the contemporaneity of life in the city in the late twenties, he still reflects on the war and its influence on society.

²⁰⁹ Kaes 2009 (see note 3), p. 173.

To conclude, all three themes (madness, morbidity and metropolis) relate, albeit in different ways, to the First World War, the personal lives and experiences of artists and the development of expressionism in the visual arts and film. The depiction of madness shows the freshness of the war in the memories of the involved and their personal experience with madness or psychiatry. The frequency of the treatment of the topic signifies the scale of the psychological influence of war experiences. And, notably, the way in which psychological changes reflected upon the ideological principles on which expressionism was founded. Then, morbidity shows the prevailing influence of the war and the way in which the experience of killing and mass death changes views on life and death. Finally, the treatment of the metropolis in the visual arts and film confirm the change of contemporary society, signified by modern urbanization, and the way modernity is experienced. It is evident that topics remained of relevance and outlived expressionism itself. The war left its mark on German cultural production until long after the armistice.



Fig. 29. Still from *Nerven* (Robert Reinert, 1919).



Fig. 30. Still from *Nerven* (Robert Reinert, 1919, English edition).



Fig. 31. The hallucinations of Roloff: still from *Nerven* (Robert Reinert, 1919).



Fig. 32. Conrad Felixmüller, *Soldat im Irrenhaus I*, 1918. Lithograph, 38,42 x 30,96 cm, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies).



Fig. 33. Conrad Felixmüller, *Soldat im Irrenhaus II*, 1918. Lithograph from portfolio *Die Schaffenden*, 34,13 x 27,94 cm, edition of 100, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies).

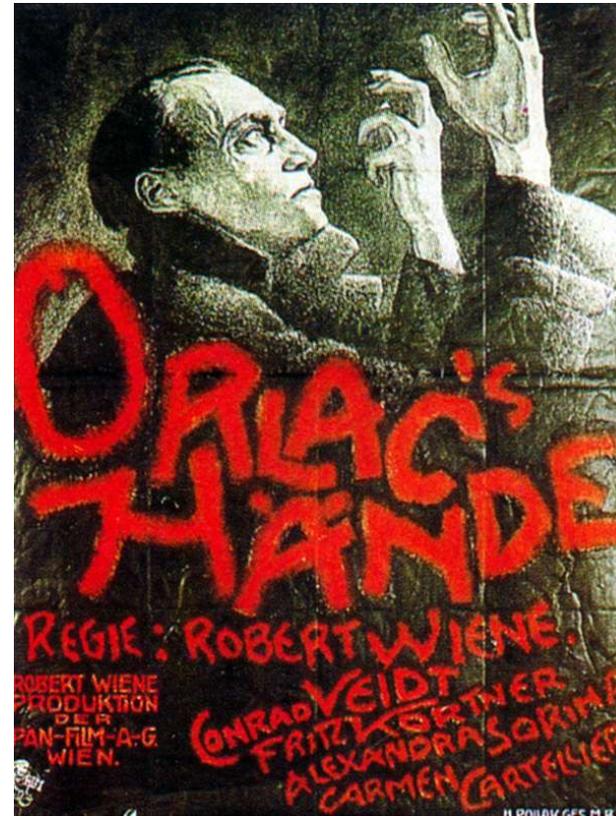


Fig. 34. Film poster for *Orlacs Hände* (Robert Wiene, 1924).



Fig. 35. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Selbstbildnis als Soldat*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 69 x 61 cm, Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College, Oberlin.



Fig. 36. George Grosz, *Krawall der Irren*, 1915-16. Drawing, 32 x 23,5 cm, SMPK Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin.



Fig. 37. George Grosz, *Grauer Tag (Magistratsbeamter für Kriegsbeschädigtenfürsorge)*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 115 x 80 cm. SMPK Nationalgalerie, Berlin.



Fig. 38. Otto Dix, *Die Irrsinnige*, 1924. Tempera on panel, 120 x 60 cm, Kunsthalle, Mannheim.

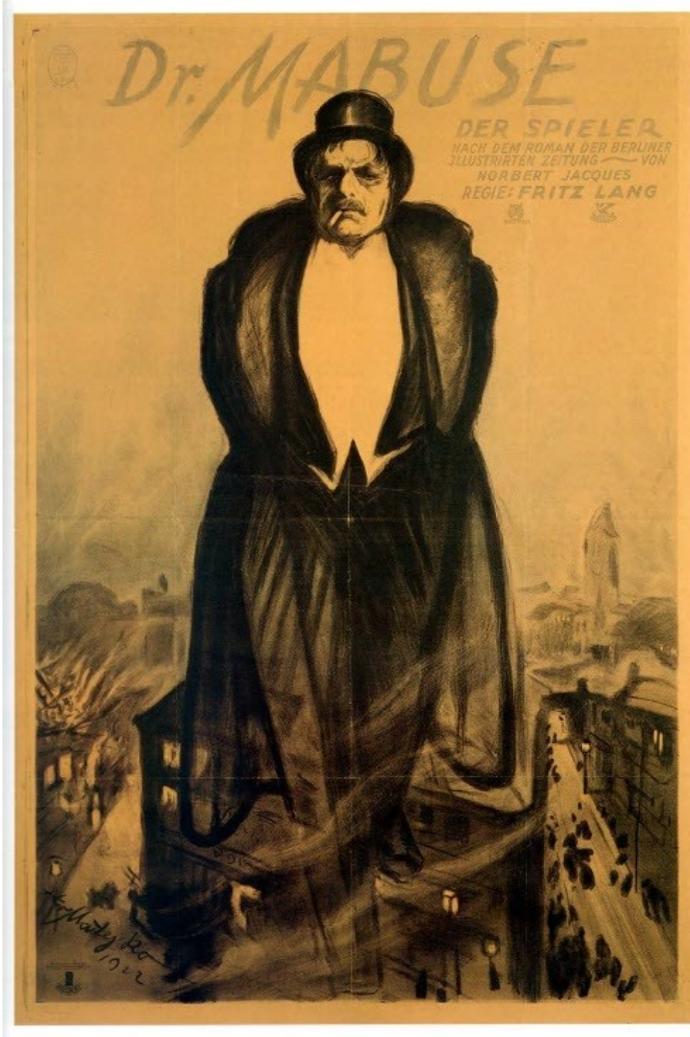


Fig. 39. Film poster for *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* (Fritz Lang, 1922). Design by Theo Matejko.



Fig. 40. Film poster for *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919-1920). Design by Erich Ludwig Stahl and Otto Arpke, 1920.



Fig. 41. Photograph of the opening of the First International Dada Fair Berlin, including: George Grosz, *Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen*, 1918. Otto Dix, *Kriegskrüppel*, 1920. John Heartfield and Rudolf Schlichter, *Preußischer Erzengel*, 1920. Photograph in collection of Bildarchiv Preussischer Kunstbesitz, Berlin.

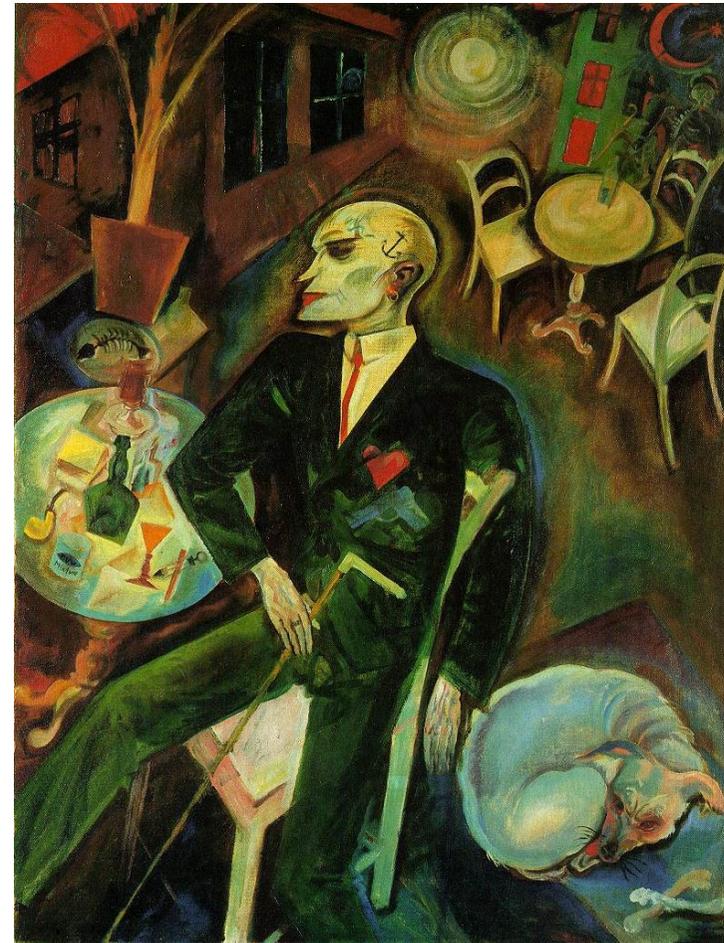


Fig. 42. George Grosz, *Der Liebeskranke*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 100 x 78 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf.



Fig. 43. George Grosz, *Selbstmord*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 100 x 77,6 cm, Tate Gallery, London.



Fig. 44. Max Beckmann, *Weinende Frau*, 1914 (published 1918). Drypoint, 24,3 x 19 cm, edition of 50, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 45. Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Eltern*, 1921-22 (published 1923). From woodcut portfolio *Krieg*, plate 3, 35,1 x 42,5 cm, edition of 400, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 46. Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Witwe*, 1921-22 (published 1923). From woodcut portfolio *Krieg*, plate 4, 37,2 x 23,6 cm, edition of 400, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 47. Procession of the dead: film still from *Der Müde Tod* (Fritz Lang, 1921).



Fig. 48. Death and his candles: film still from *Der Müde Tod* (Fritz Lang, 1921).



Fig. 49. Max Beckmann *Auferstehung* (unfinished), 1916-18. Oil and charcoal on canvas, 345 x 497 cm, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.



Fig. 50. Film poster for *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* (F.W. Murnau, 1922).



Fig. 51. Nosferatu and Ellen: still from *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* (F.W. Murnau, 1922).



Fig. 52. Ellen on the beach: still from *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* (F.W. Murnau, 1922).



Fig. 53. George Grosz, *Lustmord in der Ackerstraße*, 1916-17. Drawing, 35,6 x 27,5 cm, private collection, Vienna.



Fig. 54. George Grosz, *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 66 x 66 cm, private collection.



Fig. 55. George Grosz, *John, der Frauenmörder*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 86,5 x 81 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.



Fig. 56. George Grosz approaching his model Eva with a knife, ca. 1918-20. Grosz Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.



Fig. 57. Otto Dix, *Der Lüstmörder (Selbstdarstellung)*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 170 x 120 cm, current location unknown.



Fig. 58. Otto Dix, *Lustmord*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 165 x 135, current location unknown.



Fig. 59. Max Beckmann, *Die Nacht*, 1918-19. Oil on canvas, 133 x 154 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.



Fig. 60. Max Beckmann, *Der Mord*, 1933. Watercolor, 50 x 45,5 cm, private collection.



Fig. 61. Shadows on the ceiling: still from *Die Straße* (Karl Grune, 1923).



Fig. 62. Ludwig Meidner, *Ich und die Stadt*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, private collection, Cologne.



Fig. 63. Ludwig Meidner, *Betrunkene Straße mit Selbstbildnis*, 1913.
Drawing, 46 x 58,8 cm, Saarland-Museum, Saarbrücken.



Fig. 64. Bourgeois staircase: still from *Die Straße* (Karl Grune, 1923).



Fig. 65. Staircase of the poor: still from *Die Straße* (Karl Grune, 1923).



Fig. 66. The set of *Von Morgens bis Mitternachts* (Karl Heinz Martin, 1920).



Fig. 67. The set of *Raskolnikov* (Robert Wiene, 1923).

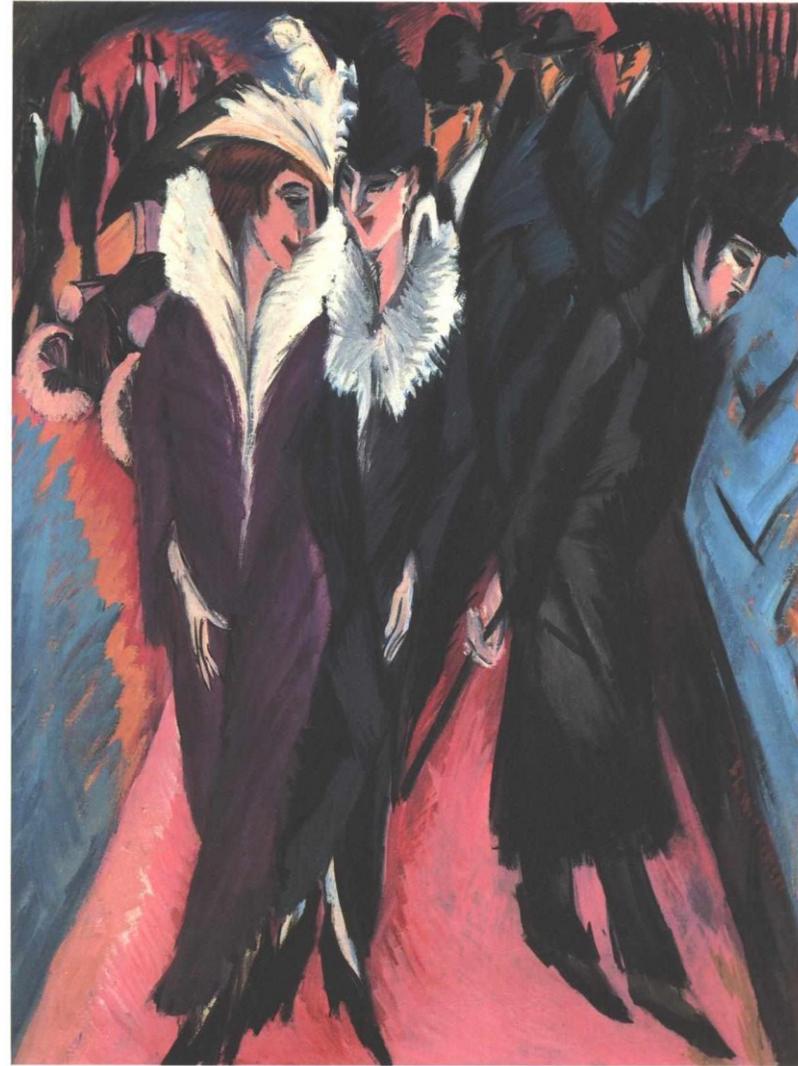


Fig. 68. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Strasse, Berlin*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 120,6 x 91,1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 69. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Potsdamer Platz, Berlin*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 200 x 150 cm, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.



Fig. 70. George Grosz, *Metropolis (The City/Großstadt)*, 1916-17. Oil on canvas, 100 x 102 cm, Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid..



Fig. 71. George Grosz and John Heartfield, *Leben und Treiben in Universal-City, 12 Uhr 5 mittags*, 1919. Collage, medium and dimensions unknown, location unknown.

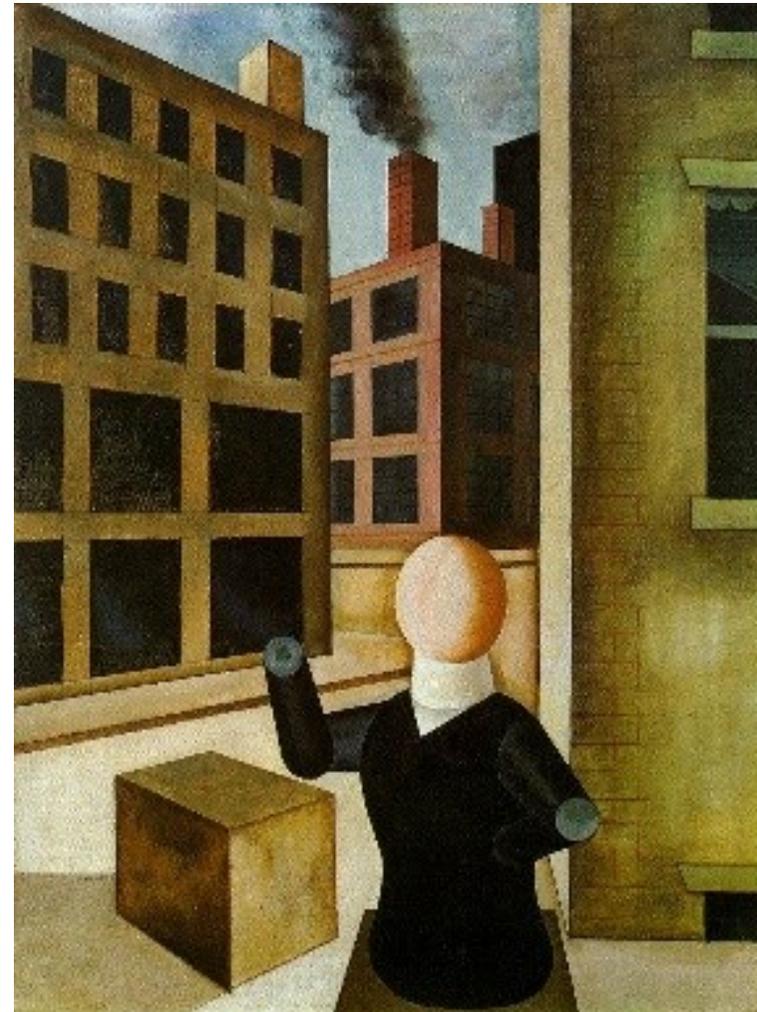


Fig. 72. George Grosz, *Ohne Titel*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 81 x 61 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein- Westfalen, Düsseldorf.



Fig. 73. George Grosz, *Republikanische Automaten*, 1920. Watercolor, 60 x 47,3 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



74. Film poster for *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927). Design by Heinz Schulz-Neudamm.

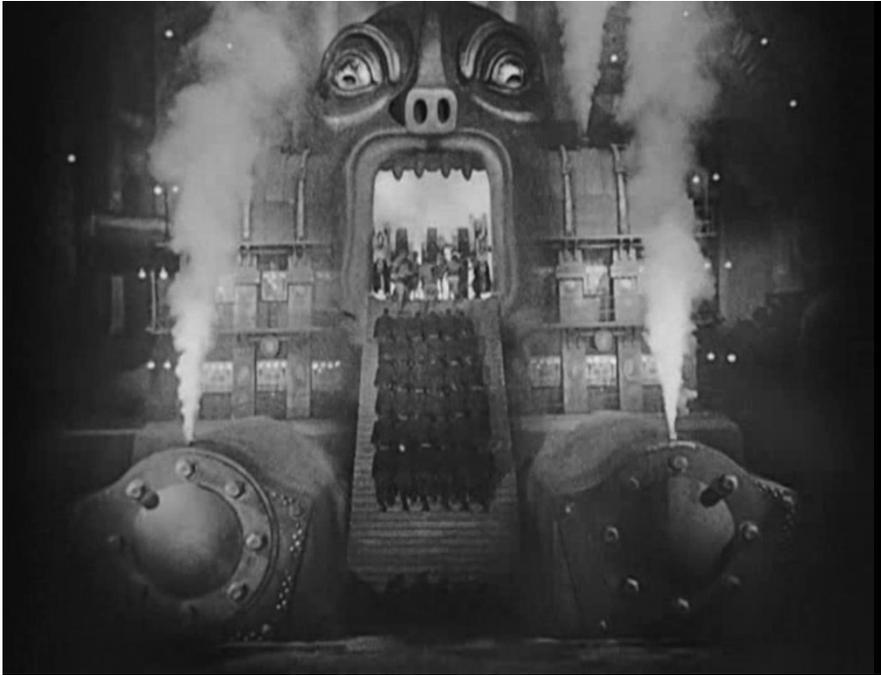


Fig. 75. Machine as a monster: still from *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927).



Fig. 76. Generic architecture: still from *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927).



Fig. 77. Otto Dix, *Großstadt*, 1928. Mix technique on panel, middle panel 181 x 200 cm, left 181 x 101, right, 181 x 101, Kunstmuseum, Stuttgart.

Conclusion

“The Russian troops crowded through our barbed wire and applauded our soldiers. An historic moment for movies!”²¹⁰

Otto Dix wrote this in a letter at the end of 1917, but it took a long time before the historic moments of the battlefield would be translated to film, while these moments were treated immediately in the visual arts of the period. Nevertheless, the end of the First World War did inspire the German film industry to do something else: to create artistic avant-garde films.

²¹⁰ McGreevy 2001 (see note 119), p. 101.

The outset of this research was to find the ways in which visual artists and filmmakers were both affected by their war experience and which connections existed between the work of both, if any, based on those experiences. Since research up until now mostly focused on either the visual arts or film, it was necessary to combine knowledge from both fields, in order to get a more comprehensive view of artistic development during the postwar period: essentially, to find missing links.

In literature, contemporary as well as more recent, it could be seen that expressionism in both art and film are built on the same ideological principles: not the depiction of the visual reality, but finding the essence of that reality within the artist. During the period itself, the connection between film and arts was considered to be much more logical than in later times. Moreover, from this literature it is evident that artists did not confine themselves to one medium, but experimented with several, which caused an interaction between the visual arts and film. As George Grosz argued, film provided a “ganz große Wirkungsfläche für neue Graphik”.²¹¹ He, for example, experimented with new film techniques such as animation, and accordingly, Fritz Lang was originally trained as a painter but switched completely to filmmaking. The stimulation of the film industry by the German government contributed to this, by creating a higher demand for

²¹¹ Grosz, George, ‘Randzeichnungen zum Thema’, *Blätter des Piscator-Bühne* January 1928; as quoted by Goergen in Schuster 1994 (see note 140), p. 217.

films during the war and thereby drawing people from other fields to be able to answer to that demand.

To a certain extent, filmmaking seemed to be more related to the graphic arts than to painting, although in a different way than what was proposed by Grosz. Namely, in print series artists were able to convey a sense of time, which painting lacks, by depicting different moments of an event, just as film would do. All three portfolios in the appendices use multiple images to shed light on different aspects of a situation.

Since the period was marked by the appearance of periodicals which aspired to spread cultural, artistic, and political ideas, such as *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*, it makes sense that the ideological principles on which the new art was built did not remain confined to one field. In this way, expressionism was not only a force in the visual arts, but also in literature, theater and film.

Then, by studying the most powerful event of the period, the First World War, it became clear how specific artists and filmmakers integrated their changing views of society into their work. In general, already in the nineteenth century the way of depicting war in art was largely dependent on the artist's view of society and warfare. The particular stories of the artists have shown that their experiences during the war varied greatly, but that they had a quite similar effect on the mindset of the artists: all sustained some form of mental illness, whether it was from fighting at the front, treating the wounded or struggling with the military command. Especially useful in this respect is the use of autobiographical sources,

since these provide insight into the ways in which experiences relate to the artist's thoughts, to what he considered to be important and to what is depicted in his art. However, it has to be taken into consideration that this may not always reflect the complete truth. In particular, autobiographical information made for the purpose of publication may be edited to the author's liking, to present a certain image of himself.

Although the comparison of the experiences of three artists and two filmmakers by no means provides a complete picture of the events and ideas of the period, it provides insight into the way the subject can be treated.

The comparison between art and film has proved to be very useful, mostly in the detection of themes. All three themes, as discussed in chapter three, show that the prominence of these subjects in art are related to its prominence in society. Firstly, the treatment of the subject of madness in films and art is related to the artists' personal experiences as well as an overall preoccupation in society (the debate on the validity of the symptoms and the debate on its treatment). Secondly, death is prominent in two ways: the experience of mass death and the way society coped with this; and the idea of being a murderer, related to a changing attitude caused by the war. Thirdly, the metropolis can be seen as a manifestation of modernity and technology. Therefore, it is a subject that touches on themes that relate to the First World War, without specifically addressing the subject of war itself. This is then especially important for films where, due to the wishes of the audiences, the subject of the war itself remained taboo

for around a decade after the armistice. With all three themes, the approach from both a psychological and a social perspective is very useful, since it gives knowledge of how the ideas of artists relate to general developments within society.

The visual comparison has shown that expressionism did not limit itself to the use of painting in films (that is, through set designs), but could also be detected in lighting and use of camera angles. However, to be able to obtain a more comprehensive view of the use of these methods, more research is necessary. It could particularly be useful to further investigate the involvement of artists in the making of films, in order to get an sense of the way they were able to contribute to the filmmaking process. Moreover, such research could also shed light on the way they dealt with elements specific to film as a medium, such as time and movement.

Overall, two types of results could be found: the strong link between film and the arts in terms of production (involvement of visual artists in production) and in terms of content. The most significant difference in content, namely that of the depiction of war, is related to the difference in production: film is much more dependent on commercial demands of the intended audience and therefore has to make concessions in terms of its content. Although a visual artist needs commercial success to a certain extent, i.e. to provide a living, a work can be created without consideration of commercial salability. Especially drawings or etchings can be made without commercial purpose in mind. This gives the visual artist the

opportunity to act more freely upon his own ideas than a filmmaker could and can therefore explain some differences in their respective output.

To conclude, an artistic movement, that is primarily determined by an urge to change society, is contrariwise likely to undergo extreme changes itself when society changes. Moreover, it expresses themes that are relevant for society at the time, not limited to a single medium. Since artists did not experience a strict separation between these mediums, the study of their work should not be confined to a single discipline, but should instead discuss the work in its full artistic, social and historical context. Only then the full scale of artistic production can be detected.

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Chapter one: the idea of expressionism in art and film

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2. Wassily Kandinsky, *Berg*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 109 x 109 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich. Image:
[<http://uploads3.wikiart.org/images/wassily-kandinsky/a-mountain-1909.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
3. Franz Marc, *Gelbe Kuh*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 140.5 x 189.2 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Image: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
[http://annex.guggenheim.org/collections/media/full/49.1210_ph_web.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
4. Cover of *Der Sturm, Wochenschrift für Kultur und die Künste*, 1910 no. 20 (Berlin, 14 July 1910), with illustration: Oskar Kokoschka, drawing for *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*. Image: 'Blue Mountain Project: Historic avant-garde periodicals for digital research' [<http://bluemountain.princeton.edu/bluemtn/cgi-bin/bluemtn>] on 01-07-2014.
5. Cover of *Die Aktion, Wochenschrift für Politik, Literatur, Kunst*, vol. 7 no. 16-17 (Berlin, 21 April 1917), with illustration: Conrad Felixmüller, woodcut. 30.8 x 23.2 cm. Image: Museum of Modern Art, New York.
[http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/364/w500h420/CRI_245364.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
6. Set design of *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920). Image: [http://www.8weekly.nl/images/art/7689_2a.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
7. Film still from *Der Student von Prag* (Stellan Rye, 1913). Image: [http://www.filmportal.de/sites/default/files/imagecache/gal_image/f024790_slg_wegener_stud04.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
8. Film still from *Der Student von Prag* (Stellan Rye, 1913). Image: [[http://www.movpins.com/big/MV5BMjE5MjQ4ODYxNF5BMl5BanBnXkFtZTcwMjEwNTQwOQ/still-of-grete-berger-and-paul-wegener-in-der-student-von-prag-\(1913\).jpg](http://www.movpins.com/big/MV5BMjE5MjQ4ODYxNF5BMl5BanBnXkFtZTcwMjEwNTQwOQ/still-of-grete-berger-and-paul-wegener-in-der-student-von-prag-(1913).jpg)] on 01-07-2014.

Chapter two: the First World War in art and film

9. Max Beckmann, *Die Kriegserklärung*, 1914. Drypoint print, 19.8 x 24.8 cm (unique state proof), Museum of Modern Art, New York. Image: Museum of Modern Art, New York
[http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/900/w500h420/CRI_112900.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
10. Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Freiwilligen*, 1921-22 (published 1923). From woodcut portfolio *Krieg*, plate 2, 34.9 x 49.5 cm, edition of 400, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Image: Museum of Modern Art, New York
[http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/919/w500h420/CRI_151919.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
11. Max Beckmann, *Selbstbildnis als Krankenpfleger*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 55,5 x 38,5 cm, Von der Heyt Museum, Wuppertal. Image: Mémorial de Caen, Caen (© SESAM, Paris (1998))
[<http://www.memorial-caen.fr/10EVENT/EXPO1418/tableau/006beck.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
12. Max Beckmann, *Die Granate*, 1915 (published 1918). Drypoint print, 38.9 x 28.9 cm, edition of 20, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Image: Museum of Modern Art, New York
[http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/515/w500h420/CRI_67515.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
13. Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis mit Artilleriehelm*, 1914. Oil on paper, 68 x 53,5 cm, Galerie der Stadt, Stuttgart. Image: Mémorial de Caen, Caen (© SESAM, Paris (1998)) [<http://www.memorial-caen.fr/10EVENT/EXPO1418/tableau/004dix2.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
14. Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis als Soldat in rotem Hemd*, 1914. Oil on paper, 68 x 53,5 cm, Galerie der Stadt, Stuttgart. Image: Mémorial de Caen, Caen (© SESAM, Paris (1998)) [<http://www.memorial-caen.fr/10EVENT/EXPO1418/tableau/004dix1.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
15. Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis als Mars*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 81 x 66 cm, Städtische Kunstsammlung Haus der Heimat, Freital. Image: [<http://uploads0.wikiart.org/images/otto-dix/self-portrait-as-mars.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
16. Otto Dix, *Selbstporträt als Schießscheibe*, 1915. Oil on paper, 72 x 51 cm, Otto-Dix-Stiftung, Vaduz. Image: Mémorial de Caen, Caen (© Imperial War Museums, London) [<http://www.memorial-caen.fr/10EVENT/EXPO1418/tableau/066dix.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
17. Otto Dix, *Schützengraben*, 1920-23. Oil on canvas, 227 x 250 cm, destroyed during the Second World War. Image: [http://classconnection.s3.amazonaws.com/340/flashcards/2193340/jpg/the_trench1352942849072.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
18. Otto Dix, *Der Krieg*, 1929-32. Mix technique on panel, middle panel 204 x 204 cm, left 204 x 102, right, 204 x 102, predella, 60 x

- 204 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. Image: [http://uploads5.wikiart.org/images/otto-dix/war-1932.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
19. Otto Dix, *Flandern, zu Henri Barbusse 'Le Feu'*, 1934-36. Mix technique on canvas, 200 x 250 cm, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie, Berlin. Image: [http://uploads5.wikiart.org/images/otto-dix/flanders.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
20. George Grosz, *Sonnenfinsternis*, 1926. Oil on Canvas, 207,3 x 182,6 cm, Heckscher Museum, Huntington (NY). Image: [http://www.abcgallery.com/G/grosz/grosz15.JPG] on 01-07-2014.
21. George Grosz, *Der General*, ca. 1916. Drawing, dimensions and material unknown, Archiv Roland März. Image: scan from: Schuster, Peter-Klaus, George Grosz: Berlin, New York, exh. cat. Berlin (Neue Nationalgalerie) 1994, p. 125.
22. George Grosz, *Widmung an Oskar Panizza (Das Begräbnis des Dichters)*, 1917-18. Oil on canvas, 140 x 110 cm, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. Image: [http://www.paletaworld.org/dbimages/2133_1.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
23. George Grosz, *Sanatorium*, 1917. Drawing, 61,4 x 43,3 cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne. Image: scan from: Schuster, Peter-Klaus, George Grosz: Berlin, New York, exh. cat. Berlin (Neue Nationalgalerie) 1994, p. 397.
24. George Grosz, sketch for scene in *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* (Erwin Piscator, 1928). Image: scan from: Schuster, Peter-Klaus, *George Grosz: Berlin, New York*, tent. Cat. Berlin (Neue Nationalgalerie) 1994, p. 216.
25. George Grosz, sketch for scene in *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk*, (Erwin Piscator, 1928). Image: scan from: Schuster, Peter-Klaus, *George Grosz: Berlin, New York*, tent. Cat. Berlin (Neue Nationalgalerie) 1994, p. 217.
26. Fritz Lang, reconnaissance drawing from war diary. Image: scan from: Aurich, Rolf, et. al., *Fritz Lang: Leben und Werk, Bilder und Dokumente 1890-1976*, Berlin 2001, p. 24.
27. Film poster for *Westfront 1918* (G.W. Pabst, 1930). Design by Fritz Weber. Image: Archiv für Filmplakate [http://www.filmplakate-archiv.de/filmplakat/1930/westfront-1919.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
28. Film poster for *Niemandland* (Victor Trivas, 1931). Image: [http://www.iphotoscrap.com/Image/337/1315199145.jpg] on 01-07-2014.

Chapter three: madness, morbidity and metropolis

29. Still from *Nerven* (Robert Reinert, 1919). Image: own screenshot from film.
30. Still from *Nerven* (Robert Reinert, 1919, English edition). Image: own screenshot from film.

31. The hallucinations of Roloff: still from *Nerven* (Robert Reinert, 1919). Image: own screenshot from film.
32. Conrad Felixmuller, *Soldat im Irrenhaus I*, 1918. Lithograph, 38,42 x 30,96 cm, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies). Image: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles [http://collections.lacma.org/sites/default/files/remote_images/piction/ma-31943804-WEB.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
33. Conrad Felixmuller, *Soldat im Irrenhaus II*, 1918. Lithograph from portfolio *Die Schaffenden*, 34,13 x 27,94 cm, edition of 100, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies). Image: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles [http://collections.lacma.org/sites/default/files/remote_images/piction/ma-31926562-WEB.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
34. Film poster for *Orlacs Hände* (Robert Wiene, 1924). Image: [<http://www.cinemascream.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Hands-of-Orlac-Poster-2.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
35. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Selbstbildnis als Soldat*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 69 x 61 cm, Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College, Oberlin. Image: Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College, Oberlin [http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/images/kirchner_ernst1_ft_000.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
36. George Grosz, *Krawall der Irren*, 1915-16. Drawing, 32 x 23,5 cm, SMPK Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin. Image: [http://cdn2.all-art.org/art_20th_century/expressionism/grosz/22.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
37. George Grosz, *Grauer Tag (Magistratsbeamter für Kriegsbeschädigtenfürsorge)*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 115 x 80 cm. SMPK Nationalgalerie, Berlin. Image: [<http://www.kinopitheque.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/GROSZ-jour-gris-1921-753x1024.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
38. Otto Dix, *Die Irrsinnige*, 1924. Tempera on panel, 120 x 60 cm, Kunsthalle, Mannheim. Image: Kunsthalle, Mannheim [http://www.kunsthalle-mannheim.de/files/Bilder/Ausstellungen/Dix_Beckmann/B4,B8.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
39. Film poster for *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* (Fritz Lang, 1922). Design by Theo Matejko. Image: Archiv für Filmposter [<http://www.filmposter-archiv.de/filmplakat/1922/dr-mabuse3.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
40. Film poster for *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919-1920). Design by Erich Ludwig Stahl and Otto Arpke, 1920. Image: Archiv für Filmposter [

- archiv.de/filmplakat/1920/cabinet-des-dr-caligari-das-2.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
41. Photograph of the opening of the First International Dada Fair Berlin, including: George Grosz, *Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen*, 1918. Otto Dix, *Kriegskrüppel*, 1920. John Heartfield and Rudolf Schlichter, *Preußischer Erzengel*, 1920. Photograph in collection of Bildarchiv Preussischer Kunstbesitz, Berlin. Image: [http://farm5.static.flickr.com/4022/4674626692_ca9de4802f.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
42. George Grosz, *Der Liebeskranke*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 100 x 78 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf. Image: [http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-mRZUmw3ogsw/T055qrjC1eI/AAAAAAAAABhQ/kRGyU5sW3NM/s1600/the-lovesick-man-1916.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
43. George Grosz, *Selbstmord*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 100 x 77,6 cm, Tate Gallery, London. Image: © Tate Gallery, London [http://www.tate.org.uk/art/images/work/T/T02/T02053_9.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
44. Max Beckmann, *Weinende Frau*, 1914 (published 1918). Drypoint, 24,3 x 19 cm, edition of 50, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Image: Museum of Modern Art, New York [http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/109/w500h420/CRI_120109.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
45. Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Eltern*, 1921-22 (published 1923). From woodcut portfolio *Krieg*, plate 3, 35,1 x 42,5 cm, edition of 400, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Image: Museum of Modern Art, New York [http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/341/w500h420/CRI_117341.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
46. Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Witwe*, 1921-22 (published 1923). From woodcut portfolio *Krieg*, plate 4, 37,2 x 23,6 cm, edition of 400, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Image: Museum of Modern Art, New York [http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/342/w500h420/CRI_117342.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
47. Procession of the dead: film still from *Der Müde Tod* (Fritz Lang, 1921). Image: own screenshot from film.
48. Death and his candles: film still from *Der Müde Tod* (Fritz Lang, 1921). Image: own screenshot from film.
49. Max Beckmann *Auferstehung* (unfinished), 1916-18. Oil and charcoal on canvas, 345 x 497 cm, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. Image: [http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-1U8xkvL4aeI/Tb9MSsPiOHI/AAAAAAAAACd8/SG1jdlEXJqY/s1600/res.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
50. Film poster for *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* (F.W. Murnau, 1922). Image: Archiv für Filmposter

- [<http://www.filmposter-archiv.de/filmplakat/1922/nosferatu-1.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
51. Nosferatu and Ellen: still from *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* (F.W. Murnau, 1922). Image: own screenshot from film.
52. Ellen on the beach: still from *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* (F.W. Murnau, 1922). Image: own screenshot from film.
53. George Grosz, *Lustmord in der Ackerstraße*, 1916-17. Drawing, 35,6 x 27,5 cm, private collection, Vienna. Image: [<http://85.214.48.237/kunst/pic570/299/400506160.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
54. George Grosz, *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 66 x 66 cm, private collection. Image: scan from: Hoffmann-Curtius, Kathrin, *Im Blickfeld George Grosz, John, der Frauenmörder*, Stuttgart 1993, p. 9.
55. George Grosz, *John, der Frauenmörder*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 86,5 x 81 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg. Image: scan from: Hoffmann-Curtius, Kathrin, *Im Blickfeld George Grosz, John, der Frauenmörder*, Stuttgart 1993, p. 6.
56. George Grosz approaching his model Eva with a knife, ca. 1918-20. Grosz Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin. Image: scan from: Hoffmann-Curtius, Kathrin, *Im Blickfeld George Grosz, John, der Frauenmörder*, Stuttgart 1993, p. 2.
57. Otto Dix, *Der Lüstmörder (Selbstdarstellung)*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 170 x 120 cm, current location unknown. Image: [http://31.media.tumblr.com/344eae3e9a6b2b6978b674d7e725784/tumblr_mn2j5l5AI71rcisg0o1_1280.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
58. Otto Dix, *Lustmord*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 165 x 135, current location unknown. Image: [http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_O0ch3ABb3L4/TD9VsdK1m9I/AAAAAAAAB30/6irxx8t-Cfw/s400/OttoDixLustmord.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
59. Max Beckmann, *Die Nacht*, 1918-19. Oil on canvas, 133 x 154 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf. Image: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf [<http://emp-web-21.zetcom.ch/eMuseumPlus?service=DynamicAsset&sp=SU5mxm4Yx%2FVbg9LVP7MZLDqo6z5lhONBxez%2FYx5EhVSCZjU0bcvvsnPxkoLiFJnF9QzRY98OZwV1b%0AfnOjhdzPJCrGy%2BOIZxfXys9Yi8S8yOJdydIzHmXDfMSKhPZoJX7u&sp=Simage%2Fjpeg>] on 01-07-2014.
60. Max Beckmann, *Der Mord*, 1933. Watercolor, 50 x 45,5 cm, private collection. Image: scan from: Hoffmann-Curtius, Kathrin, *Im Blickfeld George Grosz, John, der Frauenmörder*, Stuttgart 1993, p. 20.
61. Shadows on the ceiling: still from *Die Straße* (Karl Grune, 1923). Image: own screenshot from film.
62. Ludwig Meidner, *Ich und die Stadt*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, private collection, Cologne. Image:

- [<http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/2500/2713/1600/Meidner2.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
63. Ludwig Meidner, *Betrunkene Straße mit Selbstbildnis*, 1913. Drawing, 46 x 58,8 cm, Saarland-Museum, Saarbrücken. Image: [http://lyrik.antikoerperchen.de/bilder/werke/werke_53_orig.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
64. Bourgeois staircase: still from *Die Straße* (Karl Grune, 1923). Image: own screenshot from film.
65. Staircase of the poor: still from *Die Straße* (Karl Grune, 1923). Image: own screenshot from film.
66. The set of *Von Morgens bis Mitternachts* (Karl Heinz Martin, 1920). Image: [http://on-cologne.de/uploads/pics/von_morgens_bis_mitternachts_01.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
67. The set of *Raskolnikow* (Robert Wiene, 1923). Image: [<http://espiralado.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/raskolnikov2.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
68. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Strasse, Berlin*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 120,6 x 91,1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Image: Museum of Modern Art, New York [http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/031/w500h420/CRI_135031.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
69. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Potsdamer Platz, Berlin*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 200 x 150 cm, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin. Image: via Museum of Modern Art, New York, Photograph by Joerg P. Anders © Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, New York [http://www.moma.org/images/dynamic_content/exhibition_page/23924.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
70. George Grosz, *Metropolis (The City/Großstadt)*, 1916-17. Oil on canvas, 100 x 102 cm, Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid. Image: © Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid [http://www.museothyssen.org/img/obras_mediana/1978.23.jpg] on 01-07-2014.
71. George Grosz and John Heartfield, *Leben und Treiben in Universal-City, 12 Uhr 5 mittags*, 1919. Collage, medium and dimensions unknown, location unknown. Image: [<https://dadarockt.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/grosz-heartfield-leben-und-treiben-50.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
72. George Grosz, *Ohne Titel*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 81 x 61 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein- Westfalen, Düsseldorf. Image: [<http://xident.de/wp-content/uploads/MMGkusaNRW/George-Grosz-%E2%80%93-Ohne-Titel-1920.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
73. George Grosz, *Republikanische Automaten*, 1920. Watercolor, 60 x 47,3 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Image: Museum of Modern Art, New York

[http://www.moma.org/collection_images/resized/959/w500h420/CRI_121959.jpg] on 01-07-2014.

74. Film poster for *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927). Design by Heinz Schulz-Neudamm. Image: Archiv für Filmposter [<http://www.filmposter-archiv.de/filmplakat/1927/metrololis.jpg>] on 01-07-2014.
75. Machine as a monster: still from *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927). Image: own screenshot from film.
76. Generic architecture: still from *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927). Image: own screenshot from film.
77. Otto Dix, *Großstadt*, 1928. Mix technique on panel, middle panel 181 x 200 cm, left 181 x 101, right, 181 x 101, Kunstmuseum, Stuttgart. Image: [http://www.simskultur.net/sites/default/files/imagecache/gallery/sites/default/files/artikel/Drei_dix_1.jpg] on 01-07-2014.

Apendices

- A: Otto Dix, portfolio *Der Krieg*, 1923-1924 (published 1924). All images from: Museum of Modern Art, New York [http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=63259] on 01-07-2014.
1. *Verschüttete (Januar 1916, Champagne)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 14 x 19,4 cm. Portfolio I-2.

2. *Tote vor der Stellung bei Tahure*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19,6 x 28,8 cm. Portfolio V-10.
3. *Die Irrsinnige von Ste-Marie-à-Py*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 28,8 x 19,5 cm. Portfolio IV-5.
4. *Trichterfeld bei Dontrien von Leuchtkugeln erhellt*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19,3 x 25,1 cm. Portfolio I-4.
5. *Granattrichter mit Blumen (Früling 1916 vor Reims)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 14,4 x 20 cm. Portfolio III-4.
6. *Gefunden beim Grabendurchstich (Auberive)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19 x 28,3 cm. Portfolio III-9.
7. *Zerfallender Kampfgraben*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 29,3 x 24,4 cm. Portfolio I-9.
8. *Verwundeter (Herbst 1916, Bapaume)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19,7 x 29 cm. Portfolio I-6.
9. *Fliehender Verwundeter (Sommeschlacht 1916)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19,5 x 14,4 cm. Portfolio I-10.
10. *Leuchtkugel erhellt die Monacu-ferme*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 14,5 x 19 cm. Portfolio II-7.
11. *Abgekämpfte Truppe geht zurück (Sommeschlacht)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19,5 x 29,1 cm. Portfolio III-1.
12. *Gesehen am Steilhang von Cléry-sur-Somme*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 25,7 x 19,5 cm. Portfolio III-8.
13. *Maschinengewehrzug geht vor (Somme, November 1916)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 24,6 x 29,4 cm. Portfolio V-1.

14. *Nächtliche Begegnung mit einem Irrsinnigen*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 25,7 x 19,4 cm. Portfolio III-2.

B. George Grosz, portfolio *Gott mit uns*, 1918-1919 (published 1920).

All images from: Museum of Modern Art, New York
[http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?object_id=144146] on 01-07-2014.

Cover of *Gott mit uns*, 1918-1919 (published: Berlin 1920).

Letterpress and line block, 41,3 x 20,6 cm.

1. *Gott mit uns (Dieu pour nous – God for Us)*, 1919.
Photolithograph, 30,2 x 42,9 cm.
2. *Für deutsches Recht und deutsche Sitte (Les boches sont vaincus – Le bochisme est vainqueur – “The Germans to the front!”)*, 1919.
Photolithograph, 38 x 31,3 cm.
3. *Feierabend (L’angelus à Munich – “Ich dien”)*, 1919.
Photolithograph, 38,7 x 29,9 cm.
4. *Licht und Luft dem Proletariat (Liberté, égalité, fraternité – The workman’s holiday)*, 1919. Photolithograph, 34,9 x 29,7 cm.
5. *Die Gesundheitsbeter (Le triomphe des sciences exactes – German doctors fighting the blockade)*, 1918. Photolithograph, 31,6 x 29,6 cm.
6. *Zuhälter des Todes (Les maquereaux de la mort – The pimps of death)*, 1919. Photolithograph, 38,4 x 30,1 cm.

7. *Die vollendete Demokratie (L’état c’est moi – “The world made safe for democracy)*, 1919. Photolithograph, 44,5 x 30,3 cm.
8. *Die Kommunisten fallen – und die Devisen steigen (Écrasez la famine – Blood is the best sauce)*, 1919. Photolithograph, 30,5 x 45,2 cm.
9. *Den macht uns keiner nach (Honni soit qui mal y pense – “Made in Germany)*, 1919. Photolithograph, 28,4 x 24,7 cm.

C. Max Beckmann, portfolio *Die Hölle*, 1919.

All images from: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh [http://www.nationalgalleries.org/object/GMA_2465_A] on 01-07-2014.

Max Beckmann, titlepage *Selbstbildnis*, 1919. Lithograph, 87 x 61 cm.

1. *Der Nachhauseweg*, 1919. Lithograph, 73,3 x 48,8 cm.
2. *Die Straße*, 1919. Lithograph, 67,3 x 53,3 cm.
3. *Das Martyrium*, 1919. Lithograph, 54,5 x 75 cm.
4. *Der Hunger*, 1919. Lithograph, 62 x 49,8 cm.
5. *Die Ideologen*, 1919. Lithograph, 71,3 x 50,6 cm.
6. *Die Nacht*, 1919. Lithograph, 55,6 x 70,3 cm.
7. *Malepartus*, 1919. Lithograph, 69 x 42,2 cm.
8. *Das patriotische Lied*, 1919. Lithograph, 77,5 x 54,5 cm.
9. *Die Letzten*, 1919. Lithograph, 75,8 x 46 cm.
10. *Die Familie*, 1919. Lithograph, 76 x 46,5 cm.

A. Otto Dix, portfolio *Der Krieg*, 1923-1924
(published 1924).



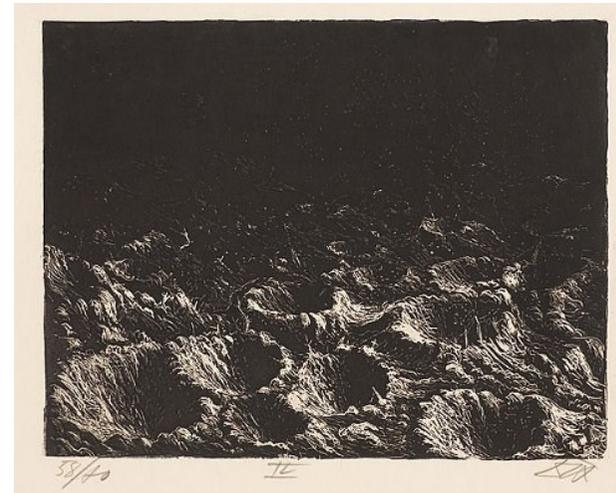
1. *Verschüttete (Januar 1916, Champagne)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 14 x 19,4 cm. Portfolio I-2.



2. *Tote vor der Stellung bei Tahure*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19,6 x 28,8 cm. Portfolio V-10.



3. *Die Irrsinige von Ste-Marie-à-Py*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 28,8 x 19,5 cm. Portfolio IV-5.



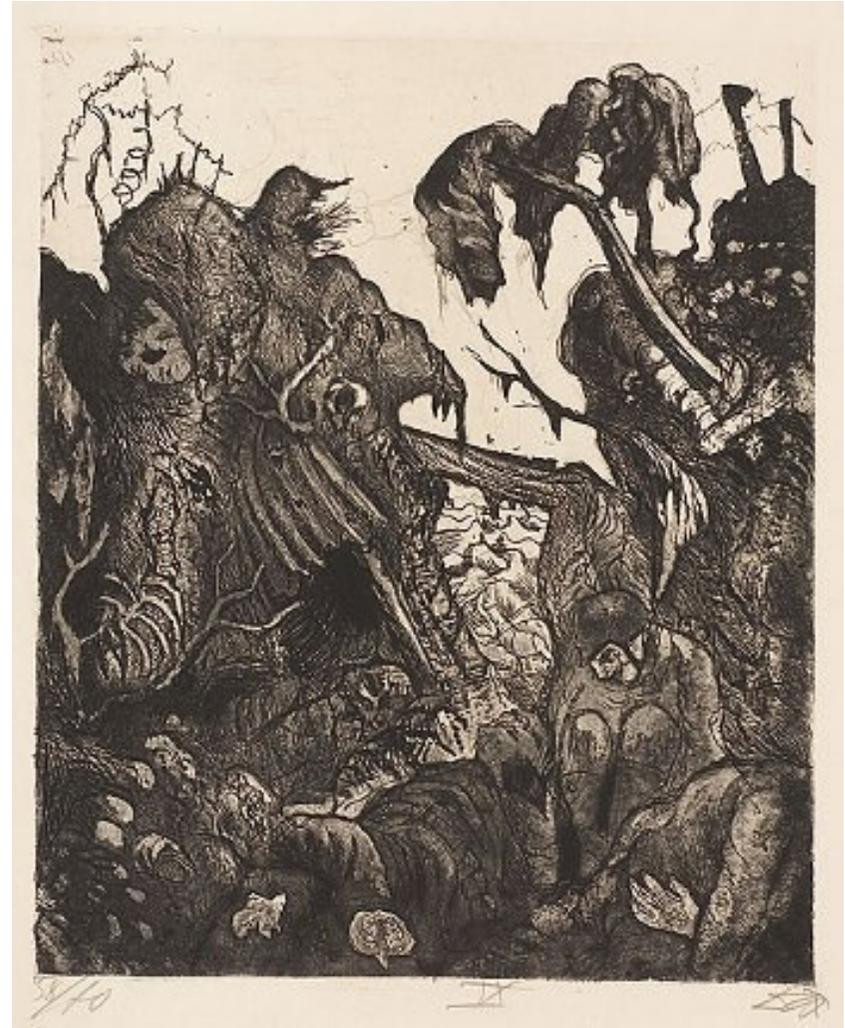
4. *Trichterfeld bei Dontrien von Leuchtkugeln erhellt*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19,3 x 25,1 cm. Portfolio I-4.



5. *Granattrichter mit Blumen (Früling 1916 vor Reims)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 14,4 x 20 cm. Portfolio III-4.



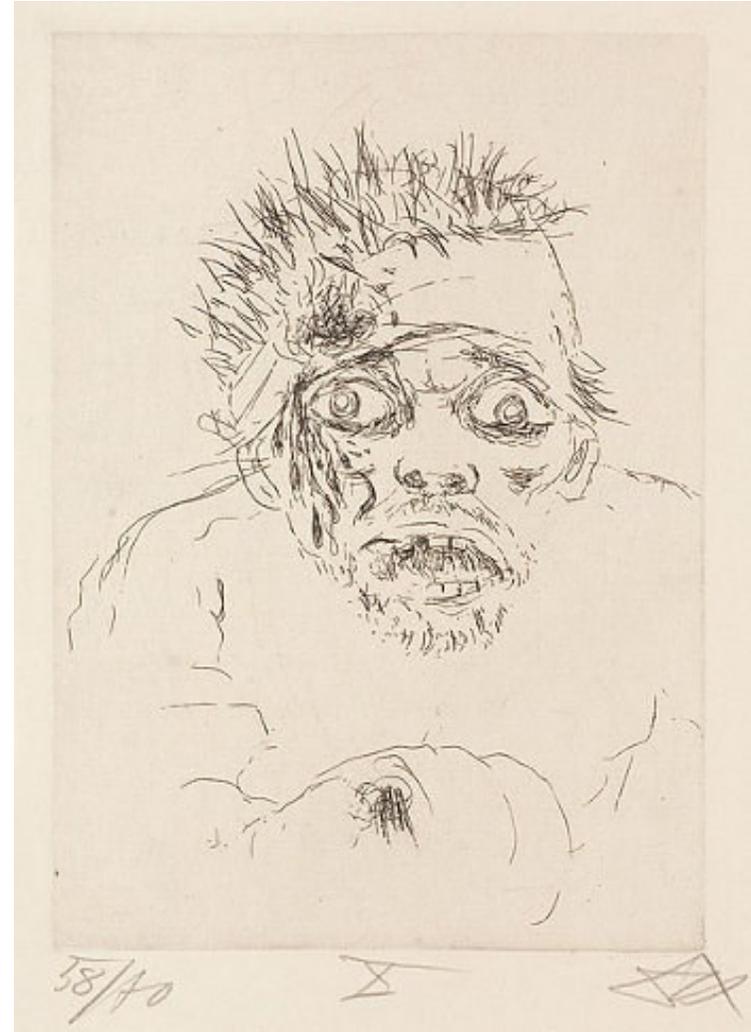
6. *Gefunden beim Grabendurchstich (Auberive)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19 x 28,3 cm. Portfolio III-9.



7. *Zerfallender Kampfgraben*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 29,3 x 24,4 cm. Portfolio I-9.



8. *Verwundeter (Herbst 1916, Bapaume)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19,7 x 29 cm. Portfolio I-6.



9. *Fliehender Verwundeter (Sommeschlacht 1916)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19,5 x 14,4 cm. Portfolio I-10.



10. *Leuchtkugel erhellt die Monacu-ferme*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 14,5 x 19 cm. Portfolio II-7.



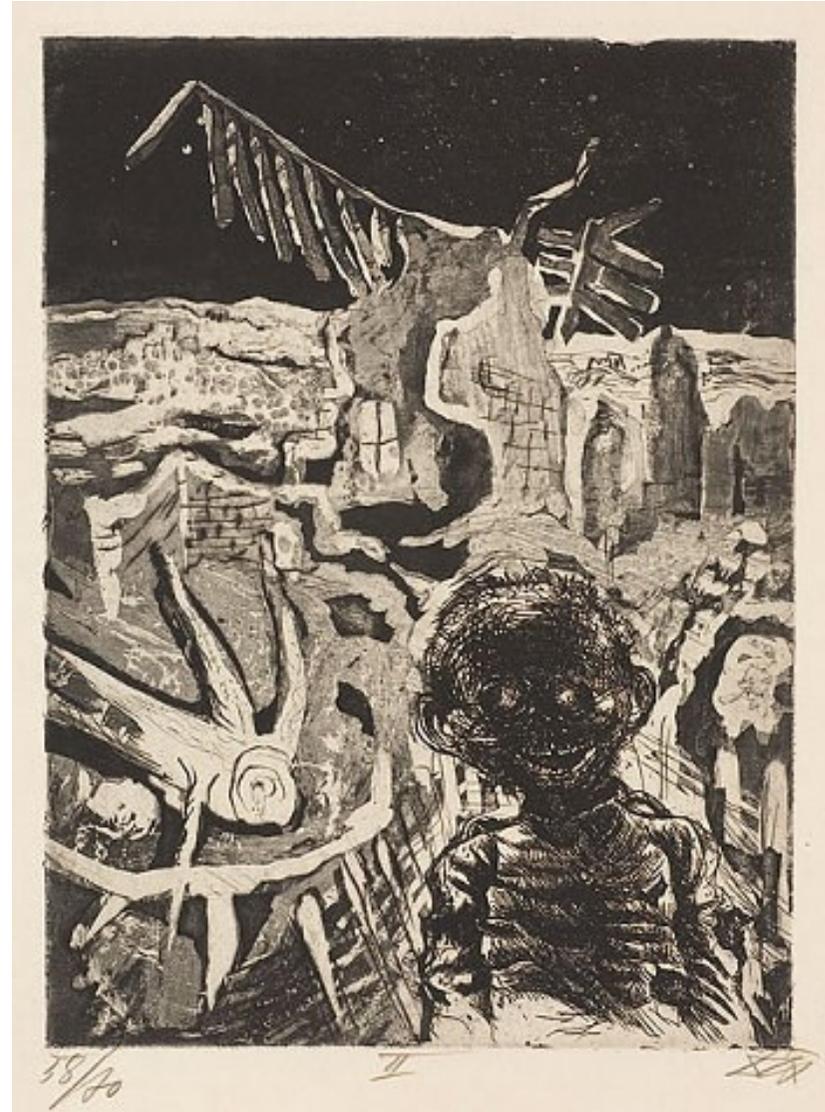
11. *Abgekämpfte Truppe geht zurück (Sommeschlacht)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 19,5 x 29,1 cm. Portfolio III-1.



12. *Gesehen am Steilhang von Cléry-sur-Somme*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 25,7 x 19,5 cm. Portfolio III-8.

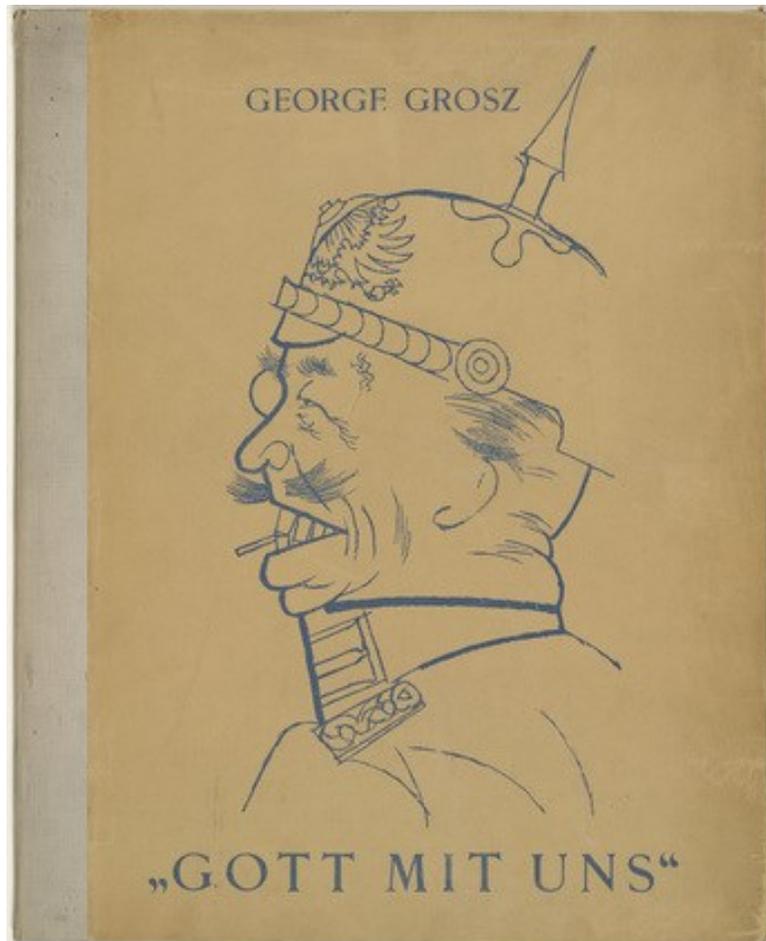


13. *Maschinengewehrzug geht vor (Somme, November 1916)*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 24,6 x 29,4 cm. Portfolio V-1.



14. *Nächtliche Begegnung mit einem Irrsinnigen*, 1924. Aquatint and drypoint, 25,7 x 19,4 cm. Portfolio III-2.

B. George Grosz, portfolio *Gott mit uns*, 1918-1919 (published 1920).



Cover of *Gott mit uns*, 1918-1919 (published: Berlin 1920). Letterpress and line block, 41,3 x 20,6 cm, image: Museum of Modern Art, New York.



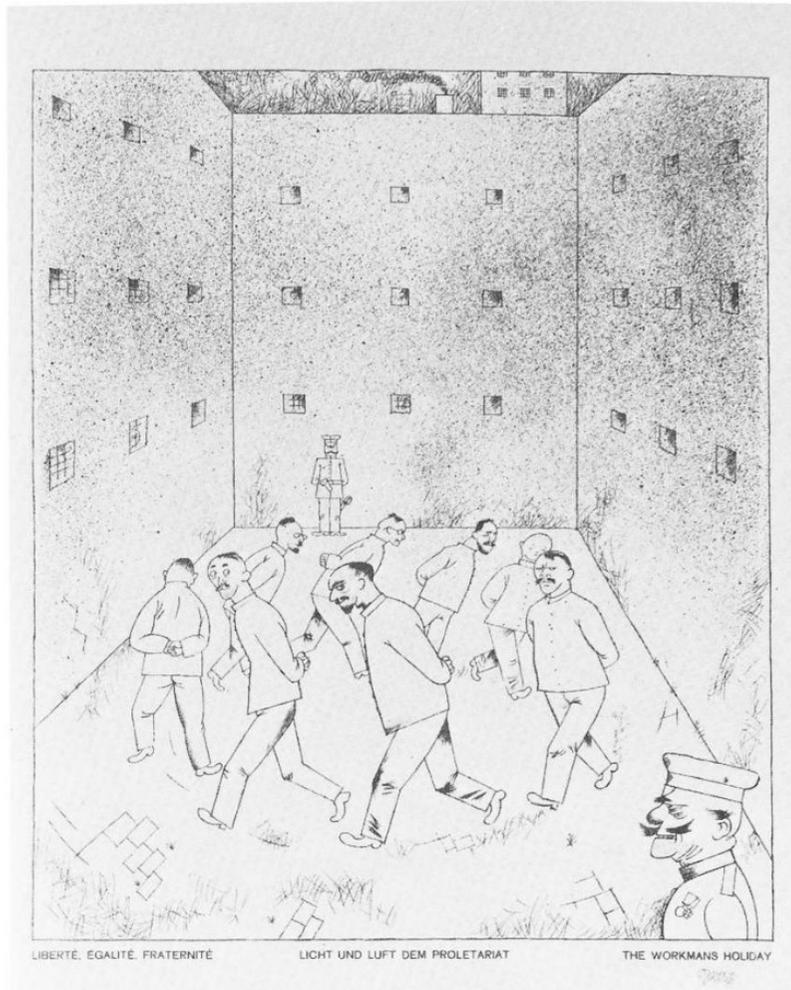
1. *Gott mit uns* (*Dieu pour nous – God for Us*), 1919. Photolithograph, 30,2 x 42,9 cm.



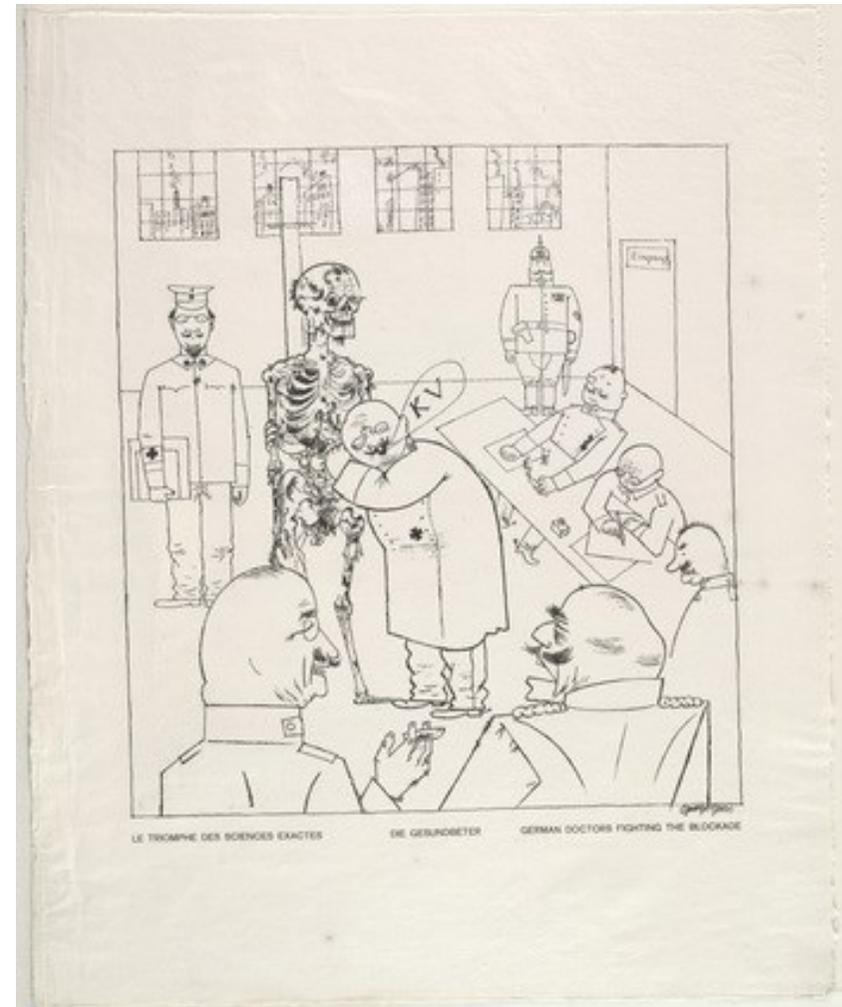
2. *Für deutsches Recht und deutsche Sitte (Les boches sont vaincus – Le bochisme est vainqueur – “The Germans to the front!”)*, 1919. Photolithograph, 38 x 31,3 cm.



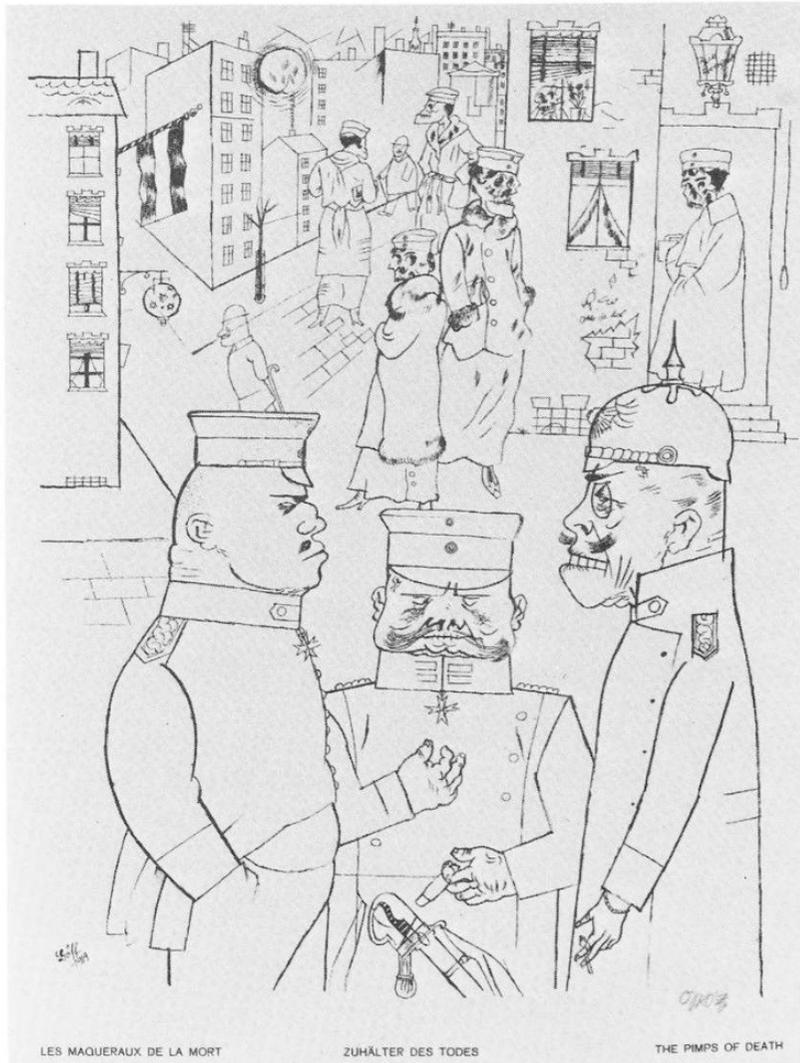
3. *Feierabend (L'angelus à Munich – “Ich dien”)*, 1919. Photolithograph, 38,7 x 29,9 cm.



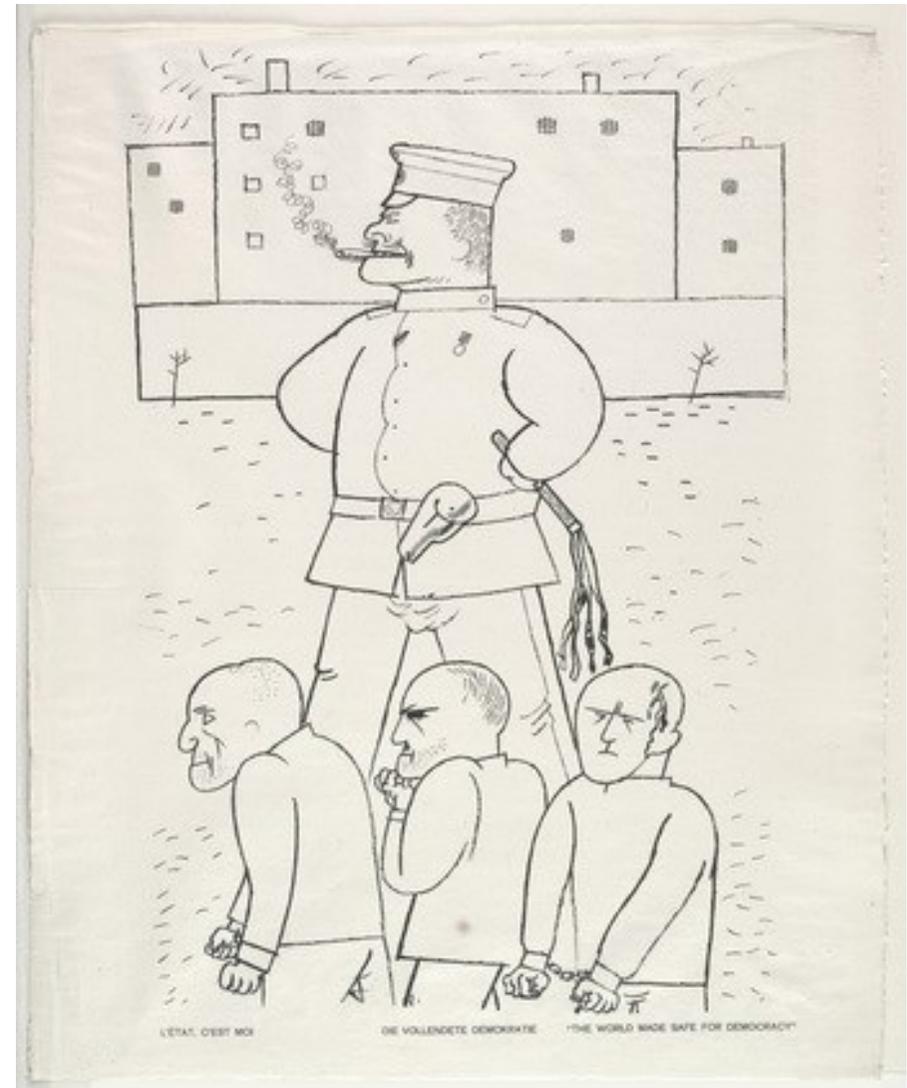
4. *Licht und Luft dem Proletariat* (*Liberté, égalité, fraternité – The workman's holiday*), 1919. Photolithograph, 34,9 x 29,7 cm.



5. *Die Gesundbeter* (*Le triomphe des sciences exactes – German doctors fighting the blockade*), 1918. Photolithograph, 31,6 x 29,6 cm.



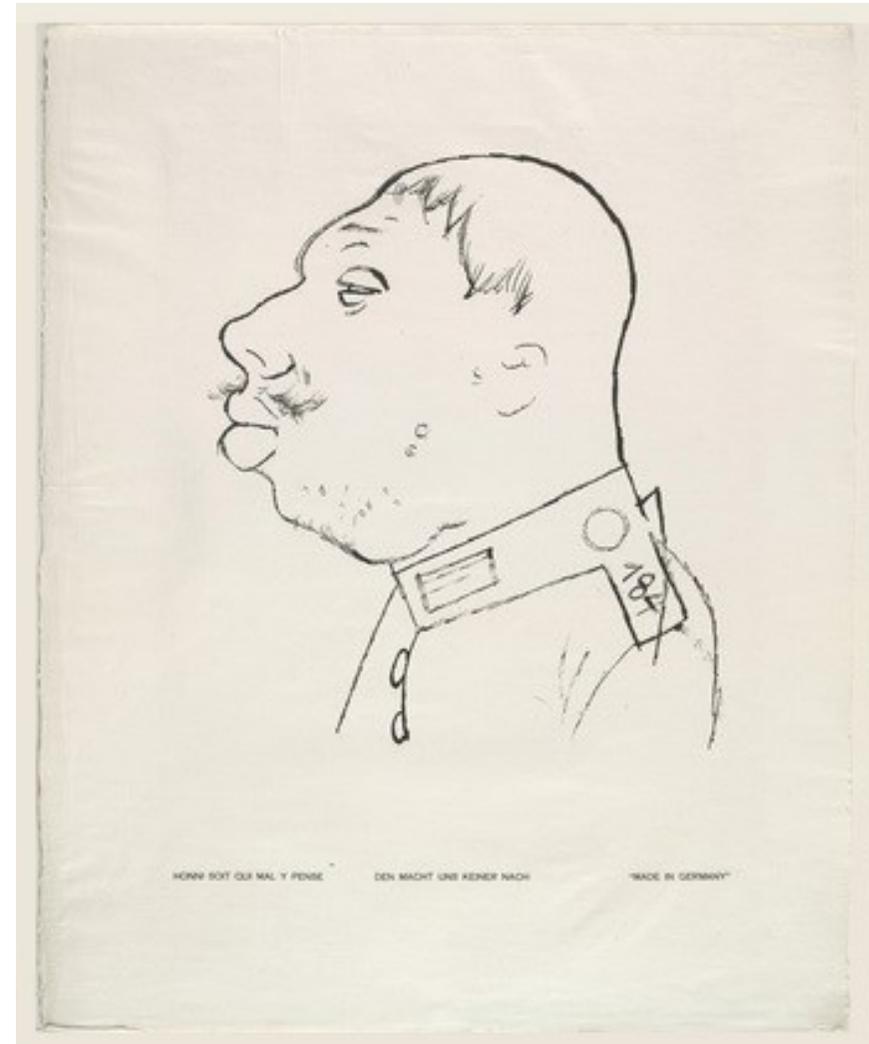
6. Zuhälter des Todes (*Les maqueraux de la mort – The pimps of death*), 1919. Photolithograph, 38,4 x 30,1 cm.



7. Die vollendete Demokratie (*L'état c'est moi – "The world made safe for democracy"*), 1919. Photolithograph, 44,5 x 30,3 cm.

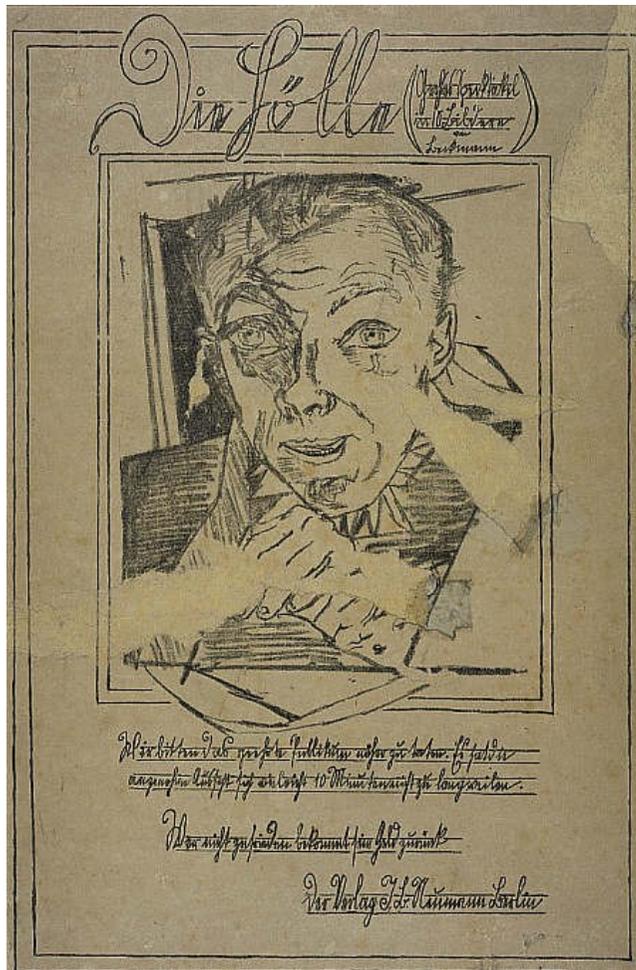


8. *Die Kommunisten fallen – und die Devisen steigen* (*Écrasez la famine – Blood is the best sauce*), 1919. Photolithograph, 30,5 x 45,2 cm.



9. *Den macht uns keiner nach* (*Honni soit qui mal y pense – “Made in Germany”*), 1919. Photolithograph, 28,4 x 24,7 cm.

C. Max Beckmann, portfolio *Die Hölle*, 1919.



Max Beckmann, titlepage *Selbstbildnis*, 1919. Lithograph, 87 x 61 cm.



1. *Der Nachhauseweg*, 1919. Lithograph, 73,3 x 48,8 cm.



2. *Die Straße*, 1919. Lithograph, 67,3 x 53,3 cm.



3. *Das Martyrium*, 1919. Lithograph, 54,5 x 75 cm.



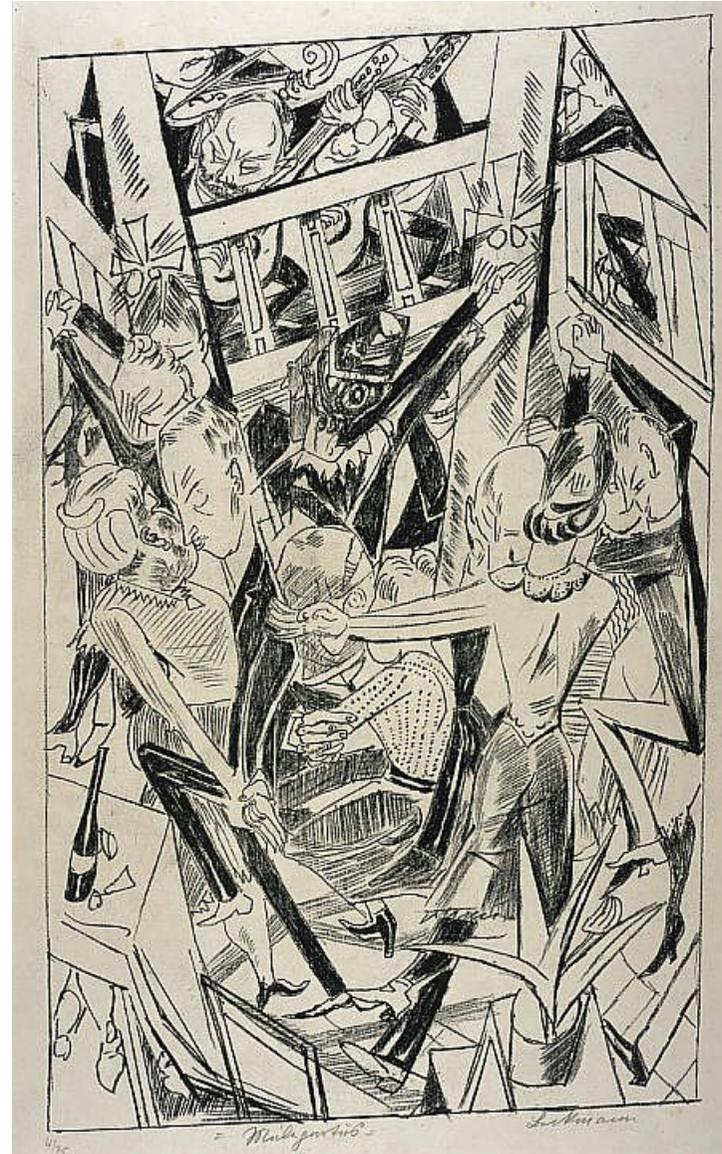
4. *Der Hunger*, 1919. Lithograph, 62 x 49,8 cm.



5. *Die Ideologen*, 1919. Lithograph, 71,3 x 50,6 cm.



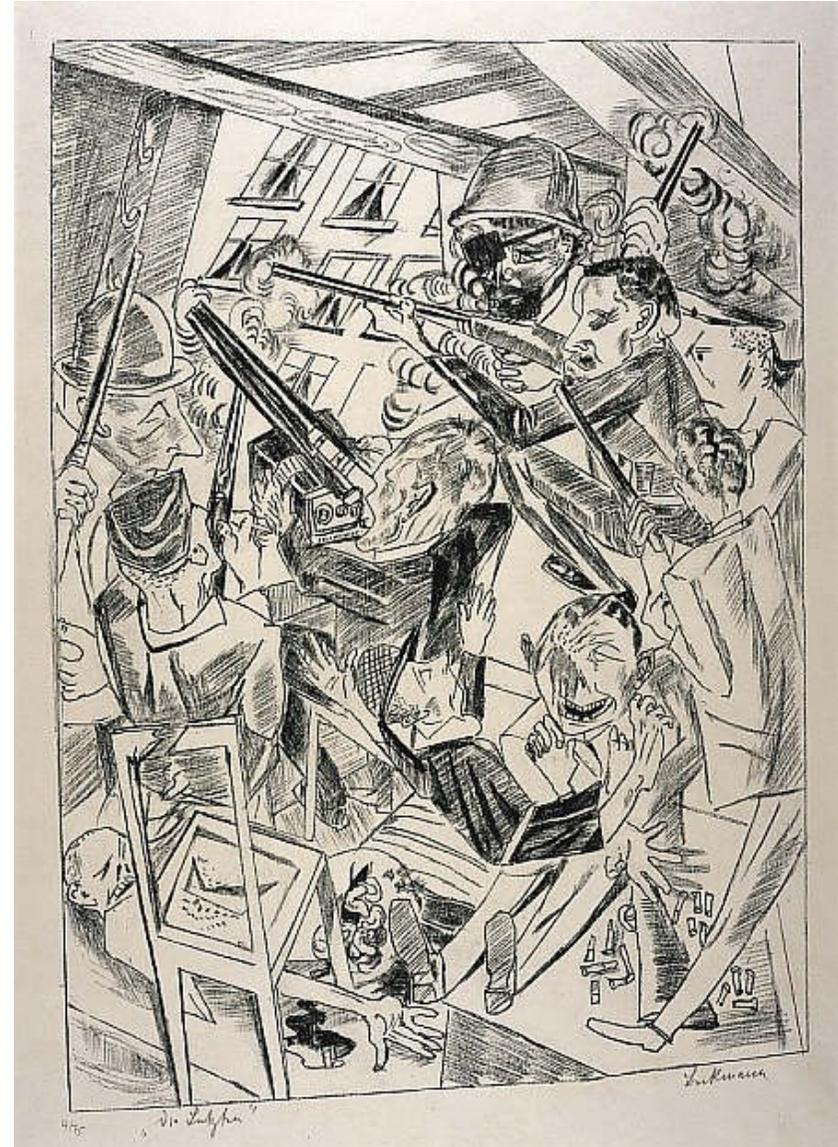
6. *Die Nacht*, 1919. Lithograph, 55,6 x 70,3 cm.



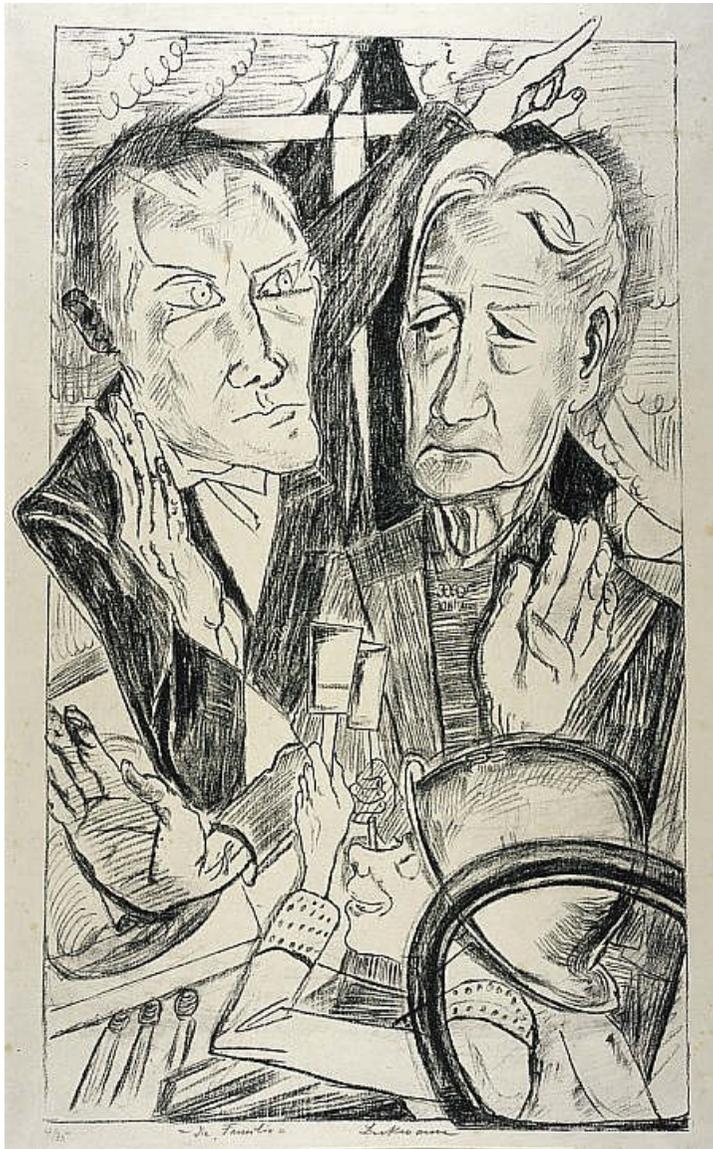
7. *Malepartus*, 1919. Lithograph, 69 x 42,2 cm.



8. *Das patriotische Lied*, 1919. Lithograph, 77,5 x 54,5 cm.



9. *Die Letzten*, 1919. Lithograph, 75,8 x 46 cm.



10. *Die Familie*, 1919. Lithograph, 76 x 46,5 cm.