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THE EARLY GRAPHIC WORKS OF KÄTHE KOLLWITZ 1867-1910.

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PREFACE

By concentrating generally on what can be loosely defined as Kollwitz's 'early graphic works', between the years 1867 and 1910, I hope to trace the development of Kollwitz's artistic career during these years with particular attention given to the major influences, which are historical, literary, political, social, personal and artistic, which inspired her to create such memorable series of prints as "Ein Weberaufstand" and "Bauernkrieg", and to recognise the lasting influence that they generated on her work and her life until her death in 1945. Around 1910 there was a marked shift in the direction of Kollwitz's work. Her artistic career can then be loosely divided into two phases. In the first phase, Kollwitz's work is narrative, revolutionary in spirit and meticulous attention is given to detail. In the second or latter phase of Kollwitz's artistic career, her work tends towards simplification, monumentalisation and generalization of form and expression. Few of her later works are fired with the revolutionary spirit which predominates her early work.

In both phases of her artistic career, the mainspring of her art was the evocation of emotion, and to do that she had to concentrate on what was timeless and unchanging, which is why she is as relevant today as she was earlier this century.

INTRODUCTION

> "I am in complete agreement with
> the fact that my art has a purpose.
> I wish to work in this age, an age
> in which people are so perplexed and
> so in need of help." [1]

Käthe Kollwitz was an incorruptible woman, an artist with clear and simple aims; a socialist who was and remained as a matter of course, a socialist in an undeviating way. The art of Käthe Kollwitz spans out over sixty years of creativity, and, while she endeavoured to give her art a purpose as a voice for the proletariat, her great technical ability and the emotive strength inherent in her work are often overlooked.

Today Käthe Kollwitz is celebrated in Germany as one of the forerunners of Socialist-Realism in art, yet, she is relatively little-known outside Germany, with the exception of China, where Kollwitz's popularity survived the cultural revolution. Today there is a good deal of discussion about the possibilities and development of a socially responsive art, but amidst such discussions, Kollwitz's name is rarely raised. The reasons for this neglect are rooted in several calculated and/or unconscious notions that have dominated art history and criticism in the post-World-War-Two period until quite recently. Like John Heartfield, the poster-maker, and Lea Grundig, an artist with aims and ideas close to those of Kollwitz, and a few others, Kollwitz has often been remembered primarily as a propagandist of left-wing or radical-socialist/humanist ideals, rather than as an artist working from political and human sources concerned with the problems of aesthetics. Even though Kollwitz was of the same generation

as Edvard Munch (1863-1944) and Emile Nolde (1867-1956) and was aware of the cultural changes and trends around her, she remained relatively unaffected by the many new and radical styles, with the exception of the Expressionists use of the Black and White Woodcut in the 1920's. This in itself could account for the omission of Kollwitz's name from many histories of art. The fact that Kollwitz herself evolved a uniquely expressive and equally radical style as the other modes of expression being developed at the time, makes her art historical absence all the more anomalous and questionable.

In the midst of the anti-fascist struggles of the 1940's, Kollwitz was compared world-wide to Daumier, Goya and Rembrandt. In the 1950's, with the triumph of modernism, her work became "illustrational", "obvious", "emotional" and "literary". Kollwitz was virtually ignored during the 1960's.[2] Since her death in 1945, Kollwitz has remained a neglected figure because, as is the case with many artists, she fails to fit into any classified art movements. The problem rests with the fact that no category as such exists to accommodate these artists and to thereby re-establish their relevance to art history and to other categorized art movements. The importance of Kollwitz's work cannot be denied, in terms of her own lifetime and also in relation to the time in which we live today. Her effect on her time did not come to an end with her death. Indeed, a few of her posters are still reproduced for political purposes. Kollwitz's most striking prints and posters seem particularly appropriate in our time in the struggle against war and for peace, disarmament and humanitarian principles. Kollwitz wanted her art to have an effect on the way people thought and felt in times of severe and intolerable deprivation. Kollwitz was indeed a propagandist but she followed no specific party line. She had sympathies with the Communist Party; she worked with the Socialist Democratic party for a time and she identified with any pacifist/socialist political thought, whether or not

within a party.

> "I feel I must not shy from the responsibility of being an advocate. I must speak of human suffering which never ends." [3]

To find a new context in which to consider Kollwitz's art it has, firstly, to be looked at in relation to her experiences, her social and political sentiments, her sex and her family with its long tradition of non-conformism and revolutionary activity. The mainspring of her work has to be looked for in Königsberg where she was born. This force was so strong and powerful that it determined the entire direction of her artistic development. Though Kollwitz lived and worked in Berlin for more than fifty years, one would never include her in the Berlin group of artists of her day, as one would, say, in the case of Heinrich Zille or Otto Nagel.

Königsberg is not merely Kollwitz's birthplace; it is the origin and point of departure of her work as an artist and the key to her future development.

Kollwitz's art developed along very clear lines. Her early works are narrative; active people are shown in their environments. These situations usually reflect real-life events from history, from her environment and very often from poetry and literature. These early works are of major relevance in discussing Kollwitz's later achievements. It is these early works that show the direction in which her artistic and personal development proceeded. Actions are reproduced less in her later works, replaced by the illustration of passive conditions, namely suffering, waiting, enduring. Her early works determine the direction, content, emotional and social relevance of her later work. Her choice of the proletariat as her subject matter as a young artist in Königsberg and Berlin remained the subject of her work all her life.

While she was still a student, Kollwitz adopted the print as a means by which the maximum audience could be reached. In the first decade of this century she moved from social themes inspired by literature (writers such as Zola, Dickens, Hauptmann) to works which drew on her experiences as a doctor's wife and as a mother in the slums of Berlin.

The art and politics of Käthe Kollwitz emerged from her social life, her background in Königsberg, her experiences, her concern with the less fortunate and also from her historical and literary awareness. These influences are evident in all of her works, but are most obvious in her early drawings and graphic works. Before Kollwitz had reached her thirties she had evolved a uniquely expressive style and had developed her printing techniques to near perfection. During the years 1890 to 1908 Kollwitz had completed two tremendously competent series of prints - "Ein Weberaufstand" (A Weaver's Rebellion), (1897-1900) and "Bauernkrieg" (The Peasants' War) (1903-1908) - and also countless drawings of the workers in Königsberg, of women and children in the slums of Berlin, numerous self-portraits and many great etchings and lithographs.

In both "Ein Weberaufstand" and "Bauernkrieg" Kollwitz developed techniques that she continued to use throughout her artistic career. Both series of prints are based on historical/literary events. In "Ein Weberaufstand" she deals with the plight of the Silesian Weavers. She was inspired to produce a series of prints about the weavers having seen Gerhart Hauptmann's play 'Die Weber' (The Weavers) in 1848, which reflects this event. In "Bauernkrieg" Kollwitz deals with another historical event. She was inspired to produce this series after reading Zimmermann's "The Great German Peasants' War". The heroic figure of Black Anna, the revolutionary peasant, who incited the peasants to rebel against their profiteering landlords and employers, provided Kollwitz with an image of woman as

revolutionary which she had been continually searching for in history and literature since she was a student. Kollwitz identified herself with many of the women figured in historical and literary events. When she created "Kampf" (Struggle) (1893), she depicted an episode from Emile Zola's novel "Germinal" in which two men, Lantier and Chaval, fight over a young woman, Catherine. Kollwitz resembles the figure of Catherine and the emotional charge in the picture looks forward to future developments. Most of Kollwitz's earlier work is generally that of illustrative genre whereas her later work is more ambiguous and generalized. As her work developed, the narrative element ceased to be of utmost importance as it was in "Ein Weberaufstand", "Bauernkrieg", and most of her early works.

The unremitting gloom in Kollwitz's work is an inherent and integral part of her work. She frequently chose to depict such themes as death, loss, misery and suffering. In her later work the themes become more obvious and more direct. One tends to read about an event, which incorporated such themes as misery and death, in her earlier creations. In her later works themes such as Death take on a visible form. In the series "Ein Weberaufstand" death is not so much seen as described. Death emanates from the expressions on the faces of the weavers and their families. In her series of eight lithographs simply entitled "Death" (1934-1935), done towards the end of her career, death becomes human, and something that she relates to her own life. In these prints she depicts Death as aggressive, passive, an enemy and a friend ("Death Recognized as a Friend" 1934-1935), a comforter ("Death holding a girl on his lap" 1934), and in each case death is depicted as either the traditional skeleton or a shadowy black human form. However unrelated much of Kollwitz's work would appear to be to politics, her work was usually (intentionally or not) related to the adverse political climate in which she lived. She reacted to the established German Fascist government with the prophetic cycle "Death". Her use of the figure of Death as an

enemy goes back to the popular medieval concept of the "dance of death". The converse of this, the idea of Death as a friend, is borrowed from A. Rethel's woodcut series "Another Dance of Death" (1848).[4] Although it may appear that Kollwitz relied heavily upon social and historical events and concepts, it must be remembered that many of her European contemporaries, notably Edvard Munch, relied on similar, if not the same, concepts.

A marked shift took place in the philosophical position underlying Kollwitz's work at the time of World War One. Having lost her son, Peter, in 1914, the war had made a confirmed pacifist of Kollwitz. In the light of this conviction, Kollwitz gave up the revolutionary principle that condones battle as a means of changing social conditions. In "Ein Weberaufstand" and "Bauernkrieg" the themes of revolt and rebellion give these series of prints their emotive strength. In her later works her pacifism is what gives her work its emotive strength.

The period 1910 to 1918 represents something of a hiatus in Kollwitz's work. Her work was crippled for quite some time following the death of Peter, her son. Of equal significance was her new found interest in sculpture. Kollwitz began to look more and more at the situations around her for inspiration and not so much, as she had done before, to historical or literary events. Now she focused exclusively on the human figure, using it alone to convey the social problems she envisaged. She was so practised in her draughtsmanship at this stage that she rarely relied on models.

During her early years of creativity the themes that Kollwitz chose to depict were to stay with her throughout her life. It was during these years that she developed a style that was to eventually become a freer drafting style, enabling Kollwitz to dispense with detail in order to focus on essential elements. Her formal strategies were integrated with her

content. There are no weak spots in her shapes or compositions; like her figures, they are compact and earthbound, held together by a suggested solidity/solidarity. In the person of each weary woman, bowed under oppression she is helpless to affect directly, is the hidden courage and endurance that permits her to survive.

Kollwitz firmly integrated her social experiences, her ethics and her politics with her art, so much so that this in itself set her apart from her contemporaries and to confuse the chroniclers. Kollwitz's position was not, as it may seem to be, that of an isolated rebel. If we consider the dominant styles in art in the 1870's and 1880's, ranging from the wax museum realism of Anton Werner's school in Berlin to Makart's cult of beauty in Vienna, then Kollwitz's view appears almost to be the reaction we would expect from progressive middle-class intellectuals and from workers committed to the Social Democratic Party. Also, Kollwitz employed fairly traditional methods of drawing to give expression to her equally traditional choice of subject matter - mother and child. However, Kollwitz did not cling to what Bertolt Brecht referred to as "tried rules of narrative..., eternal aesthetic laws".[5] Kollwitz used all means derived from art and derived from other sources, "to render reality to men is a form they can master".[4]

Kollwitz's art can be viewed as both 'popular' and 'realist'. It can be seen as popular art insofar as she created her art for the broad masses who are oppressed by the few. Kollwitz's art is realist in the sense that it, in the words of Brecht, discovered:

> "...the casual complexes of society/
> unmasking the prevailing view of things
> as the view of those who are in power/
> writing from the standpoint of the class
> which offers the broadest solutions for
> the pressing difficulties in which human

> society is caught up/emphasizing the
> element of development/making possible
> the concrete, and making possible
> abstraction from it." [6]

As already mentioned, Kollwitz integrated her life and her art thoroughly. Because she employed fairly traditional means to give expression to her art does not qualify Kollwitz as a 'realist', realism is not a question of form.

The depiction of life in her work must be compared with the life itself that she depicted, instead of comparing it with other depictions. To do otherwise is to place Kollwitz in too rigidly defined modes of narrative.

The pessimism, the unremitting gloom of almost all Kollwitz's work makes her approach to her subject quite untraditional and untypical. Most modern art has been concerned with problems which have to do with art itself rather than with life. Bertolt Brecht stressed the need for artists and writers to deal with real situations:

> "I am speaking from experience when I say
> that one need not be afraid to produce daring,
> unusual things for the proletariat so long as
> they deal with its real situation. There will
> always be people of culture, connoisseurs of
> art, who will interject:
> 'Ordinary people do not undertand that'.
> But the people will push these persons impatiently
> aside and come to a direct understanding with artists."[7]

The fact that Kollwitz was a woman working in a male dominated art world was a major obstacle. Perhaps the existing forms of art for the ideas men had were inadequate for the ideas that Kollwitz and other 'women artists'

had. Susana Torne is quoted as saying that:

> "perhaps women, unable to identify with historical styles, are really more interested in art itself, in self-expression and its collective history and communication, differing from the traditional notion of the avant-garde by opposing, not styles and forms, but ideologies."[8]

Kollwitz's politics emerged from her social life and her literary and historical awareness. She dealt with tragedy, not pathos, though tragedy was not usually associated with the lines of working-class people. Her formal strategies were integrated with her content. Kollwitz's work arises not only from artistic, political and literary motives, but also from ethical motives. During her youth, the aesthetic aspect of her work was of foremost importance to her. Later, as she mastered her drawing and printing techniques, her commitment to Socialist principles was the driving force behind works such as "Seed Corn must not be Ground." (Fig. 18). Kollwitz did not want her aesthetic productions seen simply as topical art or political manifestos based on ethical imperatives. She wanted them to be regarded as objects of lasting value, which might well have been created for specific occasions (leaflets, posters, works commissioned for political uses) but which contained demands as yet unfulfilled, demands for decent living conditions for all and for a lasting peace.

During Kollwitz's artistic career, writers and artists in general were concerned with different issues to those of Kollwitz and a few others who dealt with social themes in an accusing or satirical manner. The latter were the exceptions among avant-garde artists rather than the rule. An affinity existed between these minority artists and writers. Artists tended more and more to refer to writings which sympathized with the needs of the working classes. The parables in these artists' visual interpretations

of some literary account rarely coalesced into direct borrowings - Kollwitz's use of Gerhart Hauptmann's play "Die Weber" (The Weavers) is the major exception (this will be discussed later). In rejecting their idealistic or romantic predecessors, and in pursuing their interest in the unadorned world of the poor, the naturalistic artists and writers found themselves frequently in a similar historical position.

Kollwitz did not object to interpretations that viewed her work from the perspective of economic and intellectual history. On the contrary, she encouraged such interpretations. Key terms, like 'early socialism', 'duty', and 'tendentious art' suggest historical experiences of her lifetime, experiences that were incorporated into her work. Throughout her life, Kollwitz was dependent upon the concrete in content as well as in form. Her art, based on 'academic realism', developed from this combination, and from it she took her greatest strength. Naturalism meant, for Kollwitz, a way of portraying reality as it was. For Kollwitz it represented a movement that rejected the social contentions of the time and aimed at portraying nature and people in a traditional style but without pathos or patronizing idealization. Emile Zola found beauty in natural and human 'ugliness', as did Ibsen, Strindberg, Tolstoy, Dostoievsky and Hauptmann. Kollwitz found inspiration in all their works. Literature was one of the main inspirations that produced some of Kollwitz's greatest graphic works in the early stages of her career, such as "Ein Weberaufstand" (Weaver's Rebellion), and "Bauernkrieg" (The Peasants' War).

Kollwitz's environment in Königsberg and in Berlin played an equally important role in her life and was a decisive influence on her choice of the proletariat as the subject of her work. This influence is obvious in her diaries:

"the unsolved problems of the workers continually

> tormented me ... It was partly, the realisation of these problems which obliged me to portray the working classes, and in their constant and repeated portrayal, I found an outlet which helped me to bear with living." [9]

Kollwitz commenced her studies during a time of many cultural upheavals. Her repeated occupation with Naturalism reaffirms her belief that naturalistic art alone was able to produce that general effect which she strove after with great determination. During her lifetime various major artistic developments were in progress. According to William S. Liebermann, writing about the relationship between Paula Modersohn-Becker and Kollwitz, the two women "stand between Post-Impressionism and Expressionism"[10]. This can hardly be held as true - since - Kollwitz worked strictly in black and white. Colour was a major element in both movements, particularly to the Post-Impressionists, with whom Kollwitz had little in common. Kollwitz was closer, especially during the 1920's, to the Expressionists, whose black and white woodcuts influenced Kollwitz and inspired her to create quite a number of prints in this medium. Her "Memorial for Karl Liebknecht" (Fig. 17), is a superb example of her mastery of this medium.

Kollwitz had a need to dispel polarities, to fuse expressionism and simplicity, to heal wounds and to balance contradictions. Such fusing is perhaps the product of isolation. The loner (and most artists have little choice but to be loners) remains outside of major art movements and foregoes the role of leader within a set style. This is true of other (women) artists working during Kollwitz's lifetime, such as Lea Grundig (an artist who chose to reflect the terrors of war having spent two years in Auschwitz) and Paula Modersohn-Becker. These artists, despite the fact that they are recognised as great <u>women</u> artists of their day, still remain neglected

figures. According to Brecht, there is not only such a thing as being popular, there is also the process of becoming popular. To quote Brecht, "we must do something for the intelligibility of new works today." [11]

Kollwitz tried to create an art that would reflect the lives of the proletariat. Unlike her predecessors, such as Millet and even Courbet, Kollwitz's use of naturalism and realism was not romantic. Kollwitz tried to resolve the conflict between the exactness of naturalism and generality of form without becoming over-sentimental. She sought simplification and monumentalization of form. As she grew older she reduced forms to their essentials.

The polarization of the personal and political has led to the current and disastrous neutralization of art within the international art scene; it is accompanied, or caused by the simultaneous modification of socially uninvolved art from modernist art history. For a large segment of the contemporary art audience, due to such conditioning, the combined formal and emotional integrity of Kollwitz's work are almost impossible to see. This is not merely a matter of style, but of context and values. Kollwitz was indeed a loner, not because she was rebelling against current trends in the mainstream, but because she was extremely clear about her own priorities. Not only did she follow her feelings, she acted upon them with conviction.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Early Years

> "Sadness is a larger thing than social misery. It is life that contains everything within itself, and it is life that I am confronting in my work." [1]

This statement is the justified complaint by Käthe Kollwitz, an artist who was always intent on uniting both the finite and infinite, the fragment and the whole, in her aesthetic conceptions. Kollwitz did not want her aesthetic productions seen simply as topical art or as political manifestos based on ethical imperatives. Kollwitz had a fear that the subject matter she wanted to portray would forfeit its inner range and sense of wholeness if it were seen solely as created works independently. Whether or not their message was politically relative, their meaning was universal.

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From the earliest stages of her career, Kollwitz's work and personality were shaped by two major factors: the intellectual atmosphere of her home and the physical environment of Königsberg, the East Prussian city where she was born - in 1867 - and grew up. At home, the tone was set by her grandfather Julius Rupp (1809-1884), founder of the first Free Religious Congregation, a non-conformist evangelical church in Germany. This group rejected the authority of the State church and was committed to combining the ideals of early Christianity with the democratic impulses of the period. Kollwitz's father, Karl Schmidt, took over the leadership of the Free Religious Congregation after Rupp's death. Karl Schmidt was a successful builder who had learned his trade after qualifying as a lawyer. As a Social Democrat in a Germany hostile to all dissenting views, he recognised

that his party would compromise his prospects. Karl Schmidt was a man unusual for his time and place. Discouraged with the political climate of Bismarck's Prussia, he became intrigued by the ideas of Karl Marx. Marx's message of socialist revolution had resulted in an abortive, premature revolt of Berlin workers in 1848, a few months after his views were printed in a pamphlet entitled "The Worker's Declaration of Independance," [2] which became one of the most popular pieces of political writings of the day. The socialist conviction that the proletariat was destined to overtake the bourgeoisie had captured the imagination and devotion of many, among them Karl Schmidt. Having joined the Social Democrats he knew it would be disastrous to practise law in right-wing Prussia; hence his reason for turning to the art of stonemasonry.

Kollwitz's mother, Katharina Schmidt, also possessed artistic and literary interests. As the daughter of Julius Rupp, Katharina Schmidt had been raised to be religiously and politically broad-minded. Influenced by the intellectual environment of the day, and, as a socialist, Katharina Schmidt wanted to give her children as many opportunities as possible. At home, Katharina Schmidt took time doing successful copies of the Old Masters, and reading Shakespeare, Byron and Shelley in original English - an uncommon achievement for an East Prussian woman of her day.

The Schmidt children, following their parents' lead, developed a keen interest in contemporary problems and issues. Kollwitz owed her schooling in socialistic thinking not only to her parents but also to her older brother Konrad, who maintained a correspondence with Friedrich Engels and became the editor of the official Social Democratic Party publication "Vorwärts". He became for Kollwitz a kind of political guide and mentor. Kollwitz was influenced by Konrad's political beliefs and it was Konrad who helped to launch her on the reading of the great and, by the standards

of the time, dangerous moderns: Ibsen (1829-1906), Zola (1840-1902), Tolstoy (1828-1910), Dostoievsky (1821-1881), Gorki (1868-1936) and even Karl Kautsky's (1854-1938) interpretations of Marx's ideas. Economics, too, was also as much a part of the Schmidt's intellectual fare as philosophy, literature and history. They did not regard German classical literature, which is bourgeois in origin, and socialist theory as irreconcilable opposites but rather as related phenomena, both of which had valid exemplary characteristics. In this attitude the Schmidts were fully in accord with the cultural policy of the Social Democratic Party at the time of Bismark's anti-socialist legislation (around 1879 Bismarck had enforced "antisocialist laws" restricting the activities of the SPD). However, Kaiser Wilhelm II (Grandson of Bismarck) repealed these laws in 1889, motivated more by his dislike of Bismarck than by love of the SPD. The SPD acted as an underground organisation for more than a decade as a result of Bismarck's antisocialist laws.

Karl Schmidt was quick to encourage Kollwitz's early and obvious talent for drawing and provided her with academic training early on in a girls academy in Königsberg. Not all her developing intellect was concentrated on drawing however. She enjoyed the history and literature taught there. More importantly, her parents gave their children the opportunity to develop themselves by opening up their library. It was here Kollwitz discovered many German writers such as Gotthold Lessing, Heinrich Heine, Johann von Goethe. Goethe became her favourite poet and she continued to read him throughout her life.

Kollwitz's parents favoured popular naturalistic verse. Goethe belonged more to the German tradition of romantic lyricism in German classical literature. Both modes influenced Kollwitz. Karl Schmidt encouraged his children to appreciate poetry by often reading aloud to them. One of his

favourite works was Freilignath's translation of the English poet Thomas Hood's "The Song of the Shirt", written in the 1870's. It was translated into many languages and reprinted in many newspapers in order to expose the inhumane conditions of the factory workers:

> "With fingers weary and worn
> With eyelids weary and red
> A woman sat in unwomanly rags
> Plying her needle and thread
> Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
> In poverty hunger and dirt
> And still with voice of dolorous pitch
> She sang "The Song of the Shirt!" [3]

Both Kollwitz and her father were deeply moved by this poem. Kollwitz was also deeply impressed by another poem of Freilignath's "The Dead to the Living", in which the voices of the March Dead summon all survivors of that revolution to arm against capitalist profiteers and decadent monarchs. Thirty years before, on March 8, 1848, the Kaiser's militia had killed two hundred labourers, who, inspired by a French uprising a month earlier by the recently published Communist manifesto, were protesting against unjust working conditions outside the Kaiser's palace in Berlin. Kollwitz identified with the March Dead martyrs and with their revolutionary spirit which she depicts clearly in her two series of etchings "Ein Weberaufstand" and "Bauernkrieg". The poem "The Dead to the Living" made an indelible impression on Kollwitz:

> "Battles on the barricades, with father and
> Konrad taking part, and myself loading their
> rifles - these were some of my fantasies of
> heroism at this time." [4]

Later in life, Kollwitz reflected on the various influences which affected her during this most formative period:

> "In adolescence, one's talent is nourished by the influences surrounding one. At this age, everyone is gifted because of one's responsiveness. Parents employ various methods to give us an opportunity to develop ourselves further without placing things under our very noses. For example, the book-cupboard was always open to us as children and it was never asked of us what we chose from it ... My father also read aloud to us from time to time. This poem made an indelible impression upon me." [5]

Karl Schmidt provided Kollwitz with drawing lessons when she had finished in the girl's academy. Kollwitz took traditional lessons in drawing from the engravery, Rudolf Mauer, who had her concentrate on drawing heads, working mainly from pictures and plaster casts. She soon began enlivening and expanding this work with drawings from life which she made on her walks through the streets of Königsberg and along the docks. She described being powerfully drawn to the type of motif that would later become a permanent part of her working repertoire. What prompted Kollwitz to seize on these subjects was no childish whim but rather a strong and genuine interest in the lives of the working classes. As she put it herself:

> "Motifs chosen from this sphere offered me, simply and directly, what I felt to be beautiful .... The largesse of movement in the working people was beautiful. People from middle-class life were completely without interest for me. Everything about bourgeois life struck me as pedantic. The movements of the proletariat were, by contrast, large and expansive." [6]

Kollwitz's position, as revealed in this statement was not that of an isolated rebel, if we consider the dominant styles in art in the 1870's

and 1880's, ranging from the wax museum realism of Anton Werner's school in Berlin to Makart's cult of beauty in Vienna, then Kollwitz's view appears almost to be the reaction one would expect from forward looking intellectuals and from workers committed to the Social Democratic Movement. During this period, Russian, Scandanavian and French literature were the major sources of inspiration for art in Germany. Emile Zola, the major representative of naturalism in literature, had made the decline and fall of a Parisian working-class family the subject of his novel "L'Assommoir", which appeared in 1877. This was the first serious portrayal of proletarian life in European art. Admittedly various artists (the Realists, for example) had attempted to portray a convincing picture of proletarian and peasant life. The distinction, however, has been between two attitudes towards experience, formed in the main by, as John Berger puts it, the artists:

> "imaginative and intellectual grasp of what is happening, changing in his or her world ... a distinction between a submissive worship of events just because they occur, and the confident inclusion of them within a personally constructed but objectively truthful world view. This distinction ought to apply to the visual arts, but up to now it has only been applied, with sufficient light, to literature." [8]

"L'Assommoir" represented a convincing departure from the tenuous and empty images of humanity offered in French literature at that time. In the world of painting a similar pre-occupation with the bourgeoisie and bourgeoise values permeated the works of artists, such as Jules Garnier, who pampered to bourgeois taste. The spread of industrialism and mercantilism created a new bourgeoisie that was sufficiently strong to assume the once-traditional role of the nobility as sponsors of art. A society chiefly motivated by profit, power and comfort (such as existed in France and Germany in the

late 1900's) had, of course, little use for artistic integrity and imaginative creativity. The bourgeoisie sought and found painters able to translate its values into pictures, thus giving rise to a school of art replete with banality and vapid themes, to a saccharine romanticism which delighted in such subjects as "Entering the Convent", and "The Bathing Venus". A certain degree of originality was tolerated and accepted, but only if the artist was careful not to transcend the boundaries of conventionality.

As Kollwitz grew older, she became increasingly influenced by naturalist artists and writers. These artists and writers rejected social conventions and aimed at portraying nature and people without "false pathos or idealisation." [8] The values sought by men and women were to be found in this world and in its tragedy, and to be confidently included within an objectively truthful world view. The workers and peasants were discovered as subjects by artists such as Millet. Millet became increasingly popular in Germany, as did those German artists who were influenced by him. Despite, however, the conservative tendencies that permeated the work of Millet and the Rural Realists, their art had a considerable influence on Kollwitz in her early years. In literature the changes were more radical. Zola saw and wrote about reality without idealisation, as did Ibsen, Strindberg, Dostoievsky, Gerhart Hauptmann and Halbe. Other radical changes also encorporated a highly emotional view of man as isolated in his or her emotional dilemma. Painters such as Edvard Munch gave visual form to these notions. Kollwitz, too, found inspiration in all their works. When Munch exhibited later in Germany, Kollwitz was deeply impressed by his work and also by a new play by Max Halbe entitled "Youth". Both these artists simultaneously influenced and impressed Kollwitz.

According to Kollwitz's own testimony it was literature that exerted the strongest general influence on her. Overall, however, it was Goethe who exerted the strongest lasting impression on her. The literary world of Goethe was vast and enthralling for Kollwitz. Yet it must be noted that in her own work she did not reflect Goethe's attitudes. In his "Falconet" essay, an early tribute to Goethe's debt to the tradition of the visual arts in the Netherlands, Goethe sees Rembrandt as the presiding genius, yet there is no realization of the tragic and sublime aspects of his work, of the aspects which make Rembrandt, in the eyes of many, the greatest painter who has ever lived. Goethe's own aversion from the tragic elements of existence, as portrayed by artists such as Rembrandt and Kollwitz, would probably, had he seen Kollwitz's work, have made him as impervious to this important aspect of her work as it did to his view of Rembrandt.

Goethe was allied in his life with the aristocracy of the small court of Weimar, whose duke he served as a minister, writer in residence and, so to speak, cultural ornament. As he grew older he became more conservative in his views. Some might say that he became increasingly olympian and reactionary.

Despite the enthusiasm which led Kollwitz to memorize large segments of Goethe's poetry (she particularly favoured his "Faust"), she could never share his lofty unconcern for the fate of the common people. Kollwitz's art, while strongly influenced by her personal feelings, is in no way governed by biography. Her personal feelings and experiences do not seem to be limited to herself, but ascend to the level of general human experience. With Goethe it was different. According to Goethe, the truth is:

> "that what the artist has not loved and
> does not love, s/he cannot and should not
> depict ... keeping to generalities gets

> you nowhere. Limitation is as necessary to the artist as to anyone who wants to make something significant of himself or herself." [9]

Kollwitz saw that Goethe wanted "the greatest possible versatility and breadth", while she wanted "limitation in all things except for what I really wanted it in." [10] It is this intentional limitation on which the effect produced by her art is largely based.

Kollwitz was more akin to Emile Zola in her concern for the common people. For Kollwitz Goethe was "a lord of language" in a phrase used by Oscar Wilde, Kollwitz's clear vision and strong mind enabled her to form and act on opinions that Goethe seldom would have tolerated. Like Zola, Kollwitz dealt with tragedy and not pathos. The words of Zola in 1877 seem to precede Kollwitz's own sentiments:

> "I want to depict the inevitable downfall of a working-class family in the polluted atmosphere of our urban areas ... the progressive loss of decent feelings and, as the climax, shame and death. It is mortality in action, just that." [11]

gsberg - A Lasting Influence.

Despite the fact that literature was an enormous influence and source of inspiration for Kollwitz, it was the people around her and the environment in Königsberg that survived as the lasting influence on her art. She was capable of making the troubles of others her own. Sorrow was for her, in the words of Gerhart Hauptmann, "a mighty power ... as varied as life itself." [12]

Human misery was a determining factor in Kollwitz's artistic career and in a threefold way: through description of misery taken from literature, through the misery she saw in her environment, and finally through the misery which entered into her own life after the death of her son, Peter, at eighteen in 1914. It was her own personal experiences of grief and suffering and her ability to share the grief and sorrow of others upon which her power of creative compassion was based. Königsberg is not only the place where Kollwitz was born and grew up in. It is the origin and point of departure of Kollwitz's work, and the key to her future development.

In retrospect we can discern in her mature works the perfect solutions to the problems she had encountered in the early stages of her career. While Kollwitz had from very early on gained contact with the working-class, in whose lives she could observe most distinctively one side of human misery, Kollwitz's diaries contain very illustrative descriptions of her excursions through the harbour district of Königsberg:

> "The labourer type very much attracted me and strongly influenced my later work thematically." [13]

and:

> "The reason why over a long period all my later works took their subject-matter exclusively from the world of the workers is to be found in those long walks I took through the narrow streets of our busy trading city with its large working-class population." [14]

ialism

While Kollwitz was studying in Königsberg she came into contact, through her brother, Konrad, with Karl Kollwitz, a medical student. Both Konrad and Karl accepted the premises of the Social Democratic Party as their own.

As Kollwitz became acquainted with their political scene, she began to participate in their conversations and discussions. Much of this talk centered around August Bebel's writings. Bebel was co-founder of the S.D.P. and his pioneering work "Women and Socialism" had been published a few years earlier in 1879 and had already caused a great stir throughout Germany. According to Bebel it was the goal of the socialists to:

> "not only achieve equality of men and women under the present social order, which constitutes the sole aim of the bourgeois women's movement, but to go far beyond this and to remove all barriers that make one human being dependent upon another." [15]

In 1883 Kollwitz was old enough to enter Königsberg's Academy of Art. It was here, at sixteen, that Kollwitz first encountered institutionalized discrimination. Being female, she could not be admitted to the Academy. Fortunately her father understood the importance of training, or at least an artistic environment, to a young artist and so he enrolled her in studies with a relatively well-known painter in Königsberg, Emile Neide. Neide painted naturalistic scenes and he enjoyed a small reputation as the painter of one powerful canvas entitled "Weary of Life". Neide did not initiate painting styles, ideas or techniques, but he knew his trade, and with this he expertly and competently interpreted the tenents of naturalism to Kollwitz. In 1883 under Neide's instruction, Kollwitz composed an illustration to Freilignath's poem "The Emmigrants". This drawing portrayed the subjects, newly-arrived immigrants, resembling the native inhabitants of Königsberg.

The year 1884 brought many changes in Kollwitz's life. Her grandfather, Julius Rupp, died. Also Karl Kollwitz and Kollwitz (then Schmidt) became engaged. In the same year Kollwitz made an exciting and memorable journey to Berlin with her mother and her sister, Lise. In Berlin they stayed

with their older sister, Julie, where, by chance, her husband had met the dramatist Gerhart Hauptmann. During their visit, Hauptmann gave a dinner party to which the Schmidts' were invited. At the party Hauptmann read aloud from Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar". For Kollwitz, it was "an evening that left its mark ... a wonderful foretaste of the life which was gradually but irresistibly opening up for me." [16]

During this fruitful period in which Kollwitz grew up in Königsberg, the influences generated from all directions - politics, history, literature, family and environment - were firmly established with Kollwitz. It is clear, therefore, that from the very outset a commitment that was human as well as aesthetic was supported by a socio/political, historical awareness quite extraordinary in her time.

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER TWO

Kampf

lin

When Kollwitz began her art studies in Berlin in 1884 at the School of Art for Women, it was at this time that the antagonism between the two offshoots of the Romantic movement in Germany - genre and symbolistic realism and socio/rural realism - was just beginning to emerge. On the one hand there were the Idealists, such as Arnold Böcklin, whose art was based on imagination and ideas. These images were near enough to reality to have relevance to peoples' lives, and they were far enough removed to excite a feeling of mystery. On the other hand there were the Rural Realists such as Millet. Böcklin seemed to answer a deep need for an art that went beyond appearance and gave meaning to a world that was rapidly changing. At that time Germany was experiencing rapid industrialisation, moving from a largely agrarian economy where power and authority rested with the local professional classes to an industrial economy whose power-base lay in the cities with the banks and large companies. This brought with it an enormous upheaval in social and cultural values, and, in its turn, a conservative reaction. Kollwitz was heir to both these traditions, it is part of her achievement that she managed to fuse them into a vital whole.

There was another strain of Realism that had a more direct impact on Kollwitz's art. A realism that criticised the social conditions of the working classes and had a history in Germany that went back to the Düsseldorf School of the 1840's. This school produced artists that chose

to comment on issues such as the plight of the Silesian weavers, the crushing of the 1848 revolution and the repression that followed in 1849. Kollwitz a few years later chose the plight of the weavers as the subject for a series of prints.

ıger

Central to the revived interest in social issues was the work of Max Klinger (1857-1920). When Kollwitz commenced her studies in the Academy of Art for Women, her teacher, Karl Stauffer-Bern, recognised something akin to his friend Max Klinger's work in a drawing she had made in Königsberg, inspired by Freilignath's poem "The Emmigrants" to which he exclaimed: "But this is just like a Klinger!" [1] Kollwitz's drawing convinced Stauffer-Bern that Kollwitz could excel in the graphic arts of etching and lithography, requiring expert, subtle drawing skill, in which Klinger had perfected his own naturalist graphic techniques.

Under Stauffer-Bern's advice, Kollwitz concentrated on her drawing instead of her painting. Kollwitz had never head of Max Klinger, Prussia's most skilled artist working under the influence of naturalism. Naturalism emphasised photo-like images of actual persons, scenes and conditions, often in the most minute even microscopic detail. "The Emmigrants" convinced Stauffer-Bern that Kollwitz had the necessary drawing skills to develop in the style of Klinger. Kollwitz absorbed the stimulating effects of Stauffer-Bern's teaching. At his suggestion she went to see Klinger's "Ein Leben" (A Life) at a Berlin exhibition. In his meticulously detailed series of prints Klinger dealt with contemporary social problems such as urban prostitution, which he depicted in "Ein Leben" (188301884) and the effects of poverty on family life which he depicted in "Dramas" (1882-1883) in a highly serious manner. In "Ein Leben", Klinger simultaneously mirrored

and mocked moral hypocrisy, just as Zola did in literature. On seeing "Ein Leben", Kollwitz dimly but intensely felt that she wanted to follow in Klinger's direction: "It was the first work of his I had seen and it excited me tremendously." [2]

Klinger identified the causes of individual problems and followed the development through to the "final dénovement." [3] By interspersing these prints dealing with the same issues on a more philosophical or symbolic level, Klinger was attempting to remove the debate from the kind of trivialisation that much genre realism suffered from.

One print from "A Life", "Into the Gutter", shows a young woman being shoved into an open sewer by a horde of grotesque, sadistically grinning figures. This type of blatant symbolism, directly related to Goya, was to affect Kollwitz's own direction while she was still a student. Deeply impressed by both Klinger's and Zola's naturalist and moralist social themes, Kollwitz's own work started to develop along naturalistic lines. At this time, however, Kollwitz's work shows that she was primarily concerned with aesthetic rather than moral or social problems. "It was the optical attraction of the surroundings, however, rather than sympathy with the labourers world, which intrigued her." [4]

VICH

At the end of the school year, Kollwitz left Berlin with the assurance that Stauffer-Bern was interested in her work and would support her in pressing her father into letting her attend art school again the following winter. Back in Königsberg in 1887 she returned to her former teacher Emil Neide for drawing, and especially for painting lessons, for even though Stauffer-Bern had perceived her talent for the graphic arts, Kollwitz, influenced by her father's wish for her to be a painter, pursued with trying

to perfect her painting technique. At this time she was planning to return to Stauffer-Bern when she heard of his sudden death in Italy. Kollwitz, unable to resume her studies with Stauffer-Bern in Berlin, was sent to Munich. From 1888 to 1889 she attend Munich's Art College for Women and was tutored by Ludwig Heterich in his painting classes. The intellectual climate that Kollwitz entered in Munich in 1888 was sophisticated and challenging. Munich, like Paris, was the cultural and academic centre of the country, and, unlike the art schools in Berlin, the Art Academy in Munich had been founded on high aesthetic principles and progressive liberal attitudes. The Academy's sense of high purpose and its relaxed learning environment undoubtedly helped to set the tone which was highly receptive to the latest European Art and Thought.

Emile Zola's vivid, naturalistic novels exerted a great influence in this university world. The recent performance of Henrick Ibsen's "A Doll's House" with its message of women's emancipation from the bonds of marriage, along with Bebel's numerous public speeches, greatly changed the lives of many women. Bebel pointed out that "marriage constitutes one phase of sex relations of bourgeois society, prostitution constitutes the other." [5]

The Academy shared its professors with the women's college, hence Heterich became tutor to Kollwitz. Less insistent that Stauffer-Bern that she should focus upon drawing, Heterich welcomed Kollwitz into his painting class. "Heterich know how to train my eyes, and in Munich I really learned how to look." [6] Kollwitz, however, experienced some of her most beneficial art instruction and practice outside of class. Kollwitz was a member of the Composition Club, a group of artists made up the club. They would work at night giving Kollwitz the change to work independently in an informal atmosphere. Heterich's teaching seemed "mannered" [7] to Kollwitz.

His emphasis on colour was of no interest to her.

In the course of these years, Kollwitz came to realise that she had little talent for painting. She felt confirmed in this view after reading Klinger's pamphlet "Painting and Drawing", which argues that the proper medium for treating ideas is the graphic arts and not painting. This pamphlet, published in 1891, not only defines the differences between these media but also asserts that the one is not of itself greater than the other, merely more capable of dealing with different kinds of experience. According to Klinger, who was a painter and sculptor as well as a print-maker, painting is best suited to the expression of "the glorification, the triumph of the world", while graphics more satisfactorily describes "resignation... misery ... the pitiful creature in his eternal struggle." [8] Painters should idealise, therefore, while graphic artists attack and criticise, and Kollwitz had come to realise that her background and temperament were leading her towards an art that would portray social problems in a critical way.

According to Klinger, the graphic arts lacked the immediate appeal to the senses of painting, they were necessarily incomplete and unreal and so relied more on the imagination to complete what was missing. The artist should exploit these basic characteristics and emphasise:

> "the strong subjectivity of the artist. It is his world and view-point that s/he is representing, it is the artist's own personal observations on what is happening around him." [9]

The reading of this technical but stimulating essay led to one of the major turning points in Kollwitz's career. The pamphlet emphasized that:

"Drawing has a freer relationship (than painting) to the world; it gives fantasy wider play to imaginatively colour and enhance the thing represented ... Line, the oldest element in the visual arts, determines the whole form ... moreover, drawing in line invites one to cyclical compositions ... presenting the artist with a cornucopia of fantastic notions and images ... The draughtsman, however, looks perpetually at the unfilled holes ... the painter bodies forth optimism, but the draughtsman cannot escape his more negative vision beyond appearance." [10]

rminal

Kollwitz now realized that her background and temperament were leading her towards an art that would portray social problems in a critical way. She suddenly saw that she "was not a painter at all". [11] Kollwitz recognised herself as a graphic artist, as a result of many circumstances, but one major reason was her independence from the college and her membership of the Composition Club; an association of art students, mostly engravers. One incident particularly enforced Kollwitz's determination to excel in the graphic arts. It was the custom of the Club's members to select a topic for their evening's work. One night the Club chose "Kampf" (Struggle) as its theme. Kollwitz's illustration for this theme was based on a scene from "Germinal", Zola's powerful novel about a strike of coal miners in Northern France against their profiteering employers. From this novel Kollwitz cose the scene in which two men, Lantier and Chaval, fight over a young woman, Catherine, in a smoke-filled tavern. Her illustration received a good deal of attention and praise.

It was not pure coincidence that led Kollwitz to choose this subject,

"Germinal", which had appeared in 1885, had been a literary sensation.

> "All at once people began to see the same things everywhere; the misery of the proletariat, the degradation of human beings by modern wage slavery, and the gradual despoiling of the world caused by the spread of capitalism ... "Germinal" opened the eyes of all those who, up to this point, had not known what use to make of the revolutionary impulses they felt. Only now did they become aware of the soot-blackened, degrading aspects of the workers quarters in their own cities." [12]

In Munich during that same year, M.G. Conrad, an apostle of Zola's, founded the magazine "Die Gesellschaft" (Society) which rapidly became a forum for Zola enthusiasts. Hence, it is not difficult to see how french naturalist literature was beginning to emerge as a dominant style, and how in turn its effect on the visual arts was now beginning to increase.

Kollwitz's treatment of "Kampf" (Fig. 1) is generally still that of illustrative genre, but the hazy atmospheric light and the use of Catherine as the figure with whom to identify (she actually resembles Kollwitz herself) give the drawing a heightened emotional change that looks forward to future developments and her break from painting in favour of drawing and printing. In fact, Kollwitz was so pleased with the drawing and its subject matter that she was not a painter motivated her to seek more technical expertise from the newly reformed etching club, her sole source of education in the graphic arts at this time. However, her time in Münich soon came to an end and once more she found herself in Königsberg. A friend of Kollwitz's Helene Bloch, had a studio in Königsberg, and here Kollwitz and Bloch discussed socialism and feminism. In Königsberg both women met frequently and also read Kautsky's "Popularisation of Marx's Ideas." [13]

During this year in Königsberg, Kollwitz developed her style, having just read Klinger's pamphlet "Painting and Drawing". In this same year (1891) external circumstances did their part to make printing of secondary interest to her career. She married Dr. Karl Kollwitz, who was just opening a practice in a working-class section of Berlin. Kollwitz no doubt saw her decision to settle in Berlin and concentrate on the graphic arts as a compromise solution that allowed her to combine her marriage and a career. Shortly before the marriage, Kollwitz realised that when they were married studio space in a small apartment would be very limited. She then, out of necessity, discarded her ideas of painting. In a letter to Paul Hey, a student friend, she wrote:

> "In general I draw now more than I paint. From the practical consideration, I will hardly have enough money to rent a studio in the first year of my marriage; in the cramped quarters which one lives in there, to paint oil paintings is a sad thought. For the first time in my life I have conceived of a large plan for a painting: the struggle scene from "Germinal", which I had made as a charcoal sketch in Munich. I started it right away, but am stopped. I can't paint it anymore till spring, and in Berlin I can't pursue it because there will be no room. So I am making all the preparatory studies which I will need for it, and I etch everything so I will have as much practice as possible." [14]

A few weeks later on 13 June, 1891, Käthe Schmidt and Karl Kollwitz were married. The couple moved to an apartment on 25 Weissenburgerstrasse, No 58 in North Berlin, now East Berlin. From the start of their marriage, both Käthe and Karl worked. Karl spent most of his time at the clinic.

Kollwitz drew numerous studies of hands, nudes, a number of self-portraits and also reworked studies for her planned graphic series, "Germinal". She found these years of "quiet, hardworking life" as "unquestionably good for my further development". [15]

In the reworked etching of the drawing she made in 1890, "Kampf" (1893) (Fig. 2) demonstrates a more varied use of graphic techniques in the distorted perspective, the distribution of light and shade shows an emphasised dramatic conflict and personal involvement. The isolation of the figure Catherine to the extreme right of the unusually wide but low composition, a device borrowed from Klinger, concentrates attention on Catherine's fears and her role in the drama.

The move from provincial Königsberg to the country's major city forced Kollwitz to break off her studies of the characteristic situations of working-class life that she had begun in Königsberg. She found the Berlin working-class type totally different from that in her home city. The Berlin type struck her as being "on a higher level" and she found that, given the way she perceived this type in "all its visible manifestations", she was "not able to make any artistic use of it". [16] As a consequence her early work in Berlin must be seen, first, as a testing ground for new graphic techniques but also - and more significantly - as a search for and exploration of new motifs, whose intellectual models Kollwitz took from contemporary Naturalism. Both in their dramatic light-and-dark effects and in their emphasis on the psychological, the genre-like illustrations "Four men in a pub" (1892-1893), "City Outskirts" (1901) and "Young Couple" (1904) all show the influence of Edvard Munch, whose work was being shown in Berlin at the time.

irst Criticisms

Despite the preoccupations of her first year of motherhood, (she gave birth to Hans, the first of her two sons, in 1892) Kollwitz tried to place some of her work in shows.

> "My occasional efforts to exhibit failed. But in connection with one of these exhibitions, a show of the rejected applications was taking place, and I took part in this." [17]

The first public criticism of her work slandered her sex. The leading "establishment" art critic Ludwig Pietsch belittled the entire show by pointing out that one of its artists was a woman, quoting a line from Kollwitz's favourite poet Goethe's "Faust" that, "When the road leads to an evil place, woman has a head start in the race." [18]

In direct opposition to Pietsch was Julias Elias, who wrote:

> "In almost every respect the talent of a young woman stands out. A young woman who will be able to bear the insult of this first rejection lightly for she is assured of a rich artistic future. Frau Kollwitz perceives nature readily and intensely, using clear, well-formed lines. She is attracted to unusual light and deep colour tones. (Hers is) a very earnest display of artwork." [19]

For this praise of her work, which was dark in spirit and in style, like the work of Edvard Munch, whose pictures had caused a sensation in a Berlin exhibit the year before - Elias was branded an idiot by Pietsch. The dark, Nordic sensibility of Kollwitz and Munch was new to the Berlin Art World.

Acclaimed by some, it was downgraded by others.

Jugend

Kollwitz's early self-portraits are the first in a long series that represented a continuing adjunct to her creative life. They can be seen as biographical soundings taken in the flow of historical experiences and, in Werner Timm's phrase, as "psychograms of the world around her". [20] Kollwitz's first self-portrait with Karl, "Junges Paar (Selbtsbilnis)," (Young Couple (Self portrait)), (Fig. 3), an etching she made in 1893, projects a candid image of unsolved emotional strife. The self-absorbed woman sits on the edge of the bed, stunned by the realization of some uncomfortable but immutable truth. Another figure, Karl, faces the wall in the opposite direction to the woman. We do not see his face. In the woman's gaze there is a fatefulness that gives her face a sad quality of sad introspection.

In all, Kollwitz made three compositions of "Junges Paar". Both the first and second composition (etchings with drypoint done in 1893), she executed within the first two years of marriage. The last is an etching with aquatint that she made in 1904, eleven years later, probably as a final, technical exercise, for the 1893 versions are technically imperfect as the quality of the etchings is uneven. The year 1893 was a very important year in Kollwitz's life.

Max Halbe's dramatic love story "Jugend" (Youth), had its first performance in that year and made a great impression on Kollwitz. Halbe's play highlighted human problems; the psychological states inseperable from certain human situations - indeed, the problems of human existence as such, the kind of problems which Munch strove to give visual expression to at that time. Julias Elias had, as mentioned, already stressed the influence of

Munch on Kollwitz. The same influence is also apparent in the conception of "Junges Paar". This motif was inspired by Halbe's drama of love and these works indicate clearly that it would have been possible for her art to develop in an entirely different direction.

The drawings and prints produced during this period must be seen as major landmarks in Kollwitz's career, insofar as they determine what direction her work was to take. Some of these drawings and prints are extraordinarily accomplished and various influences are obvious; Zola's, Halbe's, Munch's and Klinger's influences. Although Klinger moved easily from esoteric symbolism to subjects without an obvious social or political comment, Kollwitz was interested solely in his satirical work which made some sort of socio/political comment. Klinger dealt with problems in family life in a series "Dramen" (Dramas) (1882-1883) in a highly serious way. Like Zola, Klinger identified the causes of individual problems and followed the development through to its tragic finale. Indeed Klinger, working in Leipzig from 1893, had made an early reputation for himself through his graphic cycles. In "Dramen" he was inspired by French Naturalist literature and he chose to depict the tragic, strife-ridden situations against the bleak background of the metropolis of Berlin.

In 1867 Zola had begun to work on a series of novels intended to follow out scientifically the effects of heredity and environment on one family - "Les Rougon-Macquart". This work contains twenty novels which appeared between 1871 and 1893 and is the chief monument of the French Naturalist movement. Zola said about L'Assommoir:

> "It is a work of truth. The first novel about the common people which does not tell lies but has the authentic smell of the common people." [21]

Zola dealt with the plight of the poor in a tragic, sympathetic light. Kollwitz, too, dealt with tragedy, which, until now, had not been associated with the common people. Zola had come under heavy criticism for his novels about the working-class family's tragic downfall. Tragedy was an enduring metaphor for both Zola's and Kollwitz's work.

FOOTNOTES

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2.	K. Kollwitz	Tagebuchblätter und Briefe	P.39
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9.	ibid.,		P.26
10.	M. Kearns	Woman and Artist	P.48
11.	K. Kollwitz	Tagebuchblätter und Briefe	P.40
12.	R. Hinz	Käthe Kollwitz - Graphics, Posters, Drawings	P.XVIII
13.	M. Kearns	Woman and Artist	P.51
14.	ibid.,		P.60
15.	K. Kollwitz	Tagebuchblätter und Briefe	P.42
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CHAPTER THREE

The Child of Sorrow

The Weavers

Käthe Kollwitz recalled February 28th, 1893, as a 'milestone' [1] in her career. This was the day when Hauptmann's play "Die Weber" (The Weavers) was first performed in Berlin by the company Freie Bühne. Since the censors had not released the play for public viewing, it could be offered only in private performances, and the police were even on duty to enforce this ruling. Nine years earlier, Kollwitz had visited Hauptmann with her mother and sister.

The play "Die Weber", which deals with the plight of the handloom weavers of Silesia and their desperate rebellion in 1844, made a deep impression on Kollwitz. Competition from the industrialised textile mills offered their product at a considerably lower price than the weavers could afford. The middlemen, wanting to keep their profits up, paid less for the hand-woven goods, thus reducing the weavers' income below subsistence levels.

The moral and political message of the play did not fall on deaf ears in the 1890's, when a wave of strikes was spreading throughout Germany. Fired with enthusiasm by the private premiere of "Die Weber", Kollwitz instinctively realised that the subject of the revolt of the Silesian Weavers could have a greater impact in Germany. It was a cause célèbre that still touched a raw nerve in the establishment. Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), the German poet and satirist, had published a poem about the events years earlier and Freilignath's "Dead to the Living" was a summon to continue the revolt

begun by the Silesian weavers of March 1848, however Hauptmann's play was simply too powerful a depiction of the misery and inevitable revolt caused by laissez-faire capitalism. The plight of the Silesian weavers was a textbook case, but the situation was widespread throughout Europe, and, right up to the turn of the century, it inspired many artists, such as Van Gogh, to depict the weavers working over their looms.

Kollwitz must have been aware of the popularity of this subject and probably knew Max Liebermann's characteristically neutral treatment of it in his painting "The Weaver" (1882) and his more famous, related work "The Flax Shed in Laren" (1887). It is possible that Kollwitz wanted to measure herself against Liebermann, the acknowledged leader of German naturalism, and, perhaps to show that the type of objectivè naturalism which scrupulously avoided taking sides and showing emotion was not enough. Significantly the year 1893 was also the year in which Liebermann led the secession from the Society of Berlin artists over the scandalous treatment given to the exhibition of Munch's paintings the previous year. Kollwitz was one of the new "Freie Künstlervereingung" (Free Association of Artists). Kollwitz was deeply impressed with the way Munch imbued the figures and situations in his paintings with archetypal significance as her series of prints reflecting the weavers' struggle indicates.

Kollwitz responded to Hauptmann's "Die Weber" with a series of six prints entitled "Weberaufstand" (The Weaver's Rebellion). She began work on the series in 1893 and completed it in 1898. "My work on this series was slow and painful," [2] perhaps, for this reason, Kollwitz termed it "the child of sorrow." For the next five years it absorbed her completely. She began with careful studies from models, preparing figure after figure, scene after scene throughout the long years of "unremitting, painstaking work".[3] She organised the series into six frames: 1) "Not" (Poverty); 2) "Tod"

(Death) - a weaver's child dies of hunger; 3) "Beratung" (Conspiracy) - the weaver's plan to avenge their child's death; 4) "Weberzug" (Weavers' March) - to the factory owner's home; 5) "Sturm" (Attack) - on the employer's mansion by the weaver's community; 6) "Ende" (End) - the revolt, and the lives of some people, are over.

The design of the whole series was worked out in numerous composition sketches. She remained true to this traditional way of working for the major part of her oeuvre, although in later years she tried repeatedly to free herself from the naturalistic style and to adopt a freer, less limited language of form. It is possible to recognise, in retrospect, that the subject of the play which Hauptmann had treated with such consumate artistry embodied what were to become the main themes of her own creative endeavour. Hauptmann, however, often came under attack in Germany from new leftwing painters' journals such as "Atkion" - a journal of the word of action, or at least aspiring to action. "Atkion" came out against what is called "yesterday's naturalism"; portraits of wretchedness a la Hauptmann because, it claimed, they had made no attempt to change the world, which would seem to be rather unjust criticism.

The subjects of the weavers were to become the main themes of Kollwitz's creative endeavour; the social deprivations of the proletariat, the spirit of revolutionary protest and death. Kollwitz did not choose merely to illustrate Hauptmann's play. Instead, she pictured essential highlights in a great historical tragedy.

Ein Weberaufstand

Originally, Kollwitz intended to etch all six subjects. The first three, though executed repeatedly in that medium, were finally completed as

lithographs, for she still felt a lack of control with etching. The last three, she found herself able to handle with great technical control and expertise, as etchings. One can see that the first three are more shadowy and evocative. The latter three are more pictorial and precise, but nevertheless very strong in emotion and drawing technique. The two initial scenes "Not" (Poverty) and "Tod" (Death), establish a mood of imminent revolt. "Beratung" (Conspiracy) - a rework of previous pub scenes that Kollwitz had sketched - captures the process of clarification and the emerging consciousness that provide the driving force of the drama. "Weberzug" (Weaver's March) and "Sturm" (Attack) depict the uprising itself, which comes to its climax and its end in front of the wrought-iron gates of the factory owner's house.

Recalling the Weavers series, Kollwitz must have relied heavily upon her youthful studies of Königsberg's "Jimkes" who seemed to be classic in a way the Berlin workers were not.

> "The type of workman to be found (in Berlin) was entirely different from the kind which had interested me. The Berlin workers stood on a much higher economic plane than the Königsberg workers, and as far as the visual aspects of their personality went, the Berlin workers were of no use as subjects to me." [3]

The motif of women and children in scenes of battle is one that Kollwitz would use repeatedly in her portrayals of mass action, especially evident in her early works. With this motif she calls attention to the important role that women play in social conflict and at the same time reflects the views expressed by August Bebel in his book "Women, Past, Present and Future." [4] Kollwitz also reflects Zola's capacity, as an emotional writer, for evoking vast crowd scenes and for giving life to such symbols of misery

in a dehumanized environment. Both Kollwitz's and Zola's work when not overloaded with detail, have a tragic grandeur. Both absorbed the influence of Dickens and in a later etching of Kollwitz's, "La Carmagnole", the influence of Dicken's "A Tale of Two Cities", which she had just read, is evident as we shall see later.

Looking back on "Weberaufstand" (The Weaver's Rebellion) Kollwitz later recalled that another impulse behind the series had been the Old Testament saying "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". This was the attitude that had fuelled the weavers' rebellion, an attitude which Kollwitz identified with when she was a young woman. In later life Kollwitz was to abandon her faith in revolutionary activity in favour of a peaceful demonstration against the inequities around her.

When Kollwitz saw the play 'Die Weber', the mass crowd scenes overwhelmed her. She dropped the series on "Germinal" and set to work on "Die Weber". She was thus transformed into an artist who celebrated revolution. Just as she had used Freilignath's poems and Zola's "Germinal", she now used Hauptmann's play to help her visualize the people, conditions and events that had helped shape the Weavers' Rebellion. She did not illustrate Hauptmann's version but used it as raw material for her own highly dramatic scenes of revolt. Unlike Hauptmann, Kollwitz conceived of her story solely from the perspective of the weavers, never wasting a glance on their opponents or making the slightest gesture towards impartiality. The oppressors are strictly never seen in any of Kollwitz's works but their presence is always felt.

Not

The first print from "Weberaufstand", "Not" (Poverty) (1897) (Fig. 4) sets the scene: the looms, the wretched poverty and sickness as a result of

malnutrition permeate the room. "Not", which can also mean misery is the thematic keynote of her work. Although Kollwitz had by then abandoned much of the detailed description found in Klinger's prints she still had difficulty in reconciling naturalism with symbolism; the need for narrative content in her desire to create a strong direct image. Kollwitz turned her etchings into compassionate pleas for the oppressed of the world. "Not" is reflective of most of Kollwitz's work at this time. Human misery was already a determining factor early in her work, however, it is with this series that her direction is truly established. Her use of naturalism and realism limited her medium so as to direct all attention towards the subject. Her use of naturalism is unselective, or rather it is selective only in order to present with maximum credibility the immediate scene. It has no basis for selection outside of the present. Realism, on the other hand, is selective and strives towards the typical. Yet, what is typical of a situation is only revealed by its development in relation to other developing situations. Thus realism selects in order to construct a totality.

This language became a characteristic feature of Kollwitz's art for the oppressed. Because she had moved away from symbolism, she decided against using the symbolic etching "You Bleed from many Wounds, O People" (1896). In its form and iconography, it is a relic of 19th century bourgeois art that the artist had tried to press into the service of social and political message. She did, however, preserve the etching "The Downtrodden" (1900) (Fig. 10) which had originally formed the realistic, lefthand section of "You Bleed from many Wounds, O People". By alluding to the Christian image of Mary weeping over her dead son, Kollwitz, for the first time, imparts to the idea of death, a universal meaning that reflects the suffering of all humanity. The present of death in these prints foreshadows her later work, in particular a series of eight lithographs simply entitled "Death".

In may pictures death is present in the grief of those left behind. In another print from this cycle "Ende", (Fig. 9), Kollwitz has expressed grief by the posture of the two women represented. Here we see a weaver's workshop. In the foreground there are two bodies. A third corpse is being carried in by two men. A gaunt woman, grief-stricken and despairing, receives them at the door. Another woman cowers by the bodies in the foreground, her head bent low over her crossed arms.

Tod

Death plays an unusually dominant part in the works of Kollwitz. In many of her works she deals with it directly or indirectly, by either portraying personified death, the act of dying, or the grief of those left behind. The same subject is brought up again and again in many ways: as human destiny in general; as the power which deprived her of her son and, later, her husband, and as her own fate which she was going to meet. It is in conformity with the directness of her observation and experience of things that allegory rarely occurs in her creations, and then only during her early period. One exception is death embodied by a skeleton. It is the only allegory which to this day is generally understood because death occupies a special position among allegories; it is a direct illustration of what it personifies, and thus does not require intermediary explanations to make the observer understand what is meant by it.

Kollwitz expressed death's presence by depicting it as a skeleton, in the print "Tod" (Death) (Fig. 5), where it is visible to the observer in the family circle, touching the mother. Kollwitz here prompts the question of whether the woman is being touched by death, or whether the touch has already killed her. She left this question open since those living in sickness and starvation and great misery are already marked by death.

In "Tod" its bodily presence goes unnoticed and its inclusion in the picture almost seem unnecessary since death is felt as a presence even when invisible, and alarmingly sensed from the woman's collapse, from the man's silent, and almost paralysed attitude and, above all, from the child's wide-eyed horror. The entire composition, except for the illuminated face of the dead child, is in black or darkening shades of grey.

Death is shown as an enemy that wrenches life away from people. The confrontation with death is a central experience of life, which Kollwitz's work depicts is innumerable variations. The culmination of this theme is her later series of 1934 entitled "Death", which related back directly to these prints of "Weberaufstand".

In 1896 in the midst of her work on the Weberaufstand series, Kollwitz bore her second son, Peter. That summer, as she completed the series, her father became critically ill. Kollwitz travelled to Rautschen, where her parents were living for her father's health, to show her father her first graphic work. In the Spring of 1897 he died. Kollwitz was depressed because she could never give him the pleasure of seeing the work publicly exhibited. Kollwitz gave up the idea of a show but a good friend of hers, Anna Plehn, entered the series to the jury, and a few weeks later it was in the show at the Lehrter Station.

When the "Weberaufstand" series was displayed in the Great Berlin Exhibit of 1898 it created a sensation among public and critics alike. The artists' jury, which included the most famous artist of the day, Adolf Menzel, selected the series for a gold medal. But Kaiser Wilhelm II vetoed this award, probably out of his antagonism towards art showing socialist sympathies.

One year later, when the series was shown in Dresden, the museum's director of Prints and Drawings, Max Lehrs, proposed to the King of Saxony that Kollwitz be awarded the Gold Medal. The monarch agreed and in 1899 she was awarded with this nomination.

The Weavers series established Kollwitz as a first-rate graphic artist. On the third day of the exhibition of 1898 Kollwitz in a letter to her friend Jeep confided that:

> "the child of sorrow sold on the
> third day. When I heard this I was
> so surprised ... Five hundred marks!" [5]

Also in this year of recognition, Kollwitz was offered and accepted a post on the staff of the Academy for Women Artists. In her thirty-second year, Kollwitz was astonished to find that "from then on, at one blow, I was counted among the foremost artists of the country." [6]

Universal Art.

Kollwitz gradually overcame her initial uncertainty about her choice and formulation of motifs during the five years that she worked on the Weavers series. She drew on literary and historical themes for her work, showing a penchant for psychologically complex characters (Goethe's 'Gretchen' figured in a print and drawing of Kollwitz's in 1899) and dramatic ideas and situations. Hauptmann's play had confirmed in Kollwitz the necessity in her art of a strong social commitment. Max Halbe's play had highlighted human problems, closely related, but a different kind. Kollwitz's series "Weberaufstand" features figures which are not 'types' or 'stereotypes' as some critics of her work would have us believe. A careful examination of her work reveals that although she frequently used the same models (including herself), the inner life of each subject had its own existence.

Kollwitz's subjects become universal not because they are 'types', but because they express a mood so intensely that those who view it share the feeling. The argument that her subjects are 'types' may very well be class-biased. If oppressed, people all look alike to middle and upper-class viewers, then indeed her subjects will appear to them to represent 'types'. But, in fact, Kollwitz had a great capacity for creating particular people, feelings and situations.

Kollwitz had a personality that was both powerful and self-reliant. Two particular traits were predominant - "a serious fundamental trait tending towards melancholy", and "her capacity for sympathy and compassion." [7] She was, however, receptive to everything that went on around her. We have seen how profoundly she was affected by Zola's writings, and in particular his novel "Germinal"; by Halbe; by Hauptmann's play "Die Weber" and by many other writers. The manner in which the two major literary experiences ("Germinal" and "Die Weber") inspired her creative faculties is highly characteristic of the direction her future creative endeavours were to take, and also highly characteristic of Klinger's series of prints "A Life" of which she wrote "it filled me with tremendous excitement!" [8]

In addition to the art and literature of her time, Kollwitz took a keen interest in political events and everyday happenings and, obviously, people. There were even times when direct, active assistance seemed more important to her than her art. At the start of the First World War she wrote to her friend, Jeep:

> "I am thinking of your letter and your advice to draw. Yes, I shall do that again, but not yet. For the time being I feel that the strength of the individual belongs to the community. You say that I work for the

> community when I draw. But it is not enough. Feeding children and women is more important now." [9]

Kollwitz did not underestimate art; on the contrary, it was of utmost importance to her all her life. This is evident from the ambition she showed in perfecting her talent: "Had I been able to, I would have taken my entire mental capacity and added it to my artistic ability just to make that fire burn brightly." [10]

Later, she came to realize more clearly that it is not permissible to depart from formal problems in creating a work of art, but that the figures have to arise from a strong emotion. She claimed the right "to extract the emotional content from everything", "Never have I been cold in producing a work of art ... it has always been done with my blood, in a sense. Those who look at my work must feel that." [11]

Whenever an important subject directly touching on her was inadequately portrayed, human sympathy was more important to her than set artistic standards. She was prepared, regardless of her own inner conflict to overlook the shortcomings of expression:

> "I feel that in all art connected with war the old standards of good or poor art have no meaning. Personal experience predominates to such an extent that - as in amateurs - it always comes to the fore." [12]

FOOTNOTES

1. L. Lippard — Käthe Kollwitz: Graphics, Posters, Drawings — P.XVIII
2. M. Kearns — Woman and Artist — P.20
3. ibid., — P.71
4. A. Bebel — Women, Past, Present and Future
5. M. Kearns — Woman and Artist — P.76
6. ibid.,
7. Käthe Kollwitz 1867-1967 — P.13
8. W. Timm — Käthe Kollwiz — P.7
9. Käthe Kollwitz 1867-1967 — P.11
10. ibid., — P.12
11. ibid., — P.12
12. ibid., — P.13

CHAPTER FOUR

Black Anna

Socialist Artist

'Socialist Artist' was a label often applied to Kollwitz after her series "Weberaufstand" became known. However, her own view stated some time later, was different. It was true, she wrote, that she had been moved towards socialism by the influences of her father, her brother and her friends, and also by literature and political writings. It is true to say that the subjects of revolution and revolt were to occupy Kollwitz for some time to come. Soon after completing "Weberaufstand" Kollwitz turned to a subject of earlier German history. In 1899 she began a new series of etchings entitled "Bauernkrieg" (The Peasants' War).

> "Grief, if it is not counterbalanced by hope, is a wasteful emotion. It belongs essentially to a tragic and pessimistic view of life. Socialism is, by definition, optimistic." [1]

As a 'good socialist', Kollwitz attempted to show that there are ways of fighting back against poverty, oppression and hunger, (if she did not always succeed it was because she could not wholly shake off her ingrained pessimism). In "Weberaufstand", "Carmagnole" and "Bauernkrieg" Kollwitz created some of the most memorable images of revolt since Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People" (1831).

La Carmagnole

At this time Kollwitz was obsessed with the theme or idea of woman as revolutionary. Woman as the muse or inspiration for action - rather than

as woman as herself the actor - is a familiar male concept, and woman as the nurse of revolution is a familiar romantic image. Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People" is an apt example. But it was not this tame concept of the woman revolutionary that Kollwitz was seeking.

At this point Kollwitz began reading Charles Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities" and other accounts of the French Revolution, in which peasants and bourgeoisie had revolted against the decadent monarchy of King Louis XVI. Peasant and Parisian women alike participated in the revolution, despite male opposition. In 1791, a huge group of Parisian women marched eleven miles to the palace of King Louis XVI in Versailles; there they surrounded the building and forced him and his family to return to Paris as hostages. A few years later, the all-female battalions were officially banned; in spite of this, they continued to form. In "A Tale of Two Cities" Dickens wrote of one such band of women:

> "There was no other music than their own singing. They danced to the popular revolution song, keeping a ferocious time that was like a gnashing of teeth in unison." [2]

The most popular song of the French Revolution was "La Carmagnole" - "Let us dance the Carmagnole, long live the sound of the canon!" [3] and it was with this theme, sung and danced by peasant women, that Kollwitz depicted the French Revolution.

"La Carmagnole" (Fig. 11) shown at the Secession Exhibition of 1901 added to Kollwitz's fame. The tall dark houses depicted in the background and the French revolutionaries are so characteristic of the people and surroundings of Hamburg or Königsberg that Kollwitz transferred the scene to a big North German city. An etching from the same year which bears

the title "A Hamburg Tavern" points to her having been there at that time and we may assume that she made architectural studies which she then used for "La Carmagnole".

In the centre of the composition there is a black guillotine. Around it a densed packed crowd stamp and dance in passionate revolutionary solidarity. Arms are raised in menacing gestures in defiance against the guillotine. It is significant too that once again the women take major parts in the scene. Here it is the women shown clearly in the foreground who dance in a sort of tribal ritual. What is unique in this work is the detailed drawing of the massed buildings and the cobblestones.

Shortly after finishing "La Carmagnole" Kollwitz read in Zimmermann's "The Great German Peasants' War", about the peasant woman, Black Anna, who incited the peasants to rebel. Still searching for the image of the woman revolutionary, Kollwitz continued to hope to represent it. Black Anna supplied her, at last, with the historical prop for this vision. Kollwitz's strong personal identification with Black Anna becomes evident in four preliminary drawings in which she sketched the subject in her own likeness.

In 1907, while Kollwitz was working on "Bauernkrieg (Peasants' War), she received the relatively new but already greatly respected "Villa Romana" prize; an annual grant awarded by Max Klinger to enable a German artist to spend a year in Italy. Leaving Berlin, Kollwitz went to Florence, and, though she produced no work there, she enjoyed herself greatly, absorbing the influences of Michelangelo and other great Italian artists.

Back in Germany, she set to work on completing "Bauernkrieg". In "Aufruhr" (Uprising) (1899), a preliminary study for "Bauernkrieg", the psychological state of the rebelling peasants is symbolized by the allegorical figure

of Fury brandishing a torch. "Losbruch" (Outbreak) (Fig. 12), another print from this series, shows the peasants being led by Black Anna. It is also interesting to note that when Kollwitz had finished her studies in Munich in 1889 she received as a leaving present, a reproduction of "St. Joan of Arc" by Albert Beonard, a painting greatly admired by herself and her fellow students.

> "There was something in her of the spirit of the warrior saint; an invisible bond links the heroine warrior with the monumental image of other peasant women: Black Anna (a figure more firmly rooted in social realities)." [3]

Intuitively, Kollwitz chose the back view of the figure, a suggestive device known from many figures of the Romantic School, which induces the viewer to identify with the figure in question. Consciously, or not, there is no doubt that Kollwitz identified herself with this image. Edvard Munch once expressed a similar attitude in connection with a picture of his showing a stream of people moving irresistibly towards the onlooker: "It is me you see approaching." [4]

As in "Weberaufstand", Kollwitz lays the blame for the uprising on the peasants' catastrophic living and working conditions. At a later period it was human inspired concerns rather than politically motivated feelings (both of which are at once human and political concerns) which led her to the creation of works determined by political events resulting in deprivation. However, this transition can be seen even at this stage. In "Bauernkrieg" Kollwitz focuses on the process by which the individual develops a consciousness of one's social conditions. The preliminary studies for "Whetting the Scythe" (Fig. 13) shows the artist homing in on her theme as she concentrates solely on the face, capturing the

psychological moment when it suddenly occurs to the sower that she is exploited and she can give her farming tools a new purpose as a defense weapon against human conditions.

In a letter of 1907 Kollwitz talks about "Losbruch" (Outbreak) and its history:

> "The motifs of the Peasant War prints are not something taken from literature. After I had made the print "Aufruhr" (Uprising) with the figure of Fury flying above the peasants, the theme kept occupying my mind and I hoped I would one day be able to represent it in a definite way that would satisfy me. At that time I was reading Zimmermann's account of a peasant woman, 'Black Anna', who had incited the other peasants to revolt. After that I produced the large print showing the onslaught of massed peasants. This brought me the commission for the whole sequence. Everything else fell into line with this first completed print." [5]

In "Bauernkrieg", Kollwitz created some of the most memorable images of revolt. The prints 'Weberzug' (March of the Weavers), "Aufruhr" (Uprising), and "Losbruch" (Outbreak) 1903, are very effective images of working-class solidarity. The repetition of elements - striding legs, grim determined faces, clenched fists, picks, axes - immediately stamps the group as a united, unanimous force; the individual is subsumed into a common type. Kollwitz, as already pointed out, did not dehumanize her subjects in doing this. It is specifically in these scenes of mass action that the group appears as a unanimous force. In "Weberzug" Kollwitz emphasises the effect of strong forward motion by forming the group into a semi-wedge shape; the men at the back fill the horizon line, at the front they are below

it, a visual device that she developed even more powerfully in "Losbruch", where the march becomes a headlong charge.

Kollwitz did not, of course, invent these ways of depicting solidarity and revolution, but she did more than most artists to make them really effective. Kollwitz began with real situations, not ideas, and to help her identify with that situation she replaces the French Symbol of Liberty with a peasant woman, to all intents and purposes, with herself. The female figure in "Losbruch", Black Anna, is said to have encouraged the peasants and driven them on to fight. Perhaps because of this, Kollwitz felt constrained in openly identifying with her and hence depicted her from the back. This strengthens, if anything, the involvement Kollwitz, and through her viewer, has with the figure.

Sich a pitch of emotional involvement is normally associated with expressionism, and, indeed, there are aspects of "Losbruch" which figure strongly in expressionist graphics. Firstly, there is a spontaneous and violent quality in the etched line, that, whenever possible, runs from right to left, emphasising the movement of the figures. Secondly, the figure of Black Anna is given a monumentality that is intended to capture the viewer's attention to crucial importance. The first is in line with German Impressionist Art which, unlike its French counterpart, lay greater stress on graphic fluency than on colour and on emotional reactions than on visual response. The second derives in part from the example of Millet and of certain German Realists such as Leibl, and in part from symbolists such as Böcklin and Hodler. It reflects the general trend in German Art at that time towards making 'important' profound statements. The third is likewise derived from symbolist sources. But, without doubt, it was Rodin, at this time who proved to have an overwhelming impact on Kollwitz.

In 1904 she went to Paris and visited the sculptor twice. She admired the way he was able to imbue his figures with so much meaning and feeling without either overloading them with symbolism or breathing the naturalistic mould. Rodin was able to do this through the carefully contrived poses and gestures he gave his figures. If we compare Kollwitz's "Die Gefangenen" (The Prisoners) (Fig. 14) which is the seventh and final print in the series "Bauernkrieg" with Rodin's "The Burghers of Calais" (1899), we can see how much Kollwitz learnt from Rodin. The heroic poses, the contained energy, the gesturing heads and hands; these are some of the most admired qualities in both these artists' work.

Despite the fact that this plebian uprising ended in defeat, it still remains clear that the prisoners of this final print in the series are destined eventually to bring about the liberation of their class. That Kollwitz is not presenting merely historical material here but "the past infused with the present" [6] becomes evident in the "Help Russia" poster she did years later in 1921. She picks up the figure of a suffering young prisoner from the earlier work and transforms him into a symbol appealing for international aid to the young Soviet Union, whose people were threatened by war and famine.

To produce the seven scenes of "Bauernkrieg", Kollwitz combined aquatint and soft ground with the regular etching process. Except during her seven-month stay in Florence, she worked faithfully on this etching series, from 1902 to 1908. "Bauernkrieg" is larger than "Ein Weberaufstand", and five of the seven frames lack the superficial stagings of interior props. By this time Kollwitz was using space like a sculptor: the peasants in this series have more physical depth, standing in open, free space (especially in "Losbruch").

Kollwitz completed the series on returning to Berlin from Florence by drawing three more frames - "Vergewaltigt" (Raped), "Schlachtfeld" (Battlefield), and, as already discussed, "Die Gefangenen".

"Vergewaltigt" (Raped) (Fig. 15), the second print of the series, is one of the earliest pictures in Western Art to depict a female victim of sexual violence sympathetically and from a woman's point of view. [7] In this print a woman lies prostrate, stricken by violence, shock and humiliation. The foreshortening of her body - with feet in the foreground - is so pronounced that her head and torso can scarcely be distinguished. The body, nearly overrun by grass, vines, flowers and leaves, seems to sink into the ground, decaying before our eyes. The flowers in this print were the only flowers Kollwitz ever drew in what work is known. But instead of using them to adorn or decorate, as most of her Impressionist and Post-Impressionist colleagues were wont to do. Kollwitz did not see the consequences of war as merely death. Kollwitz, on the other hand, looked at the misery of the survivors, the poverty-stricken, the prisoners, the raped women, the widows, the mothers who lost their children. In "Schlachtfeld" (Battlefield) (Fig. 16), the sixth plate, a mother, stooped, looks from body to body in the very black of night, searching for her dead son.

Like "Ein Weberaufstand", "Bauernkrieg" depicts revolution and dramatizes the subject from a woman's perspective. Two of the three plates showing the motivation for "Bauernkrieg" portray women: one is the "passive" woman, a victim of rape; the other is the "active" woman, peasant woman expressing outrage. [8] Black Anna catalyzes the workers' passions through organized revolt, taking violent action against further humiliation as a serf and as a woman. The last and fifth protagonist is the mother who stoically searches for her son among the dead on the battlefield surrounded by the blackness of night. None of these women resembled the prevailing standards

of feminine beauty. They are physical rather than sexual beings. In this sense, Kollwitz was one of the first to reject the common, time-worn image of women as physically passive. With these dramatic portraits, Kollwitz projected an unfamiliar, affirmative view of women, especially working-class women, as persons of character and mental ability, fully responsive to the full range of human feeling.

When "Bauernkrieg" was issued in 1908, it confirmed Kollwitz's stature as one of the great graphic artists of Germany. Public and critics alike responded to the monumental composition of the series and its message.

When Kollwitz had created "Losbruch" for the series "Bauernkrieg", she knew that she could not possible produce anything more revolutionary than this and that this chapter was now closed for her. And she would perhaps have turned away from politics altogether, if events had not involved her once more, i.e. the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Formerly Kollwitz would have treated such an event quite differently. To the young people who sought Kollwitz as their standard-bearer, she appeared insincere, for she no longer was what they saw her to be, namely the former rebellious Käthe Kollwitz. [9]

The murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg outraged Kollwitz. She writes: "The tremendous impression made on me by the hundreds of thousands of workers who followed him to the grave crystallized into shape almost at once." [10] These two experiences - the posthumous encounter and the funeral procession - fused to provide the inspiration for the memorial print which took her two years to complete. After many preparatory versions she completed the definitive version as a woodcut (Fig. 17). There can be no doubt that in its modern expressionist form with its emphasis on large areas of black, sharp contrasts and simple lines it provided the

perfect solution - simple, austere and infinitely moving. Kollwitz dedicated the woodcut to the working class and added the legend: "Die Lebenden dem Totem. Erinnering an den 15 Januar 1919" (Those who live to those who died) which was addressed to the victims of the revolution of 1848. The emotional power engendered to the woodcut by its intense formal concentration, its eschewing of all inessentials and its stern grandeur have made this print into something like a sacred image of Socialist Art.

FOOTNOTES

1. Käthe Kollwitz: The Graphic Works P.29
2. M. Kearns Woman and Artist P.84
3. W. Timm Käthe Kollwitz P.8
4. ibid., P.8
5. Käthe Kollwitz 1867-1967 P.16
6. R. Hinz Käthe Kollwitz: Graphics, Posters, Drawings P.XX
7. M. Kearns Woman and Artist P.104
8. ibid., P.105
9. Käthe Kollwitz 1867-1967 P.16
10. W. Timm Käthe Kollwitz, Fig. 15

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Seed Corn Must Not Be Ground.

During the years that Kollwitz worked on "Bauernkrieg" she had also been hired as a free-lance artist for the "Simplizissimus", a progressive Munich monthly with a large circulation. In 1909 the magazine began to publish a series of her drawings collectively entitled "Bilder Vom Elend" (Portraits of Misery). Works expected to produce a general effect, i.e., to be 'popular,' must have specific qualities: they must be simple and full of a reality which can be re-experienced.

Kollwitz compares "realistic art" with "studio art" which at the time she believed to be exemplified by expressionism.

> "Art for the spectator need not be shallow. Of course the spectator has no objection to trite. But it is time that if are were simple enough, s/he would accept it. I thoroughly agree that there must be understanding between the artist and the people. In the best of ages this has always been the case. Genius can run on ahead and seek out new ways. But the good artists, and I count myself among these, who follow after genius have to restore the lost connection once more. A pure studio art is unfruitful and frail, for anything that does not form living roots - why should it exist at all?" [2]

It was during these years of work for "Simplizissimus" that a human concern

for the proletariat permanently replaced Kollwitz's aesthetic, academic, and - probably - romanticized interest in the working-class people that she depicted in "Weberaufstand" and "Bauernkrieg". Their troubles were no longer historical or literary, they were now painfully real to her - she saw them working, living and struggling everyday. Later, she came to realize more and more clearly that it is not permissible to depart from formal problems in creating a work of art,[3] but that the figures have to arise from a "strong emotion." [4]

All the "Simplizissimus" drawings, done with charcoal, tell very directly how working-class women lived at the time in Berlin. Eight of these fourteen drawings depict general aspects of the urban proletariat's situations, e.g. widowhood, unemployment, hunger and despair, anti-sociality, prostitution, unwanted pregnancy. Kollwitz's work for "Simplizissimus" forced her to conceptualize key themes quickly and to express them in a pictorial language that was accessible to a broad public. This brought about a major change in her mode of work. In the past she had carefully depicted her pictorial ideas using live models, painstakingly worked out in detail. Now she shifted to a freer drafting style, dispensing with detail in order to concentrate on essential elements. The result was a compressed pictorial language that presented those elements almost as ciphers. The moral and socio/political messages of these drawings remind us of Zola's writings which condemned urban poverty and dereliction, but even more so we are reminded of Klinger's series of etchings 'Ein Leben' and 'Dramas' in which Klinger dealt with contemporary social problems and the effects of poverty on family life in a manner very close to that employed by Kollwitz in her "Simplizissimus" drawings.

Although Kollwitz's art training had emphasised realism, Kollwitz did not classify herself as a realist. Rather, as she had done with naturalism,

she used some aspects of realism, finally transcending it to form her style. "To Kollwitz 'realism' was a style; rather, it was ... a matter of the genuineness of communication." 5

Beginning with her student days, Kollwitz had tried to foster this rapport between artist and people by choosing etching as her medium, so that as many prints as possible could be distributed. Later it was lithography which suited her intentions best and which she called a technique "so simple that it scarcely is a technique." 6

Throughout her life, Kollwitz sought to be free of everything that obfuscated her true self. Every artist tends towards self-expression, but Kollwitz used this unusually strong tendency in herself to examine and/or resolve personal conflicts and truths. Whether as art student, wife and mother, revolutionary, adventurer, or very private artist, she regarded her work as an avenue of self-discovery. Not only did she follow her feelings, she acted upon them with conviction, for in her singular quest she often disagreed with her colleagues.[7] Thus, she was often a loner in her art. Kollwitz agreed that her art had a purpose, and that purpose was to help the working-class movement. But the method she chose to do this was invariably to concentrate on evoking emotion and to do that she had to concentrate on what was timeless and unchanging, which is why she is as relevant today as she was earlier in the century.

The series of prints on the theme of Death which she made in the 1930's are her most remarkable and original works. In these prints she had perfected a strong, simplified style of working directly on the lithographic stone, producing "compact and powerful images pared of all irrelevant detail." [8] In 1909 she had written in her diary: "I believe I shall have

to find a more abbreviated way of expressing myself. My work is becoming too detailed these days." 9

The war and the death of her son, Peter, delayed the development of this style and in the early twenties under the influence of Barlach, she experimented with wood cuts, and produced the amazing memorial print to Karl Liebknecht (Fig. 17). By the mid-twenties Kollwitz had achieved an extraordinary technical mastery of the lithographic medium.

In 1926, after her work had been shown in Russia, Lunacharsky, who was then the People's Commissar for Culture, wrote about the changes in her style:

> "It began as what might be described in artistic terms as outré realism, but now towards the end of her development, it is dominated more and more by a pure poster technique. She aims at an immediate effect so that at the very first glance one's heart is wrung, tears choke the voice. She is a great agitator. It is not only through her choice of subject that she achieves this effect, nor by the exceptional, indeed, one may call it the physiological accuracy with which she evokes an event - no, it is mainly by the exceptional economy of her means. As distinct from realism, her art is one where she says no more than her purpose demands, she says with the most graphic vividness." 10

Her posters and works of social protest do work in this direct way as Lunacharsky described. But there is also a limitation in comparison with the earlier, more realistic, illustrational etchings, namely "Ein Weberaufstand" and "Bauernkrieg".

When Kollwitz was young, she saw herself in both the oppressed and the revolutionary woman. Her politics were unalterably affected by the death of Peter during World War I. She found she could no longer maintain her "revolutionary hatred." [11] Her pacifism let her to abandon communist sympathies for a more moderate position because she could no longer condone killing for any belief system. At the same time the 1920's and 1930's were her most activist periods. She made some twenty posters and leaflets against those profiteering from the postwar inflation that was causing so much misery, and against unjust abortion laws and their effect on working-class women; she worked with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and also supported the homosexual rights movement. Her memorial print to Karl Liebknecht, leader with Rosa Luxemburg of the Spartacus Party and assassinated with her in 1919, helped establish a fund for workers and artists in need. Her series 'Death' is, according to some, how Kollwitz reacted to the established German fascist government that tried to convey a sense of initiative and youth. Her use of the figure of Death as an enemy goes back to the popular medieval concept of the "dance of death".

Kollwitz had stated her desire in the early 1920's to exert influence in "these times when human beings are so perplexed and so in need of help." She succeeded then, and her art continues, despite the lack of attention it deserves, to succeed as an example for those who want their art to function in society.

As early as 1918 Kollwitz had quoted Goethe's dictum "Seed Corn must not be Ground" in response to Richard Dehmel's appeal that all able-bodied men volunteer for military service. Her pacifist conviction found its last pictorial expression in her lithograph "Seed Corn must not be Ground" (Fig. 18) 1942. With passionate intensity the aged artist responded to

the events of her time. Here the mother, an old woman trying to shelter the young under her cloak, holds back the children from the dangers they face. She spreads her arms and hands over them in a violent and commanding gesture. Seed corn must not be ground! This is fundamental, - like an earlier poster she did with the demand "Never Again War!" - not a fervent wish, but a commandment, a peremptory demand.

This last stirring message emphasized not death, but the preservation of life. Käthe Kollwitz did not see the end of World War Two. She died on 22 April, 1945, a few days before the surrender of Nazi Germany, at her refuge in Moritzburg.

FOOTNOTES

1. Käthe Kollwitz 1867-1967 P.12
2. K. Kollwitz Tagebuchblätter und Briefe P.61
3. ibid., P.68
4. ibid., P.86
5. M. Kearns Woman and Artist P.140
6. Käthe Kollwitz 1867-1967 P.28
7. M. Kearns Woman and Artist P.140
8. P. Overy "Käthe Kollwitz": Art Monthly P.17
9. ibid., P.17
10. ibid., P.17
11. R. Hinz Käthe Kollwitz: Graphics, Posters, Drawings P.X

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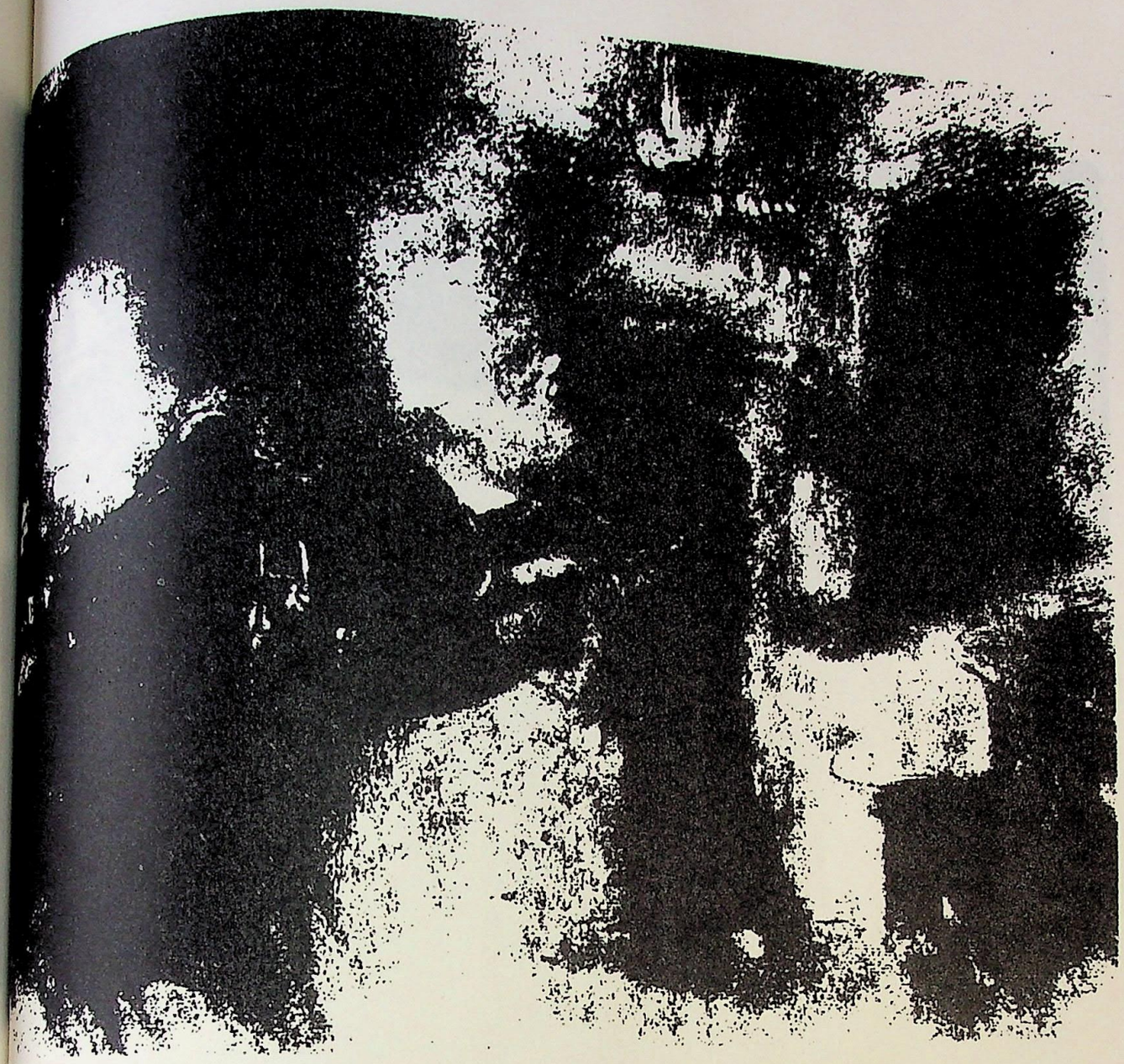
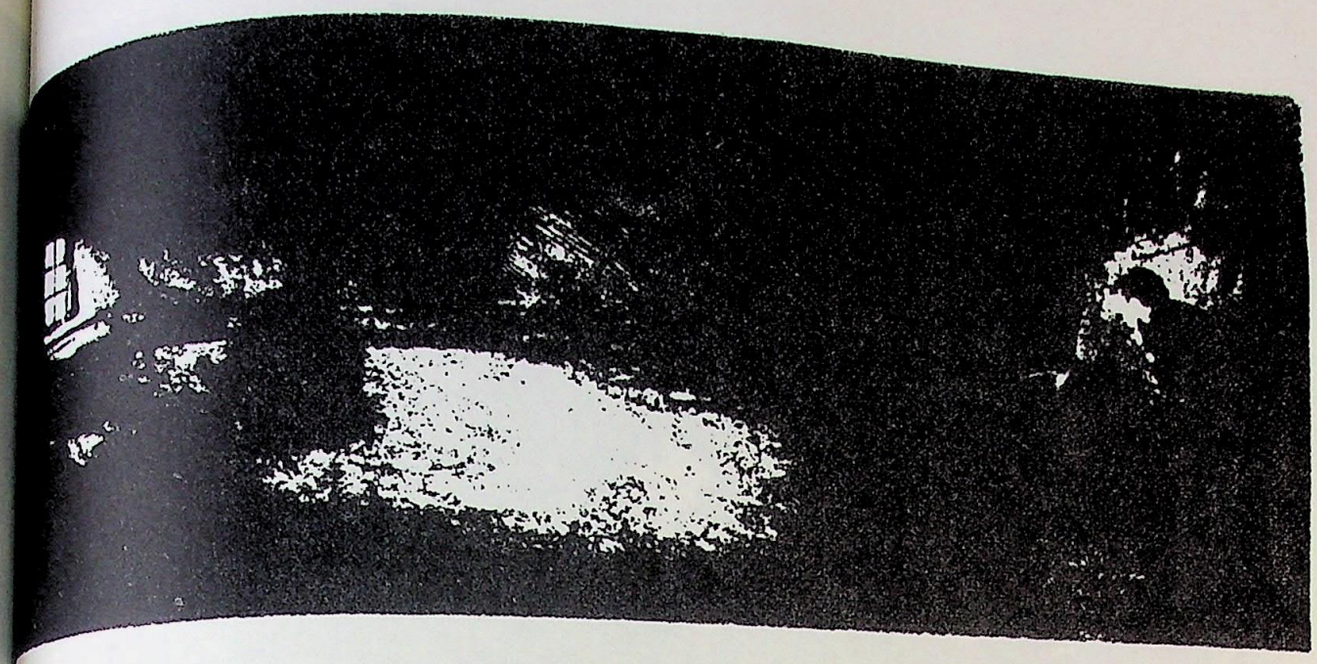
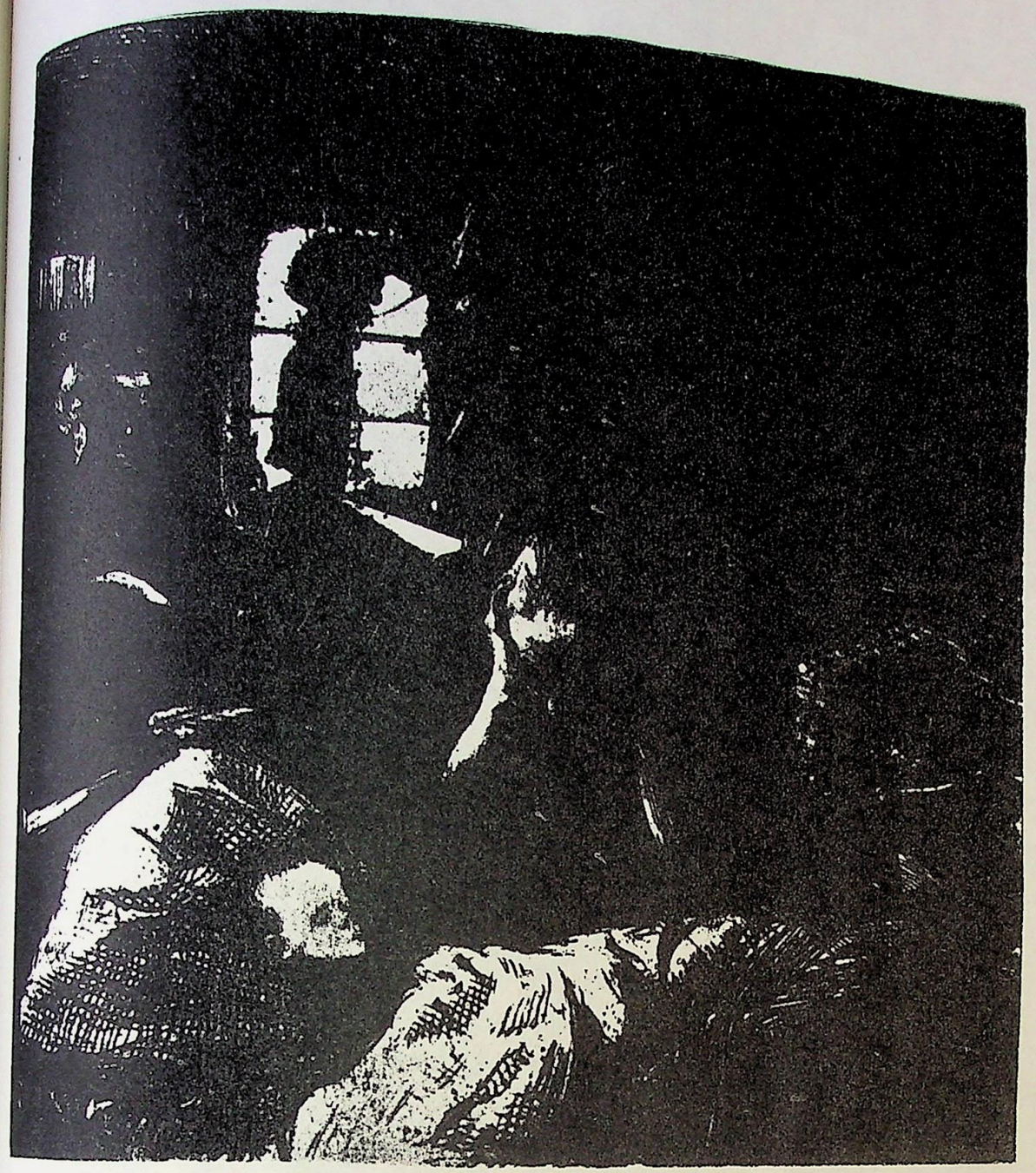


No.1 KAMPF (Struggle) 1890.

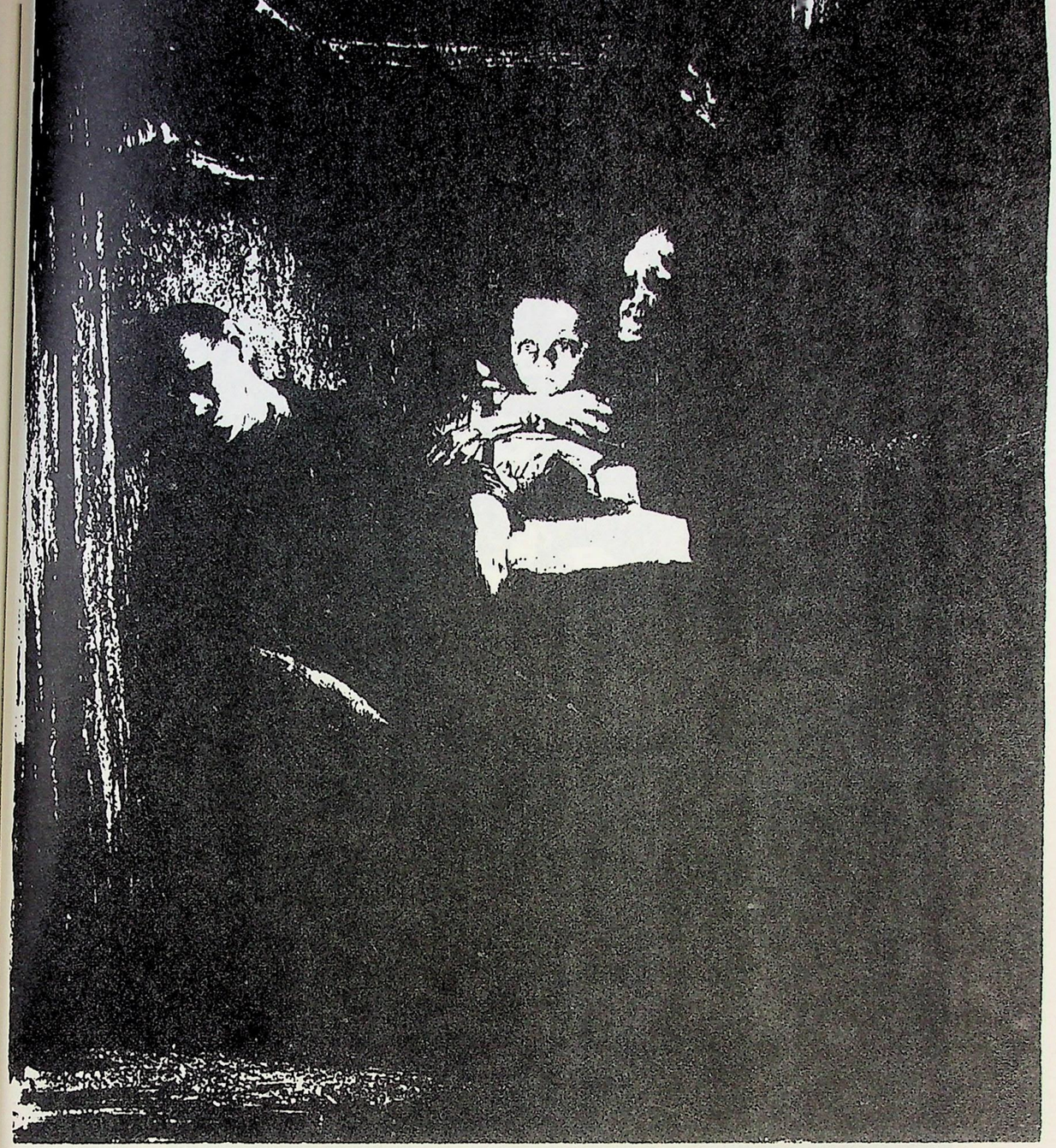


No.2 KAMPF (Struggle) 1893.

No.3 JUNGES PAAR (Young Couple) 1893.

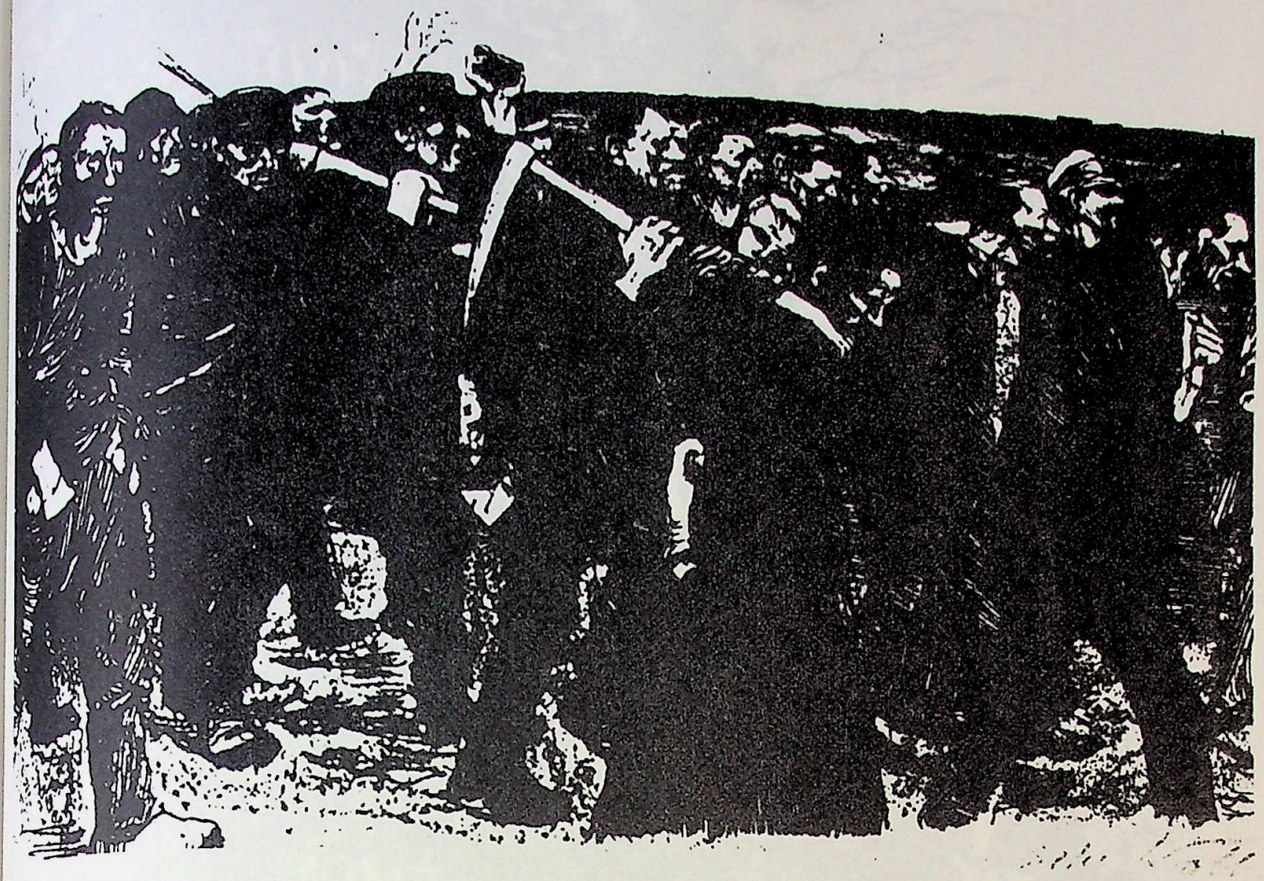


No.4 NOT (Misery) 1897.



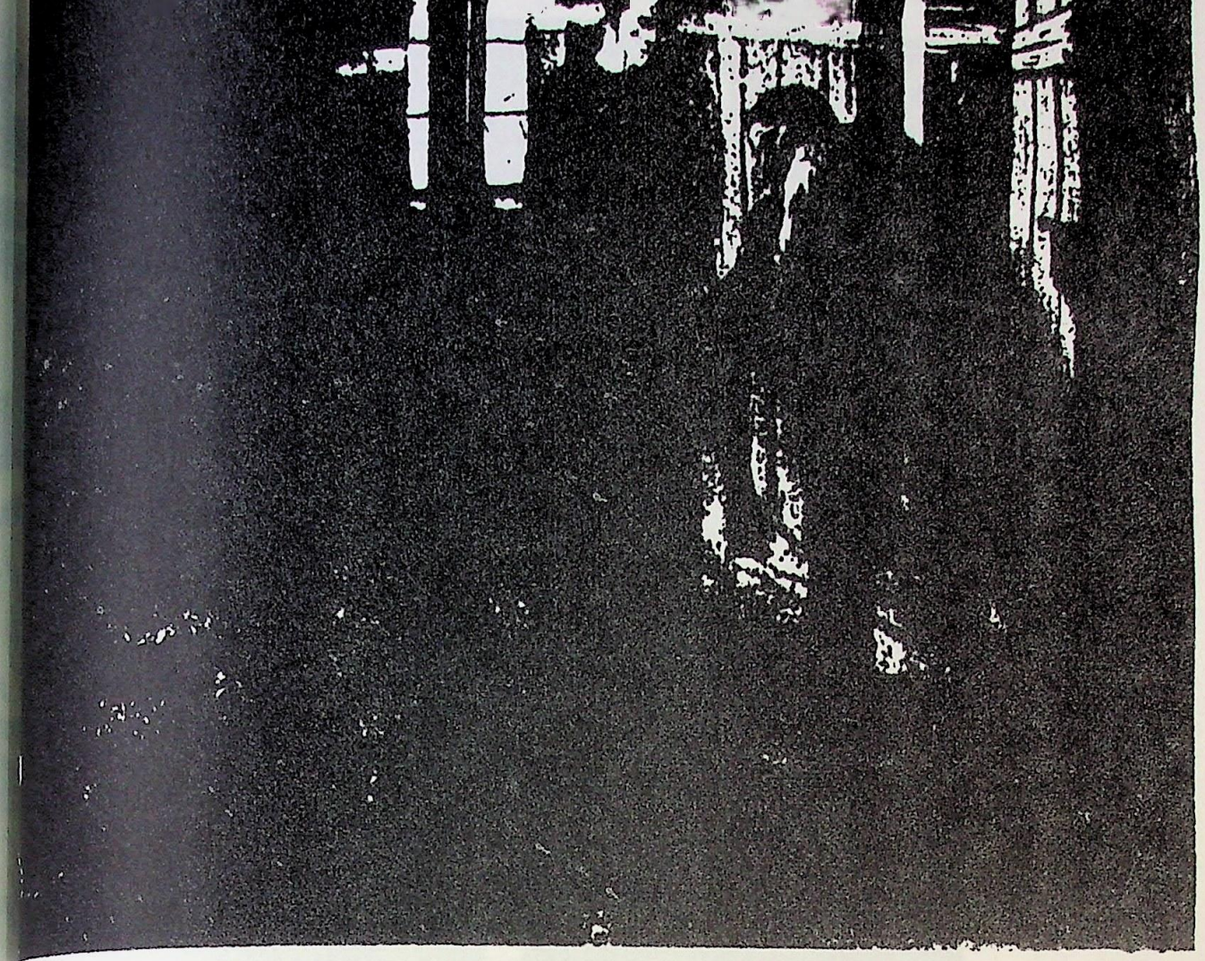
No.5 TOD (Death) 1897

No.6 BERATUNG (Conspiracy) 1898.



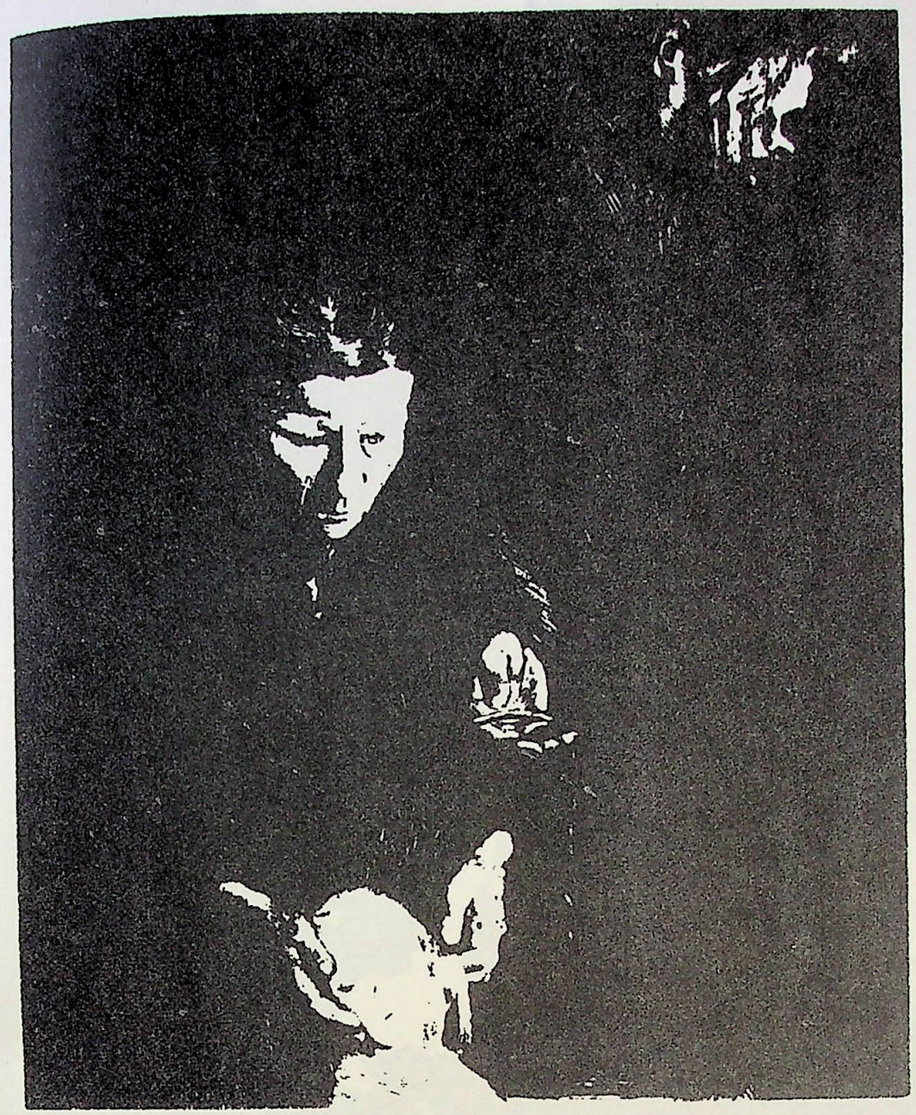
No.7 WEBERZUG (Weavers' March) 1897.

No.8 STURM (Riot) 1897.



No.9

ENDE (End) 1897.



No.10 ZERTRETENE (Downtrodden) 1900.

No.11 LA CARMAGNOLE 1901

No.12 LOSBRUCH (Outbreak) 1903.

No.13 BEIN DENGELN (Whetting the Scythe) 1905.

No.14 DIE GEFANGENEN (Prisoners) 1908.

No.15 VERGEWALTIGT (Raped) 1907.

No.16 SCHLACHTFELD (After the battle) 1907.

No.17 KARL LEIBKNECHT MEMORIAL 1919-1920.

No.18 SEED CORN MUST NOT BE GROUND 1942.