

“Deficiently Differentiated”:

Visual Encounters with Weimar Germany’s New Woman

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Art History: Art and Its Institutions

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Carleton University

Ottawa, Canada

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-71669-4
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ISBN: 978-0-494-71669-4

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ABSTRACT

After Germany's defeat in World War I and the punitive conditions of the Treaty of Versailles, the country was cast into a social, political, and economic maelstrom. Amidst this turmoil, the allegedly emancipated New Woman of Weimar Germany emerged. This social type was often viewed as a threat to the moral fabric of German society as well as to the nation's health and survival. This thesis investigates how artists associated with the New Objectivity depict this androgynous type. It seeks to find clear relationships between social and cultural attitudes as expressed through painting, advertising, and fashion illustration. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and recent considerations of the grotesque, this thesis examines and critiques aesthetics employed by certain artists that caution against the New Woman's alleged gender transgression. Additionally, it seeks to locate in these images indices of the flexibility and fluidity of gender.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is my pleasure to thank the individuals who assisted or guided me throughout this exciting process. First, I would like to extend deepest thanks to my supervisor, Mitchell Frank, for whose patience, encouragement, and kindness I am truly grateful. Thanks to many enlightening conversations at The Wild Oat, his openness to my ideas, and his careful reading of drafts, each day of the research and writing process has been invigorating and gratifying.

I am indebted to professors Randi Klebanoff, Carol Payne, and Jill Carrick for their support during my time at Carleton. I would also like to express my gratitude to a former professor and friend, Arthur Haberman, for his inspiration, guidance, and the time he took to read and comment on portions of this thesis.

Many thanks must also go to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship for their generous financial support. I would also like to thank the German Academic Exchange Service, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, and the Art History department for enabling travel and research abroad.

I would like to express my gratefulness and warm appreciation to my wonderful parents, Linda and Gary, my brother Matthew, my canine companion Tessa, and my dear friends Kattie and Polina for their encouragement and love. Finally, I extend a tremendous thank you to my best friend, Rob, for always lending an open ear to my ideas.

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INTRODUCTION

Enough is Enough!

In 1925, the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* featured an article that harshly criticized the increasingly popular androgynous fashions introduced in the early 1920s. Entitled, “Nun aber genug! Gegen die Vermännlichung der Frau” (“Enough is Enough! Against the Masculinization of Woman”) (fig.1), the article rails against the enduring nature of this fashion, which was at first “a playful game,” but which had “gradually become a distressing aberration.”¹ The author articulates how initially one could accept this trend, for, “angels are asexual, yet they have always been represented in a pre-adolescent female form.”² Disturbing for the writer is women’s alleged encroachment upon masculine style and appearance, moving beyond a feminine-oriented androgyny towards masculinization: “women no longer wanted to appear asexual; rather fashion was increasingly calculated to make women’s outward appearance more masculine.”³ Adding a final punch to this fervent attack, the writer concludes that the masculinization of women results in a loss of their “natural” allure, replacing it with, “at best, an unnatural one: the look of the sickeningly sweet boy is detested by every real boy or man.”⁴ For the

¹ “Nun aber genug! Gegen die Vermännlichung der Frau,” *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 13 (29 March 1925): 389. Translation: “Enough is Enough! Against the Masculinization of Women,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 659. This comprehensive and valuable anthology of primary sources encompasses texts from the fields of the visual arts, mass culture, technology, and the legacy of war.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

journalist, the mere sight of the so-called masculinized woman evidently causes much outrage. Moreover, the infringement of clearly demarcated gender boundaries appears to have very serious implications for both male subjectivity and society at large.

One year later, Otto Dix, at the helm of the Verist wing of the New Objectivity, or *die neue Sachlichkeit*, conveyed his view of the androgynous New Woman, or *die neue Frau*, in a work entitled *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden* (fig.2). The journalist is depicted in the Romanisches Café in Berlin, a bohemian haunt of which intellectuals, writers, and journalists were the major clientele. The work lays bare Dix's penchant for exaggeration in combination with a realist visual vocabulary. Dix translates his personal, subjective vision of his sitter through the traditional and painstaking oil glaze technique employed by the Old German Masters, lending "the invariably subjective experience of reality an objective [*sachlich*] quality."⁵ During the Weimar period, several portrait artists endeavoured to achieve equilibrium between the individual and the type in order to retain the humanness of their sitters, which, they felt, had been compromised during World War I. At the same time, many sought to associate their sitters with identifiable types as a means to counteract the disorder of post-war German society.⁶ However, by way of the precision and clarity of Dix's medium and the emphasis he places on von Harden's external appearance, the portrait is hardly an investigation of personal character. Rather, Dix condenses and manipulates the individual characteristics

⁵ Eva Karcher, *Otto Dix: 1891-1969* (Cologne: Taschen, 2002), 8.

⁶ Ian Baruma, "Faces of the Weimar Republic," in *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, ed. Sabine Rewald, exh. cat. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 14 November 2006 – 19 February 2007 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 19.

of the sitter so that they constitute the New Woman type.⁷ Dix himself may have expressed this attribution of physiognomy to a general rather than specific subject. Dix met von Harden in the Romanisches Café, after which he allegedly chased her down in the street, an encounter which von Harden herself has documented. Dix supposedly exclaimed:

“I must paint you! I simply must!... You are representative of an entire epoch!”

“So, you want to paint my lacklustre eyes, my ornate ears, my long nose, my thin lips, you want to paint my long hands, my short legs, my big feet – things which can only scare people off and delight no-one?”

“You have brilliantly characterized yourself, and all that will lead to a portrait representative of an epoch concerned not with the outward beauty of a woman but rather with her psychological condition.”⁸

One cannot, of course, accept the authenticity of this story. Regardless of whether the artist and sitter indeed spoke these words, or whether this is a finely crafted hypothetical scenario composed by a Berlin journalist, one is still left asking, what did Dix, or von Harden for that matter, mean by stating that her features were “representative of an entire epoch”? “Epoch” likely refers to the political, social, and economic upheaval of the Weimar era, in addition to the abundance of creative projects that emerged.⁹ Yet how are von Harden’s features – the lacklustre eyes, the ornate ears, the long nose – evocative of these post-war conditions in Germany? Is Dix or von Harden making reference to the

⁷ Sabine Rewald, *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, 136.

⁸ Dialogue between Otto Dix and Sylvia von Harden quoted in Sergiusz Michalski, *New Objectivity: Painting in Germany in the 1920s* (Köln: Taschen, 1994), 56.

⁹ Rewald, “I Must Paint You!” in *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, 3.

social embarrassment that some, like the author of “Enough is Enough!” associated with the New Woman? It is worth noting how such traditionally unfeminine physical attributes are positioned as indicators of an era characterized by uncertainty and instability as well as creative innovation. I would argue, then, that von Harden’s traits are not just representative of the New Woman type, but of a specific *facet* of that epoch in which this type was a central topic of popular discourse.

As a reaction to the uncertainty in most areas of life in post-war Germany, several scientists, sex reformers, and gynecologists developed typologies and theories that aimed to classify all areas of life, an overwhelming interest that has been termed the “Furor des Rasterens,” or classification mania.¹⁰ The areas of gender and sexuality seem to have offered numerous opportunities for categorization. A theory developed by gynecologist P. Mathes, published in 1924 in *Geschlecht und Charakter (Sex and Character)* was based on the author’s “scientific” proof of the New Woman’s deviancy and debility. Mathes’ study is primarily concerned with evaluating women based on the degree to which they possess masculine traits. Normative, ideal femininity is, according to Mathes, based on “the greatest possible sexual differentiation from the masculine ideal.”¹¹ Those who were allegedly inadequate in this differentiation were termed

¹⁰ Helmut Lethen, *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte: Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 40. Lethen states: “Ein Furor des Rasterens ergreift die Beobachter des sozialen Feldes. Alle Phänomene vom Körperbau bis zum Charakter, von der Handschrift bis zur Rasse werden klassifiziert.” “A furor of classification seizes the observers of social fields. All phenomena are classified, from physique through to character, from handwriting through to race.”

¹¹ P. Mathes, “Die Konstitution des Weibes, Insbesondere der intersexuelle Typus” in *Biologie und Pathologie des Weibes*, eds. J. Halban and L. Seitz (Berlin: Urban und Schwarzenberg, 1924), quoted in Lynne Frame, “Gretchen, Girl, Garconne? Weimar Science and Popular Culture in Search of the Ideal New Woman,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. Katharina von Ankum

“intersexual,” and were viewed as abnormal and in opposition to the ideal feminine form. Moreover, intersexual women, often termed “*eheuntaugliche*,” or unsuited to marriage, were diagnosed as “manic, excitable, argumentative, depressive, sad, sensitive, egotistical, and neurotics with an inferiority complex.”¹² Mathes’ diagnosis added that the intersexual woman was prone to an irregular sex drive, physical complications during childbirth, or even infertility, making her all the more unsuitable for marriage.¹³ For Mathes and many others, this blurring of gender categories was not only a threat to society, but to civilization as a whole. As one gynecologist, Hugo Sellheim, stated: “Where there is true culture the sexes move away from one another and develop their differences to the extreme.”¹⁴ Another well-known gynecologist, Max Hirsch, adheres to

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 19. Mathes’ theory is an intensified continuation of the classification of the “character of the sexes” (*Geschlechtscharaktere*) developed in the last half of the eighteenth-century. This “natural” order polarised the sexes, and at the same time defined proper standards of masculinity and femininity. A detailed overview of the “character of the sexes” is provided by Karin Hausen, “Family and Role Division: The Polarisation of Sexual Stereotypes in the Nineteenth-Century – An Aspect of the Dissociation of Work and Family Life,” in *The German Family: Essays in the Social History of the Family in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany*, eds. Richard J. Evans and W.R. Lee (London: Croom Helm, 1981).

¹² Otto Herschan quoted in Atina Grossman, “The New Woman and the Rationalization of Sexuality in Weimar Germany,” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 167.

¹³ Frame, 19.

¹⁴ Hugo Sellheim, “Hygiene und Diätetik der Frau,” in *Handbuch der Gynäkologie*, eds. J. Veit and W. Stoeckel (Munich: Bergmann, 1926), quoted in *ibid.* These gynecological theories from the Weimar period are clear articulations of the two-sex model established by Thomas Laqueur in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). In the one-sex model, there were indeed two genders, man and woman, but these were situated upon a “teleologically male ladder” (157). After the eighteenth-century, however, the two-sex model advanced the fundamental difference between male and female on the basis of biology, or the “supposed facts of life” (172). Laqueur emphasizes that social and cultural paradigms were inscribed upon anatomy to further support the incommensurability of the sexes.

this notion when he employs the term “deficiently differentiated” as a descriptor for slender, athletic women.¹⁵ There is no doubt that the New Woman was for many a symbol of sexual liberation, with her slicked short hair and uncorseted dress. However, in a society predicated upon rigid definitions of gender, this lack of clarity was deeply disconcerting.¹⁶ In the aggregate, the androgynous New Woman was in no way welcome in this system that honoured rigid polarizations of genders as the highest possible order.

A wider range of readers outside of the scientific community might still have come into contact with forms or variations of these theories. The seventh edition (1924) of the *Meyers Lexikon* includes a lengthy entry for “Geschlecht,” the majority of which discusses the term in relation to botany. Although “Geschlecht” translates as both sex and gender, the entry makes it clear that the sexes/genders are fundamentally different: “The sexes/genders, through so-called sex characteristics, are so different in physique and so on, often to such a high degree that one speaks of dimorphism.”¹⁷ An aspect of the entry for “Geschlechtsmerkmale,” or sex/gender characteristics bears some similarity to Sellheim’s assertion that sexual differentiation is indicative of an advanced society. In an entry that is primarily concerned with establishing the physical differences between men and women, one reads: “With some human races, secondary sex characteristics take shape to such a small degree so that with the Somalis or the Malayans, for example, the

¹⁵ Max Hirsch quoted in Frame, 18.

¹⁶ Susan Laikan Funkenstein, “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World: Otto Dix, Social Dancing, and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany,” in *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture 21*, eds. Helga W. Kraft and Marjorie Gelus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 180.

¹⁷ *Meyers Lexikon*, 7th ed., s.v. “Geschlecht” (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1924-1930), 30. “Die Geschlechter sind im Körperbau usw. durch sog. Geschlechtsmerkmale unterschieden, oft in so hohem Grade, dass man von Dimorphismus spricht.”

sexes resemble one another in face and form.”¹⁸ The necessity for the polarization of male/masculine and female/feminine was thus communicated through various literary media and audiences in turn.

This thesis examines visual representations of this androgynous woman who evidently provoked much debate, scepticism, and anxiety in Weimar society and culture. Many artists joined Dix in depicting the New Woman, and while some rendered this type in an equally scathing manner, others appear to have questioned the dominant gender ideologies that stringently cast it as deleterious. This project aims to illuminate how social and cultural discourses on the New Woman are very much implicated into these images. It will also endeavour to present a new theoretical framework for analysing them.

Literature Review

With the development of feminist art history in the 1970s and 1980s, various scholars began to address the experience and representation of women in Weimar Germany. Why this inter-war period in Germany garners so much interest is clear: the newly established Weimar constitution for the first time enfranchised German women, and yet their increasing independence was often met with fierce disapproval. While some scholars address the way in which the New Woman was categorized and stigmatized due to her transgression of gender norms, few art historians have endeavoured to conduct an extensive analysis of the different means by which she was *represented*, and moreover, to

¹⁸ Ibid., s.v. “Geschlechtsmerkmale,” 34. “Bei manchen Menschenrassen sind die sekundären Geschlechtsmerkmale in nur sehr geringem Maße ausgeprägt, sodass sich z.B. bei den Somali oder Malaien die Geschlechter in Gesicht und Gestalt sehr ähneln.”

ask how these modes of representation reflect general anxieties surrounding the androgynous woman.

My thesis will address various themes that pertain to both the conception and representation of the New Woman, namely typological gender theories of the Weimar era, androgynous fashions, and the notion of *Lustmord* as a visual and literary backlash to female sexuality. These topics are covered in a series of essays comprising *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. The art historical studies most pertinent to my project are “The Conspiracy of Women: Images of City Life in the Work of Jeanne Mammen”¹⁹ by Annelie Lütgens as well as Beth Irwin Lewis’ essay, “*Lustmord*: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis.”²⁰ With a biographical focus, Lütgens discusses how select works by Mammen figure female friendship and companionship in addition to lesbian relationships within the complex urban space of Berlin. Lewis’ article analyses the work of Georg Grosz and Otto Dix in relation to the *Lustmord* theme, and identifies these images of sexual violence as visual manifestations of the artists’ anxieties towards female sexuality. The essays in this anthology present strong and well-researched arguments, however, those that study visual sources lack focused attention on the relationship between gender anxieties and representations of the New Woman, an element that I argue is critical in comprehending these images.

¹⁹ Annelie Lütgens, “The Conspiracy of Women: Images of City Life in the Work of Jeanne Mammen,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*.

²⁰ Beth Irwin Lewis, “*Lustmord*: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*.

Of particular note is Dorothy Rowe's contribution, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany*.²¹ Rowe examines various manifestations of male anxiety towards the metropolis, in which a putatively devouring female sexuality dwelled. She thoughtfully traces the various scientific, cultural, and ultimately visual responses to gender transgression during the Weimar period. Absent in her discussion, as in Beth Irwin Lewis', is a consideration of images of the New Woman as ruthlessly critical of, and subtly aggressive reactions to, the blurring of gender categories. While Rowe's text is significant for its close examination of various artists' relationship to the Berlin metropolis and female sexuality in turn, it does not provide detailed analyses of how artists depicted the New Woman in relation to current debates surrounding gender.

A text that addresses women's changing roles in Weimar Germany is Marsha Meskimmon's *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, in which two chapters are devoted to the New Woman and the Garçonne.²² Meskimmon analyses the reception of these female types in Weimar culture, particularly through mass media, in relation to women artist's representations of the same. This text thus takes a unique methodological approach, for Meskimmon initiates a discussion of female visual artists and their experience of androgyny in both the practice of their everyday lives and their professions. Meskimmon's text has also caused some confusion. She considers the New Woman and the Garçonne separately on the basis of their sexuality, with the latter engaging in lesbian activity. While this may simply be an

²¹ Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

²² Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

organizational decision, permitting Meskimmon to discuss lesbian sub-culture at length, I have elected not to separate these terms for concern that a heterosexual/homosexual binary might emerge, undermining a critical approach to gender and representations of female androgyny. Moreover, it seems that the majority of scholars refer to the androgyne and the Garçonne as sub-categories of the New Woman, whereby the term implies a range of experiences and sexual orientations.

Indeed, who exactly was the New Woman? Was she an advertising ploy or a reality in Weimar German society and culture? Most importantly, why was this type viewed by so many with such disdain? These questions will undoubtedly recur in varying contexts throughout my thesis, but warrant some discussion here through a brief overview of historical literature on the New Woman. The androgynous fashions of which the author of “Enough is Enough!” was so critical were Parisian, British, and American imports, but a particular form of New Woman and corresponding criticism emerged in Germany that were specific to the nation’s post-war, newly formed democratic Republic.

Wartime necessitated that women enter the workforce in unprecedented numbers, but it also initiated profound changes in women’s fashions, lifestyle, relationships, as well as in their economic, social and later political status. In 1919, the Weimar Constitution granted German women the right to vote. New Women no longer subjected themselves to the restrictive corset. Rather, many wore formless dresses that flattened the breasts and hid the waist, attire that was often accompanied by the cropped pageboy cut, or *Bubikopf*. Most New Women were middle-class and held white-collar jobs, permitting them a certain degree of economic independence. Moreover, many New Women openly confronted the full range of sexual freedoms available to them, such as contraception,

abortion, and the possibility of lesbian relationships. Literature on the New Woman illuminates these new freedoms which she acquired, but with great reserve. The significant gains acquired by women during the post-war period must be considered alongside the persistent hindrances that the New Woman still confronted, and the tremendous anxiety fuelled by her new lifestyle and androgynous appearance.

First, it is necessary to eradicate any assumption that the New Woman was nothing more than a media trope. Atina Grossman has clarified how the New Woman was indeed a type employed by various advertising outlets, but she was “not merely a media myth or a demographer’s paranoid fancy, but a social reality that can be researched and documented. She existed in office and factory, bedroom and kitchen, just as surely as in café, cabaret, and film.”²³ While advertisements may have presented consumers with a stock stereotype, the lifestyle of the New Woman is in no way limited to one experience. New Women embraced daily life in various ways, many holding positions in different types of employment, from secretarial work to more avant-garde professions like von Harden.

The majority of scholars whose texts address the New Woman recognize the limits of women’s emancipation. On the issue of increased numbers of women in the workplace, there is a general consensus that the gains in this area were not nearly as auspicious as advertising and critics of the New Woman conveyed. Rowe notes how there was no significant increase in the numbers of women in the workforce from the pre-war level, but it was the relocation of their labour that raised considerable concern, particularly as men returned from the front seeking employment. She states: “Although it

²³ Atina Grossman, “*Girlkultur* or Thoroughly Rationalized Female: A New Woman in Weimar Germany?” in *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change*, ed. Judith Friedlaender et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 64.

is quite clear historically that the notion that women were gaining access to greater amounts of power was an illusion, a combination of factors led to an increase in anxiety that women were presenting a direct challenge to unstable hierarchies of male cultural authority.”²⁴ Even though tensions between men and women increased due to greater job competition, women essentially did not replace men. In fact, even after the war, women were outnumbered in the workforce by approximately one million.²⁵ As Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz note, women’s presence was felt so profoundly as “it had never really been accepted in the first place and because inflation and depression made jobs scarce and competitive.”²⁶ As active members of the workforce, single women were seen not only as competition, but also as “rivals for male attention and a menace to married women,” and hence coldly termed “surplus women.”²⁷ The misapprehension that women were flooding the workforce soon became an effective scapegoat employed by the political right to explain the ravaged state of the post-war German economy.

The New Woman was blamed not only for unemployment and unfavourable economic conditions, but also for the breakdown of the traditional family unit. Grossman has noted how New Women openly rejected conventional and constrained definitions of female identity by radically altering their lifestyles. “Contrary to the common wisdom, which held that tens of thousands of German women were mourning the lack of available

²⁴ Rowe, 130.

²⁵ Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, “Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work,” in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, eds. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman, and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 45.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Cornelia Usborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women’s Reproductive Rights and Duties* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 81.

husbands after the war,” she writes, “these young women relished their relative freedom and were not eager to exchange it for wifely and maternal duties.”²⁸ It was feared that the rejection of marriage and motherhood for the single, working life would initiate a dangerously low birth rate, preventing the German population from regenerating itself after an unprecedented loss of life during wartime. New Women generally did not see marriage, pregnancy, and domesticity in their futures, and their clothing choices reflect this shift. Androgynous fashions, which hid under formless dresses the maternal anatomical characteristics such as the breasts and hips, could be seen as surface rejections of the conventional path to motherhood.²⁹ Although the New Woman was presented with a greater range of options in her daily life and her corresponding fashion choices, such a challenge to gender roles stirred the ire of those who clung to patriarchal structures as beacons of certainty in a precarious social environment.

Tracing various scholars’ studies of the New Woman in Weimar Germany indicates that a large gap exists between literature on general historical approaches to the New Woman and art historical analyses of her representation. In fact, few if any art historians have sought to critique the often denigrating images of the New Woman or to consider the grotesque aesthetic as a commentary on female androgyny. By considering a wide range of social and cultural approaches as well as different forms of visual culture, I will carefully analyse depictions of Weimar Germany’s New Woman and the gender anxieties articulated therein. Since most approaches have hitherto only focused on the

²⁸ Grossman, “*Girlkultur* or Thoroughly Rationalized Female: A New Woman in Weimar Germany?”, 70.

²⁹ Sabine Hake, “In the Mirror of Fashion,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, 196.

shocking and unsettling aspects of these representations, it is time for critical reassessments and re-evaluations of select images to come to the fore.

Methodology

Given the theoretical nature of this project, my methodological approach is oriented around recent and contemporary approaches to the grotesque and gender. I should note in brief, however, that I have drawn to varying degrees on certain aspects of psychoanalytic theory. Some of my arguments draw on aspects of Sigmund Freud's definition of the fetish and, more generally, on male identity formation.

In each chapter, I will investigate how many artists use certain pictorial conventions, such as aesthetics of decay and fetishism, to render the New Woman as falling into the established, limited category of the grotesque: the ugly and the undesirable. I will argue that this mode of grotesque representation is often employed as a means to express anxiety towards the perceived breakdown of patriarchal norms that the New Woman came to signify. Similarly, I hold that the use of grotesque aesthetics reveals the extent to which these artists imagined gender itself as a stable, fixed entity. In the last chapter, however, I will critically review both terms – grotesque and gender – in order to initiate a deconstructive reading of these images. For this task, I will focus in the main on Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of the grotesque in *Rabelais and His World*.³⁰ I will also draw on more recent conceptions of the grotesque and related categories to support some of Bakhtin's claims. My discussion of gender will centre around Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity as established in her essay, "Performative Acts and

³⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” as well as *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.³¹ I will emphasize the fluid and combinatory aspects of both gender and the grotesque, and the possibility of describing gender as a grotesque process. It is hoped that such a theoretical approach focuses much needed attention on the activity of the female subjects in these images, and that this project as a whole contributes to emergent feminist scholarship devoted to the assertion of female agency.³²

Since my project investigates how the New Woman was represented in Weimar visual culture, both high and low, I draw on advertisements and articles from the popular *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, which often celebrate or caution against Weimar Germany’s androgynous female type. Moreover, fashion illustrations, which were regularly featured in women’s magazines like *Die Dame* and *Moden-Spiegel*, form an integral part of Chapter Two. An investigation of such popular culture, with which artists of the New Objectivity were likely familiar, will better inform and enrich my analyses of their depictions of the New Woman.

³¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990). This book expands on the concepts originally laid out in her 1988 article, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” which is republished in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (London: Routledge, 2003).

³² Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., Introduction to *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History after Postmodernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Broude and Garrard write that “many feminist art historians began in the 1990s to look more closely at the agency of specific women in history, uncovering the subversive power they actually wielded, as measured by visible cultural efforts to suppress or neutralize them” (3).

Thesis Scope

Although my thesis also addresses allegedly low art depictions of the New Woman, it is primarily concerned with representations by artists associated with the post-war realist visual trend in Germany known as the New Objectivity. I have tried to address a wide range of artists, but as expected, could not discuss the work of all artists linked to this movement, if it can even be called one. I should like to comment briefly on my reasons for not discussing the work of George Grosz and Hannah Höch, whose work might seem particularly suited to this topic. To my surprise, Grosz's oeuvre contains very few representations of the New Woman. Very rarely, a woman with cropped hair and androgynous garb appears, but she is usually only a small part of a much larger scene. Despite his association with the New Objectivity, Grosz focussed principally on socialist themes. As such, it is usually prostitutes, bourgeois men, corrupt priests, and politicians that populate his images.

Höch, who continued to work in a Dadaist mode throughout the New Objectivity's popularity, and is not considered part of the latter, does indeed focus much of her work on the New Woman and gender constructions in Weimar culture. Her photomontages literally combine and manipulate bodies as a means to challenge dominant perceptions of femininity and masculinity. While there is certainly a large body of literature that addresses the deconstructive potential of Höch's photomontages, I have opted to focus solely upon artists linked to the New Objectivity.³³ Discussion of her work

³³ Notable texts on the work of Hannah Höch include Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Maria Makela provides clear analyses of Höch's photomontages, particularly in relation to the grotesque in "The Misogynist Machine: Images of Technology in the Work of Hannah Höch," in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*; and "Grotesque Bodies: Weimar-Era Medicine and the Photomontages of

could nevertheless form a major part of a more comprehensive study of visual manifestations of the New Woman in Germany that might also address film and photography.

On a theoretical note, I should mention that my thesis does not examine issues of lesbianism in detail. Indeed, considerations of lesbian identity are quite conducive to this topic, but are beyond the parameters of this project. I try, where possible, to consider briefly questions of sexual orientation with regard to certain images. The challenge to gender hierarchies that my thesis presents is ultimately a critique of the same heteronormative systems of power that exclude homosexual and lesbian identities, and hence is in no way closed to their consideration. This project is concerned to a much greater degree, however, with the conception and formation of gender identity itself.

Thesis Organization

Tracing the conceptual and visual connections established between the prostitute and the New Woman in the Weimar Republic, Chapter One establishes how various artists – Dix, Schlichter, and Schad – often stigmatized their sitters through conventional grotesque aesthetics of decay or attempted to efface them altogether. In order to clarify the extent to which the indistinguishability between the prostitute and the New Woman was problematic to the overall health of patriarchal society, I will draw on primary sources and historical precedents, namely late nineteenth-century Paris. I argue that these artists give expression to their anxiety surrounding female corporality and gender

Hannah Höch,” in *Modern Art and the Grotesque*, ed. Frances S. Connelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

transgression by figuring the New Woman as a decaying and dying body, a convention that permits them, ultimately, to immobilize female agency.

Counterpoints to this mode of representation, some images by Lotte Laserstein depict the New Woman as a healthy, active human being in control and aware of her body. Also, she is often shown as a participant and observer in the depicted space, an effect heightened by Laserstein's distortion of traditional perspective. This chapter sets out to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the concern surrounding female agency and its potential impact on patriarchal systems of power.

Chapter Two will address another way in which representations of the New Woman often lack any form of female agency. I examine how many depictions of the New Woman fetishize hands and legs in a manner similar to Weimar advertisements for stockings, skin cream, shampoo, and perfume, despite high art's attempts to quarantine itself from mass cultural intrusion. In-depth analyses of select works by Dix as well as advertisements from 1925 onwards will illuminate compositional similarities. These comparisons will also stress the extent to which fetishism was so deeply ingrained in Weimar culture, and will address how the post-war environment may have influenced this cultural taste. Once again, I will examine how some female artists, specifically fashion illustrators, attempt to find an alternative mode of representation that is ultimately resistant to the fetishistic gaze and that permits female agency over the body. These illustrations demonstrate how female artists engaged with, and were active within, Weimar culture and society, in contrast to many of their male counterparts' depictions of New Women as inert, passive, and yet ultimately threatening bodies.

Chapter Three is a focused case study of Dix's *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden*. After outlining the critical understandings of both the grotesque and gender, I highlight the parallels between the two in order to suggest that gender itself is a grotesque process. I will attempt to deconstruct the portrait by revising and appropriating the limited grotesque concept by which the portrait subject is represented, and apply it to the equally narrow understanding of gender that the portrait signifies. I present an understanding of the image that stresses how the sitter might in fact be shown as participating in a grotesque activity, namely gender performativity, rather than one that identifies her as a grotesque deviant by way of her alleged transgression of femininity. I will thus encourage the viewer to approach the sitter not as the *embodiment* of "the grotesque," but as *participating* in the process of gender that is fluid, versatile, combinatory, and hence grotesque.

It is my aim for this project to present a new way of reading a select body of images from Weimar visual culture. I hope to bring to my analysis of these images an understanding of the many manifestations of the New Woman within different yet nonetheless connected spheres of post-war Germany. Not only does this thesis identify some of the overlooked derogatory means by which the androgynous, modern woman was rendered, it seeks to deconstruct these aesthetic categories so that the often-illusory concepts of emancipation and agency associated with the New Woman finally become a tangible reality.

CHAPTER ONE

Neutralizing the “New” Woman: Death, Decay, and the New Objectivity

One of the defining features of Mikhail Bakhtin’s conception of the grotesque image is its ability to assume a previously inconceivable combination of birth and death.

He writes:

The grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relation to time is one determining trait of the grotesque image. The other indispensable trait is ambivalence. For in this image we find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis.¹

Grotesque images thus confound the empirical and linear biological process from growth to decay by facilitating the co-existence of opposite states. Bakhtin’s most famous example of the “senile pregnant hag” is all at once dying and giving birth to life, and represents to Bakhtin the ambivalent state which defies the completion, stability, and smoothness of classical aesthetics.² Indeed, in many visual traditions, the image of that which is dying, yet still alive, decomposing, but somehow still a functioning body, falls into the grotesque category. Frances S. Connelly identifies this category of grotesque as *Traumwerk* or *diablèrie*, images of which “do not play on the body’s appetites, but rather

¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 24.

² *Ibid.*, 25-26.

on its inevitable failure and death.”³ Many images of the New Woman express this form of grotesque. While depictions of this type emphasize “the new” and the unprecedented – the *Bubikopf* or *Herrenschmitt*, the androgynous attire, and usually liberal attitude towards sexuality – the *New Woman* also signifies “the old” – the inert, the decaying, the dying. Still others try to move beyond this vision of the New Woman, and present a different form of grotesque metamorphosis that does not vilify on the basis of gender difference.

In this chapter, I will trace the ways in which the New Woman has been linked to social and cultural discourses on death and decay in Weimar Germany, and will examine how such associations materialize in some portraits of the New Woman by artists connected to the New Objectivity. These modes of representation, I will argue, aim to provide visual confirmation of the New Woman’s purportedly threatening and destructive essential nature.

In Weimar society, the prostitute was often figured as a sign of death on physical as well as social levels. The dissolution of boundaries between the acceptable and the improper initiated by the malaise and confusion of military defeat, social upheaval, and the financial crisis assuaged, to a point, some of the blatant public discrimination of the profession, which was seen by many as a provision of survival.⁴ That is not to suggest, however, that the prostitute *per se* became a benign figure. Rather, the prostitute was seen to embody the very ambivalence and loss of boundaries characteristic of the Weimar cultural landscape with which she was associated.

³ Frances S. Connelly, ed., introduction to *Modern Art and the Grotesque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 10.

⁴ Eva Karcher, *Eros und Tod im Werk von Otto Dix: Studien zur Geschichte des Körpers in den 20er Jahren* (Münster: Lit, 1984), 63.

As prostitutes became increasingly visible on the streets of major German metropolises, particularly Berlin, they were positioned as highly ambivalent symbols within the male, heterosexual imagination.⁵ Berlin's infamous liberal nightlife and sex industry, which attracted many tourists from other European countries and North America, placed prostitutes in high demand, even though the threat of venereal disease, which was particularly acute during the Weimar years, always loomed. Prostitutes were thus increasingly associated with the eradication of boundaries between sexual desire and repulsion, erotic vitality and death, and on a social level, between the purportedly consolidated boundaries between men and women and the private and public spheres.⁶ For the many facets of Weimar society and culture that based conceptions of health and vitality on ordered binary systems, the prostitute was a harbinger of degeneration and social and moral decay.

The New Woman, I would argue, eventually assumes a similar symbolic significance as the prostitute. Art historian Dora Apel has suggested that, "discursively constructed as masculinized and unmaternal, the New Woman allegedly lacked a desire for children, which linked her to other excluded categories of identity such as prostitutes and lesbians."⁷ As I suggested at the outset of this chapter, the New Woman signified the modern and the progressive, particularly in the realm of sexuality. Yet, as Apel notes, this sexuality, like that of the prostitute, was seen as primarily and threateningly non-

⁵ Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 28.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Dora Apel, "'Heroes' and 'Whores': The Politics of Gender in Weimar Antiwar Imagery," *The Art Bulletin* 79, no.3 (September 1997): 380.

reproductive. Moreover, like the prostitute, the New Woman confounded the boundaries between socially and culturally consolidated categories, namely, masculine/feminine, public/private, and Virgin/whore through her androgynous appearance and progressive lifestyle. The New Woman, unlike the women of the preceding Wilhelminian generations, could participate in the workforce and freely express her sexuality, but these new engagements situated the New Woman as responsible for the break-up of the traditional family unit, the increase in abortions, and cultural decadence.⁸ Lisa Pine has noted how the relatively modernized experience of women in Weimar Germany experienced a conservative backlash, leading many to term the increase in divorce, abortion, sexual promiscuity, and the declining birth rate a “national catastrophe” and to predict the “death of the nation.”⁹ Degeneration, if one traces the writings of various German critics, namely Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, and Max Nordau, was purportedly gripping Germany since its unification in 1871. The consequences of cultural decline were identified as the triumph of liberalism, science, and reason, which many saw as fully realized in the form of the Weimar Republic.¹⁰ Prostitutes, New Women, Jews,

⁸ Beth Irwin Lewis, “*Lustmord: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis*,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 224.

⁹ Lisa Pine, “Women and the family,” in *Weimar and Nazi Germany: Continuities and Discontinuities*, ed. Panikos Panayi (Essex: Pearson, 2001), 200.

¹⁰ See Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (London: William Heinemann, 1898). Nordau approaches certain nineteenth-century cultural movements, such as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Symbolism, and Tolstoyism, and writes: “In our days there have arisen in more highly-developed minds vague qualms of a Dusk of the Nations, in which all suns and all stars are gradually waning, and mankind with all its institutions and creations is perishing in the midst of a dying world” (2). A comprehensive study by Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), examines degeneration as it was conceived in the

and liberals became personifications of these allegedly deleterious values. It is clear, then, that these two figures – the prostitute and the New Woman – were associated with death by way of overindulgence and sexual freedom, but perhaps most profoundly with the degeneration and decay of Germany itself of which their ambivalence was apparently a direct consequence.

Journalist Thomas Wehring blatantly expresses the anxiety surrounding women's increasingly liberal attitude towards sexuality in his 1920 article, "Die Verhuring Berlins" ("Berlin is Becoming a Whore"), published in *Das Tage-Buch*. He traces the alarming social trend that leads respectable bourgeois women, with an interest in fashion and aversion to motherhood, to lapse into prostitution. Though I do not doubt that some women who fashioned themselves as New Women may have engaged in prostitution to supplement their incomes, the source of Wehring's disquietude is not prostitution itself, but rather the increasing presence of women in the public sphere and what he sees as women's denial of their "natural" maternal role. Wehring blames the destitution of the bourgeoisie not on the financial crisis of the time in which he writes, but on women's movement within public spaces, which he conflates with, and exaggerates as, "whoredom": "A generation of females has grown up that has nothing but the merchandising of their physical charms in mind. They sit in the parlours...they go to the

ideologies of Lagarde, Langbehn, and Moeller van den Bruck. Each German critic feared and warned of Germany's demise, a concern articulated in the following statement by Langbehn: "It has gradually become an open secret that the contemporary spiritual life of the German people is in a state of slow decay; according to some, even of rapid decay. Science everywhere is dissipated into specialization; in the field of thought and literature, the epoch-making individuals are missing. The visual arts, though represented by significant masters, lack monumentality...The entire culture of the present is...turned backward...The more scientific it [culture] becomes, the less creative it will be" (Langbehn quoted in Stern, 122).

cinema in the evenings, wear skirts that end above the knees, buy *Elegant World* and the film magazines.”¹¹ Moreover, he writes, “the daily use of devices to prevent pregnancy leads inexorably to whoredom on the part of woman. She learns to enjoy but she forgets how to have a destiny.”¹² If an age is to be judged by how it views the symbol of mother and child, Wehring argues, then Germany is “mired, from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat, in the swamp of the most hopeless degeneration.”¹³ It is clear that, although unnamed in the article, the New Woman is his prime target. In Wehring’s conception, the New Woman is synonymous with the prostitute through her participation in Weimar mass culture, engagement with modern fashions, and exploration of her sexuality, leading to a “corrosive moral decay” on par with prostitution itself.¹⁴

Not only were the New Woman and the prostitute symbolically linked through their conflation of conventional boundaries and through their association with death and decay, but also through their simple outward appearance. Several scholars have noted how, during the Weimar years, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish “the woman *on the street* from the woman *of the street*.”¹⁵ Indeed, as Wehring’s article articulates, the

¹¹ Thomas Wehring, “Die Verhuring Berlins,” *Das Tage-Buch* 1 (6 November 1920): 1381-1383. Translation: “Berlin is Becoming a Whore,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 721.

¹² *Ibid.*, 722.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 721.

¹⁵ Meskimmon, 29. See also Ingrid Sharp, “Gender Relations in Weimar Berlin,” in *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Christiane Schönfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2006), 4.

collapse of seemingly fixed boundaries caused considerable anxiety about the wellbeing of patriarchal power relations not unlike that described by Hollis Clayson of late nineteenth-century Paris wherein “women’s behaviour seemed less governable and female morality seemed less stable than ever before. The question ‘Is she or isn’t she?’ became a commonplace obsession of Parisian men and women.”¹⁶ No longer was there a distinct boundary between prostitutes and “upright” women, for both donned make-up and the fashionable androgynous clothing characteristic of the New Woman. As a result of burgeoning mass production, these fashions and cosmetics were more accessible to a wider range of women. *Margot* (fig.3), a portrait by Rudolf Schlichter, depicts a rather masculine prostitute dressed in androgynous fashions and with a *Bubikopf*. “It is an outfit,” Sabine Rewald writes, “that could be worn by any self-respecting waitress, saleswoman, or secretary.”¹⁷ Indeed, nothing in this portrait hints at the sitter’s occupation as a prostitute, and demonstrates the degree to which the self-fashioning practices of the prostitute and the New Woman overlapped during the Weimar years. Moreover, it was no longer only prostitutes who walked the streets of the city, as greater numbers of women entered the workforce and experienced public spaces unhindered by traditional social conventions. Although, as Patrice Petro notes, walking alone on the

¹⁶ Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 7. This text provides thoughtful analyses of representations of prostitutes set in brothels and cafés. Clayson’s discussion of the indistinguishability between “upright” women and prostitutes draws specifically on public attitudes as communicated primarily through newspapers and the initiatives of neoregulationists to patrol the profession within the city.

¹⁷ Sabine Rewald, ed., *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, exh. cat. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 14 November 2006 – 19 February 2007 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 66.

street was nonetheless still a dangerous activity for women who were not prostitutes: “When a woman signals the flâneur’s aimless and purposeless drifting along the streets, she risks being perceived as a ‘streetwalker,’ as the object of a male gaze not usually characterized by the flâneur’s disinterested attitude.”¹⁸ These two factors – outward appearance and accessibility to public spaces – left many confused as to whether any given woman was a prostitute or was fashioning herself on the New Woman type, and likely fuelled arguments that positioned the New Woman as a sign of moral and social degeneration.

At this point I would like to make a critical distinction. In the European cultural tradition, Woman, as Elisabeth Bronfen argues, is linked to birth and regeneration rather than life, thus linking her to decay and making her an object of dread: “The paradigmatic coupling of Woman and body serves to allegorize the aspect of corruption, vulnerability, and disembodiment inherent in human existence. The conjunction of woman-death-womb-tomb reduces to the ambivalence that the mother’s gift of birth is also the gift of death.”¹⁹ However, the prostitute and the New Woman, as discussed earlier, were primarily seen as *non*-reproductive and *non*-maternal, refusing to engage in their reproductive destinies. Woman’s union with the body need not necessarily always refer to reproduction specifically, but to corporality and decadence in general. In fact, this

¹⁸ Patrice Petro, “Perceptions of Difference: Woman as Spectator and Spectacle,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, 76.

¹⁹ Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 67. Bronfen’s text focuses specifically on literary and some visual tropes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wherein women are literally and symbolically linked to death and corporality. Some notable case studies include Edgar Allan Poe’s short story, “The Oval Portrait,” Prosper Mérimée’s *Carmen*, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s portraits of muse Elizabeth Siddall.

association preserves a long tradition that positions women, immovable in an “erotic realm,” as a threat to men’s capacity for spiritual transcendence.²⁰ In depictions of prostitutes and eventually of the New Woman by Dix and other artists, what might previously have been interpreted as an affirmative interplay between life and death becomes a pessimistic vision of woman’s corrupting liminal course of corporal decay.

Dix’s prime subjects during the Weimar years have been identified as “war, metropolis, prostitution,”²¹ areas in which women’s corporality becomes an inevitable and inescapable theme. Dix’s *Girl at Mirror* (fig.4) from 1921, a possible reference to Francisco Goya’s *Time (Old Women)* (fig.5), forcefully presents women’s purported

²⁰ Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 221. See also Karen Lang, “Reason and Reminders: Kantian Performativity in the History of Art,” in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, eds. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (New York: Routledge, 1999). Lang’s article investigates the way in which Max Beckmann, Max Klinger, and Adolph Menzel positioned themselves or male figures in their images as performing the role of the ideal Kantian subject, namely, a man whose reason has overcome (feminine) nature. She argues that the “objective” positions that these artists assume is akin to the detachment of the art historian, for in both cases, the subject is “[d]rained of its own nature – of its own corporeality,” and “is accorded through reason a transcendent position on both ‘the starry heavens above me’ and the artistic object” (17). The view of man as a reasoning subject and woman as essentially emotional is articulated in the late nineteenth-century as follows: “Beim Weibe behauptet das Gefühl, das Gemüt, beim Mann dagegen die Intelligenz, das Denken, die Oberhand. Die Phantasie des Weibes ist lebhafter als die des Mannes, erreicht aber selten die Höhe und Kühnheit wie bei letzterm. In Bezug auf die Schärfe der Unterscheidung, auf die Tiefe des Urteils ist der Mann entschieden bevorzugt; er ist daher auch zu abstrakten Forschungen mehr geeignet als das Weib.” “Feeling, nature asserts with woman, with man, by contrast, intelligence, reasoning, predominance. The woman’s imagination is more vivid than that of the man, but seldom reaches the heights and audacity of the latter. In reference to the sharpness of distinction, to the depths of judgment, the man is decidedly privileged; he is hence more suited to abstract research than the woman.” See *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon*, 4th ed., s.v. “Geschlechtseigümlichkeiten” (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1885-1892), 209.

²¹ Eva Karcher, *Eros und Tod im Werk von Otto Dix: Studien zur Geschichte des Körpers in den 20er Jahren* (Münster: Lit, 1984), 1.

obsession with bodily appearance. Here, a prostitute, when first seen from behind suggests a youthful, healthy woman. However, the mirror in which her front is reflected to the viewer in fact reveals that she is an old woman; her breasts sag down towards the edge of her corset, it appears as though she is missing several teeth, and overall the body reflected in the mirror assumes a skeletal appearance. This personification of Vanity seems all the more pathetic considering the old prostitute's attempt to deny the natural decay of her body through the application of make-up. Apparently, the image was too shocking for many, and Dix was brought to trial for indecency in 1923. Dix's defence recalls the age old association of women with corrupting corporality, which men were advised to evade at all costs: he argued that the image was intended as a moral lesson showing the destructive consequences of prostitution, and would dissuade men from consorting with women of this profession.²² Lustmord (sexual murder) images by Dix as well as other Weimar artists become vehicles through which such female corporality is both articulated and overcome. In each case, the artist violently exploits the prostitute as a means to assume a masculine hegemonic position over the female subject.

Lustmord images have been interpreted as aggressive visual expressions of male anxiety towards women's emancipation in both pre- and post-war Germany. It is particularly after the war that the theme of Lustmord occurs more frequently and becomes more attractive to artists of different backgrounds.²³ Maria Tatar argues that

²² Rewald, 232.

²³ This post-war trend has only recently been addressed by some scholars, such as Beth Irwin Lewis, "Lustmord: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis," in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Maria Tatar addresses in greater detail the social, political, and cultural foundations of Lustmord, and uses case studies of

post-war Lustmord images, the majority of which depict the murder of prostitutes, originate from the divergent wartime experiences of men and women: “Women, who escaped the shells and shrapnel of the trenches and survived the war with bodies intact, could easily slide into the role of a covert enemy, one that had cheered them on and had thereby become complicit in plunging them into physically devastating military combat.”²⁴ Many artists who fought at the front legitimize the representation of sexual murders through the transfer of their violent wartime experiences into the domestic sphere.²⁵ A particularly interesting aspect of Tatar’s argument is her assertion that both Lustmord images and the murderous acts that inspire them serve as “defences against the double threat of sexuality and death conjoined in the feminine.”²⁶ It might be argued that these images attempt to overcome the corrupting corporality of the prostitute, and of women in general, by pitting this very force against her; the artist visually annihilates the woman by depicting a brutally ravaged and deformed corpse. These images, which so

Otto Dix and Georg Grosz to address its visual manifestation. See Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

²⁴ Tatar, 11. See also Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder, 1918-1924* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1999). Crockett discusses the increased fascination with Lustmord in light of the experience of some soldiers in military brothels. He notes the connection between militaristic violence and eroticism as established by Magnus Hirschfeld: “The ultimate sado-erotic impulse excited by combat, he [Hirschfeld] claimed, was murder connected with rape and/or mutilation. With their erotic impulses aroused by the brutality and cruelty in the trenches, soldiers had their sexuality further brutalized by frequent trips to cities like Lille and Brussels...which had been turned into brothel centres for the use of the German army. The regimented barbarism of the trenches was relieved by the regulated brutality of the army brothels” (72).

²⁵ Tatar, 69.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

often represent the disfigured reproductive organs of their victims, appropriate the procreative abilities of the woman through the artistic act, but ultimately consolidate male authority by literally expunging the threat of female sexuality, rendering a “perfect woman” as a dead and silent corpse.²⁷

Lustmord images appear in Dix’s oeuvre more frequently than in that of any other male artist discussed in this chapter. One of the most well known depicts a bloodied and mutilated woman draped over the edge of a bed in what many have viewed as Dix’s own Dresden apartment (fig.6). The most damaged and exposed part of her body, her womb, is directly reflected in the mirror on the wall next to the bed. Another image from 1922 depicts a watercolour variation of the theme that considerably heightens the brutality of the murder that has just occurred by way of its loose and speedy manner of execution²⁸ (fig.7). Moreover, Dix did not hesitate to depict himself as the perpetrator of the sex murders that he depicted with such frequency in the early 1920s. In *Self-Portrait as Sex-Murderer* (fig.8), Dix is shown flailing the leg of a dismembered female corpse, his bloody handprints imprinted upon the body as if to proudly mark this work as his own.

Rudolf Schlichter also depicted numerous Lustmord images that are formalistically quite different from those by Dix, but nonetheless still involve the silencing, immobilization, and annihilation of the female subject. While Schlichter does not depict the open womb like Dix, his images still retain a disturbingly gruesome effect, particularly by situating the woman’s corpse in a banal setting, such as a simple cramped

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 36 and 85.

²⁸ Keith Hartley, ed., *Otto Dix*, exh. cat. Tate Gallery, 11 March – 17 May 1992 (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1992), 142.

bedroom or back-alley (fig.9).²⁹ Schlichter also depicts a variation of the Lustmord theme: prostitutes are often not stabbed to death, but are, equally unpleasantly, strangled by hanging. In *The Artist with Two Hanging Women* (fig.10), a prostitute and a woman dressed in the latest 1920s fashions have been hung by the artist, who sits beneath the foreground woman. The artist depicts himself with an enigmatic gesture of what might be shock at his murderous actions. By presenting himself as the instigator of female powerlessness, Schlichter's image belongs in the same category as Dix's *Self-Portrait as Sex-Murderer*. In fact, Schlichter regularly engaged in this activity, otherwise known as autoerotic asphyxia, with his wife Speedy (fig.11). While it is possible to argue that Schlichter as well as Dix completed these images with some humorous Dadaist inclination, it is hard to conceive of these images as anything but a visual articulation of masochistic obsessions.

Of all these Lustmord images, and variations thereof, there are few completed after 1924, and careful inspection of these artists' oeuvres reveals that, to my knowledge, such depictions rarely recur in the later 1920s.³⁰ It is surprising that a theme that was embraced with such rigour could so quickly withdraw from these artists' bodies of work. Why do such images suddenly disappear from Weimar visual culture? Lustmord images' origins in the Expressionist tradition and their incompatibility with the larger aims of the New Objectivity are critical when considering this shift. As early as 1922, many felt that

²⁹ Dirk Heisserer, "Sexualmord," in *Rudolf Schlichter: Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen*, ed. Götz Adriani (Berlin: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1997), 134.

³⁰ One exception to the absence of Lustmord images after 1924 is an image completed by Karl Hubbuch, an artist associated with the Karlsruhe wing of the New Objectivity from 1930. The image appears in a text by Manja Seelen, *Das Bild der Frau in Werken deutscher Künstlerinnen und Künstler der Neuen Sachlichkeit* (Münster: Lit, 1995), 111.

a new mode of painting based in realist and naturalist modes of representation had emerged. At the outset of this trend, what would later be termed the New Objectivity was often defined in opposition to earlier Expressionist trends. In 1919, even the Expressionist Ludwig Meidner wrote: “What will matter tomorrow, what I and all others need, is a fanatical, fervent naturalism.”³¹ For both the public and the artist, the Expressionist tendency towards bold and emotive colour palettes, non-representationalism, and often other-worldly subject matter was no longer relevant to the present post-war, post-revolutionary moment.

In 1925, Franz Roh published his “Post-Expressionist Schema,”³² a document that dichotomizes the characteristics of Expressionism and what Roh calls “Post-Expressionism,” a word choice that furthers his attempt to distinguish fundamentally the two trends. According to Roh, contrasts such as rhythmic/representative, dynamic/static, and warm/cool to cold are key differences between the two. In that same year, Gustav Hartlaub, director of the Kunsthalle in Mannheim staged an exhibition for artists who were “disillusioned, sobered, often resigned to the point of cynicism,” and whose works returned to what was “most immediate, certain, and durable: truth and craft.”³³ The exhibition, called “Neue Sachlichkeit. Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus” (The

³¹ Ludwig Meidner quoted in Sergiusz Michalski, *New Objectivity: Painting in Germany in the 1920s* (Cologne: Taschen, 1994), 15.

³² Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1925), 119. Translation: “Post Expressionist Schema,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 493.

³³ Gustav Hartlaub, “Zum Geleit,” in *Ausstellung “Neue Sachlichkeit”: Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus* (Mannheim: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1925). Translation: “The New Objectivity. German Painting Since Expressionism,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 493.

New Objectivity. German Painting Since Expressionism), in which Dix and Schlichter participated, was likely a major turning point that resulted in the abandonment of anything that might recall Expressionist manner and content, including the Lustmord theme. The exhibition attracted much public attention, received positive reviews from critics, and travelled to cities in Thuringia and Saxony.³⁴ The exhibition not only brought the new trend publicity, but also firmly established its participants' reputations as "sober" objective observers of their time, and suggested a favourable association that might lead to independent success in the form of solo exhibitions and commissions.

However, Hartlaub himself was not so quick to mark the New Objectivity as a radical departure from Expressionism. In the catalogue to the Mannheim exhibition, he wrote that, "because evidence is displayed here of artistic endeavours that became recognizable after expressionism, and which, in a certain sense, appear to represent a reaction against the latter, does not mean that a position is being taken against expressionism and the generation of artists adhering to it."³⁵ Indeed, many scholars overstate the opposition between Expressionism and the New Objectivity, which was ultimately, as Linda F. McGreevy articulates, "as much an offshoot of Expressionism as a reaction to it."³⁶ She further states that the emotional component of Expressionism merged with the new realist style that so many artists began to adopt. These artists may have thus abandoned the Lustmord theme as a means to disassociate from earlier trends

³⁴ Michalski, 19.

³⁵ Hartlaub, 492.

³⁶ Linda F. McGreevy, *Otto Dix: German Critical Realist* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), 59.

that were viewed as retrograde, but one could also argue that the Expressionist impulse behind these images does not wane. Rather, it is redirected to, and resurfaces in, some of these artists' depictions of the New Woman. What were earlier blatant visual manifestations of violence against prostitutes is reconfigured as a repressed and innate hostility against the New Woman.

In 1923, two years before the Mannheim exhibition, Carl Einstein wrote: "So, instead of laboriously profound anecdotes, ceaselessly choking shabbiness, Dix renders permanent fact and principles point-of-view with exquisite painterly skills."³⁷ Despite the attempts by Einstein and many other Weimar critics to position Dix as a herald of realism, most art historians today are in agreement that Dix never eradicated his Expressionist tendencies. His affinity for the interplay between the poles of "sobriety and passion, precision and expression" is marked throughout his artistic career.³⁸ Even as he became one of the most revered and feared portrait painters of the Weimar Republic due to his sharp observation of reality, Dix usually completed only preliminary sketches with his sitter present, a method that permitted him to take tremendous liberties and to consolidate his subjective personal impressions. *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden* (fig. 12) is one of the clearest examples of how the artist redirects the impulse

³⁷ Carl Einstein, "Otto Dix," *Das Kunstblatt* 7, no.3 (March 1923): 97-102. Translation: "Otto Dix," in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 491.

³⁸ Wieland Schmied, "Neue Sachlichkeit and German Realism of the Twenties" *German Realism of the Twenties: The Artist as Social Critic*, exh. cat. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, ed. Louise Lincoln (Berlin: Brüder Hartmann, 1980), 49. Schmied holds that Dix "shifted during his lifetime back and forth between Neue Sachlichkeit itself, a precisely defining art schooled in the tradition of the Old Masters, and expressionism, a formal language laden with vehement emotion. He had an inherent predisposition to both these poles of art, sobriety and passion, precision and expression, and the tension between the two elements governed the whole evolution of his work."

behind his Expressionist-inspired Lustmord images – articulations of his fear of female corporality – into a portrait representation of the New Woman.

Several components of the portrait align with Dix's images of sexual murder. First, markers of von Harden's status as well as the portrait's setting imply the decadent female corporality that Dix so often ascribed to the prostitute. Von Harden is rendered as the intellectual bohemian type by way of her exaggerated monocle, in addition to her placement in a corner of the Romanisches Café in Berlin, a central social space for Weimar artists and intellectuals. Yet her indulgence in a cigarette and a spritzer, in addition to the presence of kitschy Art Nouveau furniture, positions such intellectualism as decadent and excessive. It is possible that Dix transfers a common characteristic of many of his earlier depictions of prostitutes, particularly *Venus of the Capitalist Age* (fig.13), to emphasize this overindulgence. The left stocking of a wide-eyed prostitute has rolled down in much the same way as von Harden's right stocking. For Dix, the slipping stocking appears to signify a sloppy, decadent, and depraved physical nature. Moreover, an earlier portrait from 1923, *Mieze, Evenings in the Café* (fig.14), could quite possibly have served as a basis for the later 1926 portrait. Mieze's leopard print stole as well as the little cat strategically placed in her genital area, strengthen the relationship between sexuality, corporality, and death.³⁹ The images are quite different stylistically, as Dix had not fully developed his smooth and pristine Old Master style. He also depicts von Harden as physically conservative and expressionless, in contrast to the soliciting nature of

³⁹ Susanne Meyer-Büser, *Das Schönste Deutsche Frauenporträt: Tendenzen der Bildnismalerei in der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 1994), 149. Meyer-Büser notes how the German name, Mieze, is also a colloquial term in German meaning "broad," "chick," "bird." It can also mean "pussy," an association underlined by the placement of the cat in Mieze's genital area.

Mieze. Just like von Harden, however, Mieze, with her similarly long and bony fingers, is seated at a marble café table with a spritzer. Dix renders the prostitute, wearing the red nail polish characteristic to women of the profession, as an emaciated and yet highly threatening figure, an impression that the portrait of the journalist also exudes. To be clear, I am not suggesting that Dix is representing von Harden as a prostitute, which she was not, but that he is explicitly linking the New Woman's gender transgression with the prostitute's alleged bodily corruption.

The most striking elements of this painting are in fact those that most firmly place this representation of the New Woman in the realm of the corporal, the decaying, and the dying. While Dix has largely concealed von Harden's form by an unattractive and bulky dress, one nonetheless has the impression that underneath this fabric is a skeletal figure. The criss-cross pattern of the dress serves to flatten her body, and her large bony hands give a suggestion as to what may lie beneath her clothing. Moreover, green-tinged flesh emerges from underneath the otherwise "healthy" flesh tone that the slipping stocking conveys (fig. 15). Dix's depiction of von Harden's face is equally representative of corporal decay and death. Her blackened lips enclose her yellowing teeth, and Dix has outlined her face in a thin yellow as if to suggest that her sickly skin tone cannot be concealed by her white face make-up (fig. 16). Perhaps most interesting is the way in which Dix has rendered von Harden's eyes, which are surrounded by dark lines, and which are also almost entirely lidded. These eyes reveal that Dix has not depicted von Harden actively looking; instead, she is shown in an enigmatic stillness that suggests complete obliviousness bordering on unconsciousness. While the portrait may seem to depict a liberated woman with physical agency, these are eyes that cannot see, and overall

this is a body that appears to border on complete anaesthesia. Indeed, Dix does not present the viewer with a vivacious and liberated New Woman, but rather a torpid and dying body.

It is perhaps not only von Harden's physical form that is suggestive of decay and death. The café space is cold, confining, and bleak, and could also be described as "virtually hostile to life."⁴⁰ Art historian Otto Conzelmann writes that the reddish pink of this space is "for Dix a colour that seldom suggests anything other than a libidinal impulse and arising violence."⁴¹ There is in fact a marked similarity between the reddish-pink colour palettes of both the portrait and the 1922 *Lustmord* image (fig. 7). Dix may have changed his stylistic approach so that his work suggests *Sachlichkeit*, or objectivity, but it seems that his use of colour may have retained its Expressionist function. The portrait, while suggestive of cool and detached observation, in fact renders in repressed form the same hostility that so powerfully characterizes Dix's earlier *Lustmord* images.

Two images by Schlichter similarly reveal some of the ways in which the acute animosity in *Lustmord* images towards prostitutes, and women in general, later materializes in representations of the New Woman. *Passers-By and the Imperial Army* (fig. 17) depicts a street scene wherein four women stand between an unidentifiable male

⁴⁰ Andreas Strobl, *Otto Dix: Eine Malerkarriere der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1996), 195. He writes that von Harden sits in "einem kalten, beinahe lebensfeindlichen Raum."

⁴¹ Otto Conzelmann, "Vom Porträt zum Menschenbild – Otto Dix, der Menschenbildner," in *Otto Dix – Menschenbilder, Gemälde, Aquarelle, Gouachen und Zeichnungen*, ed. Eugen Keuerleber, exh. cat. Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart, December 1981 – January 1982 (Stuttgart: Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart, 1981), 21. He writes that the reddish-pink is "eine Farbe, die bei Dix selten etwas anderes suggeriert als libidischen Trieb und die ihm entspringende Gewalt."

figure in the foreground and a group of soldiers in the background; bourgeois men are interspersed throughout the scene. This compositional organization permits Schlichter to situate these women in opposition to the masculine, which is signified here by the personification of the institutional structure of the State and the serious, piercing gaze of the male foreground figure.⁴² The fine clothing in which these women are dressed is in stark contrast to their otherwise decaying appearances. With her extremely pale skin, neck, and hands, the woman wearing the black dress appears sickly and drained of all life. Similarly, the woman across from her on the right is rendered with bloodless lips of a greyish white. The seemingly active gazes of these two women are rendered obsolete and outnumbered in the face of the objectifying gazes of the male foreground figure, the soldiers, and of the composition's implied male viewer. While the two other women appear to have healthier skin tones, their eyes disclose a sense of lifelessness and unresponsiveness similar to that suggested by Dix's portrait of von Harden. With their fashionable clothing and obvious association with mass consumption, these New Women, like von Harden, signify the decadent and threatening materiality, corporality, and ultimately, the moral decay that Schlichter had earlier reserved for prostitutes.

It is difficult to distinguish representations of New Women from those of prostitutes in Schlichter's oeuvre. While I do not view these women as prostitutes due to their dress and their surroundings, their identities as New Woman are nonetheless equivocal for both the viewer and, apparently, the male figures by which they are

⁴² Seelen, 134. Seelen holds that the foreground figure is in fact a priest, and hence representative of the institution of the Church. She does not provide any evidence to support her assertion, which is disputable given that this man does not wear clothing typical and easily recognizable as indicating priesthood.

surrounded. Common signifiers used by prostitutes to announce their presence subtly are indeed here: two women wear lace-up boots, and the central figure, dressed in black, wears a widow's veil and also holds a rather phallic umbrella.⁴³ However, these women, with their muted clothing, appear non-sexual and do not solicit the men around them. Each woman wears some form of finery that associates her with bourgeois respectability rather than prostitution; some of the women wear lace stockings, and all sport a highly conservative coat or dress. Moreover, Schlichter situates these four women directly in front of what might be a shop selling such articles of clothing. He seems to make a statement about female consumerism in general, but more particularly, the association of the New Woman with mass consumer culture as well as the ubiquitous manipulation of the social type as an advertising trope. Though it is likely that these women are not prostitutes, the image asks of the viewer the same question on the minds of the male figures within: "Are they or aren't they?" Indeed, Schlichter is possibly imaging this very conundrum by way of the ambiguity of these women's appearances. Further, the artist perhaps figures their decaying and inert forms as direct consequences of their mass consumer activity, but most profoundly of their descent from the realm of respectability to threatening deviance through their fashionable and self-adorned exterior.

Hausvogteiplatz (fig.18) likewise emphasizes Schlichter's visual treatment of the New Woman as a physically decaying and hence morally corruptive figure. Like *Passers-By and the Imperial Army*, this street scene depicts a small number of women surrounded entirely by men. They appear as "upright" New Women with their conservative clothing,

⁴³ Rewald's catalogue entry for Dix's *Three Women of the Street* identifies each of the objects held or worn by the women, including the widow's veil and umbrella, as understated indicators of prostitution. See *Glitter and Doom*, 68.

but Schlichter once again complicates any unambiguous reading of their identities with suggestions of prostitution, such as the bold red lipstick usually only worn by the New Woman at night while frequenting cafés and clubs.⁴⁴ Unlike the previous image, however, *Hausvogteiplatz* is laden with pessimistic symbols. Not only are Saturn and the crescent moon, respective symbols of melancholy and apocalypse, high in the sky, but the artist directly aligns a bloody gallows above the women. Such ominous portents have led art historian Günther Metken to characterize this space as suggestive of an “Endzeitstimmung,” or apocalyptic environment.⁴⁵ In this mass of people, in close proximity and yet completely isolated from one another, everyone is for him or herself.⁴⁶ As with *Passers-By and the Imperial Army*, this environment is threateningly eerie and

⁴⁴ Sabine Hake, “In the Mirror of Fashion,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, 189. Hake notes how makeup became a common element in most women’s lives, not just those of prostitutes. She writes how the modern, working New Woman often wore natural, sun-tanned tones during the day, and reserved bolder red lipstick for evening outings. Mila Kaneva, in *Women in Weimar Fashion: Discourses and Displays in German Culture, 1918-1933* (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), discusses the importance of external appearance for working woman’s professional opportunities. In reference to Irmgard Keun’s novel *Gilgi*, she writes that the eponymous main character “uses makeup and smokes cigarettes. And for her as well as for many of her fellow white-collar workers, the conscious cultivation of appearance has not only become an essential part of her self-image and self-esteem but is also inseparable from her prospects for upward mobility” (176). Siegfried Kracauer similarly writes of this emphasis on external appearance: “Employees must join in, whether they want to or not. The rush to the numerous beauty salons springs partly from existential concerns, and the use of cosmetic products is not always a luxury. For fear of being withdrawn from use as obsolete, ladies and gentlemen dye their hair...Fashion and economy work hand in hand,” in *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 1998), 39. I thus disagree with Sabine Rewald’s contention that makeup was one of the means by which prostitutes marked their presence, for “no proper woman used it during the day” (Rewald, 68).

⁴⁵ Günther Metken, “Hausvogteiplatz,” in *Rudolf Schlichter: Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen*, 166.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

borders on the uncanny. Once again, the skin tones of the foreground women exhibit a deathly paleness that is likely not a consequence of cosmetic powder considering that their hands, particularly those of the woman on the left, are equally white. That their eyes are also outlined in a yellowy brown, suggestive of jaundice, firmly situates them in the same realm of decay occupied by von Harden and the women of *Passers-By and the Imperial Army*. Similar to that image, the women are pictorially connected to the *Konfektion*, or ready-made clothing shop that dominates the upper left portion of the watercolour. Given the incorporation of blatant apocalyptic references, I am led to believe that Schlichter is pinpointing the New Woman as the direct cause of moral and social degeneration, embodied here by human isolation, the dissolution of the boundary between the “upright” woman and the prostitute, and mass, depersonalized consumption.⁴⁷ As if to offset the threat posed by the New Woman, Schlichter depicts these women, with their partially closed, slit-like eyes, as absent, corpse-like figures, similar to the prostitutes in his *Lustmord* images whose decadent corporality also had to be put in check.

Images that represent the New Woman as a decaying, docile, and passive body are not particular to artists like Dix and Schlichter who had earlier engaged with the cultural interest in sexual murder. Christian Schad completed many portraits of the “emancipated” New Woman that participate in the same discourse of female death and decay. Unlike Schlichter and Dix, Schad did not serve in World War I. Instead, he sought

⁴⁷ Metken writes that Schlichter suggests a link between clothing and depersonalization: “In seinen Erinnerungen schildert Schlichter das Stehkragenproletariat der kleinen Angestellten als Inbegriff entpersönlichter Normierung, so als ob Kleider Leute machen.” “In his memoirs, Schlichter describes the standing collar proletariat of lesser employees as the epitome of depersonalization, as if clothes make people” (ibid., 166).

refuge in neutral Switzerland, where he befriended Tristan Tzara and joined the Dadaists in Zurich. The contact that he had with Italian Renaissance art during his stay in Italy from 1921-1925 profoundly affected his artistic development from Dadaism to a more “objective,” realist style.⁴⁸ Schad’s subsequent move to Vienna brought him into contact with aristocratic circles. Even though Hartlaub did not include Schad in the 1925 Mannheim exhibition, select portraits nonetheless suggest the innate hostility towards the New Woman present in other portraits by artists of the New Objectivity. Despite the fact that Schad did not complete any Lustmord images, a self-portrait from 1927 (fig.19) suggests that male violence against women, as well as the artist’s attempt to sever himself from female corporality, are in fact not absent from Schad’s oeuvre.

The self-portrait is a testimony of the artist’s approach to his cosmopolitan sexual identity. Positioned obliquely to the picture plane, Schad depicts himself with a piercing gaze directed straight at the viewer, while in the background his nude lover is depicted in profile reclining and gazing dispassionately in another direction. Most striking about the woman is the inclusion of a long freshly stitched wound on her cheek. It seems Schad wished to align himself with the passionate Italian men in Naples whom he had witnessed scarring their mistresses as a way to create physical evidence of their ownership of those women. While the image does not employ the same violent force as Lustmord images, Schad still makes the connection between sexuality and violence quite clear. One might further link this woman, with her black ribbon bracelet, to Manet’s *Olympia* (fig.20) and

⁴⁸ Jill Lloyd, “Christian Schad: Reality and Illusion,” in *Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit*, eds. Jill Lloyd and Michael Peppiatt, exh. cat. Neue Galerie, New York, 14 March – 19 June 2003 (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 20.

to prostitution in turn.⁴⁹ The hint of a red stocking at the far left of the painting seems to confirm her profession. Schad takes specific measures in his self-representation to distance himself from female corporality, which both the scar and the woman's likely profession as a prostitute represent. A clear contrast is created between the fleshy skin tone of the woman and the transparent green chiffon shirt that the artist wears. Such a shirt, worn in ancient times by men on the Greek island of Kos, is in fact a narcissist symbol.⁵⁰ The narcissus flower in the background, in tandem with this shirt, crystallizes the portrait's function as a clear testament to the artist's egotism. Not only does the representation of this shirt permit him to boast his skill in rendering skin through transparent fabric, it also ultimately serves to separate Schad from his surroundings.⁵¹ In this way, the shirt acts as a "protective layer, a subtle barrier" between himself and the woman.⁵² Just as Dix's and Schlichter's *Lustmord* images sought to eliminate the threat of female corporality, so too does Schad, albeit in a more muted fashion, attempt to distance himself from the realm of the allegedly corrupting female body.

Two of Schad's portraits communicate the same sense of physical decay evident in works depicting the New Woman by Dix and Schlichter. During his stay in Berlin in the late twenties, Schad completed *Lotte* (fig.21) and *Sonja* (fig.22), which, according to

⁴⁹ It is possible that this accessory is not only an art historical reference on Schad's part. Schad wrote that he had seen a woman wearing a black ribbon around her wrist at a shooting range in the Prater amusement park in Vienna, and was perhaps subsequently led to apply this accessory to this woman. See Michael Peppiatt, "Christian Schad: Portraits of the 1920s," in *Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit*, 22.

⁵⁰ Rewald, 74.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁵² Peppiatt, 44.

him, represent “the two poles at either end of the spectrum of women in Berlin that I saw in those days.”⁵³ Schad, with his almost classical treatment of form, uses quite different methods from Dix and Schlichter in these portraits, which still evoke the impression that the sitters occupy a liminal state of decay. *Lotte* depicts a young milliner, who worked in the shop below the hotel at which Schad was a visitor, seated alone in a dancing club. Schad thus means to distinguish one of these two poles of women as the career-oriented New Woman, a role that the sitter, with her severely cut blazer, white blouse, and perfectly coiffed hair, quite neatly fills. Yet one might not expect to find in a portrait representation of the purportedly emancipated and liberated New Woman the dark circles under Lotte’s eyes, which art historian Günther Richter interprets as the consequence of many sleepless nights.⁵⁴ If Richter’s observation is followed, one could assume that Schad is commenting on the ceaseless activity that characterized the lives of many women who viewed themselves as New Women, working by day and visiting bars and dance clubs by night. In addition, Schad seems to comment subtly on the “respectable” woman’s lapse into indecency, as with Dix and Schlichter, by including a hint of eroticism in the portrait; the faint lines of a red bra peak through from underneath Lotte’s white blouse. The black ribbon tie on her blouse is also remarkably similar to that worn by Olympia in Manet’s painting. I would argue that the heavy dark circles are indeed a sign of sheer exhaustion, and work in tandem with the hint of red lingerie and the bow to

⁵³ Christian Schad quoted in *Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit*, 233.

⁵⁴ Günther Richter, ed., “Lotte,” in *Christian Schad: Texte, Materialien, Dokumente* (Rottach-Egern: G.A. Richter, 2002), 140.

more broadly indicate the degeneration of the female body that the New Woman's lifestyle was believed to instigate.

Not only do the sitter's eyes disclose a state of decay, but the way in which Schad has positioned her body and depicted other facial features also reveals qualities of lifelessness and torpor evident in the works by Dix and Schlichter discussed earlier. It seems as though Schad has deliberately posed Lotte in a rigid, immovable position; this strict physical formality creates a marked sense of distance between the sitter and viewer, a common characteristic of the artist's portraits. Moreover, her perfectly applied lipstick, her extremely pale complexion, and styled hair combine to give the impression that Lotte, in this immovable state, becomes a lifeless and insentient doll, and ultimately, the object of the male gaze. Schad perhaps intended for the portrait to create such an effect considering that he in fact called Lotte a "porcelain figure."⁵⁵

Sonja supposedly depicts a member of the opposite pole of Berlin women, namely those who circulated in bohemian crowds. *Sonja* is pictured in the Romanisches Café, where Dix's portrait of von Harden is set, with similar staffage: a box of Camel cigarettes, a tube of lipstick, and a compact. Whatever his intentions for polarizing Lotte and *Sonja*, many of the conventions that Schad uses to portray them are remarkably similar. Like Lotte, *Sonja* is situated in uncomfortably close proximity to the picture plane, but her cool gaze imposes the same sense of distance and marks her as an inapproachable figure. Schad even more deeply accentuates the lines underneath the sitter's eyes, and by thickening and shading the eyelids, he more definitively evokes

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Sonja's exhaustion. Richter writes that Schad depicts an already spent or used up face,⁵⁶ suggesting once again that Schad unsparingly associates his New Woman sitter with excessive and decadent corporality. Moreover, the knee with the stocking folds and the translucent material of the sleeves are subtly erotic in the same manner as Lotte's thin blouse and red bra.⁵⁷ The same combination of exhaustion, decay, and understated sexuality are present in both portraits, and characterize the New Woman as the prostitute's bedfellow in German society's decline.

I would like to briefly comment on the unconventional depiction of space in these two portraits. Schad depicts both background spaces quite oddly; one cannot logically define the nightclub space in which Lotte is placed, and the café space in the portrait of Sonja recedes far too quickly, creating the effect that the sitter is in fact impossibly sandwiched between two tables. Where does the mirror begin and real space end in *Lotte*? Is the table with the empty glass *behind* Lotte, or is this the reflection of the table that sits directly *in front of* her? Such questions can similarly be asked of *Sonja*: is there a table separating Sonja from Max Hermann-Neisse, whose unmistakable ear announces his presence in the portrait? How is it possible for Sonja to fit in between her own table and the one behind her? It seems Schad has intentionally distorted his representation of these spaces in order to further isolate the two sitters from their surroundings, for while Lotte and Sonja are treated with Schad's classical style, these spaces stray far from the traditional one-point perspective approach to rendering three-dimensional space on a two-

⁵⁶ Ibid., "Sonja," 148. Richter terms Sonja's face "das schon verlebte Gesicht."

⁵⁷ Patricia Spiegelfeld, "Sonja," in *Christian Schad Retrospective: Life and Work in Context*, ed. Michael Fuhr, exh. cat. Leopold Museum, Vienna, 26 September – 6 January 2009 (Cologne: Wienand Verlag, 2008), 143.

dimensional surface. For the sake of his egotism, Schad has perhaps compromised the accurate representation of space as a way to accentuate his acute technique in rendering the human form. However, these portraits do not render the illusion of living flesh on canvas. As Bronfen notes, these sitters' presences rely not on the depiction of a seemingly touchable body and living skin, but rather entirely on the fact that their forms are starkly outlined from the background, and, moreover, that they appear unnaturally frozen in their poses.⁵⁸

Bronfen's psychoanalytic interpretation of Schad's portraits of women warrants some discussion. Schad's attempt to transform living flesh onto canvas, Bronfen argues, results in the erasure of the female sitter. Drawing on three concepts – mirror, type, and fetish – Bronfen argues that the artist's portraits are not forms of visual documentation of the female sitter in a particular time and place, but rather that they function primarily as vehicles through which the artist defines his masculine identity and asserts his act of masculine creation through and against a feminine Other. She writes that a form of defiguration of the sitter occurs, which “functions as a reflection of the painter and hence as a code for his creative and figurative strength.”⁶⁰ Moreover, she argues that the strict formality and superficiality with which Schad represents Lotte and Sonja, in lieu of an investigation of their psychological characters, allows Schad the pleasure of “self-determination and self-stylization.”⁶¹ Not only does Schad fade out (*ausblenden*) his

⁵⁸ Elisabeth Bronfen, “Weibliches Antlitz. Weibliche Figur, Weiblicher Blick: Christian Schads Frauenporträts,” in *Christian Schad: Texte, Materialien, Dokumente*, 117.

⁶⁰ Ibid., “einer Spiegelung des Malers dient und somit als Chiffre für seine Schöpfungs- und Gestaltungsmacht fungiert,” 119.

⁶¹ Ibid., “die Freude der Selbstbestimmung und Selbstentwerfung,” 124.

female sitters, but he also makes a permanent mark on some of his female subjects; Bronfen remarks that the scar on the woman in the 1927 self-portrait is left as a trace of the artist's creation and overcoming of the image of woman.⁶² I would also add that such a trace remains in *Sonja*, wherein the artist's signature appears directly on the sleeve of the sitter's black chiffon dress. Through the creation of an image, a task designated as masculine, the artist is able to defeat his fear of death, and by extension, the feminine. The artist eliminates the threat of female corporality in these portraits through a powerful assertion of masculinity.

Bronfen is partly indebted to Griselda Pollock's essay on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: The Representation of Elizabeth Siddall." Pollock holds that the many drawings and paintings that Rossetti completed of Siddall are in fact not portraits, but are instead sites upon which the male artist asserts his creative power by definition of Woman as a sign of virginity, purity, and, ultimately, of passive femininity. Rossetti's drawings, she argues, "register his active looking at and possession of the feminine object, the looked-at, the surveyed which is reconstructed in *his* image."⁶³ She continues: "They signify in the ideological process of a redefinition of woman as image, and as *visibly* different. They appropriate 'woman,' as an explicitly visual image – seen to be seen – as a signifier in a displaced and repressed discourse on masculinity."⁶⁴ Pollock's assertion that these drawings efface the female subject, Elizabeth Siddall, as a

⁶² Ibid., 122.

⁶³ Griselda Pollock, "Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: The Representation of Elizabeth Siddall," in *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (New York/London: Routledge, 2003 [first published 1988]), 160.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

means to construct masculinity, holds particular relevance to Schad's narcissistic use of female portraits to assert his own masculine artistic skill. It thus seems possible that a psychoanalytic dimension of interpretation emerges in which death is no longer only signified through indications of physical decay. A form of symbolic death marks some of Schad's portraits, and perhaps some by Dix and Schlichter, by which the female sitter is negated at the expense of the artist's narcissistic self-definition. The depicted woman, as in the images by Dix and Schlichter previously addressed, is denied physical agency, and hence becomes a passive body through which male fears surrounding the New Woman are processed.

Female artist Lotte Laserstein approaches the New Woman from a perspective rather divergent from that of her male contemporaries. In her essay, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," Pollock asks how the study of women artists can account for their highly specified body of work as well as consider that these female producers worked within different spaces and subsequently had experiences unlike those of their male colleagues.⁶⁵ Pollock proceeds to analyze the social spheres in which male and female artists of late nineteenth-century Paris were active as producers, and examines the alternative modes of representation that female artists used to account for their individual experiences of the spaces of femininity. Using aspects of Pollock's argument, I will consider the work of Laserstein, one of the few female artists associated with the New Objectivity. In so doing, the unique experiences of an artist who in many ways saw and

⁶⁵ Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art*, 76.

pictured herself and her model, Traute Rose (née Gertrud Süssenbach), as New Women will come into view.

After studying art history for a few semesters at the Royal Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin, Laserstein decided to pursue the fine arts. She was trained in the studio of Realist painter Erich Wolfsfeld in the early 1920s, and established her own studio in Wilmersdorf, Berlin in 1927. She was in many respects a New Woman: she wore the fashionable *Herrenschnitt*, and decided not to marry in order to focus on her artistic career. Up until her exile in 1937 (Laserstein's father was half-Jewish), the artist completed numerous paintings set in her studio, showing herself in the act of painting, and often accompanied by Traute Rose. In one of the very first of such images, *In My Studio* (fig.23), a nude Traute Rose in fact occupies more than half of the painting. The image was likely painted with the help of a mirror: the recumbent model is positioned in front of a large mirror, while the artist in fact sits behind her, using the reflection she sees of herself and her model as the basis for the image. Apparently, one of the reasons why Laserstein employed Traute Rose as her model so frequently was due to her androgynous and athletic appearance characteristic of the New Woman, which the artist underlines in this double portrait.⁶⁶

Laserstein has rendered the model with a healthy skin tone and muscular legs in a highly sensual pose. Unlike portraits of the New Woman completed by Dix, Schlichter, and Schad, Laserstein depicts Traute Rose as a healthy, strong, and athletic model aware of her body and its sensuality. While Traute Rose does not appear fully aware of her

⁶⁶ Anna-Carola Krause, *Lotte Laserstein 1898-1993: Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Reimer, 2006), 69.

surroundings, she is shown in a peaceful state of sleep rather than one of obliviousness and exhaustion as seen in the images of von Harden, Lotte, Sonja, and Schlichter's New Women. Moreover, Laserstein depicts Traute Rose as fully naked, thus complicating attempts at classification; it seems that all of Dix's images of naked women, by contrast, are in fact not fully naked, for the women most often wear a hairpiece or stockings as markers of their professions as prostitutes. While it might seem that Laserstein depicts a passive nude body that invites the voyeuristic male gaze, I would argue that her inclusion in the image actually circumvents such objectification. The image compels the viewer to consider the complex conventions behind the construction of the image, thus effacing any pleasure that might be derived from its observation. By communicating the process of production to the viewer, Laserstein's *In My Studio* in no way functions as a site for male viewing pleasure. Instead, the image reduces the classical ideal of the female nude to the status of a banal studio image.

Laserstein does more in this double portrait than present a counterpoint to some male artists' sickly and decaying representations of the New Woman. The mere fact that she renders herself depicting a reclining nude is a personal assertion of her artistic ability in a realm from which the Western classical tradition had for so long excluded women. This undermining of gender roles is not only apparent through the participation of a female artist in a male-dominated artistic genre, but also through the androgynous appearance of both Laserstein and her model. Laserstein, with her white smock and overall masculine appearance, confounds traditional gender roles by positioning herself as a concentrated artist, a self-assertive gesture that up to then had conventionally been a

male prerogative.⁶⁷ Moreover, Traute Rose's androgynous if not masculine physique confuses the viewer; her flat chest, *Herrenschnitt*, and robust limbs replace the traditional representation of the female nude as a nubile, curvy, and softly modelled form. The artist not only communicates the physical strength and athleticism of which the New Woman was capable, but makes a complex statement about the flexibility and superficiality of seemingly fixed gender roles.

I would like to make a brief comment on Laserstein's sexual orientation, which one might potentially misinterpret from *In My Studio*. While this image may suggest a homoerotic relationship between the artist and the model, both Laserstein and Traute Rose were involved in heterosexual relationships. It is not necessary to establish firmly their sexual orientations – a problematic and difficult project – but rather to identify the aspects of role-playing and performativity that Laserstein and Traute Rose make evident in these representations.⁶⁸ This reference to performativity opens up the possibility of placing their experiences among those of several other women who explored the variability of sexual orientation facilitated by the gender-bending lifestyle and androgynous appearance of the New Woman.

Self-Portrait with Cat (fig.24) disrupts gender boundaries in a similar manner. The distance between the viewer and artist that was previously imposed by a naked female body has collapsed, and the viewer is presented with a more direct self-portrait

⁶⁷ Anna-Carola Krausse, *Lotte Laserstein: meine einzige Wirklichkeit/ My Only Reality* (Dresden: Philo Fine Arts, 2003), 94.

⁶⁸ Dorothy Rowe, "Representing Herself: Lotte Laserstein Between Subject and Object," in *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Christiane Schönfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2006), 79.

with the artist herself filling the majority of the canvas. With her masculine attire and physical appearance, Laserstein presents herself according to the traditional principles that many male artists had followed for centuries in their self-representations. She stares directly out at the viewer with self-certainty in much the same way as Dürer, Max Liebermann, and Dix. In some ways, the self-portrait acts as an aesthetic manifesto of the artist's commitment to realism and her association with the objectivity and reportage that characterized many cultural facets of the Weimar years.⁶⁹ Laserstein renders every detail – from the individual strands of eyebrow hairs to the patterning of the cat's fur – with clear precision.

The image is similar to some traditional male self-portraiture practices. Here, Laserstein directly comments on the nature of perception as well as gender identity. Like *In My Studio*, this work was created from the reflection of a mirror. In both, what is figured on canvas, and what the viewer sees, is ultimately that which the artist has seen in her own reflection and translated into painted visual form. In other words, the viewer is not deprived of the ability to look, but Laserstein nonetheless assumes a position of authority by picturing her own experience of sight. The assumed gaze is thus no longer male, but is rather positioned as belonging to the very woman who initiated that gaze in the first place, the artist herself.

Dorothy Rowe perceives the self-questioning and self-perception that often accompany self-portraiture as an exploration of identity formation. From a Lacanian perspective, she argues that this self-portrait, completed with the assistance of a mirror,

⁶⁹ Krausse (2003), 100.

“offers a form of stasis that is knowingly inauthentic at its point of origin.”⁷⁰ Yet the impossible desire for wholeness and unity, Rowe argues, is represented as a private investigation of the gendered self rather than a representation of an iconic and universal type.⁷¹ I would like to extend Rowe’s argument by introducing the notion that Laserstein is not only presenting an investigation of the unity of self and other, but also of the unity of the polar opposites of masculine and feminine. While Krausse has suggested this point of view, I disagree with her assertion that the cat embodies the female element, or sexuality, while Laserstein’s male disposition signifies the masculine element.⁷² Such an interpretation overlooks how Laserstein, in many of her self-portraits, depicts herself as an autonomous and successful woman in a man’s world. By representing herself as a confident, self-assured, and androgynous female artistic professional, Laserstein again confounds gender boundaries as she did in *In My Studio*. Unlike that image, I would argue that she sets the gender identity of the New Woman under a microscope, transforming a type into an individual self-portrait. The self-portrait thus functions as a means for the artist to negotiate between, evaluate, and attempt to unify her masculine and feminine selves in her personal interpretation of the New Woman. This is, of course, in stark contrast to the representations of disempowered New Women by Dix, Schlichter, and Schad, many of whom appear completely oblivious of their own bodies and surroundings. In *Self-Portrait with Cat*, Laserstein assumes authority over her powers of

⁷⁰ Rowe, 82.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Krausse (2003), 102.

sight, which are in turn employed as a means to critically evaluate and picture her experience and identity as a New Woman.

The influence of the mass media's portrayal of the sporty New Woman is perhaps most evident in *Tennis Player* (fig.25). Once again, the artist depicts the New Woman with healthy, toned, sun-tanned arms and legs. Unlike many advertisements that depicted this Weimar type engaged in dynamic athletic activity, Traute Rose is shown here in a state of repose. Yet this does not mean that she is rendered as a passive and inactive being. Not only is the majority of the tennis player's body concealed by her linear patterned outfit, thereby eluding its objectification, but her face is turned away from the viewer as she actively looks beyond that which is pictured. Interestingly, the tennis player does not appear to watch the match that has attracted the attention of the background figures, but is wholly absorbed in looking at something to which the viewer is not privy. Rowe has noted that in some of Laserstein's images, the conventional relationship between subject/object is often confounded so that the female subject is no longer excluded from the activity of sight over which the viewer and/or artist normally have power.⁷³ *Tennis Player* in no way obstructs the viewer's visual access to the female subject, but the gaze is no longer privileged. It is stripped of its objectifying power through both the active gaze of the tennis player as well as the fact that the viewer does not have visual access to that which she sees. The fence netting and the tennis player herself, represented on such a large scale so that her entire upper body covers nearly half of the background scene, serve to obstruct the event that is unfolding on the tennis court.

⁷³ Rowe, 77-78.

The viewer is still aware of the setting and the event, but the subject of the tennis player's gaze remains outside of the viewer's own field of vision.

Scholars have noted how *Tennis Player* echoes mass cultural sources, namely advertisements and fashion drawings. Rowe writes that such an image is “informed by an unusual blend of high art and mass culture,”⁷⁴ while Anna-Carola Krausse holds that Laserstein “has exploited the aesthetics of contemporary poster advertisements to create her own image of the athletic New Woman.”⁷⁵ Krausse's statement suggests that Laserstein has adapted what might otherwise be limiting and stereotypical images of the New Woman to create a representation of an individual woman whose experience is likely one of athleticism, independence, and self-confidence. Indeed, “Laserstein's portraits of women,” Krausse holds, “do contradict the conventional cliché in that, however convincingly she typecasts her subjects, her view of women never results in reified stereotypes.”⁷⁶ While the interplay between representations of the New Woman in so-called high art and mass culture is the subject of another chapter, it figures in this context to demonstrate Laserstein's view of the female type, and of gender in general, as flexible and impermanent rather than given, substantiated, and fixed.

In the Tavern (fig.26) depicts a woman in a café or bar – a common motif in Weimar imagery – but differs profoundly from images of the same theme by artists like Dix and Schad. Like *Tennis Player*, the female subject in this painting is shown actively looking, even if she assumes something of a blasé attitude towards her surroundings.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 78.

⁷⁵ Krausse (2003), 138.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 128.

Moreover, the female subject's body remains hidden from view under the table in much the same way as the body of the woman was concealed by fabric in *Tennis Player*, compelling the viewer to focus on facial expression and the female subject's rather banal activity of removing her gloves. The commonplace theme of the image stands far apart from representations that isolate the New Woman as a threatening oddity. Not only does Laserstein refrain once again from portraying a stereotyped and reified image of the New Woman, she also presents the viewer with a female subject who assumes the dual role of observer and customer within this public space. I would argue that such a close-up and personal viewpoint eludes the objectification and isolation, and moreover, any form of erasure of the female subject within this space.

At this point, I would like to look in closer detail at the depiction of space in *Tennis Player* and *In the Tavern*. Laserstein's images, as suggested earlier, demonstrate a reflective understanding and adaptation of earlier traditions; in addition to the reclining nude and self-portrait, *In the Tavern* references images of bourgeois men with one gloved hand, a fashionable gesture indicative of their social status (figs. 27 and 28). Additionally, she seems to employ some of the same conventions of spatial organization used by some female artists before her to record the specificity of women's experiences. One of the central points of Pollock's, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," focuses on how artists such as Morisot and Cassatt manipulate traditional space so that it not only ceases to objectify its female occupants, but also creates a greater sense of a lived experience within these spaces. Taking as an example Cassatt's *Portrait of Madame J.* (fig.29), Pollock argues that the conventional distance between the viewer and subject collapses through Cassatt's employment of a decidedly shallow space, creating a greater

proximity between the two. As a result, the mastering male gaze no longer has dominance over the female subject.⁷⁷ This seemingly benign revision of space has a highly significant effect:

There is little extraneous space to distract the viewer from the inter-subjective encounter or to reduce the figures to objectified staffage, or to make them the objects of a voyeuristic gaze. The women depicted function as subjects of their own looking or their own activity, within highly specified locations of which the viewer becomes a part.⁷⁸

Laserstein also appears to use techniques of spatial organization employed by a male artist, namely Gustave Caillebotte. She uses a similar push/pull effect to that which Caillebotte applied to his many scenes of urban life in late nineteenth-century Paris, such as *Rainy Day Paris* (fig.30) and *Oarsmen* (fig.31). In *Tennis Player*, the female figure appears as though tilted toward the picture plane, and as though she were about to pull the back of the chair toward her until all weight moves even nearer to the viewer, bringing her foreshortened knee further forward. At the same time as the tennis player seems to advance toward the picture plane, Laserstein treats the background with a sharp, rushing perspective. Similarly, the woman of *In the Tavern* projects her forearms and hands forward as she removes her glove, a gesture underlined by the tilted table surface. The advancement of the central figure toward the viewer creates the effect of a swiftly receding background space. This construction of space lends itself well to underlining the figure's determined concentration on a given activity.

⁷⁷ Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," 89.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

Laserstein also appears to draw upon the tradition of absorption evident in the work of many male artists, such as, in Michael Fried's opinion, Chardin, Greuze, Gustave Courbet, and more recently, Caillebotte himself.⁷⁹ The collapse of space between the female subject and viewer, as seen with Cassatt, and these female subjects' absorptive states are similar to a convention employed by Caillebotte, namely the immediate foreground placement of figures "wholly engrossed or absorbed in actions or states of mind."⁸⁰ In contrast to the theatrical placement of passive figures with their attendant props on a stage-like set, common in images by Dix, Schad, and Schlichter, Laserstein renders her female subjects within specified, lived locations as oblivious, in Fried's words, "to everything but the operation he or she is intent on performing," and, most decisively, as unaware of being beheld by the viewer.⁸¹ Caillebotte's *Interior, Woman Reading* (fig.32), is similar to *In the Tavern* by way of the collapse of distance between the viewer and the woman in the foreground, in addition to the complete absorption of both women in their respective tasks. In fact, the viewer is positioned to become absorbed in looking at these absorptive states, rather than distracted by extraneous space, as suggested by Pollock. Yet, in the latter image and *Tennis Player*, the female subjects' absorption does not depend upon an activity like listening, reading, or writing, rather

⁷⁹ Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). This book expands upon the concepts of absorption and theatricality that Fried established in his 1967 essay, "Art and Objecthood," and applies them to an eighteenth-century context. Fried has recently analysed these concepts in relation to Gustave Caillebotte in his essay, "Caillebotte's Impressionism," in *Gustave Caillebotte and the Fashioning of Identity in Impressionist Paris*, ed. Norma Broude (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

⁸⁰ Fried (2002), 69.

⁸¹ Fried (1980), 47.

upon the very act of looking itself.⁸² Laserstein invests these figures with the quality of absorption in their own powers of sight, which is pronounced by their placement in the immediate foreground and the concomitant sense that the viewer is in fact a part of their space. This dual convention – the compression of intermediate space and absorption – positions the female subject as an active observer rather than a passive object to be looked at.

While some of the images by Laserstein that I have addressed achieve this effect of affording the female subject agency over her body and within the space she occupies, *In the Tavern* exemplifies this most profoundly through its minimalism. Laserstein focuses closely on this figure, dispensing with the formal distance that was so important in Schad's portraits, to not only neutralize objectification, but also to allow the viewer to engage with the female subject and her perception of the space. The image illustrates the experience of a young urbanite whose self-awareness and autonomy provide her with the physical agency so lacking in some male artists' interpretations of the same.

The representation of the New Woman as a dying, decaying, and near lifeless body is a conscious and determined endeavour. It serves to identify aggressively the New Woman on par with the prostitute as both a cause and indicator of social breakdown – of the family, of morals, and most importantly, of conventional gender roles – in Weimar society. By so doing, it sets the groundwork for the male artist to articulate and attempt to overcome his fear of female corporality and decadence, enabling him, in the process, to

⁸² Fried does not fully examine the possibility of absorption in the act of looking itself, except in reference to sexual longing in an engraving after Jean-Baptiste Greuze entitled, *Une Jeune Fille qui envoie un baiser par la fenêtre, appuyée sur des fleurs, qu'elle brise* (1769), *Absorption and Theatricality*, 60.

define his own masculine identity at the expense of the female subject. Bronfen has noted how Woman often signifies all that is outside, and is a negation of the ruling norm. One of her positions is most relevant to this discussion of the powerlessness with which the New Woman is often rendered:

The construction of Woman-as-Other serves rhetorically to dynamise a social order, while her death marks the end of this period of change. Over her dead body, cultural norms are reconfirmed or secured, whether because the sacrifice of the virtuous, innocent woman serves a social critique and transformation or because *a sacrifice of the dangerous woman re-establishes an order that was momentarily suspended due to her presence.*⁸³ [emphasis mine]

What might be viewed as grotesque aesthetics – discoloured flesh, jaundiced and exhausted eyes, and a sense of overall anaesthesia – are tools for the artist to mark the androgynous New Woman as a threatening Other. This mode of representation also serves, however, to realign that which has fallen out of order: the polarities of masculine/feminine and man/woman that the New Woman destabilizes. I have drawn on the work of Laserstein as a counterpoint to these depictions in order to clarify that not all visions of the New Woman necessarily involve decay and mastery over the female subject. Instead, they may invoke a discourse surrounding the flexibility of gender identity, the possibilities for self-fashioning in the formation of this identity, and a focussed investigation of the female subject's experiences and perceptions within public spaces. What is at stake in all of these representations of the New Woman – whether by a man or a woman – is the absence or assertion of female agency, that freedom to self-

⁸³ Bronfen (1992), 181.

determination that deeply unhinges patriarchal claims to power by initiating the threatening yet potentially advantageous reinterpretation of gender itself.

CHAPTER TWO

Parts Worth More than the Whole: Fetishism in Weimar High Art and Mass Culture

Weimar historians generally divide the period into three. The first, marked by political revolutions and crises as well as hyper-inflation, spans roughly from 1918-1924. The years from 1924-1929, often misleadingly termed “The Golden Years,” brought relative peace with the stabilization of the economy and the introduction of both the Dawes Plan and the *Rentenmark*. Lastly, scholars in the main date the decline in support for liberal parties and the rise of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) to 1929-1933.¹ While cabaret culture and the highly sexualized Berlin nightlife figure prominently in the discussion of the “Golden Years” sub-period, I think the correlation between a stabilized economy and the conspicuous rise of mass and consumer culture during this time is also noteworthy.² In addition to providing the necessary site for avant-garde production in all artistic fields

¹ E.J. Feuchtwanger establishes this division of the Weimar period in *From Weimar to Hitler: Germany, 1918-33* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993).

² Detlev J.K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), 170-171. Peukert discusses some mass cultural developments during the Weimar period. He notes how new mediums such as radio and film “reached sections of the population to which the traditional media and the cultural products of the educated had not previously had access” (170). While mass culture and consumerism were certainly prevalent in Germany for some years before, it was the democratizing effect described by Peukert that enabled these forms to permeate and become widespread in all aspects, areas, and demographics of society. Moreover, I would like to clarify any confusion surrounding the terms mass culture, mass consumer culture, and consumerism, which many scholars, including Peukert, consider intimately related. Indeed, mass consumer culture and consumerism might be considered under the larger umbrella of mass culture, for it is through forms such as radio, newspaper, magazines, and cinema that consumerism thrives and attracts potential buyers through advertising. I will use the term mass culture to refer not only to these media, but also to the mass consumer culture that is mobilized through them.

from literature to dance, the Weimar Republic also afforded fertile ground for the inauguration of the first era of mass consumption in German history.³ Despite the prevalence of, and our exposure to, mass culture in daily life, it is nonetheless a mode of visual production that art historians have only recently considered seriously. In Andreas Huyssens' view, mass culture and quotidian modern life are linked to aesthetic modernism through an interdependent relationship, and are hence highly valuable tools with which to approach so-called high art.⁴

This chapter will consider two forms of these mass cultural visual practices – advertising and fashion illustrations – as a means to introduce the possibility that Otto Dix's depiction of Sylvia von Harden (fig.33) is in fact a visual documentation of gender performativity, to borrow Judith Butler's terminology; I will expand on this concept in the following chapter, but will slowly initiate its discussion within the theoretical frameworks of visual culture and psychoanalysis. By investigating the construction of femininity across several types of advertisements, and the challenges and subversions presented to such a visual system through fashion drawings, the New Woman might be

³ Alon Confino and Rudy Koshar, "Regimes of Consumer Culture: New Narratives in Twentieth-Century History," *German History* 19, no.2 (2001): 136.

⁴ Andreas Huyssens, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986), 47. Some art historians are indeed now working within Huyssens' framework as well as in the relatively new field of visual culture. Some notable examples include Anne McClintock, "Soft-Soaping the Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998). Closely related to my project is Sherwin Simmons' essay, "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immorality in Berlin, 1913-1916," *The Art Bulletin* 82, no.1 (2009). Simmons considers select works by Kirchner that depict prostitutes within the contexts of popular fashion imagery and immorality laws in Berlin.

relocated from a position of degeneracy and threat to one of conscious self-fashioning and agency.

Undertaking to find affirmative and potentially beneficial forms of mass culture to advance feminist projects is no doubt a problematic and difficult task given the historical legacy of women's association with mass and "low" cultural production and consumption. With the accelerated development of capitalism in the nineteenth-century, women came to be associated with mass culture, whereas the sphere of genuine and authentic culture was the male domain.⁵ The economic role of the family shifted from production to consumption, with women's roles as consumers, as opposed to producers, crystallizing in the 1920s.⁶ As Huyssens has noted, various mainstream media outlets of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries characterized the masses according to feminine characteristics, revealing that fear of the masses is not simply an anxiety towards powerlessness and lack of control, but of femininity itself: "The fear of the masses in this age of declining liberalism is always also a fear of woman, a fear of nature out of control, a fear of the unconscious, of sexuality, of the loss of identity and stable ego boundaries in the mass."⁷ Huyssens focuses in particular on the modernist project's vociferous attempt to distance itself from the potentially disastrous effects of mass cultural forms on the self-described high work of art. What remains problematic and yet

⁵ Huyssens, 47.

⁶ Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 172.

⁷ Huyssens, 52.

most compelling for Huysens is the inextricable relationship between high art and low culture:

Contrary to the claims of champions of the autonomy of art, contrary also to the ideologists of textuality, the realities of modern life and the ominous expanse of mass culture throughout the social realm are always already inscribed into the articulation of aesthetic modernism. Mass culture has always been the hidden subtext of the modernist project.⁸

The “persistent gendering as feminine of that which is devalued”⁹ obscures any consideration of this indissoluble linkage. By disassembling the illusive boundary between mass culture and aesthetic modernism, it might be possible to establish a framework out of which connections between Weimar advertising and select New Objectivity depictions of the New Woman emerge.

The association of women with mass culture was particularly pronounced in Weimar Germany as debates surrounding the effects of female consumption on German society abounded. On many fronts, this stemmed from a wider concern over the consequences of the implementation of the American economic model in Germany, which was both praised as a successful capitalist blueprint and derided as soulless and threatening to the European way of life.¹⁰ German women, particularly New Women with disposable incomes, and often a penchant for fashion and cosmetics, were held accountable for the success or failure of the development of mass consumer culture.

⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁹ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰ Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 121.

However, women were confronted with several conflicting messages regarding their roles as consumers. Julia Sneeringer's analysis of election motifs in soap and clothing advertisements from 1924 reveals that, on the one hand, women were encouraged to shop as a means to revive the struggling German post-war economy, and on the other, that they were nonetheless viewed in many circles as untrustworthy voters who selected a political party as easily as their brand of dish soap.¹¹ Such advertisements, as well as contemporary Weimar criticism, demonstrate the extent to which female enfranchisement and the increased presence of women in the public sphere as voters, workers, and consumers fuelled anxieties around the "feminization" of German society.

Siegfried Kracauer, likely the most cited authority on Weimar mass culture, is often seen as one of the first to consider consumer culture as an informative signifier of the conditions of a society's existence. He wrote:

The position that an epoch occupies in the historical process can be determined more strikingly from an analysis of its inconspicuous surface-level expressions than from that epoch's judgements about itself. Since these judgements are expressions of the tendencies of a particular era, they do not offer conclusive testimony about its overall constitution. The surface-level expressions, however, by virtue of their unconscious nature, provide unmediated access to the fundamental substance of the state of things...The fundamental substance of an epoch and its unheeded impulses illuminate each other reciprocally.¹²

¹¹ Julia Sneeringer, "The Shopper as Voter: Women, Advertising, and Politics in Post-Inflation Germany," *German Studies Review* 27, no.3 (2004): 479.

¹² Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 75.

It is important to stress that Kracauer, from his Marxist standpoint, does not invoke surface or mass cultural expressions in order to celebrate them, but rather to dismiss them, and increasingly in his later work, as a means to transcend “quotidian superficiality.”¹³ Kracauer’s assessment of Berlin cinemas reveals his view that mass culture in fact has emancipatory potential for the workers who flock to these “palaces of distraction” by way of the very distraction that it facilitates.¹⁴ So long as distraction is not used as an end in itself, but rather becomes apparent to the audience and thereby incites self-awareness, can it truly lead to radical change. Yet Berlin picture houses, Kracauer argues, “rob distraction of its meaning,” instead leaving it “festooned with drapery and forced back into a unity that no longer exists. Rather than acknowledging the actual state of disintegration that such shows ought to represent, the movie theatres glue the pieces back together after the fact and present them as organic creations.”¹⁵ Capitalism’s adulterated form of distraction is, according to Kracauer, precisely delimiting by way of its passivity and lack of rational substance.

What Kracauer terms the mass ornament best characterizes this evacuation of authentic meaning from distraction. He introduces this concept in his eponymous 1927 essay, and takes the example of the Tiller Girls to advance his argument. Kracauer views the movements of the dance troupe as mathematical, mechanized, and comparable to the disconnected and fragmented actions of the assembly line worker. He defines the mass ornament when he describes the Tiller Girls as follows:

¹³ Thomas Y. Levin in *The Mass Ornament*, 20.

¹⁴ “The Cult of Distraction” in *The Mass Ornament*, 323.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 328.

They are a linear system that no longer has any erotic meaning but at best points to the locus of the erotic...the girl-units drill in order to produce an immense number of parallel lines, the goal being to train the broadest mass of people in order to create a pattern of undreamed-of dimensions. The end result is the ornament, whose closure is brought about by emptying all the substantial constructs of their contents.¹⁶

Just like the Berlin cinema house, the Tiller Girls' potentially liberating performance is drained of all meaning and substance, and becomes merely decorative and ornamental. These examples distinguish Kracauer's view of capitalism as a historical process that demystifies and demythologizes, invoking positive change through deconstructions of binding natural systems, allowing reason to emerge. However, for Kracauer, capitalist "reason" is actually an adulterated form of reason that can no longer affect the change that it sought at the outset.¹⁷

Of most importance to this discussion is Kracauer's distrust of the mass ornament, and mass culture as a whole, in addition to his characterization of mass culture as lacking a meaningful absolute. Both considerations reveal Kracauer's implicit understanding of mass culture as feminine, which becomes more explicit when he compares the utility of military marches to the ceaseless drills of the Tiller Girls, or in other words, masculine order against feminine futility: "the meaning of the living star formations in the stadiums is not that of military exercises. No matter how regular the latter may turn out to be, that regularity was considered a means to an end; the parade march arose out of patriotic

¹⁶ "The Mass Ornament," 77.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

feelings and in turn roused them in soldiers and subjects.”¹⁸ He continues that performances such as the Tiller Girls’ “have no meaning beyond themselves, and the masses above whom they rise are not a moral unit like a company of soldiers.”¹⁹ Despite the fact that, as Patrice Petro notes, he recognizes the construction of the female body as spectacle and commodity, Kracauer nonetheless suggests a correspondence between the untrustworthy image and the naïve spectator, for both exhibit particularly “feminine” qualities, namely, in Petro’s words, “passivity, uniformity, and uncritical consumption.”²⁰ Moreover, mass culture, as we have seen, is continually understood as having been effectively castrated of all substantial content, and by extension, as feminine. Kracauer’s emphasis on the passive aspects of mass culture as well as its lack of reason and constructive action firmly root his assessment in the modernist association of mass culture with woman.

Another critic, Hans Kropff, in his article, “Frauen als Käuferinnen” (Women as Shoppers) from 1926, characterizes advertising geared towards women, drawing on, like Kracauer, themes of distraction and passivity. He begins by stating that women purchase seventy-five percent of all products, thereby unambiguously equating women with consumerism from the outset. Kropff argues that ads for women must be as personal as possible, and he is sure to emphasize women’s penchant towards pure emotion and

¹⁸ Ibid., 77.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Patrice Petro, “Perceptions of Difference: Woman as Spectator and Spectacle,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 56. Petro’s essay considers the concept of gendered spectatorship and film theory in relation to the theories of Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer.

affection as opposed to objective reasoning. He notes that, “marketers find it very difficult to write advertisements for women. They think in terms that are too complicated, too masculine.”²¹ He not only identifies women as egotistical and superficial, who consider products only in relation to their exterior image, but argues that they also only regard ads based on their appearance, reacting particularly positively to those with pictures. Women, according to Kropff, look first and foremost at the picture, and only if it appeals to them do they read the text.²² Passivity, subjectivity, and distraction are all terms that Kropff associates with women in particular and mass culture in general.

The denigration of mass culture in conspicuously feminine terms not only occupied Weimar critics and journalists, but many artists as well, particularly those of the New Objectivity, including Otto Dix. After World War I, German artists, as with those from Britain and France, sought out new forms of visual expression that would accurately reflect the post-war *Zeitgeist*, which in Germany included pronounced cynicism and disenchantment. As such, many artists became indifferent to the emotional hedonism of Expressionism and the anti-bourgeois, anti-art project of Berlin Dada, instead consciously returning to their roots in search of a lost identity.²³ As the name suggests, the New Objectivity, although barely definable as a cohesive and homogeneous artistic movement,

²¹ Hans Kropff, “Frauen als Käuferinnen,” *Die Reklame. Zeitschrift des Verbandes deutscher Reklamefachleute* (July 1926): 649-650. Translation: “Women as Shoppers,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 660.

²² *Ibid.*, 661.

²³ Matthias Eberle, “Neue Sachlichkeit in Germany: A Brief History,” in *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, ed. Sabine Rewald (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 21 and 36.

aimed to reflect a sober, cool, and dispassionate vision of inter-war Germany back to its members.²⁴ The shift towards emotional detachment, so-called objective vision, and the re-emergence of the myth of male artist as creator ultimately gender the New Objectivity as explicitly and exclusively masculine.²⁵ Indeed, the New Objectivity seems to exemplify Georg Simmel's assertion that "our objective culture is thoroughly male. It is men who have created art and industry, science and commerce, the state and religion."²⁶ Yet there is one area for which male, objective culture and the New Objectivity, at least in the movement's visual artistic production, claim no responsibility, namely, the realm of mass cultural forms.

Although Richard McCormick argues that the New Objectivity held "an optimistic attitude toward mass culture," I would argue that the movement's visual artistic production largely demonstrates an effort to distance itself if not reject wholesale the products of consumer culture and the mindless consumption and passivity with which it is associated.²⁷ Dix's 1922 work, *To Beauty* (fig.34), demonstrates the artist's

²⁴ Sergiusz Michalski, *New Objectivity: Painting in Germany in the 1920s* (Cologne: Taschen, 1994), 23.

²⁵ Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and 'New Objectivity'* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 47.

²⁶ Georg Simmel, *On Women, Sexuality, and Love*, ed. and trans. Guy Oakes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 67.

²⁷ McCormick, 45-46. He writes: "The commitment to produce a functional, political art can be seen as reflecting hopes that a truly democratic public sphere was emerging and that its formation could be assisted and influenced by artists and intellectuals" (45). Further, Peukert writes how many figures associated with the New Objectivity "were keen to take up the challenge offered by mass culture and the mass media and to develop forms of expression appropriate to them" (166), but only briefly considers the effects of modern life in general on painting, not mass culture in particular. It seems that McCormick and Peukert mistake the return to a more realistic and "objective" mode of

association with mass culture, particularly Americanism, as a means, ultimately, to distinguish himself from the very realm of the “low.” The artist depicts himself at the centre of the composition, in command of the space with his concentrated, serious gaze and rigid stance. Dix appears in contrast to the languor with which he characterizes the effeminate male and androgynous New Woman at the left, the empty stares of the mannequins in the foreground and background, and the “primitivism” suggested by the exaggerated stereotype of the African-American jazz player. Moreover, decorative Corinthian columns, traditionally viewed as feminine, tower above the artist, creating a marked distinction between strait-laced order and ornament. Dix, an enthusiast of social dancing and American jazz, nonetheless aims to bring rationality and order to the conventionally female realm of dance in *To Beauty*.²⁸ He depicts himself as the New Man, whose normative masculinity embodies such traits as self-control and order.²⁹ I would add that one other compositional element further enforces Dix’s separation from the mass cultural realm. In reference to the spirit of reportage that characterized the New Objectivity, Dix holds a phone, a prop that the artist likely included in order to mark

representation on the part of many male artists of the New Objectivity as a form of democratization of their art forms; their work is positioned as more accessible than abstract forms of high art by which they were preceded. I would argue that many of these artists, by returning to techniques of the Old German masters, and by positioning themselves as sober observers of their time, in fact stress their creative roles as outside and above the realm of mass culture. Moreover, most of these artists did not abandon their Dadaist roots in that if they invoked mass culture and technology in their works, it served in the main as a criticism of bourgeois values.

²⁸ Susan Laikan Funkenstein, “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World: Otto Dix, Social Dancing, and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany,” in *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture 21*, eds. Helga W. Kraft and Marjorie Gelus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 169.

²⁹ Ibid.

himself as a reporter of sorts, rendering both objects and events from a neutral standpoint.³⁰ The image offsets the decadence and passivity of mass culture, depicted here in the dance hall as explicitly feminine, with the rationality and restraint of “sachlich” masculinity, which Dix’s self-portrait so decidedly personifies.

Dix’s champions also appear to position the artist as an objective and rational observer in many of their writings. The catalogue for the 1926 Dix exhibition held in Berlin at the Neumann-Nierendorf Gallery provides an introductory text by the art historian and critic Paul Ferdinand Schmidt. He positions Dix as “the representative painter of present-day Germany – perhaps of present-day Europe,” who “saw through his time and depicts it objectively, ingenuously, with the utmost sincerity of a child.”³¹ Carl Einstein similarly characterized Dix as a “forth-right, self-trained observer” who “sets

³⁰ Michalski advances this interpretation when he states that the telephone “indicates that he [Dix] sees himself as a reporter, communicating facts, completely devoted to the objects and events of reality” (54). Rewald situates Dix’s holding of the telephone in the Weimar inflationary period: “He clutches a telephone of the most recent model, which either identifies him as the tough manager of his enterprise or suggests that he is ready to conduct business any place and any time during the period of escalating inflation in which the picture was painted” (48). I believe this gesture relates more particularly to the genre and term “reportage,” which became popular at this time in Germany through the writing of journalist Egon Erwin Kisch of the newspaper *Der rasende Reporter*. He stated: “Nothing is more imaginative than matter-of-factness.” See John Willett, *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety 1917-1933* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 107.

³¹ Paul Ferdinand Schmidt, “Otto Dix,” in *Ausstellung Otto Dix: Katalog mit Verzeichnis der Gesamten Graphik bis 1925*, exh. cat. Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf, Berlin (Berlin: Das Kunstarchiv Verlag, 1926), 5. “Darum ist Otto Dix ohne Zweifel der repräsentative Maler des heutigen Deutschland – vielleicht des heutigen Europa. Nicht nur ein Künstler ersten Ranges, sondern ein Genie, das heißt, ein Mensch, der seine Zeit durchschaut hat und sie objektiv, unbefangen, mit der vollkommen Aufrichtigkeit eines Kindes darstellt.”

craft and objectivity against sham and a sordid sensibility.”³² Einstein continues: “The bourgeois gets kitsch back from him in sharp focus; he can do it because he paints very well, so well that his painting aborts kitsch, executes it.”³³ Einstein thus positions Dix’s work in opposition to kitsch, a product of mass culture and variously associated with the feminine, in order to clearly mark the artist as a producer of objective high art.

Self-Portrait with Muse (fig.35) further signifies Dix’s attempt to quarantine himself from the threatening potential of the feminine, which might also be understood as a decisive separation of the male artist’s work of high art from the intrusion of allegedly feminine mass culture. Huyssens has noted that, “the nightmare of being devoured by mass culture through co-option, commodification, and the ‘wrong’ kind of success is the constant fear of the modernist artist,” who, as Dix appears to do in both *Self-Portrait with Muse* as well as *To Beauty*, “tries to stake out his territory by fortifying the boundaries between genuine art and inauthentic mass culture.”³⁴ In both self-portraits, Dix appears in marked contrast to his surroundings and to the other figures, for he positions himself as the genuine and orderly masculine foil whose resistance to the temptations of mass culture solidifies the masculine/feminine, high/low, active/passive binaries that many New Objectivity works communicate in visual form.

Despite this concentrated abstention from mass culture, and, by extension, the feminine, Dix nonetheless deploys the same essentialist notions of femininity that select

³² Carl Einstein, “Otto Dix,” *Das Kunstblatt* 7, no.3 (March 1923): 97-102. Translation: “Otto Dix,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 491.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Huyssens, 53.

Weimar advertisements enthusiastically promoted in tandem with their respective products. Underneath the veneer of Dix's artistic elitism is, I would argue, a profound link with the methods and ideology of the so-called low mass cultural sphere of advertising. I would like to reiterate that mass culture is not a distinct and isolated realm, as so many modernists have held, but is inextricably linked to its high art counterpart, with one constantly defining and shaping the other. Despite attempts to conceal the fact, mass culture, like high culture, is always occupied and controlled by those with power, namely, the white, bourgeois, heterosexual male.³⁵ Huysens' assertion that, "modernism, even in its most adversary, anti-bourgeois manifestations, is deeply implicated in the processes and pressures of the same mundane modernization that it so ostensibly repudiates,"³⁶ necessitates a consideration of the methods that select Weimar advertisements and New Objectivity portraits have in common.

While there are indeed obvious aesthetic and functional differences between Weimar advertisements and painted portraits, both reflect a tendency to fetishize female body parts and to naturalize the ideal feminine form. By so doing, both implicitly identify a subversive female outsider who, by not ascribing to these ideals, is positioned as a social and sexual outcast or deviant. Before I proceed to analyse these images, I would like to discuss the possibility that the sexual fetish assumed an unprecedented and profound role in post-war Germany.

³⁵ Vibeke Rützou Petersen, *Women and Modernity in Weimar Germany: Reality and its Representation in Popular Fiction* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 9.

³⁶ Huysens, 56.

Several scholars have made note of the male crisis – of cultural authority, of power and control, of subjectivity – that men experienced after an embarrassing military defeat and the return to the home front, and which is often reflected in specific literary works of the period.³⁷ The loss of social power is, in the main, conflated with a loss of sexual potency, which has led cultural historian Richard W. McCormick to regard these male anxieties of Weimar culture as a “discourse of castration.”³⁸ McCormick discusses how sentiments of emasculation and feminization were often expressed in relation to the emancipated, employed, and often androgynous woman, in other words, the New Woman.³⁹ Yet McCormick downplays the effects of physical dismemberment on the male psyche when he asserts: “But such fears of a figural ‘castration’ had little connection to the danger of *actual dismemberment* modern soldiers face in war.”⁴⁰ I would argue, on the contrary, that the violent mutilation of male body parts during the war, and the ubiquitous presence of disfigured war veterans in its aftermath, are deeply implicated into the Weimar male crisis, damaging male subjectivity while at the same time instigating a deeper fear of castration into the male psyche.

³⁷ Dorothy Rowe addresses how pre-war concerns over prostitution and women’s suffrage movements were magnified as women entered the workforce in increased numbers during and after the war. See Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 130. Richard W. McCormick also addresses this challenge to male sexual power as well as economic and political power, 20-21. On a larger scale, Maria Tatar discusses the widespread Weimar cultural interest in Lustmord as an effect of male anxiety. See *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

³⁸ McCormick, 21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

Literature and film, as McCormick discusses, were not the only cultural mediums that partook in the “discourse of castration.” An advertisement for Javal shampoo from 1926 (fig.36) depicts a woman in profile, her eyes downcast and in shadow, whose long, flowing, and shiny hair is cut away in one fell swoop by a giant pair of scissors. It seems as though it is not merely her hair that is being chopped off, but her whole head, indicated by the strategic placement of the scissors at the nape of her neck. Indeed, two symbolic acts of castration occur in the advertisement: decapitation and the cutting of the woman’s hair. Most interesting is this long snake-like hair, which is depicted as a phallic substitute. Here, the origin of the Freudian fetish is symbolically re-enacted: the maternal penis, or hair, is severed, creating a permanent site of lack in the form of a *Bubikopf*. In other words, the fetish, “the characteristic which makes them [women] tolerable sexual objects,” and which alleviated the fear of castration, is itself castrated from the Javal woman.⁴¹ The advertisement exposes how the disappearance of long hair, a conventional symbol of femininity and subsequent fetish, is implicated in the anxiety of castration and general male crisis. Indeed, traditionally female body parts and fashions, such as hair, corsets, and bras, are optimal fetish objects, permitting the male to define his masculine identity in opposition to these socially constructed markers of femininity, which also, most importantly, keep that masculinity in tact by assuaging fears of castration. The corset, for example, forces the body “into a single, rigid whole, with an emphasis on

⁴¹ Valerie Steele, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15.

texture, stiffness...and binding,” becoming “suggestive of erection.”⁴² Once these viable fetish objects of ideal femininity disappear with the advent androgynous fashions, the advertiser and artist must compensate for this loss, it seems, by finding new sites upon which to project male fetishistic desire.

One area where the fetish resurfaces in the absence of traditional fetishes is the hand. Now, some would argue that the hand has always, to a certain degree, acted as a sexual fetish, but it seems that the 1920s ushered in a degree of tolerance for bare as well as gloved hands, both of which figure prominently in several advertisements. The exposure of the hand is a particularly significant development, as it created a necessity for the health and overall attractiveness of hands and nails, which many advertisements positioned as a social necessity not to be overlooked.⁴³ An advertisement for Pixavon shampoo (fig.37) targeting the married New Woman reveals that this “social necessity” was in fact the obligation of satisfying male tastes, emphasizing that men are particularly partial to well-maintained women. Women, according to the ad, “know what care means,

⁴² Laura Mulvey, “Fears, Fantasies and the Male Unconscious or ‘You Don’t Know What is Happening, Do You, Mr Jones?’” in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 [first published 1989]), 10.

⁴³ A 1929 advertisement for Cutex outlines the three steps of proper hand and nail care, noting how “the hands, with well-kept finger nails, and their most expressive traits will become increasingly attractive. Nail care is so easy now, and no one will neglect this important part of the toilette. Well-kept nails are a social necessity.” “Mit gutgepflegten Fingernägeln werden die Hände, Ihre ausdrucksvollsten Züge, immer anziehend sein. Jetzt, wo die Nagelpflege so einfach ist, wird niemand diesen wichtigen Teil der Toilette unterlassen. Gutgepflegte Nägel sind eine gesellschaftliche Notwendigkeit.” From *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 7, 17 February 1929, 259.

and how it bears male affinities.”⁴⁴ The ad clearly delineates the ideal modern woman as “younger and more beautiful than ever. Her complexion is immaculate, her hands are dainty, her breath is fresh, her hair has the shimmering shine that constant care with Pixavon provides.”⁴⁵ Healthy, smooth hands, preferably with long fingers and carefully manicured nails, become markers of femininity.

Some advertisements, moreover, depict fingers and hands that are stretched and rigid. The femininity associated with healthy, dainty hands, combined with their positioning in erect positions, mark them as ideal fetish objects. Two advertisements for Vogue perfume from 1926 (figs. 38 and 39) mark out the hand as a substitute which “inherits the interest which was formerly directed to its predecessor,” the maternal phallus.⁴⁶ In both cases, the woman’s left hand demands the viewer’s attention through its bold upward gesture and long sprawling fingers. Moreover, the left hand contrasts with the darker textile against which it is set, a positioning which not only further draws the viewer’s attention to the hand, but ultimately isolates it from the rest of the woman’s clothed body, an essential convention of many fetishist images. Both women are shrouded in drapery that conceal the origin of these fetishized hands, and although they seem confident in their sensuality, their importance lies above all else in their phallic

⁴⁴ “Die Frau als Gattin” (“Woman as Wife”), *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 39, 29 September 1929, 1541. “Sie wissen, was Pflege bedeutet, wie sie die Neigung des Mannes wachhält.”

⁴⁵ Ibid. “Dies ist das Merkmal der Frau unserer Tage: trotz häuslicher Arbeit ist sie gepflegt, jünger und schöner denn je. Ihr Teint ist rein, ihre Hände sind zart, ihr Atem ist Frisch, ihre Haare haben den schimmernden Glanz, den ständige Pflege mit Pixavon verleiht.”

⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud, “Fetishism,” (1927) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21 (London: Hogarth Press, 1967), 154.

lack, thereby making them docile objects upon which the male fear of castration is projected.⁴⁷

In spite of Dix's efforts to separate his work from low cultural production, he nonetheless demonstrates some of the same conventions used in these *Vogue* advertisements in a depiction of his wife, Martha Dix (fig.40). The portrait is not, of course, trying to sell a product like perfume, but Dix does stress ideal feminine traits while concurrently fetishizing the hands. Martha's skin appears flawlessly white, her make-up meticulously applied, and her expressionless doll-like face makes her seem calm and unthreatening. Also, her exposed right hand appears a healthy flesh tone, and her nails are manicured. Most interesting, however, is the way in which Martha, like the two women in the *Vogue* advertisements, is adorned with a massive amount of fabric that conceals the body to which her hands are attached. Here, however, an even greater contrast is achieved between the black coat and white glove that Martha wears. As with the *Vogue* advertisements, it is the left hand that grabs the viewer's attention by way of both the contrast between it and the fashion textile, as well as the erect, active position that the hand assumes. Female hands, as they figure in ads and in this portrait by Dix, function as fetish objects that mark female difference or lack and assuage the fear of castration. As such, they consolidate the male viewer's masculine identity and the polarized gender binary in turn.

Another body part that provides optimal fetishistic territory is the leg, particularly the calf. For the first time in the history of fashion, female calves came into view, a development that certainly did not sit well with everyone. One need only look so far as

⁴⁷ Mulvey, 11.

Hannah Höch's work *Marlene* (fig.41) to comprehend how a fascination with female legs entered into popular imagination, resonating specifically with male heterosexuals and lesbians.⁴⁸ Sabine Hake has noted how a common subject of discourse in fashion journals focused on women's legs, which, she argues, "betrayed a fetishistic interest in the female body" that unquestionably invoked the notion of lack and the denial of female castration.⁴⁹ Advertisements for stockings use several conventions that fetishize female legs, many of which are similar to those employed by the Vogue perfume ads.

Two advertisements for Glanzstoff's "Celta" stockings from 1929 depict a giant pair of female calves, one with legs crossed, while the other shows a pair crossed at the ankles (figs. 42 and 43). The mere size of these legs in relation to other aspects of the ad, such as the department store and outdoor settings below, signify their power as male fetishes and the stockings by which they are adorned as female wardrobe necessities. As with depictions of hands, these calves have a life of their own, and immediately attract the viewer's attention by way of their being set against a light background. Here, however, there is in fact no body to which the legs are attached, heightening their function as desirable fetish objects. Moreover, these legs are "made firm, uniform, and tense by a stocking," achieving a stiffness similar to that induced by the corset.⁵⁰ Stockinged legs also make ideal fetishes due to their shiny texture, a definitive

⁴⁸ It is not my intention to advance a heteronormative argument with regard to fetishism. While I do not disregard that these advertisements may have appealed to a wider lesbian audience, a consideration of lesbian fetishistic desire is beyond the scope of this project.

⁴⁹ Sabine Hake, "In the Mirror of Fashion," in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, 197.

⁵⁰ Terence Sellers quoted in Steele, 132.

characteristic of many fetish objects. In some senses, this relates to Freud's observation of one patient's nose fetish, specifically the shine on the nose (*der Glanz auf der Nase*).⁵¹ As Mulvey states, "the fetish very often attracts the gaze. In popular imagination, it glitters. It has to hold the fetishist's eyes fixed on the seduction of belief to guard against the encroachment of knowledge."⁵² Indeed, these legs remain firmly shut so as to prevent any re-enactment of the traumatic discovery, and subsequent disavowal, of the maternal penis, instead distracting the viewer with their gossamer shine.

Otto Dix's *Three Prostitutes in the Street* (fig.44) and *Big City Triptych* (fig.45) further indicate how Dix's allegedly high art production is nevertheless bound to the same conventions employed by "feminine" mass cultural forms. Moreover, these works reveal the fetishization of stockinged legs as a symptom not only of unprecedented developments in fashion, but of male physical incapacity and dismemberment. In *Three Women of the Street*, Dix depicts three prostitutes in front of a shop window, as if they are in fact the commodities for sale.⁵³ Of most interest to this chapter, however, is the stockinged high-heeled leg that tramples on the globe in that shop window. The leg, isolated and cut off from the whole, achieves a similar visual effect to the "Celta" stocking ads. According to Linda Nochlin, the cut-off leg functions as a synecdoche for the woman's availability and passivity, the source of her sexual attractiveness for the

⁵¹ Emily Apter mentions this connection between the shine of various fetishes, namely hair, and Freud's mention of this patient's case in "Fetishism," 152. See Apter, *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 108.

⁵² Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 6.

⁵³ Rowe, 161.

male spectator.⁵⁴ For Dix, however, it has an additional function of neutralizing the threat that countless Weimar artists and writers associated with the urban prostitute by way of their association with decadent effeminacy and engulfing sexuality. Many perceived Berlin in particular as teeming with prostitutes. The city itself was described as a prostitute, or more generally, as “a highly desirable but voracious and devouring female.”⁵⁵ Hovering directly above the three women, this fetishized leg acts as a foil to the prostitutes’ alleged threat to masculine order and identity.

Dix’s *Big City Triptych* seems to stage the attempt to overcome this anxiety to an even greater degree. The triptych establishes a connection between the wounded war veteran and female legs, both of which figure prominently in the left and right panels. While the link between these two forms may be indicative of Dix’s own hostility towards women as a war veteran himself, he nonetheless makes a clear connection between the symbolically castrated war veterans and the prostitutes’ fetishized calves. Rowe notes how Dix’s many war veterans “are shown to be physically, emotionally and sexually impotent. The absence of their legs can be read as being equivalent to the absence of their sexual power.”⁵⁶ The left panel shows a prostitute snubbing a war veteran whose prosthetic legs and crutch immobilize him. In the right panel, Dix further links the dismembered veteran and his amputated legs with the very origin of the fetish; Dix situates him by the confrontational foreground prostitute, whose coat is reminiscent of the

⁵⁴ Linda Nochlin, “Manet’s *Masked Ball at the Opera*,” in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 89.

⁵⁵ Rowe, 139.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

traumatic site of lack, the female genitalia. As a means to neutralize this fear of castration, however, Dix strategically places numerous female calves throughout the triptych.⁵⁷ The foremost prostitute in the left panel boldly exposes the back of her calf; the woman of the Charleston-dancing couple in the central panel, as well as the androgynous woman crossing the dance floor, flaunt their firm and finely toned calves; and in the right panel, Dix places the fetishized leg of the foreground prostitute in direct proximity to the site of the war veteran's dismemberment. In both *Big City Triptych* and *Three Prostitutes in the Street*, the fetishized leg solidifies male sexual identity in opposition to female lack, while at the same time allowing both the artist and male viewer to reclaim control over the anxiety of castration.

One cannot, of course, lose sight of the fact that men were not the sole viewers of these advertisements and perhaps also of the works by Otto Dix just discussed. The ads were intended for, and directed at, a female audience. Regardless of Dix's attempt to maintain a distance from mass culture, his female viewers, bombarded with such advertisements, were likely quick to note the visual similarities between the two forms. Given that these ads fetishize female body parts in service of the male viewer's desire and castration anxiety, how did they simultaneously appeal to women? Although not blatant, the *Vogue* and *Glanzstoff* ads employ a very new and effective advertising convention that could only have been realized with the development of first-wave feminism.

⁵⁷ Eva Karcher briefly addresses how the fetish, in the form of legs and clothing worn by the prostitutes, is used here to replace the deformed male body. She does not, however, make a clear connection between the ubiquity of the legs and dismemberment. See Karcher, *Eros und Tod im Werk von Otto Dix: Studien zur Geschichte des Körpers in den 20er Jahren* (Münster: Lit, 1984), 74.

Several advertising companies in the 1920s, as one scholar has observed, in no way ignored feminist rhetoric, but appropriated it for their own advantage: “Advertising collapsed the emphasis on women’s range and choice to individual consumerism.... Establishing new formalism, these adaptations disarmed feminism’s challenges in the guise of enacting them.”⁵⁸ Most of the ads discussed draw on contemporary feminist principles by offering the female consumer a sense of liberation and independence through the purchase and subsequent use of their product; by depicting the female form or parts of that form on a monumental scale, a woman might indeed feel that her choice of stocking or perfume can grant her access to a new and exciting lifestyle. An ad for Bemberg stockings (fig.46), however, is perhaps most demonstrative of this appropriation and subsequent disarming of feminist interests. The ad depicts the New Woman in all her activities: she works as a dental assistant, picnics with a friend, dances with a male companion, plays tennis, types at a desk, pushes a baby carriage, and does Tiller Girl-esque high-kicks. In short, the modern woman who wears Bemberg stockings, one is made to believe, has it all, namely, a job, a man, children, and leisure time. The real visual focus of the ad, however, lies not in the wide range of activities that the New Woman can accomplish in the day, but rather, quite simply, on her legs. They are shown straight, extended, slightly spread, bent and kicking, and in all cases, are disproportionately long and finely formed. On the surface, the advertisement appears to engage with feminist discourse surrounding women’s access to, and movement in, every sphere. It is clear, however, that the ad merely borrows and in turn neutralizes this discussion to satisfy the male fetishistic longing for legs, here shown in a plethora of

⁵⁸ Cott, 174.

poses. All of these advertisements in fact *demobilize* issues of women's emancipation and equal access through fetishized body parts, creating a deceptively liberating set of ideal standards of beauty to which many women, paradoxically, were more than willing to submit. Whether through hands or legs, the ads consolidate the gender binary and patriarchal structures, and thereby appease an already vitiated male sexual identity. In the process, they create a less intimidating and more palatable version of the New Woman in service of male desire.

Even a brief look at these advertisements reveals the extent to which they both depict and promote an ideal, essentially less threatening, vision of the New Woman. Not only do they advance notions of ideal femininity – such as pale, clear skin, well-maintained hands, and shiny, well-formed calves – they naturally, as is the case even with present-day advertisements, place enormous pressure on the female consumer to conform to these ideals, eradicating any possibility for individual self-fashioning. An advertisement for Mixa-Creme (fig.47) demonstrates the negative consequences of such non-conformity to the female viewer. The title, comprised of bold and capitalized letters, asks, “Warum wird sie niemals eingeladen?” (Why is she never invited?), to which the ad answers:

She is pretty, but she has red arms, an ugly complexion, and that does not please men. Up to now it was unfortunately impossible to do away with this disturbing error in beauty from which so many women suffer...A new and very wonderful invention, Mixa now enables every woman to create for herself a fresh and dainty complexion, including the arms and neck, with a single application for the entire day.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ “Warum wird sie niemals eingeladen?” (Why is she never invited?), *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 32, 8 August 1926, 1011. “Sie ist hübsch, aber sie hat rote Arme, eine hässlichen Teint, und das gefällt den Herren nicht. Bisher war es leider unmöglich, diesen

Without purchasing and using Mixa-Creme, one is informed, the lonely young woman in the ad will remain undesirable and rejected by men. However, the other young woman in the background, who has presumably perfected and beautified her skin with Mixa-Creme, catches her man, and is subsequently in the realm of acceptable, indeed desirable, feminine beauty. While emphasizing the necessity of beautiful hands, nails, and legs, all of these ads, not only that for Mixa-Creme, simultaneously fashion the threatening and undesirable outsider in the male and female viewers' imaginations.

This female outcast, who fails to constrain her body so as to properly reify sexual fetishes, would likely induce negative results for product sales if brought into full vision in any one of these advertisements. Fortunately for Dix, whose popularity as a portrait artist was based in part on his ability to capture “the disgusting, the repulsive, the socially ugly, the flawed, the sexually perverse,”⁶⁰ depicting this female outcast was in no way off limits. Dix did indeed form a vision of this figure in his depiction of Sylvia von Harden. The biological features upon which Dix places the most emphasis, namely, the huge hands, the green-tinge of the fingers and exposed leg, and the knobby knee, mark her as one who has attempted, but has ultimately failed to comply with the ideal standards of feminine beauty of which those advertisements were strident proponents. Von Harden's

störenden Schönheitsfehler zu beseitigen, an dem so viele Damen leiden...Eine wunderbare und ganz neue Erfindung, MIXA ermöglicht es von jetzt an jeder Dame, mit einer einzigen Anwendung für einen ganzen Tag sich einen frischen und zarten Teint zu schaffen, ebenso weiße Arme und Nacken.”

⁶⁰ Johann-Karl Schmidt, “Ein Künstlertum in der Sprache des Volkes,” *Otto Dix*, exh. cat. Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart, 25 May – 7 July, 1999 (Stuttgart: Hatje Kantz, 1999), 18. “Niemals vor Otto Dix ist in der Malerei das Ekelhafte, das Widerwärtige, das sozial Hässliche, das Verunstaltete, sexuell Perverse, kurz, das Tödliche der politischen und kulturellen Praxis so glaubwürdig und zugleich in versöhnlicher Selbstverständlichkeit dargestellt worden.”

fingers and nails are depicted not as dainty and manicured, as are those of his wife in *Portrait of Martha Dix*. Rather, they are yellowed from her smoking habit, and while her fingers are long like those fetishized in advertisements, their bony and spindly forms, in conjunction with the overall large size of the hands, effectively situate them far outside the realm of ideal femininity. Moreover, the calves, which jut uncomfortably out into the viewer's space, appear lumpy and veiny, in opposition to the finely toned legs of the Bemberg girl and the leg in the shop window of Dix's *Three Prostitutes in the Street*.

I would argue that Dix's portrait displays "failed fetishes," namely, body parts that are positioned as fetishes in seeming isolation from the body, but whose inability to subscribe to the requirements of the specific fetishistic desire renders them disagreeable to the male viewer. As a result of von Harden's lack of fixed feminine fetishized body parts, she threatens the male sense of control and sexual identity seemingly consolidated through the other images and advertisements discussed. *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden* thus explicitly renders the male anxiety surrounding the New Woman that Dix and many advertisers sought to pacify: new male fetishes are retrievable with the shortening of skirts and the increased emphasis on hands; however, once these body parts are subsumed into an androgynous if not masculine overall appearance, as so often with the New Woman, structures of male power and authority are called into question. Ultimately absent in this repositioning of the male fetishistic gaze is any sense of female agency and self-determination.

Berlin in the 1920s was known as the "Mediumzentrum" or the media hub, as it was the home of some of the nation's major publishing companies, namely Ullstein House, Mosse, and Scherl Publishing. It was Ullstein, however, that produced the widest

range and largest number of illustrated magazines and newspapers, from the liberal and weekly *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*, from which the advertisements just discussed are drawn, to *Die Dame*, a fashion magazine targeted at young urban women. I will now focus this discussion on the role of the female fashion illustrator in Weimar culture and modernity by considering the fashion drawings of two major illustrators for *Die Dame*, Petra Fiedler, Gerda Bunzel, as well as one drawing by Helen Ernst.

Before I look at fashion drawings themselves, it is necessary to define their function within the Weimar popular press. One could argue that fashion illustration effectively reveals the inextricable association of low mass culture and high artistic visual production. The drawings functioned as advertisements for various designers of *Konfektion*, or ready-made fashion designs that gained increasing popularity after the war, and were featured in various print outlets. However, the illustrators, primarily women, were usually not contractually obligated to any one publisher and were, ultimately, independent artists with substantial training. The Reimann School in Berlin was notable for its education of fashion illustrators, and compiled an extensive list of the skills required for the profession in one of its advertisements, which included, among many other things, “elementary drawing, perspective, colour theory, anatomy: preferably a knowledge of dressmaking as well, measuring, fit, sectional drawing. Thereupon: drawing from a living model, nude and costume.”⁶¹ Above technical training, the fashion

⁶¹ Adelheid Rasche, “Modezeichnungen als Zeitbilder der Mode,” *Pailleten, Posen, Puderdosen: Modezeichnungen und Objekte der Zwanziger Jahre*, exh. cat. Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 7 May – 9 August 2009 (Berlin: Nicolai Verlag, 2009), 13. “Elementares Zeichnen, Perspektive, Farbenlehre, Anatomie: dazu möglichst Kenntnisse in der Schneiderei, im Maßnehmen, Anprobieren, Schnittzeichnen. Alsdann: Zeichnen nach dem lebenden Modell, Akt und Kostüme.”

illustrator must have a particularly hard-working and intuitive nature according to fashion journalist Ola Alsen: “This art is not quite as simple as the impression gives. It puts extraordinarily large demands on those who turn to it: diligence, a sense for topicality, understanding of life, and above all for humans and their movements.”⁶² Moreover, many illustrators seem to have composed their fashion drawings according to modern artistic styles, such as Cubism, the New Objectivity, and Art Deco.⁶³ Despite their obvious unity of the otherwise separated spheres of mass and high cultures, fashion drawings were, for the most part, relegated to the non-intellectual sphere of the mass press. Ullstein House, in spite of boasting its considerable number of female employees, nonetheless consolidated a distinction between high and low intellectual pursuits, viewing fashion illustration as a less serious form of artistic endeavour.⁶⁴ From the viewpoints of the fashion illustrator and her viewing public, however, these drawings facilitate female agency by expressing an individual experience of modernity.

The illustrated fashion press appears to be one area of Weimar mass culture that is immune to the “discourse of castration.” The most palpable way in which these fashion illustrations distance themselves from some advertisements’ framing of the female body involves the focus of both the male and female gaze on surface fashion, not on the biological body. Of course, one of the purposes of the fashion illustration involves

⁶² Ola Alsen quoted in *ibid.*, 10. “Ganz so einfach, wie es den Eindruck macht, ist diese Kunst jedoch nicht. Sie stellt an diejenigen, die sich ihr zuwenden, außerordentlich große Anforderungen, Fleiß, Sinn für Aktualität, Verständnis für das Leben und vor allem für die Menschen und ihre Bewegungen.”

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

⁶⁴ Mila Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion: Discourses and Displays in German Culture, 1918-1933* (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 55.

marketing the clothing itself, unlike advertisements that tend to focus on how the product will enhance the female body. Even beyond consideration of this intention, however, one sees a recurrent motif among many fashion illustrations that involves not simply a downplay but, in some cases, the disappearance of body parts that might otherwise become the objects of male fetishistic desire. In illustrations by Fiedler and Bunzel, the clothing items expose very few body parts, and, moreover, the female form is flattened and largely shapeless save for a few slight curves on some models. The only body parts that are uncovered, the hands and calves, draw the least attention from the viewer.

Both Fiedler and Bunzel render the legs of their female models as if they are mere afterthoughts that play only a minor role in the representation of their fashions through illustrated form. Unlike the Bemberg Seide ad, in which disproportionately long legs assumed a variety of positions, the fashion illustrator in the main renders her dresses slightly longer than in most advertisements. In consequence, calves appear disproportionately *shorter* to the rest of the models' elongated forms. Not only are the legs downplayed in size, but in the extent of their motion. Fiedler and Bunzel employ stock poses for the legs, which are either tightly together, hip width apart and often at an angle, or crossed at the ankles. In some cases, calves are fragmented or disappear altogether behind furniture or other figures. One of Fiedler's illustrations, *Travel Attire* (fig.48), shows six women at a train station, only three of whose legs are entirely visible. While the calves of the two women in the upper right portion of the image are partially concealed by the seated model, those of the woman in the far left disappear almost entirely behind the baggage attendant. Similarly, Bunzel hinders any lucid vision of one of her figures' pairs of legs in *Summer Afternoon Attire* (fig.49). Here, the calves of the

central model staring directly out at the viewer are almost entirely obscured from vision. Where legs were once the defining feature of some advertisements, they become commonplace, even inessential components of these fashion illustrations.

As I discussed earlier, hands are another body part frequently positioned as a fetish object in several Weimar advertisements. Just as calves were minimized and often hidden by Fiedler and Bunzel, so too do hands figure only minimally in their fashion illustrations. While the hands of the models in Fiedler's illustration, entitled, *Spring Attire* (fig.50), are in plain sight, they nonetheless divert the viewer's attention to the objects that they hold. Every one of the five figures has an object in her possession, namely, a book, a cane, a camera, or an umbrella. Interestingly, the books held by the figures on the far right and left are coloured red, further attracting the viewer's attention to the intellectuality of the New Woman, while diverting it from the hands by which they are held. Bunzel's *Winter Sport Attire* (fig.51) best illustrates the disappearance of hands from the viewer's gaze. Each model in some way conceals her hands, whether behind her own body or within the clothing itself that she dons. Most captivating is the second model from the left, whose right hand is tucked away in the pocket of her breeches, while her coat drapes her entire left forearm and hand. These drawings reflect a wider opinion among many women in the Weimar fashion press industry that contemporary fashions signify women's freedom and ability to look at their own bodies as physical and tangible forms, not as symbolic objects.⁶⁵ By denying any possibility for fetishization, these fashion illustrations present the possibility for the artist and the viewer in turn to reclaim their individual bodies from the universalizing and regulatory intents of the male gaze.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 69.

Fiedler's and Bunzel's illustrations communicate female agency over the body as well as over explorations with masculine fashions. They depict their female figures as androgynous and often masculine, but not masculinized. I would like to differentiate between these two terms, masculine and masculinized, which appear so often in both primary and secondary discourses on the New Woman. Most Weimar critics perceive the New Woman as thoroughly and inexorably masculinized; in other words, the threatening process of masculinization has occurred and its finished outcome is irreversible. The terms masculine as well as feminine relate, on the other hand, to concepts of flexibility and activity in the way of gender identity. I would argue that the New Woman was in reality experimenting with masculine appearances, but this act was never understood as a permanent transformation. For while these fashion illustrations certainly do not emphasize and celebrate femininity, as did so many advertisements, they do not eradicate it wholesale. Instead, they often play with combinations of these two versatile terms, masculine and feminine.

Even in illustrations that present what might at first appear as "masculinized women," against which the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* article mentioned in the introduction adamantly protested, a wide range of fashions are presented, some of which are more masculine than others. Bunzel's *Winter Sport Attire*, for example, depicts conventionally masculine fashions, such as the streamlined sport coats and breeches. Particularly, the coat worn by the third model from the left gives no indication of the female body underneath. Yet Bunzel includes a more feminine variation of sporty attire. Most interesting, in my opinion, is the model on the far left who coyly pulls away her bulky coat to reveal a formfitting garment that suggests the contours of the female body,

and which also appears to be worn by the model on her left, in addition to conventionally masculine breeches. This model plays with both masculine and more feminine fashions concurrently, confounding any definitive assumptions of her gender identity. Bunzel showcases these models' different fashions side-by-side, not in separate drawings, suggesting that these garments can be combined to create more feminine or masculine outfits, and are in no way fixed to the ensembles in which they appear. As a whole, the illustration signifies the possibilities open to women in the realm of fashion, presenting a range of androgynous attire, some of a more masculine and others of a more feminine bent. Hence, any suggestion that these models are essentially masculinized simply cannot stand up to this presentation of androgynous fashions as variable, not fixed.

A more literal representation of androgyny, and the variability of its expression through fashion, is Helen Ernst's *Androgynous-Feminine Clothing* (fig.52) from 1928. A basic representation of the New Woman is vertically split in two, but the two parts nonetheless remain unified. Her left half is clothed with a more masculine form of androgynous attire that pairs a formal tuxedo with a patterned skirt. The other half displays a more feminine, but to a certain degree still androgynous outfit, which consists of a dress with a ruffled skirt and shapeless bodice. Here, the use of one model demonstrates the versatility of modern fashions themselves as well as the constant flux of women's engagement with fashion. Ernst, although she does not depict her fashions on several models in one illustration like Fiedler and Bunzel, still communicates that these styles are never permanent, but always variable according to the individuals by whom they are worn.

Many critics were of the opinion that fashion drawings depicted the New Woman as too austere, masculine, and threatening in her outward appearance. While some fashion illustrators did perpetuate this misconception of the New Woman, such as Ernst Dryden's row of uniform and distanced models (fig.53), the fashion illustrations that I have discussed refute this understanding. By emphasizing modern fashion's impermanence and unpredictability, in opposition to traditional costume's stability and permanence, these drawings give "concrete form to women's individuality and their desire for personal metamorphosis."⁶⁶ Indeed, they bring the fashion illustrator's individual observations and personal experience of Weimar fashions and modern life as a whole into visual expression. It is important to emphasize that these drawings nonetheless work within the patriarchal system of the fashion industry, and might be viewed as simply another form of capitalist manipulation of the female consumer. I would argue, however, that many fashion illustrators, while operative in this capitalist structure, still produce their own highly distinct forms of consumer advertising that allow them to become active agents and creators. Fashion illustrators adapt mass cultural conventions for their own ends, ultimately refusing to allow themselves, and their female viewers in turn, to be positioned as passive and mindless casualties of mass culture's allegedly effeminate onslaught.

Similarly, the women who view these fashion illustrations are encouraged to assume a participatory role in their own self-fashioning. The illustrations, which situate a variety of models in various urban settings, permit the female viewer to position herself

⁶⁶ Ibid., 73. See page 71 for Ganeva's discussion of how traditional costume was seen by many social conservatives to signify stability and order, whereas changing fashions were viewed sceptically.

actively in any one of these environments, donning any one or combination of these versatile fashions. They reveal the impermanence and flexibility of personal stylization, in contrast to many Weimar advertisements' rigid and ideal vision of acceptable femininity as passive and contained within the confines of acceptability. The importance of the female viewer's active gaze reflects a particular understanding of women's engagement with fashion as a telling sign of their desire to overturn traditional, limiting, and outdated conceptions of feminine identity. As fashion journalist Anita Daniel wrote in 1928 for *Die Dame*,

The fashionable woman as reflected until a short time ago in the imagination of the world around us was a fairy-tale phenomenon...Fashionable is no longer modern...The most recent version of a modern woman is a kind of wonder of the world. She can *do* everything...She doesn't want to represent; she wants to *experience*. And how she does that is *her own private matter*. There are no longer any fashionable women, just modern women.⁶⁷ [emphasis mine]

Both illustrator and viewer thus discount and disengage from embodiments of an essential and naturalized femininity, exposing otherwise concealed roles as participants in the endless process of gender formation. With a focus on the variable textile surfaces with which a woman could dress her body in a variety of contexts, and not on female anatomical parts, the drawings openly acknowledge the New Woman's gender identity as an elaborate and ceaseless series of performative acts.

Mila Ganeva has navigated women's participation in the illustrated fashion press, in both its production and consumption, as a form of female flânerie. She argues on the

⁶⁷ Anita Daniel, "Mondän ist nicht mehr modern," *Die Dame*, no.21 (July 1928): 44-46. quoted in *ibid.*, 76.

whole that fashion was a central component of women's experience of Weimar modernity, for it enabled them to become active participants in its many facets, whether as a journalist, illustrator, or photographer or as a consumer, model, or shop assistant.⁶⁸ While Ganeva focuses mainly on the fashion journalist's role as a modern female flâneur, her assertions equally apply to fashion illustrators. The fashion journalist, and, I would argue, the fashion illustrator, are indeed New Women with their economic independence and emancipation, but they are also female flâneurs who "had mastered the art of astutely observing metropolitan life."⁶⁹ Regardless of the fact that flânerie has traditionally been figured solely as a male prerogative since its inception in the late nineteenth-century, the new forms of self-expression brought about by the fashion industry in Weimar Germany are indeed potential sites of female flânerie.

Another scholar, Anke Gleber, traces the origins of female flânerie in Weimar culture to women's experience of the cinema. According to Gleber, the female flâneur

⁶⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 9. Ganeva briefly examines Franz Hessel's estimation that women could not master the art of *flanieren* to the same extent as men. While forms of female flânerie may exist in Weimar Germany in the form of fashion illustration and cinema, it is still widely acknowledged that women could not stroll the streets in the same manner as men without being considered a prostitute. For other interpretations of the flâneuse in a late nineteenth-century French context, see *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, eds. Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006). This anthology of essays attempts "to extend and even question the dominant model within feminist art history that had been developed in the middle years of the 1980s by Janet Wolff and Griselda Pollock – a model that, however fruitful, had been undermined both by the discovery of significantly more complex spatial practices of women in this period, and by examinations of masculine anxieties embodied in the flâneur that had weakened claims of his confident appropriation of the urban realm" (Introduction, 1). Following art historian Elizabeth Wilson's assertion, the text assumes that the flâneuse could not exist because the flâneur per se is a construction that serves to mask the challenges to masculine identity posed by modern urban life.

acts all at once as a spectator, a camera or visual recorder, and a director who reorganizes these collected images according to her own subjective observations. Her evaluation of the female flâneur in this context is applicable to the fashion illustrator whose individual experiences of urban modernity are recreated in visual form. The fashion illustrator observes the popular fashions worn by women around her both in the streets and at fashion shows, images and conceptualizes them in her in mind, and then recreates them through drawings. Gleber also outlines the affirmative aspects of female flânerie:

To be able to speak of a female flâneur would offer the new figure of a resistant gaze, an alternative approach, and a subject position that stands in opposition to women's traditional and prevailing subsistence as an image on the screens and in the streets... This figure might also help to reformulate theories of spectatorship that organize the gaze entirely along gender lines, that posit an active male spectator who seems to be in control of female images.⁷⁰

These components – the repositioning of the male gaze, the possibility of female agency through spectatorship, and the *active* re-creation of these images – are enabled through Weimar fashion illustrations.

I would like to once again return to the infamous female outcast created by Dix in *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden*. As I have emphasized, Dix underlines the physical oddities and degeneracy of his sitter, while downplaying textile surfaces, such as her box-like dress and stockings. In light of fashion illustrations' articulation of women's personal self-fashioning, autonomy, and agency, one can further revise restrictive understandings of this sitter as a “grotesque” female object by way of her gender

⁷⁰ Anke Gleber, “Female Flânerie and the *Symphony of the City*,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, 84.

transgression and failure to provide viable fetishes for the male gaze. In a way, the depiction of von Harden is similar to the model in Bunzel's *Winter Sport Attire* who pulls away her jacket to reveal her unique contact with gestures of both masculinity and femininity. The slipping stocking, I would argue, functions in the same way. While it still reveals the green-tinged skin underneath, it more importantly exposes the superficiality of this gender performance, marking another opportune point of contact between high art and mass culture. The consideration of fashion illustrations, with their nonessential understanding of gender, furthers the necessity of reclaiming this portrait as a depiction of an autonomous figure engaging with the fluidity of gender performativity.

The association of women with mass culture thus presents two fundamental contradictions. First, as Huysens has articulated, high art is in fact very much implicated in mass cultural discourse and production. As I have shown, Otto Dix employs many of the same essentialist and patriarchal motifs and devices, primarily fetishism, in two of his portraits and larger-scale paintings as some Weimar advertisements. Second, not only does women's mass cultural production demonstrate some of the artistic styles of high art, from which it was allegedly separated, it openly challenges the very association of women with mass culture through their mutual passivity and distraction. Fashion illustrations, composed by artistically trained women, are open articulations of women's active, independent, and self-determinate roles in Weimar society as both spectators and creators. By permitting women to reclaim their bodies from the male fetishistic gaze as well as from the dictates of patriarchal ideology's restrictive conception of femininity, these illustrations reveal the extent to which the surface gesture of modern fashion was used to redirect the gaze from the female body. The impermanence, unpredictability, and

versatility of fashion as revealed in these illustrations reflects a mode of thought counter to that of so many Weimar authorities on sex and sexuality who would classify Sylvia von Harden as that deviant female outsider. Instead of embodying all that is subversive and threatening to patriarchal structures, fashion illustrations call their very ideology into question through a disclosure of gender as a performative activity, and von Harden in turn as one of its many participants.

CHAPTER THREE

A New Reading of Otto Dix's

Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden

This project arose out of my fascination with Otto Dix's *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden* (fig.54). I have sought to reveal its complexities, the range of sources to which its artist has referred, as well as the larger cultural discourses on the New Woman, gender identity, and the female body during the Weimar years. I have also endeavoured to elucidate modes of representation employed by female artists that do not vilify the New Woman's androgyny as a grotesque aberration, but embrace the possibilities of gender as a performative rather than given identity. While women artists' representations of the New Woman appear to acknowledge female agency, the sitter who first piqued my interest still remains largely passive. The previous two chapters have identified Dix's treatment of his sitter as a decaying, grotesque, and lifeless object whose inability to conform to male desire denotes her deviance. The portrait thus signifies the complex fears and anxieties surrounding the dissolution of seemingly fixed gender identities when uncertainty on this issue was tantamount to social and moral degeneration at best, and at worst, the demise of an already attenuate Germany. It would not be responsible, however, to leave my analysis at this point. The representation of Sylvia von Harden, with its seemingly grotesque exaggerations, in no way excludes the potential for female agency. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how an understanding of the relationship between the terms "grotesque" and "gender" breathes life into the portrait's depicted sitter.

I would like to briefly discuss an image by another female artist associated with the New Objectivity, Jeanne Mammen. A fashion illustrator as well as a painter who depicted the lesbian nightlife of Berlin, Mammen often openly reveals the performativity of gender that I will aim to elucidate in the Dix portrait. In *Masked Ball* (fig.55), Mammen reveals the extent to which gender identity is constructed and superficial. By situating this confident woman, in her drag dinner suit and top hat with her hips jutting forward, participating in a masquerade that unfolds in a lesbian nightclub, Mammen suggests that gender identity is unstable, and does not by necessity cohere with one's biological sex. Moreover, Mammen articulates that this is a conscious activity initiated at the will of its participant, which the confident outward and somewhat self-reflexive gaze of the central figure seems to imply. Mammen images an activity that functions "to throw open the concept of fixed gender and sexual identity to debate and revision."¹ While Mammen's watercolour might at first seem far removed from the Dix portrait, the following revision will illuminate how the representation of von Harden also communicates gender's performative aspect.

It has become clear that such explorations with gender roles and identities were looked upon unfavourably in many Weimar circles, both scientific and public. As I discussed in the introduction, many influential Weimar scientists, social scientists, and so-called sex reformers called for the rationalization of an area of life that allegedly dictated the health and prosperity of the people: gender roles. Common discourse focused on the large-scale rationalization of gender and sexuality, and eventually firmly affixed itself as the dominant, no doubt patriarchal, ideology. Women were situated at the epicentre of a typological system

¹ Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 216.

based on their perceived roles as ideal barometers of society's health or degeneration.² The scientific theory established by P. Mathes that I addressed alluded to the New Woman when it identified any deviation from the fixed poles of masculine and feminine as abnormal. Other publications, however, more clearly distinguish variations of the New Woman type from suitably feminine women.

Physician and writer Gerhard Venzmer developed a classification system in 1930 entitled, *Sieh dir die Menschen an! (Look at Your Fellow Human Beings!)*. A woman's behaviour and character were held as truthful signifiers of both her marriage potential as well as her biological constitution. In other words, it was a system that generously conflated gender with sex. Venzmer created the following categories: the *Gedankenmensch* (slender, angular physique, and an intellectual), the *Tatmensch* (muscular build, and a person of action), and the *Gemütmensch* (rounded physique, uncomplicated and good-natured).³ While the *Gemütmensch* was deemed most suitable for marriage, with her passive and easy-going character, the *Gedankenmensch* was considered the most dangerous marriage partner, with a tendency to incite tension and conflict.

In a more public arena, the bourgeois Berlin newspaper *8-Uhr-Abendblatt* published an article in 1927 that postulated three identifiable categories in which women could be placed. The author defines these types as follows:

Today three women stand before us. The three types:
Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne. The *Gretchen* type is not only the

² Lynne Frame, "Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne? Weimar Science and Popular Culture in Search of the Ideal New Woman," in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 13.

³ Gerhard Venzmer, *Sieh dir die Menschen an! Was die biologische Verwandtschaft zwischen Körperform und Wesenskern des Menschen verrät* (Stuttgart: Franckh'sche Verlagshandlung, 1930). This typological system is addressed in *ibid.*, 16.

young naïve German girl with braids and a knitting-needle horizon, it is also the heroic and militaristic ranting fascist woman...The *Girl*, originating in America as the child of pioneers and immigrants, is aware from the beginning that you can rely only on yourself...The *Garçonne* type cannot be grasped by language...[Her] combination of fifty to fifty [percent] sexual and intellectual potency often gives rise to conflict...The most significant one in this group: the business- and life-artist. Uniting a sporting, comradely male entrepreneurial sense with heroic, feminine devotion, this synthesis – if successful – often makes her so superior to the man she loves that she becomes troublesome.⁴

The most enigmatic and problematic woman among these three is a sub-category of the New Woman, the *Garçonne*. The writer succinctly articulates the fear of this woman's potential to radically challenge patriarchal structures of power. Both women and men alike used these taxonomies. For women, they served as tools for self-surveillance, and for measuring their contributions to society, whereas for men, they were a means to identify the ideal marriage partner.⁵ All aspects of a woman's body were categorized, all the way down to the way she positioned her legs while seated (fig.56); apparently, leg position was entirely indicative of a woman's true character. These systems and their defining categories are indicative of how Weimar era taxonomies conflate gender, sex, and sexuality. Distinct physiological characterizations and gestures are regarded as accurate reflectors of a woman's biological and psychological constitution. Moreover, these taxonomies blatantly target the woman posing the greatest risk to femininity: the *Gedankenmensch* or *Garçonne*, descriptions of whom undeniably channel the New Woman.

⁴ M.G., "Drei Frauen stehen heute vor uns. Die drei Typen: Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne," *8-Uhr-Abendblatt* (4 June 1927), quoted in Frame, 12.

⁵ Frame, 13 and 15.

Critics of the New Woman might have understood Dix's portrait of von Harden as a grotesque representation for two not mutually exclusive reasons. First, with her *Bubikopf* and exaggeratedly large hands, she has all the marks of what one might call masculine, and yet the lipstick, dress, and stockings are traditionally feminine. One is aware that she is a woman, but where does one place her? Man or woman? Masculine or feminine? This gender ambiguity and uncertainty would no doubt frustrate proponents of classificatory systems. Moreover, her yellow jutting teeth, her aquiline nose, and the slight green tinge on her legs and hands defy all standards of ideal beauty. By way of a blurring of masculine and feminine characteristics and exaggeration of von Harden's features, the image might act as a confirmation of the degeneration, corruption, and decadence allegedly consequent of such gender bending, and which the New Woman purportedly carried with her like some disease in the metropolis. Certainly, this is the position that I have advanced up to this point. However, Dix relished in critiquing members of Weimar society, and one might thus question whether this image functions as a self-reflexive visual document, in other words, as a critique of Weimar gender taxonomies. I would argue that the image in no way functions in this manner, and that Dix concurred with the view of women's bodies as demonstrations of their overall character. As such, the image is as equally oppressive as the taxonomies upon which Weimar gender ideology is based. Dix's attitude towards sex and gender roles and portraiture itself clarify his approach to von Harden in particular, and the New Woman in general.

In Chapter Two, I briefly discussed Dix's *Self-Portrait with Muse* (fig.57) as a demonstration of the artist's attempt to distance himself from mass culture, variously understood as a feminine construct. It also more generally elucidates his traditional view of

the sexes and the gendered division of labour. As Jung-Hee Kim's analysis of the work suggests, Dix represents a polarization of the sexes as well as the figuration of the male artist's work as a "God-like creation."⁶ The image is a study of both visual and conceptual contrasts. Dix, with brush and maulstick in hand, applies paint to his near complete artistic creation. The use of the term "muse" in the title suggests that Dix aims to convey that the origin of his work stems from his psyche, and not from the external realm of models. Indeed, the unfinished nature of the depiction works in Dix's favour, as it enables him to loftily present himself as a "Menschenschöpfer, als Menschenbildner," or as Creator of Man.⁷ In fact, Dix perhaps positions himself as a Pygmalion or Prometheus figure; the artist's war diaries reveal that he compared painting to God's instinct.⁸ In such a formulation, man/masculine and woman/feminine are polarized so as to distinguish male [creator] rationality from female [created] sexuality. The contrasts between artist and muse confirm this polarized binary relationship: Dix appears orderly, with combed hair and neat clothing. The near naked muse, on the other hand, is dishevelled as she attempts to cover herself with a veil in vain, her tousled wavy hair and large eyes suggestive of that most lethal of femmes fatales, Medusa. Dix's focused gaze indicates his concentrated effort to distance himself from

⁶ Jung-Hee Kim, *Frauenbilder von Otto Dix: Wirklichkeit und Selbstbekenntnis* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 1994), 35. "Im Gemälde *Künstler und Muse* spiegelten sich daher zwei Versuche des Malers wider: Einerseits die teleologisch polarisierte Charakterisierung beider Geschlechter in der patriarchalischen Gesellschaft und andererseits die Identifizierung des Künstlers mit dem 'gottähnlichen Schöpfer.'" "In the painting *Artist and Muse*, two attempts of the artist are reflected: on the one hand, the teleologically polarized characterization of both sexes in patriarchal society, and on the other hand, the artist's identification with 'God-like creation.'"

⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸ Otto Dix quoted in *ibid.*, 35: "Malerei...Es ist der Trieb Gottes, Menschen, die Natur, ihm zum Bilde nach seinem Bilde zu schaffen." "Painting...it is the instinct of God – to create humans, nature, into an image following His image."

his fleshy muse, over whom he nonetheless has complete control. Her inescapable sexuality – her large right breast denying the picture plane, her protruding abdomen and genital area still clearly visible through the veil – do not distract the artist from his own productive task. He both creates her and contains her with his fixating gaze and implements of control, namely, the paintbrush and maulstick.⁹ The female muse submits by lifting her left arm in a gesture of surrender. *Self-Portrait with Muse* elucidates the fervour and seriousness with which Dix embraced his male-as-Creator role, displacing the female reproductive function. Moreover, the work sheds light on Dix's attempt, like his scientific counterparts, to dichotomize and sequester the sexes into a binary system.

It appears that there is a point of intersection between Weimar gender taxonomies and Dix's own conception of portraiture. For Dix, like Mathes, Herschan, and many others, there was in fact no differentiation between inner character and outward appearance. He articulated that, "the nature of every person expresses itself in his exterior. The exterior is the expression of the interior, that is outside and inside are identical...even the folds of the dress, the person's bearing, his hands, his ears immediately afford the painter information about his model's soul."¹⁰ Not only did Dix view outward comportment as an expression of the inner self, but he asserted that it was critical that the portraitist have a surface relationship with this sitter: "You know, when you paint someone's portrait, you should know as little about him as possible. Simply not know him! I don't want to know him at all, I want to see only what's there, the exterior. The interior appears of itself. It is mirrored in what is visible...The first

⁹ Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 92.

¹⁰ Otto Dix quoted in Fritz Löffler, *Otto Dix: Life and Work* (New York: Helmes and Meier, 1982), 75.

impression you have of a person is the correct one.”¹¹ As with many of Dix’s statements on his work, this articulation must be viewed sceptically. Indeed, it often seems as if Dix articulates what he believes the viewer wants to hear. However, Dix most often did not work from life, and usually completed only preliminary sketches with his sitter present. While von Harden did in fact pose for Dix on numerous occasions, this does not mean that he truthfully depicted his sitter.¹²

What is likely a preparatory sketch for the portrait (fig. 58) seems to depict a completely different woman. Aside from the dark-rimmed eyes, the sketch is far removed from the portrait, for the woman that Dix represents appears non-threatening and fully conscious of her surroundings with her powerful stare. This sketch, while minimally detailed, reveals the liberties that Dix often took when transferring sketches onto painted canvas. Moreover, a photograph of von Harden from the 1930s (fig. 59), although taken several years after the portrait’s completion, shows a homely and rather unexceptional appearance, in contrast to the frightening and gaunt face that the portrait presents to the viewer. Dix does not

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Sabine Rewald discusses the issue of exaggeration and likeness in the catalogue *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, ed. Sabine Rewald, exh. cat. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 14 November 2006 – 19 February 2007 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). She notes on page 134 that von Harden did in fact sit for Dix on numerous occasions, and while she states that the portrait demonstrates “an unsparing likeness,” she also notes that Dix distilled her characteristics so that they adhered more to a type than to an individual. In a catalogue entry for *The Lawyer Dr. Fritz Glaser and Family* (1925), Rewald quotes Volkmar Glaser: “I had the impression that...he did not take the time to study me carefully to transcribe exactly what he had observed...I did not realize at the time that he must have had a phenomenal visual memory. He not only reproduced the exterior of a person but also the emotional impression that this person had left upon him. This doesn’t bring out the most flattering side of his models. I, for example, did not think at the time that he caught my likeness” (106). Indeed, it seems that Dix combined his own personal impressions of his sitters with a realist aesthetic. Rewald also notes in this and other catalogue entries that Dix often aged his sitters.

spare von Harden from the exaggerations and distortions that he applied to his numerous other sitters to reflect his subjective perception of their “interior.” Dix distorts and privileges von Harden’s physiological attributes as accurate and stable reflectors of her biological and psychological condition, which nonetheless challenge the polarized conception of gender to which Dix appears to have adhered.

Most discussion of the portrait focuses in the main on Dix’s unflattering depiction of his sitter, often providing unnecessary pedantic descriptions. In one of the most illustrative, the author states: “Protuberant eyes (in the right a monocle), a giant nose, a large, half-open, vividly painted mouth, a huge ear and a brutal, pointed chin communicate a sickly, morbid appearance.”¹³ Otto Conzelmann offers the most violent interpretation of the portrait: “This clothing [the formless dress] is denounced through the aggressive chin, the peering narrow eyes, but most clearly through the gesture of the hands, typical for Dix, of which the right (above), with the cigarette, pursues soliciting aggression.”¹⁴ Another reading calls the image “an apparently jaundiced view of cosmopolitan emancipation.”¹⁵ Shearer West’s statement is perhaps one of the only analyses to recognize Dix’s role in this exaggerated portrait depiction, leading the reader to understand that von Harden’s actual appearance was not necessarily as it appears here: “Dix elongated her hands to give her a monstrous quality, and

¹³ Löffler, 74.

¹⁴ Otto Conzelmann, “Vom Porträt zum Menschenbild – Otto Dix, der Menschenbildner,” in *Otto Dix – Menschenbilder, Gemälde, Aquarelle, Gouachen und Zeichnungen*, ed. Eugen Keuerleber, exh. cat. Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart, December 1981 – January 1982 (Stuttgart: Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart, 1981), 21. “Denunziert wird diese Verkleidung durch das aggressive Kinn, die spähenden schmalen Augen, am deutlichsten aber durch die für Dix so typische Gestik der Hände, von denen die rechte (obere) mit der Zigarette die werbende Aggression fortsetzt.”

¹⁵ Briony Fer, David Batchelor, and Paul Wood, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993), 295.

she is shown in disarray, with a crumpled stocking and an awkward pose. Dix's portrait strays into the realm of stereotype, even caricature."¹⁶ Clearly, negative interpretations of the portrait are not far afield. I propose a reassessment of the image that considers the relationship between gender and the grotesque, out of which, hopefully, agency might be granted to a painted sitter who has been depicted and often interpreted as a powerless physical oddity.

Some feminist scholars have attempted to appropriate and redirect the analytical approach that privileges the physical exterior and the biological body. After centuries of excessive idealization, objectification, as well as disparagement of the female body, the enormity of such an endeavour comes into view. Janet Wolff discusses the dangers associated with what she terms a "feminist cultural politics of the body." She writes how "there are problems with using the female body for feminist ends. Its pre-existing meanings, as sex object, as object of the male gaze, can always prevail and reappropriate the body, despite the intentions of the woman herself."¹⁷ Mary Russo's text, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity*, employs the category of the grotesque in an attempt to contend with the problem of invoking the always culturally inscribed female body within feminist discourse. For Russo, the von Harden portrait might work to feminist ends as a version of the female grotesque, which she widely considers as any female whose body challenges ideals of

¹⁶ Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany 1890-1937: Utopia and Despair* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 147.

¹⁷ Janet Wolff, "Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics," in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), 415. Wolff considers contemporary dance a cultural form that has the potential to deconstruct the female body: "The repertoire, the style, the ideologies, and the illusion of transparency of the medium of both classical and modern dance have been overturned by postmodern dance. In such a practice, the body can indeed provide a site for a radical cultural politics" (424).

feminine beauty: the aging woman, the overweight woman, the unruly woman, the hysterical woman, as well as the “senile pregnant hags” that Mikhail Bakhtin discusses in relation to carnival. Russo advances this concept by connecting traditional notions of the feminine with the grotesque, both of which, she argues, are associated with the earthly, the abject, and the lowly: “This positioning of the grotesque – as superficial and to the margins – is suggestive of a certain construction of the feminine, as it is often described by poststructuralist and feminist critics as bodily surface and detail.”¹⁸ Emphasizing that the female grotesque involves serious risk and deviation from the norm, von Harden, as a supposedly abnormal woman in defiance of consolidated and naturalized gender ideals, might then embody the female grotesque if one considers Russo’s arguments. However, I maintain that referring to the body as grotesque is in this case problematic, as it employs the flawed tools of analysis that scientists, sex reformers, and gynecologists believed could extract accurate data from their subjects. Consequently, one risks inadvertently affirming the gender binary that these Weimar professionals naturalized and used as a means to caution against deviations from naturalized gender scripts.

For Russo, one of the most opportune sites of the female grotesque is carnival, Bakhtin’s definition of which from *Rabelais and His World* she primarily uses. Since the female grotesque defies the norm, carnival, which involves a “redeployment or counterproduction of culture, knowledge, and pleasure,”¹⁹ offers the necessary environment for the female grotesque to arise according to Russo. Yet both Wolff and Russo herself acknowledge the limits of the carnivalesque model, and hence of the category of the female

¹⁸ Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

grotesque itself. She notes how the “temporary loss of boundaries tends to redefine social frames, and such topsy-turvy or time out is inevitably set back on course.”²⁰ In other words, those seemingly fixed and stifling categories that the female grotesque defies during carnival are ultimately firmly reattached when all returns to order. Wolff notes how “the excesses and reversals of the carnivalesque often operate to reaffirm the status quo, providing licensed but limited occasions for transgressions which are guaranteed to be neutralized.”²¹ Although Russo does consider certain aspects of performance and femininity, such as her chapter on female stunt pilots, she still remains rooted in a definition of the grotesque that relies too heavily on a form of female bodily transgression and the biological body, an approach that evidently risks rebounding.

There is an aspect of Bakhtin’s consideration of both carnival and the grotesque that might facilitate an alternative to the female grotesque. Although all forms of transgression are reversed upon the termination of carnival, the mere fact that its participants performed in a mode outside of their socially accepted role at least reveals, however slightly, how hierarchical systems, norms and prohibitions are not in any way fixed and natural if one can so easily subvert them within a specific temporal moment. Moreover, while Bakhtin’s formulation of the grotesque relies on discussion of various parts of the body and its movement as whole, the bodily binaries that he challenges are in fact metaphors for social bodies, whether in the Renaissance or in Bakhtin’s own post-World War II Russia. Bakhtin refers to the body not as a biological entity, but as representative of the people:

In grotesque realism, therefore, the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form,

²⁰ Ibid., 58.

²¹ Wolff, 418.

severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people...this is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualized. *The material body principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed. This is why all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable.*²²
[emphasis mine]

For Bakhtin, the grotesque body in art and literature is not a state or condition particular to one single, closed body or to one group of people, such as the female sex, but is rather an innate potentiality in all human beings even if it does not manifest externally. While Bakhtin's text still emphasizes aspects of the material body, he focuses on the activity of those bodies, not their individual constitutions. Of most interest to him is how, and through what processes, these grotesque bodies subvert the reigning hierarchy and revert the dominant order.

In her analysis of the docility of women's bodies in relation to the Foucauldian notion of discipline, Sandra Lee Bartky contends: "We women cannot begin the re-vision of our own bodies until we learn to read the cultural messages we inscribe upon them daily..."²³ I suggest then, that one not consider the grotesque in relation to the individual, biological female body, the loaded history of which perhaps delimits any form of effective re-appropriation for feminist ends. Rather, the grotesque is a revealing descriptor of the persistent social and seemingly scripted act in which one engages day after day: gender.

²² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 19.

²³ Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, eds. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 151.

In order to consider gender as a grotesque process, a navigation of the points of intersection between both theories on the grotesque and on gender is critical. I will focus principally on Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque body and realism as established in *Rabelais and His World* and Judith Butler's performative theory of gender. Coined in response to the fanciful and allegedly tasteless ancient Roman decorative paintings discovered on the walls of underground caves, or *grottoes*, during the Renaissance, the grotesque is now a frequently cited aesthetic category in contemporary art historical scholarship. While some assert that the grotesque eludes definition,²⁴ common features recur in the literature, two of which I will address as they appear in Bakhtin's text. These traits in turn resonate with aspects of Butler's conception of gender, and seem to indicate that the grotesque might function as a descriptor of gender. To be clear, I do not intend to infringe on the independence of these terms. Rather, I hope to establish a clear adverb-verb relationship between grotesque and gender, an affiliation that appears operative in Dix's portrait and several Weimar-era images of the New Woman.

Bakhtin does not explicitly argue for an adverbial function of the grotesque, but his descriptions of the grotesque body are certainly suggestive of unstoppable movement and constant metamorphosis. If the grotesque, according to Bakhtin, is used to describe an active and restless existence whose substantive nature hence comes into question, it is not impossible to imagine this word assuming an adverbial role. He writes: "The grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death

²⁴ Geoffrey Harpham, "The Grotesque: First Principles," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 34, no.4 (1976). Harpham argues that definitions of the grotesque constantly shift according to "our conventions, our prejudices, our commonplaces, our banalities, our mediocrities" (463).

and birth, growth and becoming.”²⁵ For Bakhtin, the grotesque body is in opposition to the new bodily canon, or the classical view of the body as a closed, completed, and ideal form. Grotesque images “preserve their peculiar nature, entirely different from ready-made, completed being. They remain ambivalent and contradictory; they are ugly, monstrous, hideous from the point of view of ‘classic’ aesthetics, that is, the aesthetics of the ready-made and completed.”²⁶ In contrast, art historian Wolfgang Kayser argues that the grotesque inherently functions as an adjective descriptive of “spiritual essences.”²⁷ Given the incessant movement of the grotesque “entity,” comfortably slotting it into one distinct category is a near impossibility. Ascribing the term, then, to complete and independent subjects is erroneous. Now, one could still assert that Arcimboldo’s portrait heads – comprised of vegetables, fruits, plants, and fish – are grotesque, but the term nonetheless implies that that which it describes is not a distinct and stable identity, but an ephemeral act (*v.*) that cannot be set down to allow for categorization. If one takes Bakhtin’s approach even further, the grotesque is best understood as a descriptor of a process or action (*adv.*). When describing the female Kerch terracotta figures, Bakhtin notes:

There is nothing completed, nothing calm and stable in the bodies of these old hags. They combine a senile, decaying and deformed flesh with the flesh of new life, conceived but as yet unformed. Life is shown in its two-fold contradictory

²⁵ Bakhtin, 24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁷ Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester: P. Smith, 1968), 26. Kayser writes: “Apart from the realm of proper names, -esque and -esco (as well as -isch) attach themselves only to those nouns which can be regarded as spiritual essences... The adjective provides spiritual orientation by stressing the evaluative and interpretative function inherent in its nature as an adjective.”

process; it is the epitome of incompleteness. And such is precisely the grotesque concept of the body.²⁸

Entities or subjects labelled as grotesque are better understood for what they do, rather than what they are, and are more accurately assessed by their movements rather than their forms.²⁹

In this way, the term grotesque is no longer descriptive of some given and predetermined “essence” or nature, but rather of an unceasing activity in which an incomplete identity participates.

Uninhibited movement permits the grotesque process to freely shift and move between normative boundaries. Its resistance to categorization is due not only to the fact that the grotesque is an eternal process and not a definable entity, but also in large part because this process merges acts or states usually kept in isolation from one another. Recalling the new bodily canon/grotesque body binary, Bakhtin articulates how the grotesque “ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon,”³⁰ and does not hesitate to combine aspects of other bodies at will. Referencing his oft-cited description of the “senile pregnant hags,” Bakhtin articulates how the merging of typically opposite poles of binary structures, in this case birth and death, qualifies as grotesque. “One of the fundamental tendencies of the grotesque image of the body,” he writes, “is to show two bodies in one: the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived,

²⁸ Bakhtin, 26.

²⁹ Frances S. Connelly, ed., introduction to *Modern Art and the Grotesque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4. This introduction is an extremely helpful and clear overview of past and recent conceptions of the grotesque. As a whole, the essays comprising this anthology address the work of Delacroix, Ingres, van Gogh, and Hannah Höch, among others.

³⁰ Bakhtin, 318.

generated, and born.”³¹ The grotesque disrespects borders erected to retain a sense of order and purity, and instead merges what are otherwise kept in isolation of, and in opposition to, one another. The grotesque is thus so shocking by way of its direct contestation to the order and classificatory system of the *grands récits*; it casts off normative categories, leaving a process in which “things that should be kept apart are fused together.”³² Julia Kristeva’s concept of abjection resonates with this second characteristic of the grotesque. That which cannot be defined as belonging to, or separate from, the human body – urine, menstrual blood, sweat, tears, vomit – constitute abjection according to Kristeva: “It is thus not the lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.”³³ The term grotesque as a descriptor of the in-between and the unstable clearly disputes an ideological framework constituted by the strict polarization of purported opposites.

Butler’s performative theory of gender likewise emphasizes movement and the transgression of normative boundaries, as gender, Butler writes, “is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts.”³⁴ For Butler, it is imperative to recognize that the “sedimentation” of these acts forms a mere “illusion of

³¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

³² Geoffrey Harpham, *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 11.

³³ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon Rouiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.

³⁴ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (London: Routledge, 2003), 392.

an abiding gendered self.”³⁵ Yet gender is most often consolidated as a stable and scripted category to which the subject unwittingly ascribes, and which is predicated upon the firm binaries of male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine. She notes that “the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all...The authors of gender become entranced by their own fictions whereby the construction compels one’s belief in its necessity and naturalness.”³⁶ The challenge to gender essentialism that performativity presents is nonetheless concealed behind a typological and hegemonic ideology of gender. Rather than conceive of these acts as *expressive* of some substantial core, Butler holds that one must view them as *performative*, a distinction that precludes any pre-existing identity and identifies any evaluation of gender as right or wrong, true or false, as a “regulatory fiction.”³⁷

Since the grotesque describes a constant metamorphic process, it is a potentially useful descriptor of gender, which for Butler is a shifting and unstable identity rather than an essential category: “One might try to reconceive of the gendered body as the legacy of sedimented acts rather than a predetermined or foreclosed structure, essence, or fact, whether natural, cultural, or linguistic.”³⁸ Butler’s conception of gender as a series of temporally accumulated acts highlights its function as *verbal* and active, not nominal:

In this sense, *gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence...In this

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 394.

³⁷ Ibid., 399.

³⁸ Ibid., 406.

sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed.³⁹

Understanding gender's verbal aspect further stresses that the notion of a so-called true or natural gender identity is a "regulatory fiction." Gender binaries are disclosed as misleading reified systems, just as the social codes and hierarchies during carnival are revealed, even if for a moment, as precarious and constructed. It follows, then, that there are no "incorrect" gendered acts, but rather acts that challenge the persistently repeated and rehearsed script that consolidates the gender binary.

Often fusing categories of the known to challenge dominant typologies, the grotesque aligns with Butler's dismissal of the polarization of genders through a binary system. Given that a grotesque process merges aspects which "classical" aesthetics, or patriarchal systems, segregates, it is not unreasonable to describe gender as grotesque, for it does not foreclose the transcendence of normative categories: "it does not follow that the construction of 'men' will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that 'women' will interpret only female bodies."⁴⁰ Gender identity is in no way predicated upon, or restricted to, the confines of two assigned polar categories, as patriarchal systems would like one to believe, nor does the male or female sexed body naturally assume its corresponding man/masculine or woman/feminine gender identity. Butler elaborates, "Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution...there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two."⁴¹ The conception of gender as a binary entity oppresses any

³⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

movement outside of the oppositional binary framework, marking such acts as subversive and dangerous.

With its adverbial function, as a descriptor of that which constantly shifts and combines seeming opposites, the grotesque might act as an accurate descriptor of gender itself, which in Butlerian terms functions as a series of acts or gestures. Indeed, gender (*v.*), when its performative aspect is highlighted, is fluid, combinatory, and hence grotesque (*adv.*). Gender performances always have the potential to assume their grotesque aspect. Social and cultural limitations of gender are inscribed onto the body, however, in order to conceal this grotesque aspect, and at the same time, to consolidate the gender binary. Essential gender identity is analogous to the classical body in Bakhtin's formulation, a body that has been tailored from an otherwise unstable and unfinished state to fit into a completed, closed mould. As Bakhtin writes: "That which protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off (when a body transgresses its limits...) is eliminated, hidden or moderated."⁴² When one deviates from the gender script and the entrenched poles of masculine and feminine, exposing gender as grotesque and not closed and given, one is, as adherents to classical aesthetics would describe the dying and birthing acts of Bakhtin's "senile pregnant hags," deemed repugnant and punishable. However, the hegemonic binary system, once understood as contrived and artificial, collapses and loses its authority. One is hence no longer understood on the basis of what one *is*, but of what one *does*.

Hollis Clayson has analysed how late nineteenth-century Parisian regulationists defined prostitution "as a condition rather than an act – as what one was instead of what one

⁴² Bakhtin, 320.

sometimes did,⁴³ an assessment that also found expression in some Impressionist depictions of sex workers. Such a fundamental misconception consolidated an inflexible definition of female sexuality based on the categories of honest or illicit, normal or abnormal, making it easier to distinguish deviant women as those who contravene the boundaries of respectability.⁴⁴ In the context of Weimar German society, the New Woman was often similarly stigmatized on the basis of her psychological character and physiological condition, and for *being* innately deviant. In the process of considering gender as grotesque, however, the term “grotesque” shifts from describing the subject or depicted sitter in question to the activity in which he or she engages, thereby illuminating the acts that the subject induces of his or her own will.

How, then, does the consideration of gender as grotesque affect the viewer’s understanding of Dix’s portrait? Indeed, what happens when the entire system of belief upon which von Harden has been portrayed is revealed as a contrived binary? It is clear that Dix has exaggerated and distorted von Harden’s physical oddities as a means to identify and disparage her androgyny as deviant and threatening to the gender binary. He calls upon traditional and limited understandings of the grotesque as that which is repulsive and disgusting, as exemplified in the yellow teeth, bony hands, and green skin. These features to some degree overshadow the non-biological aspects of von Harden’s appearance, such as her lipstick, dress, and stockings. Dix shocks his viewers with what he and others held as accurate reflectors of adherence to, or subversion of, gender taxonomies: the biological body itself. Von Harden’s physical body is privileged over the more mundane and superficial

⁴³ Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

“stylizations of the body” that constitute gender, and which are rendered secondary to her physical obscurities. Nonetheless, Dix does not completely erase these material gestures from view, and still depicts them as garish, unsettling, and unfulfilling of male desire. The representation of von Harden cannot be viewed as what is generally called “the grotesque” in the form of the New Woman, for the grotesque implies movement rather than a distinct unit. Deconstruction of the gender binary system shifts the very focus of the portrait: the image does not present the viewer with “the grotesque” (*n.*), but rather displays how the sitter appears, one could say, to gender (*v.*) grotesque (*adv.*).

It is necessary, then, to look beyond what the depicted von Harden *is*, and to focus instead on what she appears to *do* in this representation. I suggest it is not von Harden’s manipulated physical body to which we should turn our attention, but to the socially constructed gestures by which it is clothed. Of particular interest is the right leg stocking, which, as discussed earlier, is not only a means for Dix to make associations with prostitution, decay, and decadence, but also draws attention to the depicted sitter’s “failed fetishism.” While Dix presents this slipping stocking as *expressive* of some stable gender core to which von Harden nonetheless deviates, it is rather an act that discloses both the active and superficial nature of this New Woman’s performance. It reveals not merely a patch of green skin, but the very acts of putting on, wearing, and taking off stockings, all of which are integral to von Harden’s shifting gender identity. Also peculiar, then, are the stark red lipstick and powdered face – the “feminine” – and the *Bubikopf* hairstyle and formless dress – the “masculine” – gestures that also disclose the grotesque aspect of the activity, gender, in which she engages. If gender is grotesque – combinatory and fluid – the portrait is then a representation of a bohemian Berlin journalist bringing formerly polarized masculine

and feminine gestures together to form a unique, but still impermanent gender identity as a New Woman. Von Harden's hairstyle, lipstick, formless dress, monocle, and stockings are affirmations that gender is nothing more than a series of sedimented acts, which, according to Butler, *express* nothing.⁴⁵ They are acts in von Harden's performance, which are "put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly, with anxiety and pleasure..."⁴⁶

Temporally, they accumulate to form an illusory conception of gender. However, they are in no way fixed, and can just as easily be wiped off as they are put on. Constantly moving, and combining "things that should be kept apart," the grotesque gender process in which the depiction of von Harden engages permits her to peel away, recombine, and re-enact these superficial gestures, as the slipping stocking already suggests. Upsetting the gender binary, it thus becomes possible to read the portrait as a representation of a sitter who can act freely without ever settling, and without ever compelling herself to ascribe to the scripted performance of normative, ideal femininity. The female sitter thus acquires agency where it was so lacking before.

In *Positions*, Derrida noted that the process of deconstruction entails an inversion that leads to "the irruptive emergence of a new 'concept,' a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime."⁴⁷ He calls these concepts "undecidables" which "can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, *without ever* constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative

⁴⁵ Butler (2003), 414.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 401.

⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 42.

dialectics.”⁴⁸ I would argue that this depiction of von Harden emerges as an “undecidable”: she is no doubt situated among these philosophical oppositions, as Derrida suggests, but nonetheless resists categorization into man/masculine or woman/feminine, subverts from and upsets the gender binary, and, above all, invalidates any punitive judgements that are thrown her way. For with this deconstruction comes recognition of the fact that there are “no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender.”⁴⁹

Von Harden’s retrospective account of the portrait’s beginnings offers potential insight into how she viewed her affiliation with the New Woman role. She writes:

He [Dix] did not talk to me, but sat me down on an ornate chair at a round marble table. Without waiting for him to show me what posture I was to assume, I crossed my legs, rolled a cigarette between my fingers, and propped my arm up on the chair’s backrest. He placed a glass on the table and my box of cigarettes next to it. It was staffage to create *the type that he envisioned I represented*.⁵⁰ [emphasis mine]

The statement that I have emphasized suggests that von Harden herself was fully aware that this role was superficial. For von Harden, as for many Weimar women, the New Woman was one of many social roles, with its own identifiable props and accessories, which one could perform. Ian Baruma has noted how masquerades were a fixture of Weimar cultural life, but one sought nonetheless “to discover a new equilibrium between character, self-representation, and social roles in an age when everything seemed out of whack.”⁵¹ In some ways, the New Woman effectively achieves this equilibrium. In no way attempting to present

⁴⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁹ Butler (2003), 399.

⁵⁰ Rewald, 136.

⁵¹ Ian Baruma, “Faces of the Weimar Republic,” in *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, 19.

itself as a natural extension of the body, the New Woman's masquerade or social performance is self-reflexive, a carnival act that inverts normative and hierarchical conceptions of gender. Patrice Petro argues that the women's newspaper *Die Dame* presents the New Woman as engaging in a "masculine masquerade," the counterpart to what Joan Riviere and Mary Ann Doane in turn call the "feminine masquerade."⁵² For Doane, the "feminine masquerade" involves a flaunting of femininity while at the same time holding it at a distance, an act which denies "the production of femininity as closeness, as presence-to-itself, as, precisely, imagistic" and hence resists patriarchal codes.⁵³ I would argue, however, that the New Woman, whose engagement in a "masculine masquerade" incensed so many, is perhaps a greater challenge to patriarchal systems of power and their attendant gender binaries. Unlike the "feminine masquerade," the parody of masculinity staged by the New Woman appropriates gestures and stylizations positioned as off-limits to the female sex. As such, the New Woman's "masculine masquerade" reveals masculinity "as neither ontologically given nor unalterable but as sheer artifice of male power," but also destabilizes masculine *and* feminine iconography.⁵⁴ Through a continuous and variegated play with masculine and feminine gestures, the New Woman's masquerade thus qualifies as participation in the grotesque performance of gender.

I acknowledge that differences between the formal aspects and techniques of Dix's portrait and Mammen's *Masked Ball* are many, but both works attest to gender's grotesque aspect, that is, its fluid, versatile, and combinatory formation. The depiction of von Harden,

⁵² Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 118.

⁵³ Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, 185.

⁵⁴ Petro, 118.

although not as energetic and confident as the central figure in Mammen's work, is nonetheless a participant in the same activity. Both figures subvert the notion of a stable, closed, and natural conception of femininity, and gender as a whole, by way of their assumption of the androgynous New Woman role. Both images thus demand of the viewer that their main subjects be considered not on an ontological basis, that is, for what they are purported to be. Instead, one must distinguish the agency that both bring to the act in which they engage.

If one views Otto Dix's *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden* as a manifestation of "the grotesque," and the depiction of the journalist as a grotesque entity, one risks affirming the gender binary that Dix and most Weimar era scientists normalized. The gender ambiguity with which Dix represents von Harden qualifies the image not as a grotesque rendering of, and frightful encounter with, the New Woman, but of the particular process in which she engages. If one positively repositions the grotesque so that it emphasizes movement and defiance of binary structures, the mundane gestures of the painted sitter's performance are no longer eclipsed by Dix's manipulative bodily exaggerations. Indeed, establishing gender as a grotesque process has revealed that regarding the body itself as grotesque is often problematic. Rather, once gender's grotesque aspect is established, it becomes possible to deconstruct the binary framework upheld in the portrait: the gender binary is a "regulatory fiction," as Butler argues, that cannot withstand affirmation of the fact that gender itself is grotesque, a non-entity. Dix's portrait of von Harden is, then, a representation not of a "grotesque" deviant punishable for her subversion from gender typologies. Rather, it is a depiction of an active participant in a concealed reality in which gender, like her red lipstick, is merely cosmetic.

CONCLUSION

The emancipated woman, having emerged from the muddy pond (or, if you will, the clear lake) of her previous state, found herself on a bleak shore, surrounded here and there by skyscrapers that blocked her view. She simply noted: I have less time than my mother had. I have less money, less joy, less hope, less consolation. And thus did she too, with quiet disillusion defiantly concealed, begin her cautious return to the ranks of the backward-looking.¹

Alice Rühle-Gerstel, January 1933.

By 1928, a reactionary shift in taste from the androgyny of the New Woman to more traditional femininity had already begun to take place. The popular cosmetic brand Elida held a competition in this year, entitled “Das schönste deutsche Frauenporträt,” or “The Most Beautiful German Portrait of a Woman,” that sought portrait representations of the modern German woman for its next advertising campaign. The competition not only created a confluence of the fine arts and advertising, but also opened up a forum through which the desire for a simple, sporty, yet still feminine German woman as well as polarized gender roles was articulated.² Among the participants were Christian Schad

¹ Alice Rühle-Gerstel, “Zurück zur guten alten Zeit?” *Die literarische Welt* 9, no. 4 (27 January 1933): 5-6. Translation: “Back to the Good Old Days?” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 219.

² Susanne Meyer-Büser, *Das Schönste Deutsche Frauenporträt: Tendenzen der Bildnismalerei in der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 1994), 39. Meyer-Büser writes: “Der öffentlich geäußert Wunsch nach polaren Geschlechterrollen mit eindeutig definierten weiblichen und männlichen Aufgabenzuteilungen war gegen Ende der 20er Jahre erneut zu vernehmen und stellte eine Ausdrucksform der gesamtgesellschaftlichen Tendenz zu restaurativen Machtverhältnisse dar.” “The publicly expressed wish for polar gender roles with undisputed, defined feminine and masculine allocations of responsibilities was being re-examined around the end of the 1920s, and

and Lotte Laserstein. The winner of the competition, Willy Jaeckel, submitted a portrait, *Standing Girl* (fig.60), that the jury felt embodied this new ideal of beauty. While the sitter still wears a *Bubikopf*, she nonetheless has identifiable hips, emphasized through her *contrapposto* pose, and breasts conducive to motherhood. The belt that firmly clasps her waist gives substantial form to a feminine body underneath her clothing. She appears, moreover, as a “natural” woman without bold makeup, and assertive in her stance and serious facial expression. The competition as a whole seems to have crystallized a growing nationalist sentiment whose central ideals were perceptible in female portraits, which, as we have seen, often functioned as barometers of both tolerance and taste in Weimar culture.

The growing scepticism towards the New Woman is also marked in the literature of the last years of Weimar. Irmgard Keun’s novel, *Das Kunstseidene Mädchen* (*The Artificial Silk Girl*), tells the story of a small town girl, Doris, who attempts, and ultimately fails, to establish herself independently in Berlin. After realizing that she cannot support herself with the income from an office job, Doris resorts to prostitution until she fills the position of a housewife, and then eventually leaves Berlin altogether. The novel reflects the disillusionment with the freedoms that the New Woman type had proffered. At the same time, it presents challenging questions about femininity, and “insists on the search for an alternative that will not play into the hands of the forces of reactionary antifeminism.”³ Nevertheless, it seems that the ideal German woman of

represented a form of expression of the entire society’s tendency towards restorative power relations.”

³ Von Ankum, 180. Von Ankum has also completed the most recent English translation of the novel: Irmgard Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl* (New York: Other Press, 2002).

Kinder, Küche, und Kirche was embraced by men and women alike with even more fervour than was the case with the New Woman only a few years prior.

When the Nazis advanced their eugenicist theories and policies upon taking power, the notion of the New Man was revitalized. The concept dates back to Martin Luther and reappeared in different forms during the French Enlightenment and Revolution, the German Enlightenment, and with many German Expressionists. Akin to an appropriated and misconstrued Nietzschean *Übermensch*, the New Man was a combination of artistic creativity and work, and exceptions to this ideal were ultimately deemed “degenerate.”⁴ For the National Socialists, Hitler himself could foster and indeed create the racially pure and steeled New Man from the formless, degenerate mass of Weimar Germany, “over against the present and presumably decadent manhood.”⁵ This conviction found visual expression in the image, *Der Bildhauer Deutschlands (The Sculptor of Germany)* (fig.61). The male body, as George Mosse has noted, became a symbol of Germany’s regeneration and strength, and the New Man could only achieve his

⁴ For an excellent study of the various manifestations of the New Man in 1930s Europe, see the National Gallery of Canada’s 2008 exhibition catalogue, particularly Laura Bossi’s contribution, “The ‘New Man’: Degeneracy and Regeneration,” in *The 1930s: The Making of the “New Man,”* ed. Jean Clair, exh. cat. The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. 6 June – 7 September 2008 (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2008). Here I refer to her analysis of Germany’s vision of the New Man, which is well summarized on page 48 of her text. I should note that some of the artists whom I have discussed, particularly Dix and Schlichter, were ostracized by the Nazis, despite the seeming compatibility of their views of masculinity and femininity. It is important to remember that the Nazis were merciless in their artistic campaign against “degenerate” artists, and likely did not approve of any such representations of the gender-bending New Woman, regardless of the artists’ views towards the type. Moreover, it was these artists’ oeuvres as a whole that were ultimately the basis for their exclusion from the German art world, for, according to the Nazis, they espoused anti-war, socialist and Bolshevik sentiments.

⁵ George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 164.

full power through the subordination of women and children and their confinement to the home.⁶ In effect, the New Man was positioned as the ideological foe to the morally depraved Weimar Republic and its allegedly equally degenerate New Woman.

The New Woman was undoubtedly a source of fascination during the Weimar Republic, from avant-garde artists and advertisers to young women hoping to find something newer and bigger in the metropolis. The diversity of approaches to the New Woman that I have explored reveals, however, that fascination was not akin to celebration. Indeed, many used the New Woman as an effective site upon which to project anxieties surrounding the perceived breakdown of gender boundaries, which threatened traditional womanhood as well as the preservation of male identity and patriarchal social structures. In visual media in particular, these anxieties were often effectively expressed and forged through grotesque aesthetics. New readings of these images must involve recognition of how their artists attempted to immobilize and denounce the New Woman, and ultimately, of their conspicuous want of female agency. By illuminating the various ways by which the New Woman fashioned her own gender identity, I have sought to recognize her as the maker of her own meaning and destiny.

⁶ Ibid., 167 and 170.

FIGURES

Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung



Die Verwöhnung der Frau wird immer mehr überwiegen!

Sein Mann, sondern der weibliche Charakter ist in der Frau zu stark. Das ist die Ursache dafür, dass die Frau heute so sehr von dem Mann abhängig ist. Das ist die Ursache dafür, dass die Frau heute so sehr von dem Mann abhängig ist.

NUN ABER GENUG!

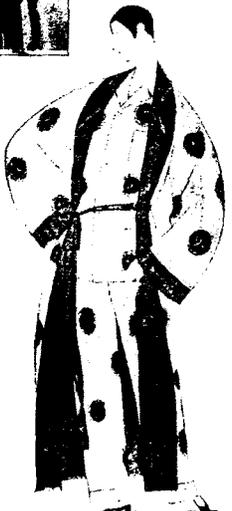
Gegen die Vermännlichung der Frau.

Was durch ein launisches Spiel der Frauenmode war, wird schließlich zu einer peinlichen Weiblichkeit. Heute möchte es wie ein unmutiger Scherz; doch jene, welche Frauen sich des



Die Schauspielerin Johanna Zutter (Holländer)

auszulegen, so es unmöglich nach sich ziehen könnte zu tragen. Und immer häufiger sehen wir die Theaterdamen mit ihren Costen sich umgeben und der weichen weiblichen Toilette mit so vielen noch mehr geübten Frauen um ihre Eitelkeit zu spielen. Das ist die Ursache dafür, dass die Frau heute so sehr von dem Mann abhängig ist.

Modellbilder für die Dame von heute.
Krautstrickung strecken diese aus bei ungeschicktem Bekleidungsgebrauch.

Figure 1. "Nun Aber Genug! Gegen die Vermännlichung der Frau."
 Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung 13 (29 March 1925): 389.



Figure 2. Otto Dix. *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden*, 1926.



Figure 3. Rudolf Schlichter. *Margot*, 1924.



Figure 4. Otto Dix. *Girl at the Mirror*, 1921.



Figure 5. Francisco Goya. *Time (Old Women)*, 1810-12.



Figure 6. Otto Dix. *Sex Murder*, 1922.



Figure 7. Otto Dix. *Sex Murder*, 1922.



Figure 8. Otto Dix. *Self-Portrait as Sex Murderer*, 1920.



Figure 9. Rudolf Schlichter. *Sex Murder*, 1924.

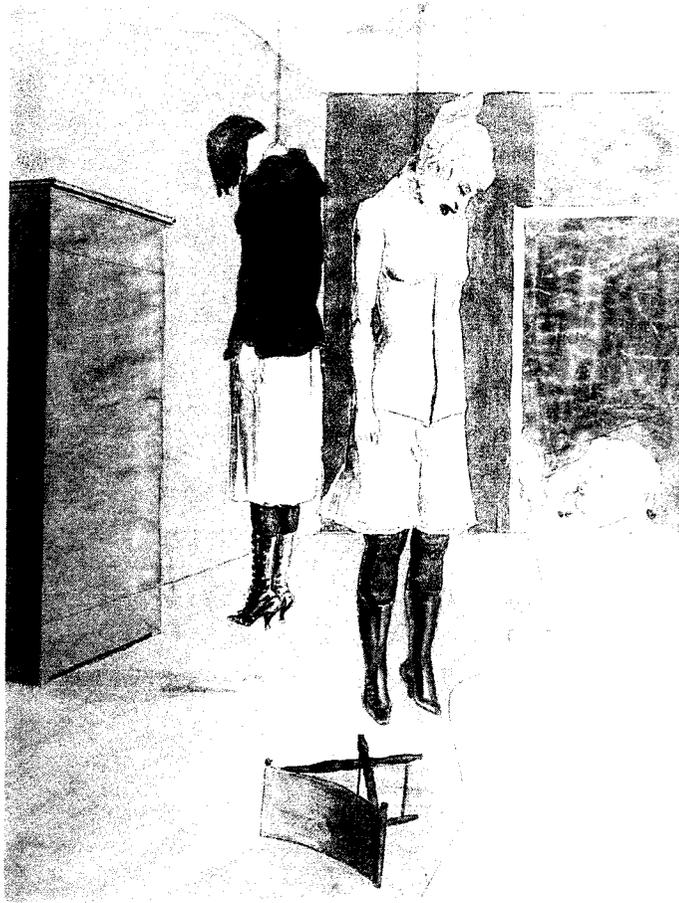


Figure 10. Rudolf Schlichter. *The Artist with Two Hanging Women*, 1924.



Figure 11. Unknown photographer. *Rudolf and Speedy Schlichter during a strangulation experiment in his studio, around 1928.*



Figure 12. Otto Dix. *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden*, 1926.



Figure 13. Otto Dix. *Venus of the Capitalist Age*, 1923.



Figure 14. Otto Dix. *Mieze, Evenings in the Café*, 1923.

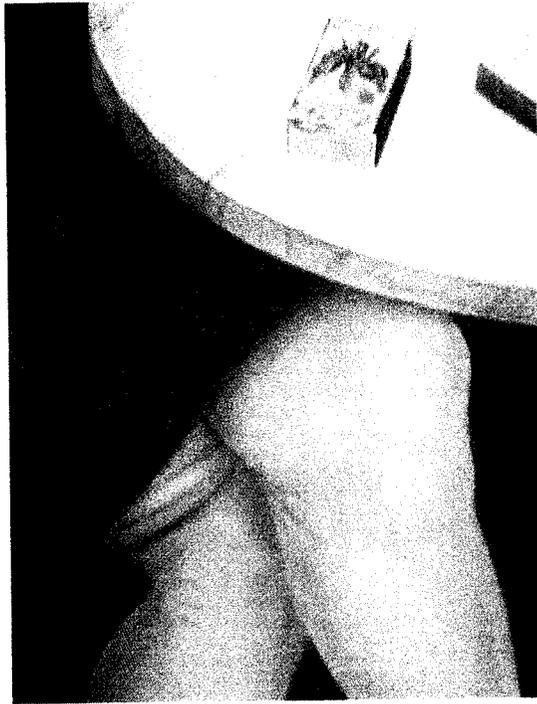


Figure 15. Detail #1 of figure 12.



Figure 16. Detail #2 of figure 12.



Figure 17. Rudolf Schlichter. *Passers-By and the Imperial Army*, 1925-6.



Figure 18. Rudolf Schlichter, *Hausvogteiplatz*, 1926.



Figure 19. Christian Schad. *Self-Portrait with Model*, 1927.



Figure 20. Édouard Manet. *Olympia*, 1863.



Figure 21. Christian Schad. *Lotte*, 1927.



Figure 22. Christian Schad. *Sonja*, 1928.

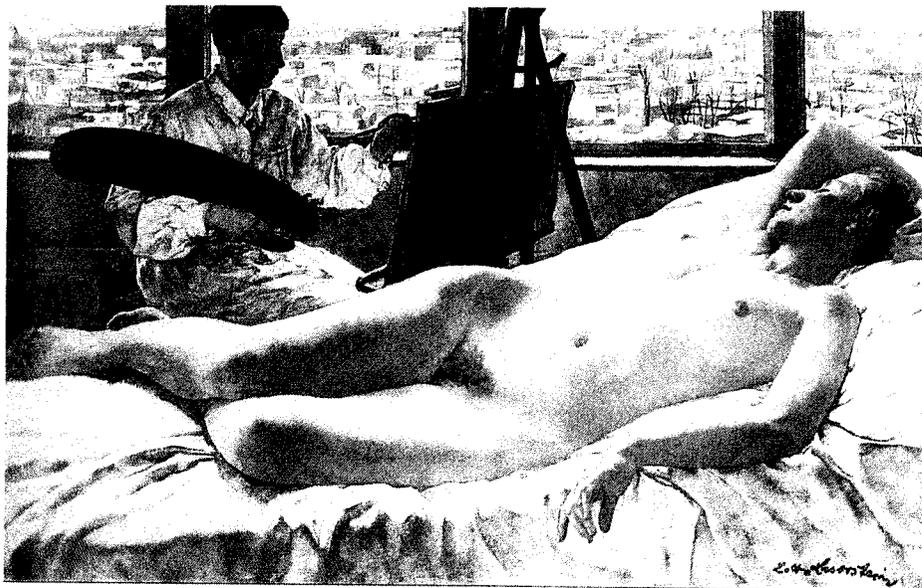


Figure 23. Lotte Laserstein. *In My Studio*, 1928.



Figure 24. Lotte Laserstein. *Self-Portrait with a Cat*, 1928.



Figure 25. Lotte Laserstein. *Tennis Player*, 1929.



Figure 26. Lotte Laserstein. *In the Tavern*, 1927.



Figure 27. Titian. *Man with Glove*, 1520-22.



Figure 28. Henri Fantin-Latour. *Portrait of Édouard Manet*, 1867.



Figure 29. Mary Cassatt. *Portrait of Madame J.*, 1879-80.



Figure 30. Gustave Caillebotte. *Paris Street; Rainy Day*, 1877.



Figure 31. Gustave Caillebotte. *Oarsmen*, 1877.



Figure 32. Gustave Caillebotte. *Interior, Woman Reading*, 1880.



Figure 33. Otto Dix. *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden*, 1926.

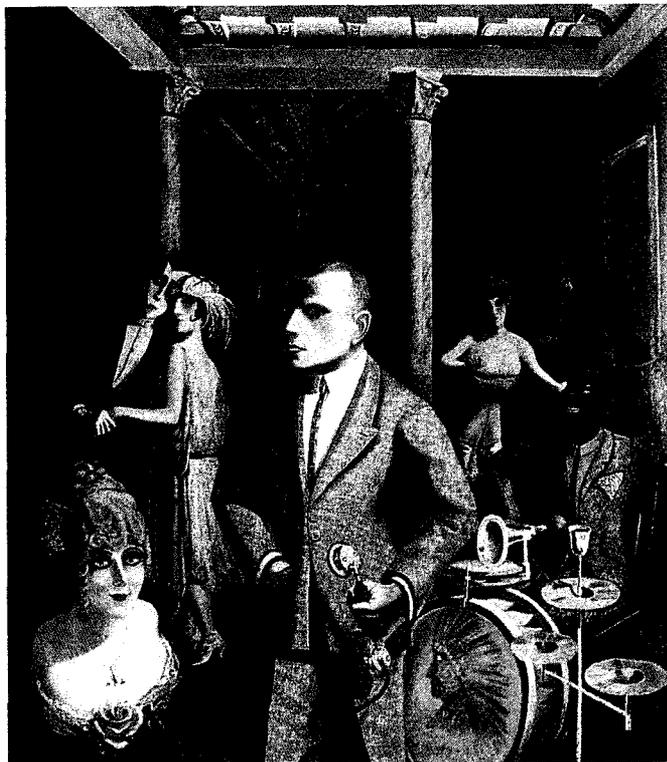


Figure 34. Otto Dix. *To Beauty*, 1922.



Figure 35. Otto Dix. *Self-Portrait with Muse*, 1924.

Ob kurz
oder lang,
es ist
unbedingt
nötig, Ihr Haar mit
Javal
zu pflegen!

Javal mit Seife für normale
bis trockene oder spröde
Haare. Javal ohne Seife
für sehr fettiges Haar.
Javal-Gelb, gelblich bis
schwarz, besonders auch
gegen Dellen. Javal-Gelb
Kopfwaschmittel, sehr
weich, zum Waschen ohne
seine gründliche Wirkung.
Javal ist in
allen Apotheken
erhältlich.

Dr. Javal (Köln)
Königsplatz

Figure 36. Advertisement for Javal Shampoo. “Ob kurz oder lang, es ist unbedingt nötig, Ihr Haar mit Javal zu pflegen!” (“Whether short or long, it is absolutely necessary to care for your hair with Javal!”). From *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 27 (4 July 1926): 848.



The advertisement is a black and white illustration. On the left, there is a dark, circular portrait of a woman's head and shoulders. To the right, a larger illustration depicts a domestic scene: a man in a suit sits at a table, and a woman in a dress sits opposite him, holding a child. The background shows a kitchen or dining area with a stove and shelves. The text is in German and discusses the role of women in the household and the benefits of Pixavon Shampoo.

Die Frau als Gattin

Die Frauen von heute sind klüger als die Frauen von gestern. Nicht dass sie die häuslichen Pflichten mit leichter Hand erfüllen diese mit häuslicher Gebär- verständlichkeit, ohne viel Worten reden zu müssen. Sie können langsam ihre Hausfrauen sein die Arbeit zu erleichtern so gewinnen sie Zeit - Zeit für die Über- des Körpers, die sorgsam ihre Pflege be- denken, was sie die Gesundheit des Mannes erhält. Dies ist das Merkmal der Pixavon Shampoo, ein natürliches Produkt, das die Haare und die Haut mit der besten Pflege versorgt. Pixavon Shampoo ist ein Produkt, das die Haare und die Haut mit der besten Pflege versorgt.

Figure 37. Advertisement for Pixavon Shampoo. “Die Frau als Gattin” (“Woman as Wife”). From *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 39 (29 September 1929): 1541.



Figure 38. Advertisement #1 for Vogue Perfume. “Das Parfum der Saison: Die neueste Schöpfung des Hauses F. Wolff & Sohn Parfum Vogue” (“The Perfume of the Season: The Newest Creation from the House of F. Wolff and Son, Vogue Perfume”). From *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 50 (12 December 1926): 1721.



Figure 39. Advertisement #2 for Vogue Perfume. “Das Parfum der Saison: Die neueste Schöpfung des Hauses F. Wolff & Sohn Parfum Vogue” (“The Perfume of the Season: The Newest Creation from the House of F. Wolff and Son, Vogue Perfume”). From *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 48 (28 November 1926): 1623.



Figure 40. Otto Dix. *Portrait of Mrs. Martha Dix*, 1923.

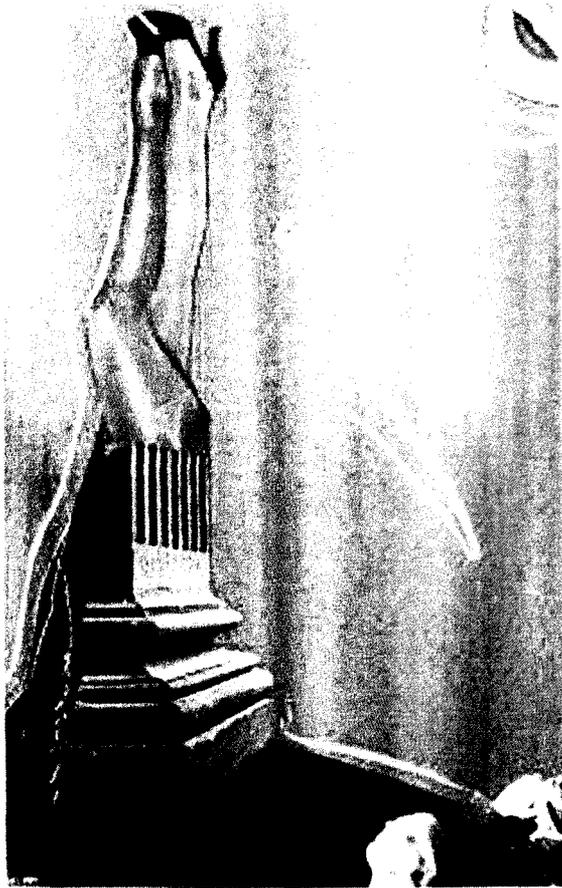


Figure 41. Hannah Höch. *Marlene*, 1930.



Figure 44. Otto Dix. *Three Prostitutes in the Street*, 1925.



Figure 45. Otto Dix. *Big City Triptych*, 1927-28.



Figure 46. Advertisement for Bemberg Silk Stockings. “Bembergseide, das hygienische Kunstseidene Edelprodukt” (“Bemberg Silk, the Hygienic Artificial Silk Fine Product”). From *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 7 (17 February 1929): 260.

F O S T E R

WARUM WIRD SIE NIEMALS EINGELADEN?



Sie ist hübsch, aber sie hat rote Arme, einen häßlichen Teint, und das gefällt den Herren nicht. Bisher war es leider unmöglich, diesen störenden Schönheitsfehler zu beseitigen, an dem so viele Damen leiden. Die Fett- und Trockencreme nützen nichts, denn sie machen die Haut speckig glänzend. Wendet man über den Creme den Puder an, so bildet er eine klebrige Schicht, die sich schnell in der Hitze auflöst. Außerdem verstopft diese Puderschicht die Poren der Haut und verbindet die Hautatmung; das Heilmittel verschlimmert also noch das Übel.

Eine wunderbare und ganz neue Erfindung, **MIXA** (eine Mischung von Puder und Creme) ermöglicht es von jetzt an jeder Dame, mit einer einzigen Anwendung für einen ganzen Tag sich einen frischen und zarten Teint zu schaffen, ebenso weiße Arme und Nacken. Ja, die Bestandteile des **MIXA**-Creme pflegen die Haut und bringen die Hautröte zum Verschwinden. Seit dieser hervorragenden Entdeckung haben die Damen keine roten Arme und Nasen mehr, auch keinen kupferroten und speckigen Teint, wenn sie **MIXA** stets auf ihrem Toiletentisch haben.

Machen Sie noch heute einen Versuch mit **MIXA**. Wenn Sie nicht vollkommen zufriedengestellt sind, so erhalten Sie Ihr Geld zurück. Jeder Tube ist ein Garantieschein beigelegt. **MIXA** ist erhältlich (in blond und brünett) in allen einschlägigen Geschäften zum Preise von M. 2,50 pro Tube. **Nur die Tuben mit dem Aufdruck der Firma „A. Bornstein & Co.“ enthalten eine deutsche Gebrauchsanweisung; auch wird nur für diese garantiert.** Generalvertretung für Deutschland: A. Bornstein & Co., Berlin W. 32, Raackrothstr. 4. Telefon: Steinplatz 6556.

Figure 47. Advertisement for Mixa-Creme. “Warum wird sie niemals eingeladen?” (Why is she never invited?). From *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 32 (8 August 1926): 1011.



Figure 48. Petra Fiedler. *Travel Attire*. Published in *Die Dame*, February 1926.



Figure 49. Gerda Bunzel. *Summer Afternoon Attire*. Published in *Die Dame*, April 1925.



Figure 50. Petra Fiedler. *Spring Attire*. Published in *Die Dame*, February 1925.



Figure 51. Gerda Bunzel. *Winter Sport Attire*. Published in *Die Dame*, December 1924.



Figure 52. Helen Ernst. *Androgynous-Feminine Clothing*, 1928.

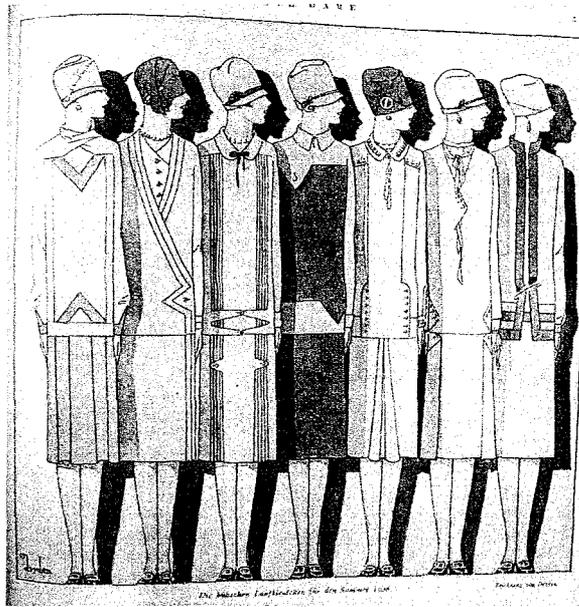


Figure 53. Ernst Dryden. *Pretty Walking Clothing for the Summer*, 1926. Published in *Die Dame*, March 1926.



Figure 54. Otto Dix. *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden*, 1926.



Figure 55. Jeanne Mammen. *Masked Ball*, 1928.

Neue Wege der Charakterforschung

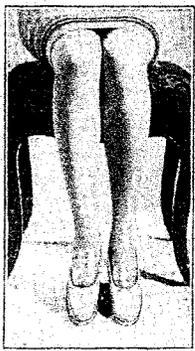
Was die Beinhaltung enthüllt



Die Abwärtige Einstellung der Beine... (Caption describing the leg position shown in the illustration)



Beit bei einer schiefen Beinhaltung... (Caption describing the leg position shown in the illustration)



Beit bei einer schiefen Beinhaltung... (Caption describing the leg position shown in the illustration)

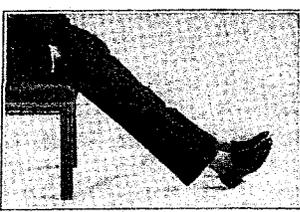
Beit bei einer schiefen Beinhaltung... (Caption describing the leg position shown in the illustration)

Die Beinhaltung... (Text describing the characteristics and implications of the wide, outward leg stance)

Beit bei einer schiefen Beinhaltung... (Text describing the characteristics and implications of the narrow, inward leg stance)



Beit bei einer schiefen Beinhaltung... (Caption describing the leg position shown in the illustration)



Beit bei einer schiefen Beinhaltung... (Caption describing the leg position shown in the illustration)



Beit bei einer schiefen Beinhaltung... (Caption describing the leg position shown in the illustration)

Figure 56. "Neue Wege Charakterforschung: Was die Beinhaltung enthüllt" ("New Ways of Character Research: What Leg Position Reveals"). *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 13 (31 March 1929): 517.



Figure 57. Otto Dix. *Self-Portrait with Muse*, 1924.



Figure 58. Otto Dix. *Sketch of Sylvia von Harden*, 1925-26.



Figure 59. Unknown photographer. Photo of Sylvia von Harden, 1930s.



Figure 60. Willy Jaeckel. *Standing Girl*, 1928.



Der Bildhauer Deutschlands

Figure 61. *Der Bildhauer Deutschlands* (The Sculptor of Germany). From *Kladderdatsch* 86 (1933): 775.

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