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“‘GHASTLY FEMALES’ AND ‘WANTON CORROSION’: THE APPROPRIATION  
AND MODERNIZATION OF GERMAN OLD MASTER MOTIFS IN OTTO DIX’S  
IMAGES OF WEIMAR WOMEN”

By

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Andrés Zervigón

and approved by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

# “‘GHASTLY FEMALES’ AND ‘WANTON CORROSION’: THE APPROPRIATION AND MODERNIZATION OF GERMAN OLD MASTER MOTIFS IN OTTO DIX’S IMAGES OF WEIMAR WOMEN”

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Otto Dix, who was associated with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* artistic style that arose during Germany’s chaotic Weimar Republic (1918 – 1933) appropriated themes and motifs used by Old Master artists and manipulated them to address both his personal anxieties and Germany’s unstable present. He specifically engaged Old Master motifs pertaining to death, decay and women who cause men harm including the *Totentanz*, vanitas motifs, the Judgment of Paris and witches. He made no secret of his admiration for artists of the past such as Hans Baldung Grien, Lucas Cranach and Albrecht Dürer and his calculated references to their works were not only acknowledgements of the inspiration he found in them but also challenges to their artistic legacies. Dix was particularly intrigued by Old Master motifs that linked women, sex and death as these themes coincided with key elements of the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. During the interwar years, anxieties about gender politics manifested themselves in debates pertaining to the changing status and roles of women. In particular, the economically and

sexually liberated *Neue Frau* was perceived as posing a threat to the patriarchal social order and to German masculinity. In light of Germany's humiliating defeat, "deviant" women, including New Women and prostitutes, were perceived as being socially and morally suspect and were accused of a variety of offenses ranging from the corruption of society to the emasculation of German men. In many of his Weimar works, Dix linked the ideas of death and decay with images of "fallen" women, such as New Women, widows and prostitutes. In these ambiguous representations of "deviant" females in which the distinctions between prostitutes and non-prostitutes are elided, the tensions between perceptions and images of prostitutes and New Women are confronted but never fully resolved. In these works, Dix deliberately referenced and ambitiously manipulated Old Master motifs and incorporated elements of Nietzsche's philosophy in order to make a case for his own artistic legacy and to propagate a public persona that fulfilled Nietzschean ideals of the *Übermensch*.



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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Dr. James and Linda Magnusen, in thanks for their unfailing love and unwavering support. This work is also dedicated to the helpful and kind, Rainer and Bettina Pfefferkorn, and to the Weimar priestess of depravity herself, the incomparable, outrageous and unforgettable, Anita Berber.

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## Chapter I Introduction: Otto Dix, Old Masters and New Women

In many of the works he created during the years of the Weimar Republic, Otto Dix (1891 - 1969), who was associated with the artistic style the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), utilized themes and motifs from Germany's past in order to engage its present state. He deliberately manipulated Old Master motifs, particularly those pertaining to death, decay or the downfall of man such as the *Totentanz*, vanitas motifs and the Judgment of Paris, in his depictions of "fallen" or "deviant" women, specifically prostitutes, widows and the *Neue Frau*. While his deliberate references to Old Master motifs that were found in works by artists such as Hans Baldung Grien, Lucas Cranach and Albrecht Dürer acknowledge his artistic debt to them, Dix's appropriation of Old Master themes was actually an attempt to position himself in their ranks if not assert his artistic superiority. In the wake of Germany's loss in World War I and in light of the contentious debates pertaining to interwar gender politics, Dix used the bodies of women, who seemed to pose economic, social and sexual threats to traditional German masculinity, to engage perceptions of German's moral decline and the perceived emasculation of German men. His interest in the themes of death and sex was inspired by his love for the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. His engagement with Nietzsche's philosophical positions led him to link "deviant" women with the Dionysian and himself with the Apollonian.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Dix attempted to reassert his authority both as an artist and as a man by adopting the persona of a New Man—Apollonian Artist.

The *Neue Sachlichkeit*, the New Objectivity, was an artistic style that arose in

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<sup>1</sup> The word "Apollonian" is sometimes spelled "Apollolinian" as the German spelling of the adjective is "apollinische." In the Nietzsche books edited by Walter Kaufmann and translated by R.J. Hollingdale, the word "Apollinian" is used. In his books on Nietzsche, the scholar David Farrell Krell also spells the word with an "i."

Germany during the interwar years. The *Neue Sachlichkeit* and the artists associated with it were indelibly tied to the culture of the Weimar Republic that began in 1918 with the proclamation of the German Republic, was solidified in 1919 with the ratification of a new democratic constitution and ended in 1933 with the rise of Adolf Hitler to the position of chancellor. However, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* was not an official, unified movement; the artists issued no group statements and published no manifestoes. In fact, the term “*Neue Sachlichkeit*” was not even applied to the artists until 1923 when Gustav F. Hartlaub, the director of the Mannheim Kunsthalle, coined the term for a 1925 exhibition of the artists’ works.<sup>2</sup>

In *Ausstellung “Neue Sachlichkeit:” Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus* (Exhibition “New Objectivity:” German Painting since Expressionism) (1925), Hartlaub ascribed a “timely, coldly verificational bent” to some of the artists he included in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* exhibition and claimed that “all of them” demonstrated an “emphasis on that which is objective and [on] the technical attention to detail.”<sup>3</sup> Within the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Hartlaub identified two groups. He termed the first group the “left wing” or the “Verists” and claimed that this wing “[tore] the objective from the world of contemporary facts and project[ed] current experience in its tempo and fevered temperature.”<sup>4</sup> The other group, the “Classicists,” was the wing that “searche[d] more for the object of *timeless* validity to embody the eternal laws of existence in the artistic

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<sup>2</sup> Crockett, Dennis. *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder 1918-1924*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Hartlaub, Gustav. “Zum Geleit,” *Ausstellung “Neue Sachlichkeit”: Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus*. Mannheim: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1925. 492. Cited in Kaes, Anton, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

sphere.”<sup>5</sup> In his book, *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (*Post-Expressionism: Magic Realism. Problems of the New European Painting*), art historian Franz Roh placed Dix in the so-called Verism (“*Verismus*”) wing of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* which included George Grosz, Rudolf Schlichter, Karl Hubbuch, Georg Scholz and others.<sup>6</sup> He termed the “Classicist” group “Magic Realism (“*magischer Realismus*”) and included Georg Schrimpf, Carlo Mense, Heinrich Maria Davringhausen, and Alexander Kanoldt.<sup>7</sup>

Although the *Neue Sachlichkeit* was technically divided into two groups, in general it was regarded as “objective” and was associated with Americanism. Waldemar George’s 1927 statement in *Das Kunstblatt* summed up the common perception of the artistic tendency: “Die ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ ist Amerikanismus, ist Kultus des Zweckes, der nackten Tatsache, der Vorliebe für funktionelle Arbeit, berufsmäßiger Gewissenhaftigkeit und der Nützlichkeit.”<sup>8</sup> Dix especially embraced *Amerikanismus* but, according to some writers, including the left-wing critic Carl Einstein, who wrote about the artist in *Das Kunstblatt* in 1923, the artist’s keen insights also produced a radical, anti-bourgeois artistic vision that sought to “demolish the real with pithy objectivity, unmask this era, and force it into self-irony.”<sup>9</sup> By using painting as “a medium of cool execution” and “observation [as] an instrument of relentless attack,” Einstein asserted that Dix’s works

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<sup>5</sup> Hartlaub, 492.

<sup>6</sup> Roh, Franz. *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei*. Leipzig: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1925. 82. According to Roh, the Veristic group also included Shalom Sebba, August Wilhelm Dreßler, Georg Scholz, Wilhelm Schnarrenberger and Rudolf Schlichter.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>8</sup> George, Waldemar. “Frankreich und die ‘Neue Sachlichkeit,’” *Das Kunstblatt* 11 (November 1927): 395. Cited in Crockett, Dennis. *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder 1918-1924*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999. My translation of George’s quote is as follows: “The ‘New Objectivity’ is Americanism, the cult of the purpose, the naked fact, the predilection for functional work, professional conscientiousness, and usefulness.”

<sup>9</sup> Einstein, Carl. “Otto Dix.” *Das Kunstblatt* 7, no. 3 (March 1923): 97-102. 490. Cited in Kaes, Anton, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.



functioned as “critical statement[s].”<sup>10</sup> He “paint[ed] what [was] current” but rather than catering to the desires of the bourgeoisie, Einstein claimed that Dix,

“[gave] this era—which [was] only the caricature of one—a resolute and technically sound kick in its swollen belly, [wrung] confessions of vileness from it, and produce[d] an upright depiction of its people their sly faces grinning an array of stolen mugs.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite their claims to objectivity, the artists associated with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and the art they created were highly affected by the trauma of World War I and its disastrous effects on Germany's politics, economic situation, social coherence, national psyche and way of life in general. World War I began in 1914 with the assassination of Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, by a Serbian nationalist. Germany entered the war in August 1914 and German military leaders, politicians and the general public expected a swift and victorious end to the war. However, the war dragged on for over four long, expensive years and the rising death toll and declining economic status disillusioned many Germans who had previously supported the war with fervent patriotism and enthusiasm. Unfortunately for Germany, the 1920 Treaty of Versailles heaped unfair, if not impossible, war reparations on Germany that further accelerated its economic decline, political crises and cultural degeneration.<sup>12</sup> It was within this tumultuous and depressing time that the *Neue Sachlichkeit* came into being.

Otto Dix (Figure 1), who is best known for his disturbing images of war cripples and

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<sup>10</sup> Einstein, 491.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 490.

<sup>12</sup> Hartley, Keith and Sarah O'Brien Twohig. *Otto Dix: 1891-1969*. London: Tate Gallery, 1992. 27. 29-32. The Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919 but it did not go into effect until 1920. In addition to paying huge cash reparations, Germany's merchant fleet was seized. It lost twenty-five percent of its coal deposits and seventy-five percent of its iron-ore deposits. Allied troops occupied the Rhineland. Germany lost its colonies and was forced to cede multiple territories to other countries. For instance, Alsace and Lorraine were given back to France.

prostitutes, was one of the best-known artists of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. As with many men of his generation, Dix's world view was inarguably inspired by his experiences in World War I (Figures 2 and 3). He was called up as an *Ersatz-Reservist* (replacement reservist) and, in Dresden, he completed his initial training as an artilleryman. Then, in September of 1915, he volunteered for service and, for the first years of the war, he fought on the western front in France. He spent the winter of 1917 on the eastern front in Belorussia and beginning in 1918, he was again stationed on the western front. As he was working class, he did not enter as an officer and had to work his way up through the ranks. For his service, Dix received the Iron Cross Second Class and was eventually promoted to the rank of *Vizefeldwebel* (vice sergeant).<sup>13</sup> In the late summer of 1918, he decided to volunteer for a pilot training course and, consequently, went to *Schneidebühl* (Silesia) for training. As an aerial observer, he witnessed the bombed and devastated countryside firsthand.<sup>14</sup> He was still stationed at this training camp when the war ended in 1918.<sup>15</sup>

Prior to the start of the Great War, Dix became interested in the philosophical writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. In fact, Dix started reading Nietzsche's works in 1911 when he was only twenty years old.<sup>16</sup> He found Nietzsche's ideas to be so fascinating that, in 1912, he was inspired to create a life-size plaster bust of the philosopher which is

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<sup>13</sup> Herrmann, Ingo. "Biography: 1914-1923." *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 235.

<sup>14</sup> McGreevy, Linda F. *The Life and Works of Otto Dix: German Critical Realist*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1975, 19. As a soldier, Dix fought in the trenches. He survived mustard gas attacks while serving in the Champagne province in France. He was wounded on several occasions and, as a result of his injuries, he briefly stayed in a French military hospital. When the war finally ended, he was serving guard duty at a Silesian training camp.

<sup>15</sup> Herrmann, 235.

<sup>16</sup> McGreevy, 11. In one of Sarah Twohig O'Brien's footnotes for her essay "Dix and Nietzsche" in *Otto Dix 1891 – 1969* (London: Tate Gallery), she mentions that Otto Griebel, who was a fellow student of Dix's prior to World War I, claimed that Dix began reading Nietzsche in 1909.

the only work of sculpture Dix is known to have created (Figures 4 and 5). This work recalls a 1902 bronze bust of Nietzsche created by Max Klinger (1857 – 1920),<sup>17</sup> a German artist respected by Dix and his contemporaries (Figure 6).<sup>18</sup> With Dix's work, the confident modeling of the facial features and the head and the powerful forward thrust of the neck recalls the intense fervor and audaciousness of Nietzsche's philosophy.<sup>19</sup> This green-tinted plaster bust was Dix's first work to be purchased by a German art gallery. In 1923, Dr. Paul Ferdinand Schmidt acquired it for the Dresden City Art Collection where it was esteemed as being one of the most impressive works of modern art in the collection until the Nazis confiscated it in 1937. Schmidt was so impressed by the work that he believed it embodied the spirit of Nietzsche and his philosophical perspective better than other portraits of the philosopher.<sup>20</sup>

Not only was Dix motivated to create a bust of the philosopher but he also carried a copy of one of Nietzsche's books with him when he went to war and kept it with him for the duration of the conflict.<sup>21</sup> He was so intrigued with Nietzsche's ideology that he

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<sup>17</sup> Van Dyke, James A. "Otto Dix's Philosophical *Metropolis*." *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 183.

<sup>18</sup> Rewald, Sabine. "To Beauty." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 50.

<sup>19</sup> Twohig, Sarah O'Brien. "Dix and Nietzsche." *Otto Dix 1891 – 1969*. London: Tate Gallery, 1992. 40. In his essay "Intransigent Realism" found in the Neue Galerie's *Otto Dix* exhibition catalogue, Olaf Peters contests the date of Dix's Nietzsche bust. Although the date is usually given as 1912, Peters suggests that, instead, the work likely dates from 1914.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. O'Brien Twohig notes that in addition to his bust of Nietzsche three other works by Dix were chosen by the Nazis and art dealers to be included in the auction of one hundred twenty five works held in 1939 in Lucerne, Switzerland. Dix's bust of Nietzsche was not sold at the auction but its location is unknown and it was, presumably, destroyed.

<sup>21</sup> Rewald, Sabine. "Skat Players." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 57. Rewald asserts that Dix's either took *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* or *Also Sprach Zarathustra* with him. Linda McGreevy suggests it was *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. On one of the inside cover pages of his copy of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, which is in the possession of the Otto Dix Stiftung, Dix signed his name in pen and dated it 1914. He signed it again in pencil but he did not date it. As the date Dix wrote in this book coincides with the start date of World War I, one can speculate that *Also Sprach Zarathustra* was the Nietzsche book Dix took with him to war.

claimed that it was “die einzig richtige Philosophie.”<sup>22</sup> After the war, his interest in Nietzsche’s works continued and he, along with other avant-garde artists with Expressionist leanings, ““radicalized Nietzsche’s Dionysian-individualist position.””<sup>23</sup> Many of the works he created soon after the war’s end, including *Prometheus—Grenzen der Menschheit* (*Prometheus—Limits of Mankind*) of 1919 (Figure 7) and *Ich DIX bin das A und das O* (*I Dix am the A and the O*) of 1919 (Figure 8), were visual manifestations of Dix’s engagement with Nietzsche’s philosophical ideas.<sup>24</sup>

Dix remained interested in Nietzsche’s works throughout his life and *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*), *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (*The Gay Science*), *Morgenröte* (*The Dawn*), *Der Wille zur Macht* (*The Will to Power*), *Götzen-Dämmerung* (*The Twilight of the Idols*), *Der Antichrist* (*The Antichrist*), and *Dionysos-Dithyrambe* (*Dithyrambs of Dionysus*) were still in his personal library at the time of his death.<sup>25</sup> However, after the immediate post-war creation of works that overtly reference the philosopher’s ideas, the Nietzschean allusions in Dix’s works became more subtle and incorporated other elements, including his simultaneous admiration for and competition

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<sup>22</sup> Dix, Otto. “Aus Gesprächen bei verschiedenen Gelegenheiten.” Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 280. Dix’s full quote about Nietzsche is *Das war die einzig richtige Philosophie.* This translates to “That was the only correct philosophy.” Presumably, these discussions with Dix were conducted by Diether Schmidt himself. The date of these discussions is not indicated.

<sup>23</sup> “Otto Dix’s Philosophical *Metropolis*,” 183. Here, Van Dyke quotes Rainer Beck’s *Otto Dix—Dix kosmischen Bilder—Zwischen Sehnsucht und schwangerem Weib*, Dresden, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. In the footnotes of his essay, Van Dyke mentions that, in Dix’s copy of *Der Wille zur Macht*, the artist made notes on aphorism 900 which remarks on Prometheus.

<sup>25</sup> The volumes of Nietzsche’s works that were in Dix’s library at the time of his death can be found in the archive of the Otto Dix Stiftung which is in Bevaix, Switzerland. These works are found in four volumes. *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* and *Morgenröte* are individual volumes. *Morgenröte* was published by C.G. Naumann Verlag in Leipzig in 1906. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* were both published by Alfred Kröner Verlag in Leipzig in 1906. One volume contains *Der Wille zur Macht*, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, *Der Antichrist* and *Dionysos-Dithyrambe*. It was published by C.G. Naumann Verlag in Leipzig in 1906. All of the books contain Dix’s signature in pencil on the inside page facing the back of the cover page. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* also contains an additional signature in pen and is dated 1914 in Dix’s handwriting.

with Old Master painters, including German artists such as Lucas Cranach, Albrecht Dürer, and Hans Baldung Grien. Dix's appreciation for these artists was no secret and, due to the extent of the inspiration he found in the Old Masters, friend and fellow *Neue Sachlichkeit* artist, George Grosz, jokingly referred to him as "Hans Baldung Dix."<sup>26</sup> Yet, Dix's engagement with the works of Old Master artists began years before the Weimar Republic was officially declared, as evidenced by his *Selbstbildnis mit Nelke* (*Self-Portrait with Carnation*) of 1912 (Figure 9), which depicts a half-length portrait of the stern-faced, young Dix sporting a textured, brownish-olive green *Manchesterjackete* (Manchester jacket)<sup>27</sup> and holding a pink and white carnation in his right hand. With this work, in which the figure is placed against a solid, pale blue background, Dix adapted a particular type of painting that had been developed by Old Master artists of the sixteenth century, including Hans Holbein.<sup>28</sup>

The self-portrait that was inspired by Holbein was painted the same year he created the plaster bust of Nietzsche which indicates that both the Old Masters and the existential philosopher were not only in his thoughts at the time but also influenced the creation of his art. The Old Masters partly inspired Dix's choice of subjects and motifs while the influence of Nietzsche's philosophical ideas affected both his motives and the manner in which he interpreted these themes. For Dix, the Old Masters were not simply canonical art historical figures whose oeuvres he could emulate. Rather, in them, he found the creative stimuli that encouraged his competitive spirit. In turn, this motivated him to experiment with their motifs and styles in order to invent a new visual language

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<sup>26</sup> Whitford, Frank. "The Revolutionary Reactionary." *Otto Dix: 1891 – 1969*. London: Tate Gallery, 1992. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Schmidt, Diether. *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1981. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Schubert, Dietrich. "Death in the Trench: The Death of the Portrait? Otto Dix's Wartime Self-Portraits, 1915 – 1918." *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 33.

that both challenged and integrated historical references. Nietzsche's vitalistic philosophy which emphasized self-mastery and championed creativity was especially foundational to Dix's point of view and unquestionably impacted his self-perception and the manner in which he engaged his art. In his construction of this innovative imagery, Dix incorporated his own experiences as a talented artist and modern man who had experienced the quietude of peacetime, the ferocity of battle, and the confusion of transitional times. Thus, his unique experiences as both a witness to and participant in the particular events of his time gave Dix a singular position from which to evaluate the shifting cultural significance of Nietzsche's ideas pertaining to war, violence, pleasure and emotional extremes in both the pre- and post-war (interwar) periods. As the cultures that produced both the German Old Masters and Friedrich Nietzsche ceased to exist, Dix seems to have attempted to use his engagement with both to construct a new kind of imagery and a new culture on his own terms.

The critical influence of both the history of art and the philosophy of Nietzsche continued to manifest themselves in Dix's works even after the end of the Weimar Republic. For instance, Dix's painting *Die sieben Todsünden (The Seven Deadly Sins)* of 1933 (Figure 10), which was painted after Dix was dismissed from his post at the art academy in Dresden, evinces Dix's attraction to both. Not only does the work display a close connection to works of Old Master artists such as Hans Baldung Grien and Hans Holbein the Younger (Figure 11), but Dix also specifically included a quotation from Nietzsche's poetic *Dionysos-Dithyramben* of 1888.<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche's phrase, "The desert grows: woe to him who conceals deserts!" appears as script written on the wall visible

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<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche's *Dionysos-Dithyramben* was in Dix's possession at the time of his death in 1969. See footnote 19.

near the blade of the scythe.<sup>30</sup> Thus, just as Dix was intrigued with the Old Masters and with Nietzschean philosophy prior to the birth of the Weimar Republic, he was just as taken with them both after its demise. This bracketing of Dix's Weimar works by additional images that display an interest in both the Old Masters and Friedrich Nietzsche indicates that these were enduring fascinations for him and were crucial elements of his thought processes and visual language. They affected the construction of his public artistic persona and impacted the manner in which he manipulated the material of those who inspired him in order to produce a new paradigm both for his art and the persona he wished to construct for himself.

Dix's prolonged interest in Nietzsche and his "rootedness...in German art"<sup>31</sup> are especially manifested in his Weimar-era representations of women. The post-war period in Germany saw many substantial societal changes. Dix's works, in particular those created during the so-called post-inflation "stabilization period" (1924-1929), engaged aspects of this interwar cultural upheaval in ways that works of art by his contemporaries did not. The Germany that existed prior to the Great War was very different from the Germany that developed in its wake. The war opposed male experience on the battlefield and female experience on the home front. Consequently, in the interwar period, one of the primary objectives of the governmental policies was to reestablish order and a general sense of security by focusing on the restoration of established gender

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<sup>30</sup> Van Dyke, James A. "Otto Dix's Folk Culture." *Otto Dix and the New Objectivity*. Ed., Kunstmuseum Stuttgart. Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012. 88.

<sup>31</sup> Van Dyke, 89. Van Dyke specifically notes the link between Dix's *Die sieben Todsünden* and works by artists including Hans Baldung Grien, Urs Graf, Hans Holbein the Younger, Hans Sebald Beham and Matthäus Merian.

roles in both the domestic sphere and in the workplace.<sup>32</sup> While some politicians and social reformers sought to police and otherwise minimize the relative degree of independence achieved by women as a result of the war, many Weimar women rejected such attempts to curtail their newfound freedoms. As a result of men being called to the front, women had gained employment opportunities in offices, department stores and factories. Additionally, with the signing of the Weimar Constitution in 1919, men and women were, at least on paper, guaranteed equal rights<sup>33</sup> and women were afforded some level of political participation and government involvement.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Weimar women increasingly demanded greater sexual freedom, economic liberties and reproductive rights and these appeals were often regarded as manifestations of the perceived erosion of German cultural values. Thus, most women's assessment of their newfound situation differed greatly from that of the traditional, patriarchal establishment which sought to regain its previously firm hold over the roles, expectations and bodies of German women.

As a result of the highly fraught debates about the increasingly conspicuous presence of women in public life both as new employees in the work force and as emancipated New Women and prostitutes, the bodies of Weimar women became the primary sites onto which patriarchal fears were projected. In the aftermath of Germany's humiliating military defeat and the subsequent return of large numbers of soldiers, many of whom were severely physically wounded if not psychologically damaged, the

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<sup>32</sup> Abrams, Lynn and Elizabeth Harvey. "Introduction: Gender and Gender Relations in German History." *Gender Relations in German history: Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*. Eds. Abrams, Lynn and E. Harvey, eds. London: UCL Press, 1996. 8. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Finch, Maggie. "Metropolis: The Brilliant and Sinister Art of the 1920s." *The Mad Square: Modernity in German Art 1910-1937*. Ed. Jacqueline Strecker. Sydney, Australia: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2011. 192.

<sup>34</sup> Abrams, 23.



perceived attitudes and behavior of many Weimar women seemed only to add insult to individual and national injury. Soldiers who had been assured of a quick and glorious victory over Germany's enemies were instead subjected to a brutal, drawn out war and an embarrassing loss. Furthermore, the punitive measures of the Treaty of Versailles, with provisions perceived as being deliberately orchestrated by the French to shame its Teutonic enemy, only served to aggravate Germany's collective feelings of humiliation and German male soldiers' feelings of dishonor and emasculation. In turn, such feelings were projected onto women, particularly those who refused to conform to patriarchal norms and these "deviant" women became scapegoats for a variety of troubles including the declining birthrate, sexual transmitted diseases and general societal degeneration that burdened the Republic.<sup>35</sup>

Women's increased visibility in the public sphere coupled with their perceived escalating promiscuity, the rising numbers of individuals suffering from venereal diseases, and the growing number of abortions despite the procedure's illegality under Paragraph 219 of the German penal code,<sup>36</sup> resulted in women being blamed for the so-called pervasive "depravity" of modern, metropolitan life. In particular, "deviant" female behavior, as exemplified both by prostitutes and by the liberated *Neue Frau*, was perceived as a galling affront to long-standing German cultural values. These shifting

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<sup>35</sup>In *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties*. (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1992) In this book, Cornelia Osborne discusses the perceptions of women, specifically those who challenged traditional female reproductive roles and maternal stereotypes. Due to their economic independence, perceived sexual promiscuity and calls for abortion rights, New Women were regarded as being especially suspect. Both prostitutes and New Women were blamed for interwar problems ranging from the declining birthrate to the increase in the number of reported cases of sexually transmitted diseases and other manifestations of so-called national decline.

<sup>36</sup> Osborne, Cornelia. "Wise women, Wise Men and Abortion in the Weimar Republic: Gender, Class and Medicine." *Gender Relations in German history: Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*. Eds. Abrams, Lynn and E. Harvey, eds. London: UCL Press, 1996. 143. In March 1927, the German Supreme Court ruled that "therapeutic abortion," meaning abortion on health grounds, was permitted.

power relations and the contentious issues surrounding Weimar gender politics were projected onto the bodies of these “deviant” women which, in turn, became contested sites in the battle between the retention of long-established, Wilhelmine cultural values and the changing cultural mores of the modern Weimar Republic.

During the interwar period, Dix’s art, specifically his images of women, engaged such discourses while also demonstrating a newly aggressive engagement with the art of German Old Masters. Prior to the war, Dix’s works clearly evidenced the influence of the Old Masters; after the war, his stance became much more overt and antagonistic. Rather than being artistically indebted to them, he wanted to surpass them by consciously appropriating and manipulating Old Master motifs pertaining to death and combining them with depictions of Weimar’s “fallen” women. In these works, Dix engaged the war’s legacy of death and emasculation and the Weimar Republic’s reputation for being morally bankrupt through the bodies of “deviant” Weimar women. These depictions of “fallen” women not only modernized certain Old Master motifs in an attempt to secure the artist’s place in the pantheon of great German artists but they also functioned as visualizations of the pervasive social unease over the *Frauenfrage* (“woman question”) that pervaded interwar texts and debates. His concurrent fascination with and anxiety over the bodies, actions and mores of modern, emancipated women led him to visually link yet distinguish between prostitutes and New Women. Yet, while he continually wrestled with the tension that existed as a result of the blurred lines between prostitutes and New Women, he did not personally resolve it and this ambivalence is manifested in his works. Neither did he overcome his fixation on the Dionysian principle of Eros which he perceived as being most directly experienced through women. As

intermediaries between him and this vitalistic life force, females, in their myriad manifestations of Dionysian Eros, remained one of his principal preoccupations.<sup>37</sup>

As Dix could not regulate the Dionysian erotic forces of female sexuality as they manifested themselves in the real world, he, perhaps, used his art and the construction of his manly artistic and public persona as attempts to control them. Via Nietzschean self-mastery and control over his persona, he not only attempted to affirm his artistic talent but also to overcome the perceived obstacles to his self-actualization, including his near obsession with the varied expressions of female sexuality. Consequently, Dix's deliberate manipulation of historical motifs, which he combined with contemporary concerns about gender politics and his great respect for Friedrich Nietzsche resulted in his decision to attempt to cast himself not only as an informed, capable Apollonian artist but also as a controlled, powerful New Man whose masculinity was not compromised by the threatening emancipated female sexuality he controlled via his artistic representations.

In addition to Nietzsche, his conception of masculinity included Americanized elements, including jazz, dance and fashion. As the victors in World War I, American male masculinity, was begrudgingly admired by the defeated Germans, including Dix. In particular, American soldiers demonstrated the manly virtues of courage, resolve and strength of will that also characterized Nietzschean interpretations of masculinity.<sup>38</sup> Dix seems to have attempted to reinforce his own self-worth as a man by adopting certain

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<sup>37</sup> Eberle, Matthias. "Neue Sachlichkeit in Germany: A Brief History." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 32-34.

<sup>38</sup> Mosse, George L. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. 100.

signifiers of American masculinity from those—American men in general and soldiers in particular—who were responsible for the blow to his male ego.

Dix was not simply passively inspired by the Old Masters and his admiration for Nietzsche's ideology. Rather, he actively used his appropriation of Americanized masculinity and his images of Weimar's "deviant" women to publicly define himself as an Apollonian artist who surpassed the Old Masters and an interwar New Man who embodied the masculine qualities valued by Nietzsche and praised in interwar discourses on ideal manhood. In so doing, he fashioned a new, unique visual language by splicing the safe, historically recognized past onto a chaotic, uncertain present. His idiosyncratic visual language exhibited an innovative and distinctive form of expressivity that was construed in utterly different terms than what had previously existed in German art. Even within the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, his idiosyncratic engagement with the works of the Old Masters and his enduring preoccupation with Nietzsche's ideas of "destructive Eros," as specifically manifested in female sexuality, and the cycle of creation, destruction and recreation<sup>39</sup> distinguish his art from other artists who participated in that artistic tendency.

Chapter two addresses Dix's desire to simultaneously engage and surpass the Old Masters via the motif of the *Totentanz*. Not only did he modernize the *Totentanz* theme but he also deliberately linked modern dance with the *Neue Frau* and, thus, with "deviant" sexuality, decay and death. Dix's personal enjoyment of dance and his engagement with *Amerikanismus* are demonstrated in works such as *An die Schönheit (To Beauty)* of 1922 and *Selbstbildnis mit Gattin (Self-Portrait with Wife)* of 1923. In these works, Dix specifically linked modern dance with illicit sexuality and the perceived

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<sup>39</sup> Eberle, 32-34.

moral corrosion of Weimar society. Furthermore, he attempted to construct an overtly masculine, American-influenced persona—the Weimar New Man—in order to combat the threat to German masculinity posed by both the nation’s loss in World War I and the dangers posed by the ostensibly emancipated *Neue Frau*, the New Woman.

Dix’s interest in these themes culminated in his 1925 painting *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber* (*Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber*). While he was on friendly terms with the scandalous drug and alcohol-addicted nude dancer whose film roles, stage performances and offstage exploits contributed to her outrageous reputation, his depiction of her coincides with Carl Ludwig Schleich’s 1921 article in *Das Tagebuch* entitled “*Kokainismus*” (“Cocaineism”). Berber’s fiendish appearance seems especially pertinent to Schleich’s discussion of cocaine as a demonic addiction. However, in contrast to Schleich’s purely critical tone, Dix’s image of Berber was not strictly intended as a condemnation. Instead, negative feelings about her unhealthy lifestyle seemed to merge with other feelings of fascination, admiration and fear. In his painting, her haggard outward appearance and scandalous persona, as recounted in Lothar Fischer’s account in *Anita Berber Göttin der Nacht: Collage eines kurzen Lebens* (*Anita Berber, Goddess of the Night: Collage of a Short Life*), enabled Dix to link her exaggeratedly decayed physical state to Weimar ideas about the pervasive “depravity” of the *Neue Frau*. Such ideas resulted in the blurring of the lines between working, sexually liberated New Women and prostitutes, who were promiscuous as a result of their occupation. Writings such as Dr. Erich Wulffen’s 1923 book, *Das Weib als Sexualverbrecherin* (*Woman as a Sexual Criminal*), seemingly supported these blurred lines and encouraged Dix’s fascination with the *Neue Frau*, sexual “depravity” and death.

Moreover, Dix's ardent admiration for the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and the philosopher's frequent mention of dance and its connection to Dionysian frenzy further inspired him to use the body of Anita Berber as a site on which to project his fascination with and anxiety over the changing roles of women in society and the impact of modernity on traditional cultural mores. Thus, his engagement with Nietzschean philosophy and his manipulation of the Old Master theme of the *Totentanz* demonstrate the uneasy distinction between New Women and prostitutes and reveal his simultaneous attempts to define himself as a Nietzschean New Man trying to maintain control over his own persona and surroundings.

Chapter three explores Dix's engagement with *vanitas* motifs in his depictions of women, especially prostitutes and New Women. During the interwar years, widows occupied an uneasy position in Weimar society. Many experienced economic hardship and, consequently, some resorted to prostitution in order to alleviate their financial difficulties. In addition, a growing number of prostitutes who were not widows adopted widows' clothing in order to decrease the likelihood of arrest. Thus, during the interwar period, not only were widows associated with death but they were also linked with the illicit sexuality of prostitutes. This perceived connection between widows and "fallen" women demonstrates the elision of widows and New Women with prostitutes that occurred across multiple discourses—both visual and written—during the Weimar years.

The difficulty in differentiating a veiled widow and a veiled prostitute was demonstrated in a variety of paintings by Dix including *Strichdame (Prostitute)* (1920), *Dame mit Nerz und Schleier (Lady with Mink and Veil)* (1920) and several works entitled *Witwe (Widow)* of 1922. Examined in light of writings such as Erich Wulffen's

discussion of “deviant” female sexuality, including that of widows, in his *Das Weib als Sexualverbrecherin* (*Woman as a Sexual Criminal*) of 1923, and Nietzsche’s philosophical postulations, Dix’s paintings evinced the corollary that existed between sex, death and supposedly “deviant” female sexuality that the artist found intriguing.

Dix specifically engaged and updated traditional *vanitas* still life motifs in his *Stilleben mit Witwenschleier* (*Still Life with Widow’s Veil*) of 1925. This work combined traditional symbols of transience and death, such as the flowers and bones, with a new indicator of death and sexual temptation, the widow’s veil. In light of the voluminous discourse pertaining to Weimar widows and prostitutes, including *Stätten der Berliner Prostitution* (*Sites of Berlin Prostitution*) by WEKA (Willi Pröger) of 1930, and to the allegedly decaying state of interwar women in general, as found in Thomas Wehrin’s “*Die Verhuring Berlins*” (“Berlin is Becoming a Whore”) of 1920, this work can be regarded as adjusting the *vanitas-voluptas* motif which warned against sexual temptation.

Dix again linked sex and death via the motif of the *vanitas* in his variants of *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* (*Girl before the Mirror*) of 1922. Despite their differing media, these works all depict an ostensibly young, attractive prostitute gazing into a mirror while her reflection is that of a gaunt, wrinkled old woman. These works engage *vanitas* images featuring an attractive, young woman as in Hans Baldung Grien’s *Die drei Lebensalter und der Tod* (*The Three Stages of Woman and Death*) of 1510. However, rather than merely addressing issues of the ephemeral nature of youth and beauty and the certainty of death, Dix altered the motif to engage Weimar discourses pertaining to prostitution, “deviant” women, sex, and death and Nietzsche’s ideas about the interrelation between sex and death in the human life cycle.

Dix's engagement with *vanitas* motifs extended to the theme of Death and the maiden in his *Vanitas (Jugend und Alter)* (*Vanitas [Youth and Old Age]*) of 1932 which is visually linked to Old Master meditations on the theme, including Baldung Grien's *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (*Death and the Maiden*) of 1517. There are thematic similarities between *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* and this work, but the nude woman in the later painting is not a prostitute and the decrepit woman stands behind her rather than being reflected in a mirror. This work also addresses the thematic functions of *vanitas* motifs by strongly alluding to the fleeting nature of youth and beauty and to the inescapability of death. Yet, the uncertainty of the woman's identity links the work to the Weimar discourse surrounding the blurred lines between prostitutes and non-prostitutes as found in Wehrlin's "*Die Verhörung Berlins*" and Curt Moreck's *Führer durch das 'lasterhafte' Berlin* (*Guide to "Naughty" Berlin*) of 1931. As she visually seems to be a *Neue Frau*, the artist again associated sex, death and the sliding scale of "illicit" sexuality on which both New Women and prostitutes were found. These *vanitas*-inspired works reveal Dix's simultaneous fascination with and trepidation toward emancipated female sexuality and its consequences both for society and for his carefully constructed Apollonian, masculine identity.

Chapter four focuses on Dix's paintings of prostitutes arranged in groups of either three or four. Works such as *Der Salon (The Salon I)* (1921) and *Der Salon II (The Salon II)* (1921) feature four prostitutes presenting themselves in the parlor of a brothel. As the prostitutes in these works are women of varying ages, they can be interpreted as referencing the traditional motif of the Three Ages of Woman which emphasizes the inevitability of aging and death. However, the precedent for depicting four nude women



grouped together in a room was set by Albrecht Dürer's 1497 engraving *Die Vier Hexen* (*Four Witches*) which depicts four nude women in a room that is not unlike the one depicted in *Der Salon II*. Additionally, Old Master paintings such as Lucas Cranach the Elder's *Das Urteil des Paris* (*The Judgment of Paris*) of 1528 also act as inspiration both in terms of the composition and the theme of the dangers of female sexual allure. While the linkage of witches and the judgment of Paris story may seem unusual at first, Dix's reinterpretation of these themes emphasizes the risks associated with female sexual appeal and the implicit harm to man caused by such dangerous women.

While a male patron is present in *Der Salon II*, in works such as *Der Salon* and *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße* (*Three Prostitutes on the Street*) of 1925, the presence of a potential male client is suggested and can be inferred to be the viewer if not the artist himself. Thus, Dix implicates himself, if not also the viewer, in the act of solicitation. Tragedy befell Paris as a result of his choice and Dix's implication of the voyeuristic position of those who gaze at the bodies of the prostitutes offering themselves for a price can be interpreted as having a cautionary element. However, given Dix's eschewal of traditional morality, these images are more clearly a demonstration of his desire to assert his own masculine authority and sexual supremacy over such erotically threatening "deviant" women.

Photographs, such as those found in WEKA's work of reportage, *Stätten der Berliner Prostitution von den Elends- Absteigequartieren am Schlesischen Bahnhof und Alexanderplatz zur Luxus-Prostitution der Friedrichstraße und des Kurfürstendamms*. (*Sites of Berlin Prostitution*) of 1930, demonstrate that Dix's representations of prostitutes on the street were, to some extent, reflections of the realities of prostitution in

large cities. Social critics, including Wehrlin, often blamed prostitutes and other “deviant” women for corrupting and otherwise causing the downfall of previously upright, honorable German men. Thus, the ideas of women being morally suspect, sexually dangerous, and potentially harmful to otherwise “good” men that are implied by Old Master images of witches and the judgment of Paris were echoed in a new form in Weimar critical discourse.

In addition, Dix’s 1926 painting *Drei Weiber* (*Three Wenchies*) very clearly references Baldung Grien’s images of witches, including his *Zwei Wetterhexen* (Weather Witches) of 1523 and to images of a *Hexensabbat* (*Witches’ Sabbath*) of 1514. Once again, in this work Dix manipulated the Old Master motif of nude witches, who were regarded as being morally and spiritually degenerate and as posing distinct threats to men, by updating it via a reference to contemporary, mostly nude prostitutes who were similarly considered to be morally suspect and potentially dangerous to men and their masculinity. Yet, rather than accepting this potential emasculation by such powerful, castrating women, Dix asserted his masculine authority by placing his signature in tattoo-like script on the forearms of one of the women which acts as proof of both his Apollonian artistic control and his sexual potency as a vitalistic, Nietzschean New Man.

Previous scholarship pertaining to Otto Dix tends to compartmentalize his references to the Old Masters, his interest in Nietzsche, his fascination with sex, “deviance” and death, and his tendency to depict interwar women in an unflattering light. Rather than remarking on the inspiration Dix found in certain Old Master motifs, this dissertation posits that he sought to surpass them via a deliberate appropriation, manipulation and modernization of Old Master motifs in order to make them relevant to

Weimar-era artistic styles and social concerns. In addition, Dix's admiration for Nietzsche is often discussed within the context of finding truth in ugliness. While there is some accuracy in this claim, this dissertation seeks to further the discourse of Nietzsche's influence on Dix by arguing that the philosopher's claims led the painter to incorporate the philosopher's ideas of the Dionysian and Apollonian into his representations of "deviant" women and into his self-construction as an artist. This, consequently, influences the discussion of Dix's fascination with sex, death, and "degeneration" as these ideas are explored not only within the cultural framework of the Weimar Republic but also in light of Nietzsche's nuanced theories on these themes.

Dix's unflattering images of women have often been interpreted as being misogynistic. However, this dissertation seeks to add nuance to that claim by suggesting a more complicated interaction between Dix and modern, Weimar women. While his works do evince certain suspicions and hostilities toward women, they also demonstrate a distinct fascination with and even an admiration for the perceived Dionysian ways in which "fallen" women embraced life in the Nietzschean, vitalistic sense. Thus, Dix's personal and artistic engagements with such women were highly complex and often involved an intermingling of a variety of feelings ranging from resentment, anxiety and revulsion to inspiration, envy and lust. This range of emotional responses is manifested in the visual characteristics of these women. While some have conventionally attractive faces and bodies, many are exaggeratedly thin or hyperbolically obese. Often, their facial wrinkles have been magnified and their breasts droop. Some are dressed in fashionable yet nondescript ways while many are garishly attired or brazenly nude. Despite how

unappealing these women may seem at first, they all seem to exert a peculiar erotic pull and a carnal attraction that almost defies explanation.

Coupled with his desire to surpass the Old Masters and his quest to fulfill the criteria of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, such ambiguous sentiments manifested themselves not only in his images of “deviant” women but also in the construction of his own public, artistic persona as a New Man. Although inspired by Susan Laikin Funkenstein’s discussion of the New Man, this dissertation deviates from her research by suggesting that, in order to combat the feelings of emasculation due to Germany’s loss in World War I and the threat posed by “deviant” women, Dix bolstered his own ego as a man and as an artist by appropriating the attire and style of America, the country which was partially responsible for the defeat of his own. As a result of his ardent admiration for Nietzsche’s philosophy, Dix’s construction of himself as a Weimar New Man naturally assumed a Nietzschean cast and can be understood as the artist’s attempt to portray himself as a masculine, controlled Apollonian New Man—Artist contra the “deviant,” threatening femininity of Dionysian New Women and prostitutes. In the face of uncertain, chaotic times over which he had no control and in light of the upheavals in social and sexual gender politics caused by the refusal of such women to conform to established, patriarchal mores, Dix’s only recourse to attempt to maintain power over his situation was through the construction of the facade of the Weimar New Man—Apollonian Artist.

## Chapter II Death, Dance and Dionysus: Otto Dix's Manipulation of Old Master

### *Totentanz* Imagery in his Images of Weimar New Women

During the Weimar Republic, new, popular forms of modern dance were heavily laden with a variety of historical, cultural and political meanings, especially those pertaining to the advent of modernity, traditionally gendered domestic spheres and the burgeoning emancipation of women. In particular, contemporary incarnations of dance, such as the scandalous, nude dances performed by the infamous dancer and actress, Anita Berber (1899 - 1928), and the newly-imported dances from America, such as the Charleston, aroused both fascination and ire. Such dances, as depicted in *An die Schönheit* of 1922, were variously praised for their avant-garde modernity and condemned for their supposedly negative impact on the public decorum and sexual mores of German society. Otto Dix, who personally enjoyed dancing, was intrigued by these new dance forms and, via a conscious engagement with the Old Master theme of the *Totentanz*, used their treatment of the body, especially the female body, to grapple with the interwar anxieties about degeneration, gender politics and sexuality with which they were intertwined. In particular, through his *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber* of 1925, Dix appropriated the *Totentanz* theme to create a visual link between dancing, sexually “deviant” women—New Women and prostitutes—death, and decay. In so doing, he attempted to further situate himself as a skilled artist who not only followed in the footsteps of but also surpassed the German Old Masters. He sought to define himself, via the type of self-presentation evidenced in *An die Schönheit*, as a New Man, a “proper” representative of masculinity who resisted corruption and emasculation by the aforementioned types of women.

As the *Totentanz* was popular during a time in which countries were wracked by political and social chaos and individuals were preoccupied with questions of health, disease, bodily decay, and punishments for sin, this theme seemed particularly appropriate to the interwar years. The Weimar Republic was similarly marked by political confusion, social disorder and a distinct preoccupation with issues of personal health, societal degeneration and the consequences of those who deviated from established moral norms. Yet, the *Totentanz* was also useful because it illustrated the fact that Death is egalitarian; regardless of one's age, gender, and economic or social status, one cannot forestall death. At a time when one's economic status could change dramatically overnight and when gender distinctions became increasingly blurred, this theme still maintained relevance. Additionally, Dix's personal love of dance likely encouraged his interest in the theme, especially as it also incorporated his fascination with death and his desire to engage and surpass Old German Masters who had come before him. Thus, the manner in which Dix interwove issues of "deviant" sexuality, the *Neue Frau*, dance and degeneracy via his *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber* enabled him not only to adapt the Old Master motif of the *Totentanz* thereby simultaneously engaging modernity and attempting to surpass past Masters but also to position himself as a masculine, authoritative New Man in a conspicuously Nietzschean vein.

Dix's passionate involvement with dance both recreationally as an amateur dancer and formally as an artist who created images of dancers makes his depictions of dance during the Weimar Republic rewarding subjects for detailed examination. The artist's love of dance found a unique complement in his avid interest in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. The philosopher often wrote about dance and, in *Die Fröhliche*

*Wissenschaft*, he even asserted that “I would not know what the spirit of a philosopher might wish more to be than a good dancer. For the dance is his ideal, also his art, and finally also his only piety, his ‘service of God.’”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, the titular character remarked that “we should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once.”<sup>2</sup> Throughout his writings, Nietzsche often held up dance as a form of Dionysian self-expression in which “man expresses himself as a member of a higher community” and as a manifestation of the “intoxication of the artistic power” revealed through man.<sup>3</sup> As an avid reader of Nietzsche’s works, Dix surely knew of the philosopher’s discussions pertaining to dance and was likely encouraged by their shared appreciation for this form of expression.

In addition, Dix’s interest in the *Totentanz* motif stemmed not only from his own fascination with death and the Old Masters but also from his personal enjoyment of dance, especially the shimmy, the Charleston and the tango.<sup>4</sup> He was an avid dancer and, in his younger days in Düsseldorf, he earned the nickname “Jimmy, the master of the shimmy,”<sup>5</sup> a nickname<sup>6</sup> he continued to use into the nineteen thirties.<sup>7</sup> Dance even drew

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<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. “*Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*.” *The Basic Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. and ed. NY: Modern Library, 2000. 178. This quote comes from aphorism number 381. Dix still owned a copy of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* at the time of his death.

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. “Thus Spake Zarathustra.” *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1977. 322. This quote comes from part 23 of the chapter entitled “On Old and New Tablets” which is found in the Third Part of the work. Dix still owned a copy of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* at the time of his death.

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. “The Birth of Tragedy.” *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Walter Kaufmann, trans and ed. New York: Modern Library, 2000. 37. This quote comes from section one of *The Birth of Tragedy*. In this discussion, Nietzsche discusses both song and dance as being “paroxysms” of man’s higher status and “artistic power.”

<sup>4</sup> Funkenstein, Susan Laikin. “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World: Otto Dix, Social Dancing, and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany.” *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture*, Volume 21, 2005. 163-164.

<sup>5</sup> “To Beauty,” 48.

<sup>6</sup> Dix, Otto. “Briefe an Martha Dix, geb. Lindner.” Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 204-205. In a letter to his wife from Efurt, dated

Dix and his future wife, Martha (1891-1985), together. When Dix and Martha met in Düsseldorf, she was married to Dr. Hans Koch (1881-1952), a doctor of urology and art dealer, whose eponymous portrait Dix painted in 1921;<sup>8</sup> however, their shared love of dance encouraged their attraction. Dix and Martha entered dance competitions<sup>9</sup> and, at one point, they even considered becoming professional dancers.<sup>10</sup>

In his painting *Selbstbildnis mit Gattin* (*Self-Portrait with Wife*) (Figure 12) of 1923, Dix portrayed himself in a fashionable, American-style dark-colored suit standing slightly behind Martha who wears a stylish but modestly cut dark, boat-neck style dress which were outfits the couple would have worn to go out dancing.<sup>11</sup> Through his attire and slicked back American hairstyle, Dix shows himself as a sober, modern New Man who, during the nineteen-twenties was identified with “Fordist efficiency, clarity of vision and precision of movement.”<sup>12</sup> Martha, who was upper middle class and well-educated, is shown as a modern, modishly attired woman due to the calf-length hem, wide neck and gathered waist of her dress. Yet, her clothing is not revealing enough nor

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January 19, 1926 and in an undated letter from Berlin that likely also dates to 1926, Dix signs his name as “Jim” and “Jimmy” respectively.

<sup>7</sup> Dix, Otto. “Briefe an Karl Nierendorf, Berlin.” Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 206. In a letter to his dealer, Karl Nierendorf, dated from Randegg in March 1934, Dix signs his name as “Dein Jim.” In a letter to his wife from Efurt, dated January 19, 1926 and in another undated letter that likely also dates to 1926, Dix signs his name as “Jim” and “Jimmy” respectively.

<sup>8</sup> Rewald, Sabine. “Dr. Hans Koch.” *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 89, 91. Dix’s portrait *Dr. Hans Koch* (1921), which is oil and collage on canvas, is in the collection of Museum Ludwig in Cologne. Rewald notes in the catalogue entry for Dix’s crayon on paper drawing entitled *The Artist’s Wife, Martha Dix*, that Dix first contacted Koch, who was also an art collector and dealer, in 1920. They met in 1921 and became friends but Martha Koch left her husband for Dix in 1921. Martha and Hans Koch divorced in 1922. That year, Dr. Koch married Martha’s sister, Maria Elizabeth. Dix and Martha were married in 1923. Despite the marital realignment, Dix and Koch still remained friends.

<sup>9</sup> Peters, Olaf. “Intransigent Realism: Otto Dix between the World Wars.” Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 22.

<sup>10</sup> “To Beauty,” 48.

<sup>11</sup> Peters, 22. *Selbstbildnis mit Gattin* (1923), which was oil glaze over tempera on canvas, was formerly in the collection of Museum Moritzburg in Halle/Saale but, unfortunately, it is missing.

<sup>12</sup> “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World,” 174.



is her pose provocative enough for her to be labeled as a *Neue Frau* which, during the nineteen-twenties, implied a non-traditional woman who was sexually liberated and enjoyed a degree of financial independence. Rather than being liberated, she appears rigidly by her husband's side as a suitably modern prop to bolster Dix's claims to New Man status without demonstrating the sexual or economic emancipation that would threaten that very designation. However, even the subtle allusion to the modern dances of which the Dixes were so fond, does not escape an allusion to "improper" sexuality. The painting was created the year the Dixes were married and, although Martha was married when she and Dix met, he used their shared love of dance to woo her. Thus, for the Dixes, dance was inextricably linked with their initially adulterous relationship.

While *Selbstbildnis mit Gattin* does not actually depict the Dixes dancing, it still links them to the fashionable city life of the Weimar Republic.<sup>13</sup> However, he depicted smartly-dressed couples actually dancing in several other works including *An die Schönheit (To Beauty)* (Figure 13) of 1922.<sup>14</sup> Even in these early works, Dix associated modern dance with sexuality and, more subtly, with societal decline and violence or death. *An die Schönheit*, which appears to be set in a nightclub or a dance hall, features an impassive self-portrait of Dix who stands in the center foreground grasping the receiver of a recent-model rotary telephone.

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<sup>13</sup> Peters, 22.

<sup>14</sup> With regard to the title of *An die Schönheit*, in the catalogue entry for the work in *Glitter and Doom*, Sabine Rewald notes that several explanations have been offered. She remarks that, given the degree of Dix's fascination with Nietzsche, the title might allude to the philosopher's preference for ugliness over beauty for its closer proximity to reality and truth. In her book on Otto Dix, Eva Karcher suggests that the title is ironic and pertains to the era's obsession with external appearances.

On the left side of the canvas, a young couple, both with closed eyes, dances cheek-to-cheek.<sup>15</sup> The man, who has dark, slicked back hair with a pronounced widow's peak, wears a black suit, a white collared shirt with a white bow tie and white gloves. Historian and film historian Patrice Petro notes that in many illustrated magazines such as *Die Dame*, images of the *Neue Frau* were accompanied by distinctly feminized males. These cosmopolitan men were often depicted wearing fashionable, elegant clothing while assuming passive, feminine poses and enacting stereotypically effete gestures.<sup>16</sup> Such images destabilized traditional representations of male and female gender identities by moving both male and female appearances and actions toward androgyny.

While Petro views such androgyny as indicating “a vision of sexuality as shifting between masculinity and femininity,”<sup>17</sup> art historian and authority on Weimar dance, Susan Laikin Funkenstein, suggests that, rather than being a dandy, this male dancer is a homosexual. She asserts that the makeup and facial structure of the “effeminate man” strongly resemble those of his female partner and that, despite the fact that he dances with a woman, his “comportment intimates homosexuality.”<sup>18</sup> This male dancer who is “depicted as a doll-like marionette ... slumps in an awkward pose that implies lethargy, or little control over his body.”<sup>19</sup> Regardless of whether the male dancer is a feminized heterosexual male or an effete homosexual male, Dix, with his “rigid body and its sign as

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<sup>15</sup> In the entry for this painting in the *Glitter and Doom* catalogue, Sabine Rewald suggests that the dancing couple is employed by the nightclub but she does not further explain this assertion.

<sup>16</sup> Petro, Patrice. *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. 119.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Petro is not specifically referencing Otto Dix or any of his works. Rather, she is discussing the images of the *Neue Frau* and the feminine male who often accompanied her in the fashion pages of women's literature.

<sup>18</sup> “A Man's Place in a Woman's World,” 169.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

virile heterosexuality,”<sup>20</sup> positions himself as a masculine, potent, in-control foil vis-à-vis the distinctly non-masculine, soft male dancer behind him.

The dancing man’s partner, who has dark, bobbed hair, is clearly a *Neue Frau*. She is fashionably dressed in a light-colored feathered hat and a pale dress with a red sash that flows down from under her left arm. Both her stylish dress and her hat have been accented with silver foil.<sup>21</sup> Her dress is conspicuously modern as its cut is more revealing than past fashions. The dress is sleeveless so it reveals both her upper and lower arms. Additionally, the back of the dress is low cut and drapes in U-shape more than halfway down her back. The uneven hemline of the dress appears to hit just below her knee thus revealing the woman’s shapely calves.

The woman’s identity as a New Woman is further established through the contrast between her and the female mannequin and a female hairdresser’s wax demonstration bust.<sup>22</sup> The mannequin stiffly stands beyond the African-American drummer and is awkwardly positioned between the drummer and a dark-suited man on the right side of the canvas who carries a tray and is, presumably, a waiter. The mannequin’s eyes are glassy and stare blankly into space while its face is completely devoid of emotion or acknowledgment of anyone else in the scene. Compared to the female dancer and the hairdresser’s bust, the mannequin’s face is the least detailed and the most schematically rendered. The mannequin has been dressed in a rosy pink corset that cinches the figure’s waist and narrows its hips to an almost absurd degree indicating that the figure is indeed a

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> “To Beauty,” 50.

<sup>22</sup> In Rewald’s entry for this painting in the *Glitter and Doom* catalogue, she claims that the figure I have identified as a mannequin is a prostitute employed by the nightclub. However, in his discussion of the work in the Neue Galerie’s *Otto Dix* catalogue, Müller asserts that the figure is a mannequin rather than a prostitute.

mannequin rather than an actual woman. This corset also makes its apparently unclothed bust appear larger by comparison. The mannequin's breasts, which lack nipples, are ill-defined as two separate entities and, instead, they appear as one solid, convex mass.

In the 1920s, "modern" women no longer wore corsets as they were considered old-fashioned and constricting. One could hardly dance the Charleston while wearing a corset. Instead, women wore looser fitting, so-called "flapper" dresses that had become popular in America. Furthermore, the mannequin's hair must have been long enough to have been gathered on top of its head and twisted into a bun. Hair of this length and hairstyles associated with it were certainly in contrast with shorter, more androgynous hairstyles, such as the bobbed *Bubikopf* ("pageboy") style, that were popular at the time. Thus, the dancing woman's loose-fitting modern dress and stylish, short haircut clearly mark her as a *Neue Frau* in contrast to the outdated, Wilhelmine clothing and hairstyle of the mannequin. Furthermore, the mannequin can neither dance nor listen to music so, despite the figure's nearness to the drummer and presence on the dance floor, it cannot partake. The mannequin simply stands there lifelessly as modernity, represented by jazz music, dancing and the New Woman, passes her by.

The outdated attire and hairstyle of the mannequin stand in ironic contrast to its identity as a mannequin. During the nineteen twenties, a new, more slender type of mannequin debuted in store windows. Although this distinctively modern type of slim mannequin originated in Parisian shop windows, the fascination with it spread beyond the French borders. The "*mannequin moderne*," which was considered a key element of urban modernity, was not simply an image of a fashionable female. In fact, such mannequins were often deliberately unnatural in their appearance. For instance, often

their facial and bodily features were dramatically simplified or aspects, such as their “skin,” were deliberately tinted unusual colors in order to distance the mannequin from the actual female body and to emphasize the clothing being advertised. Thus, rather than functioning as simulacra for actual women, these modern mannequins were reduced to non-threatening, decorative objects.<sup>23</sup>

The mannequin in *An die Schönheit* thus represents a deliberately wry contrast between the past and the present. Her outdated, long hair swept up into a bun and her frilly corset are old-fashioned and clearly out of place in the hip, urban jazz club setting. Yet, the figure is an unnaturally thin mannequin of the modern type utilized in the latest, *haute couture* fashion advertising.<sup>24</sup> This seemingly incongruous juxtaposition of the passé with the modish serves to highlight the modernity of the clothing and hairstyle of the painted figure of Otto Dix and the dancing couple on the left side of the canvas. Despite their figural appearances, the mannequin and the wax hairdresser’s bust are both clearly objects as evidenced by their blank, unseeing eyes. As a result of their “objectness,” their “brainlessness” is implied<sup>25</sup> and serves as a foil for the cool, intelligent persona adopted by the figure of Dix and demonstrated by his controlled pose and penetrating gaze. These faux females pose no threat to the masculinity of the suited figure of Dix. They are, literally, displaced window dressing that cannot return the gaze of those who gaze upon them and, as such, they reaffirm Dix’s confidence and control as the modern, New Man who exerts his authority over the proceedings.

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<sup>23</sup> Gronberg, Tag. “Beware Beautiful Women: The 1920s Shopwindow Mannequin and a Physiognomy of Effacement.” *Art History*. Vol. 20. No. 3. (September 1997). 375-377. 379. 381-382.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 377.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 390.

In the lower left corner of the painting is a hairdresser's wax bust of a blonde female head and shoulders. In the years prior to the war, busts of this type (Figure 14) were often seen in hairdressers' windows and functioned as testaments to the hair stylists' skills.<sup>26</sup> The golden blonde hair has been elaborately styled with face-framing ringlets, waved bangs, a braided bun and a decorative filigreed, golden hair ornament. As with the mannequin's hairstyle, this labor-intensive hairdo was certainly out of style during the interwar years and was in distinct contrast to the seemingly care-free, less conventionally "feminine" bobbed haircut seen on New Women. Interestingly, the immensely popular, short hairstyle known as the *Bubikopf* was inspired by the deliberately more masculine hairdo sported by Danish actress Asta Nielsen<sup>27</sup> in a radical 1920 silent film adaptation of *Hamlet* entitled *Hamlet: ein Rachedrama (Hamlet: Drama of Vengeance)*.<sup>28</sup> In this version, the title character is actually a female princess who is forced to disguise herself as a male prince; thus, Nielsen's popular haircut was, from the beginning, associated with a masculinized woman.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> "To Beauty," 48.

<sup>27</sup> Makela, Maria. "The Misogynist Machine: Images of Technology in the Work of Hannah Höch." *Women in the Metropolis: Gender & Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Ed. Katharina Von Ankum. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. 113. Although she was Danish, Asta Nielsen was wildly popular in Germany and made the majority of her films there. The *Bubikopf* hairstyle was incredibly popular throughout the nineteen-twenties and became synonymous with the *Neue Frau*.

<sup>28</sup> Starks, Lisa S. "'Remember Me': Psychoanalysis, Cinema, and the Crisis of Modernity." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 2, Screen Shakespeare (Summer, 2002). 189-190. Erwin Gepard wrote the screenplay for Sven Gade and Heinz Schall's 1920 version of *Hamlet*. It was inspired by Edward Payson Vining's *The Mystery of Hamlet: An attempt to solve an old problem* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1881). In the Gade-Schall version of *Hamlet*, Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, disguises her daughter as a son to deliberately deceive her husband. The female Hamlet falls in love with Horatio who only discovers the eponymous heroine's cross-dressing secret when he inadvertently touches her chest as she melodramatically dies in his arms. Hamlet only courts the conventionally feminine Ophelia in order to distract the maiden's attention from Horatio who finds the doomed Ophelia attractive.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 189.

According to some interwar cultural critics, the increasing unfashionableness of women wearing their hair long was a sign that “femininity itself was on the wane.”<sup>30</sup> Consequently, *Neue Frauen*, who often had “boyish” haircuts, wore more revealing clothing and behaved in untraditional ways, were perceived as being the masculinized antithesis to conventional German femininity. Thus, the bust’s proximity to the dancing, flapper-like woman also underscores its Wilhelmine appearance. The uneven hemline of the dancing woman’s skirt echoes the painstakingly styled waves of the bust’s bangs. The cascading red sash that hangs down vertically from under the dancing woman’s left arm mimics the long ringlet that frames the bust’s face. In terms of being a modern woman, the bust literally and figuratively comes up short.

The incongruity of the bust’s appearance is further highlighted by its lack of body. While the brunette mannequin discussed above could almost be mistaken for an actual human patron of the nightclub, the hairdresser’s bust is clearly not an actual person. The sky blue shawl, which is tied just below the shoulders and accented with a light pink rose in the middle of its suggested bust line, seemingly attempts to distract from the fact that it has no arms, while, in reality, the shawl calls attention to that fact. The bust’s lack of legs is also highlighted by its position in front of the dancing couple. The bust’s head and protuberant bun are positioned in front of the tuxedoed man’s legs calling attention to the fact that the bust is missing these extremities. Additionally, directly to the right, the bust is bordered by the legs of the dancing New Woman and to the center right, it is adjacent

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<sup>30</sup> Frame, Lynn” Gretchen, Girl, *Garçonne?* Weimar Science & Popular Culture in Search of the Ideal New Woman.” *Women in the Metropolis: Gender & Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Ed. Katharina Von Ankum. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. 16. Here, Frame specifically references Gerhard Venzmer’s Gerhard Venzmer’s *Sieh dir die Menschen an!* (Take a Look at Your Fellow Human Beings!) of 1930 in which he typologically categorized women in terms of his perception of their feasibility as marriage partners for members of the opposite sex.

to the gray-suited legs of Otto Dix. The legless bust is literally surrounded by legs, which further emphasizes the bust's incomplete and unreal state.

In his examination of the public performances put on by individuals during the Weimar Republic, German scholar and authority of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Helmet Lethen notes that these deliberate manifestations of artificiality were performed in order to keep others at a safe distance and to conceal one's inner, emotional state as a matter of self-preservation. This distancing was reflected in Weimar "surface culture" which refers to the interwar preoccupation with external appearance and with categorizing acceptable modes of public comportment as opposed to private behavior. This culture of deliberately superficial interactions resulted in the formation of cool personas and a distinct lack of emotional engagement. Lethen observes that this widespread performative disingenuousness was captured in the often detached style of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. In these works of art, individuals appear to simply go through the motions rather than experiencing actual feelings and seem to put on masks rather than actually distinguishing themselves via their character.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in *An die Schönheit*, actual people and fake people (a mannequin and a hairdresser's bust) are, respectively, emblematic of the distinctions between Weimar modernity and the Wilhelmine past. However, with the exception of the leering drummer, the modern patrons seem as detached as the two humanoid dummies. The mannequin and the bust are both glassy-eyed and blank-faced while the pale faces of the dancing couple show no emotion whatsoever. Their eyes are closed but their faces are almost mask-like and betray no signs of inner life. It seems that modern life makes mannequins of humans.

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<sup>31</sup> Lethen, Helmut. *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002. 12.



One can interpret this purposefully aloof style of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a response to or a manifestation of the psychic turmoil engendered by the distressing upheaval of World War I. The glory of Germany was tarnished as a result of its embarrassing loss and many former German soldiers, who had taken pride in their self-definition as heroic, manly soldier males, now reeled as these attributes were publically compromised. The war had been perceived as an opportunity to prove one's manhood through heroism and victory; however, in the aftermath of Germany's defeat and subsequent humiliation due to the Treaty of Versailles, to many, it seemed that the war had instead been a failure. To counter the possible interpretation that soldiers' loss of manliness was a form of feminization, discussions of the *Neuer Mann*, the "New Man," began to take shape.<sup>32</sup> These ideas intersected with theories about the emotional distance and public codes of conduct entailed by "surface culture." Attendant upon this was an increasing fascination with America and a deliberate attempt by some, including Otto Dix, to self-consciously mask one's perceived inadequacy by adopting the attitude and style of those whose masculinity had been demonstrated at the expense of Germany's own.

A variety of different public masks were adopted by individuals during the Weimar Republic and, for some, heterosexuality was one such mask. Following Funkenstein's argument that the dancing woman's partner is possibly a homosexual and in light of "the New Woman's reputation for lesbianism," Funkenstein suggests that the man and woman who comprise the dancing couple "serve as beards for one another to 'drag' as

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<sup>32</sup> Apel, Dora. "'Heroes' and 'Whores': The Politics of Gender in Weimar Antiwar Imagery." *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 79, No. 3 (Sep., 1997). 367-368. 371.

heterosexual.”<sup>33</sup> This notion of adopting the guise of a heterosexual individual likely stems from the fact that, due to the national Criminal Code that had been adopted by the German Empire in 1871, many activities, including homosexuality, were condemned as “crimes and offenses against morality.”<sup>34</sup> Paragraph 175 was notorious for its condemnation of homosexual acts between men as “unnatural.”<sup>35</sup> Female homosexuality was not punishable by German law but, as Margarethe Roelling noted in her 1928 guide *Berlins lesbische Frauen* (*Berlin’s Lesbian Women*), both homosexual men and women were discriminated against.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, many tried to avoid drawing attention to themselves. Thus, Funkenstein’s assertion regarding the two dancers “dragging” as heterosexuals functions within the context of the illegality of male homosexuality during the Weimar Republic and the limited tolerance of homosexual men and women during that period.

The dancing man’s effeminate appearance has already been discussed and, during this period, “the flapper New Woman was referred to as a ‘*garçonne*,’ [which was] a feminization of the French word for ‘boy.’”<sup>37</sup> As New Women were “often associated with mannish lesbianism,” the “uncorseted dress and slicked, bobbed hair” of women such as the dancing woman in *An die Schönheit* not only suggested “liberation from sexual mores” but also a transgression of traditional, “rigid definitions of gender.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World,” 169. Funkenstein bases her discussion of dragging as a heterosexual on Katrin Sieg’s concept of “ethnic drag” which, in turn, was based on Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*.

<sup>34</sup> Dickinson, Edward Ross. “Policing Sex in Germany, 1882–1982: A Preliminary Statistical Analysis.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Volume 15, Number 2, May 2007. 212.

<sup>35</sup> Dickinson, 180.

<sup>36</sup> Lütgens, Annelie. “The Conspiracy of Woman: Images of City Life in the Work of Jeanne Mammen.” *Women in the Metropolis: Gender & Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Ed. Katharina Von Ankum. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. 98.

<sup>37</sup> “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World,” 180.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, the “extremely awkward” manner in which the couple holds hands, “as if the pair is uncomfortable touching each other,” is used by Funkenstein as evidence that these dance partners are merely performing heterosexuality.<sup>39</sup> Based upon these assertions regarding the implied respective homosexuality and lesbianism of the androgynous dancing couple, this pair represents an early incidence in which Dix links modern dancing with sexuality that ran counter to bourgeois mores and was thus regarded by some as “deviant.” The connection established here between modernity, dance, “deviant” sexuality and urban “degeneration” acts as a thematic precursor to Dix’s *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber*. In this portrait, Dix explores these themes in greater depth, specifically through the body of a New Woman, by viewing them through the lens of Nietzsche’s association of dance with Dionysian qualities.

Additionally, the presence of the *Neue Frau* and the effeminate man with whom she dances enables Dix to highlight his own masculinity as a *Neuer Mann*. He is overtly masculine and this masculinity is not threatened by deviations from the traditional male or female norms as represented by the effete dancing man or the New Woman. He seems immune to urban degeneration and the upheaval associated with the increasing deviation from traditional gender roles and sexual mores. In contrast to the weak and the decadent, the figure of Dix stands as bulwark of modern masculinity categorized by physical fitness, emotional control and psychological hardness as well as by the Nietzschean qualities of capableness and self-reliance.

The figure of Dix stands rigidly and authoritatively in the foreground while clothed in an American style suit. This suit acts as a costume to enable Dix to assume the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 169.

virility associated with American men. During World War I, American soldiers played a crucial role in Germany's defeat. Thus, the masculinity of American men was asserted at the expense of the manliness of German soldiers. By adopting a distinctively American suit and hairstyle, Dix, in effect, clothes himself with the armor of the country that was responsible for the defeat of his own. World War I had been considered a test for proving one's masculinity and Germany's military failure in the war was perceived as a blow to German manliness.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Dix's decision to present himself as an able-bodied, physically healthy man presents him as the antithesis to the many injured, crippled war veterans whose physical injuries and inability to work were perceived as signs of emasculation. Furthermore, by displaying himself as a virile, commanding "real" man in contradistinction to the feminine dancing man and the masculine New Woman, Dix defensively defines his heterosexual masculinity via physical strength and sexual control as implied by his reference to the victory of America's military and culture.

The notion of illicit sexuality is further addressed through racial means via the implications of jazz music. The modern New Woman and her partner dance to a contemporary jazz beat played by the stereotypical African-American drummer on the right side of the canvas. The grinning drummer, whose drums have been accented with silver foil, wears a grayish suit with a pink collared shirt and a red, skinny tie. As there were relatively few individuals of African descent in Germany from the beginning of World War I until around 1925, Sabine Rewald suggests that this figure was taken from a

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<sup>40</sup> Lewis, Beth Irwin. *Lustmord: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis.* Von Ankum, Katharina, ed. *Women in the Metropolis: Gender & Modernity in Weimar Culture.* Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. 213.

photograph.<sup>41</sup> However, as Dix was fond of nightlife, jazz and dancing, it is likely that he actually saw at least one African-American jazz musician in person who could have served as the inspiration for such a figure. Regardless of the origin of the figure, he is clearly American as evidenced by the triangularly folded pocket square adorning his jacket pocket. The pocket square, with its alternating red and white stripes on the upper portion and a swath of blue with small white dots or stars on the lower portion, is an obvious reference to the American flag. In addition, a profile head of a Native American whose face is painted and who wears a headdress comprised of alternating red and blue feathers with a white beaded forehead band is depicted on the bass drum of his drum set.

These distinctly American elements were deliberate inclusions. The influx of American money as a result of the Dawes Plan in 1924 halted the catastrophic inflation, ushered in a period of comparative economic stability and encouraged the modishness of emulating American cultural trends, known as *Amerikanismus*.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, as

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<sup>41</sup> "To Beauty," 49-50. Rewald suggests that the drummer was copied from a photograph because of the small number of Black individuals in Germany at the time and because of his caricature-like appearance.

<sup>42</sup> The topic of *Amerikanismus* during the Weimar Republic is discussed at length in a variety of sources. In addition to Beeke Sell Tower's essay "'Ultramodern and Ultraprimitive': Shifting Meanings in the Imagery of Americanism in the Art of Weimar Germany," *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic* (edited by Thomas W. Kniesche & Stephen Brockmann; Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, Inc., 1994) contains several other essays on various aspects of Weimar *Amerikanismus*. The section entitled "American Influences in Weimar" also features Mary Nolan's "Imagining America, Modernizing Germany," which discusses Fordism, and Cornelius Partsch's "Hannibal ante portas: Jazz in Weimar," which addresses the popularity of jazz in the interwar period. In "A Man's Place in a Woman's World: Otto Dix, Social Dancing, and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany," which is found in *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* (Volume 21, 2005), Susan Laikin Funkenstein discusses Otto Dix's performance of "Americanness" via his participation in American dances, his admiration for jazz music and his adoption of American clothing and hair styles. Janet Ward's book *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001) discusses the importation and influence of American surface culture. In Anton Kaes' *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), he addresses the influence of *Amerikanismus* on the German avant-garde in general and on German film in particular. John Willett also generally remarks on *Amerikanismus* in *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety, 1917-1933* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). Vibeke Rützou-Petersen comments on *Amerikanismus* with regard to Weimar gender politics and the "Otherness" of African-Americans in *Women and Modernity in*

previously mentioned, Dix's specific references to America also allude to his personal desire to appropriate beliefs about American manliness and potency for himself and the identity he presents in the painting. These ideas about American masculinity were mediated by American films, bands, performers, news reports and works by authors, such as Karl May, whose writings engaged popular American stereotypes, such as those of the Wild West.<sup>43</sup> In the painting, the rest of the drummer's band is nowhere to be seen but African-American jazz bands, such as the Chocolate Kiddies, who performed in Germany in 1925, were very popular during the Weimar Republic.<sup>44</sup> Germans perceived performers of African descent as possessing a mysterious, exoticism that stemmed from their racial rather than ethnic identities. Thus, in addition to Africans, African-Americans were also perceived as being "primitive."<sup>45</sup> At the time, jazz music, despite its American origins, was regarded as "jungle music" and was believed to epitomize the tribal exoticism and racial otherness of black entertainers.<sup>46</sup> These racially prejudiced stereotypes extended to beliefs about African sexuality. Those of African origin, whether African-American or African-European, were believed to be savage and primitive not

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*Weimar Germany: Reality and Representation in Popular Fiction* (New York & Oxford: Bergham Books, 2001). Nancy Nenno specifically addresses the sexualized American "Otherness" of Josephine Baker and the evident *Amerikanismus* of Berlin in her essay "Femininity, the Primitive, & Modern Urban Space: Josephine Baker in Berlin" which is found in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender & Modernity in Weimar Culture*. (Von Ankum, Katharina, ed. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997). A number of essays in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Kaes, Anton, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994) also address *Amerikanismus* and the influence of American culture on multiple aspects of interwar German society.

<sup>43</sup> Tower, Beeke Sell. "Ultramodern and Ultraprimitive: Shifting Meanings in the Imagery of Americanism in the Art of Weimar Germany." *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*; edited by Thomas W. Knesche & Stephen Brockmann; Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, Inc., 1994. 89-90. Tower also notes that the works of authors such as James Fennimore Cooper, who wrote about Native Americans and the untamed American wilderness, were also popular during the Weimar Republic.

<sup>44</sup> "To Beauty," 48. According to Rewald, the Chocolate Kiddies group was the first Black jazz band to perform in Germany during this time.

<sup>45</sup> Tower, 92.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 93.

only with regard to their own sexuality, but also in their sexual behavior toward non-Africans, specifically with Caucasian women.

The sexual cast of the racially stereotypic interwar discourse pertaining to individuals of African origin was partially rooted in the military occupation of the Rhineland by French African Colonial troops in the wake of the Treaty of Versailles. The presence of these African soldiers was alternately referred to as the “*Schwarze Schmach am Rhein*” (“Black Horror on the Rhine”), “*die schwarze Schmach*” (“the Black humiliation”), “*die schwarze Not*” (“the Black peril”), and “*die schwarze Schande*” (“the Black disgrace”). Their presence was regarded as being particularly humiliating to Germany. Not only had the treaty required the nation’s forced disarmament but it also emasculated Germany by subjecting it to the authority of supposedly “uncivilized” or merely “partially civilized” African men. Along with general grumblings about the African troops’ presence, rumors spread that these men sexually abused German women, girls and even young boys and that they carried syphilis.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the supposedly dangerous, primitive and uncontrolled nature of the sexuality of Black African males was regarded as being a direct threat not only to Germany’s power as a nation but also to the virility of its men and to the health and well-being of its women and children.

Furthermore, with regard to aspects of culture that were perceived as being African, some, including the writer, Hermann Hesse, regarded jazz itself, as “the music of decline” and believed that it corrupted both culture and society.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the “primitive”

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<sup>47</sup> Nenno, Nancy. “Femininity, the Primitive, & Modern Urban Space: Josephine Baker in Berlin.” *Women in the Metropolis: Gender & Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Ed. Katharina Von Ankum. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. 150-152.

<sup>48</sup> Tower, 94. Hermann Hesse referred to “jazz as the music of decline” in *Steppenwolf* (1929).

sexuality of the African-American drummer, heightened by the derogatorily-labeled “jungle” jazz music he plays, affects those in the club, especially those dancing to the music. As women were believed to be more susceptible to corruption in all forms, particularly sexual immorality, one can infer an implied critique of the influence “primitive” jazz and the African-American musicians who played it exerted over supposedly susceptible modern women.

The notion that women were predisposed to vice was neither new nor limited to Germany. The theories of Cesare Lombroso, who studied criminals using scientific methods, were based upon ideas of women’s alleged innate susceptibility to corruption. In the 1893 study, *La Donna Delinquente: La Prostituta e La Donna Normale (Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman)*, Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero repeatedly asserted that “in women...the moral sense is inferior” and that “woman is always fundamentally immoral.”<sup>49</sup> They claimed that female weakness causes impulsiveness which results “in a state of permanent instability.”<sup>50</sup> Even “normal women” supposedly were affected by “wicked tendencies” which could either be encouraged or repressed contingent upon those, especially men, who influenced her.<sup>51</sup> They posited that even a non-criminal, “normal woman has many characteristics that bring her close to the level of the savage...and therefore the criminal (anger, revenge, jealousy, and vanity) and others, diametrically opposed, which neutralize the former.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, although Lombroso and Ferrero asserted that certain physiognomic distinctions

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<sup>49</sup> Lombroso, Cesare and Guglielmo Ferrero. *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*. Trans. Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. 80.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 71-72.

<sup>52</sup> Tower, 81.



separated “delinquent women” from “normal women,” the inherent personality traits of non-offending women were essentially the same as those of so-called female born criminals and female occasional criminals which made all women suspect.

Lombroso and Ferrero were Italian but their ideas were incredibly influential throughout Europe and found eager adherents among doctors, scientists and theorists in Germany. For instance, Dr. Erich Wulffen, a prominent interwar criminologist was clearly inspired by Lombroso’s theories. In his 1923 book, *Das Weib als Sexualverbrecherin*, which was translated into English as *Woman as a Sexual Criminal*, Wulffen specifically mentioned Lombroso’s *La Donna Criminale* (The Female Offender) of 1895.<sup>53</sup> Influenced by Lombroso, Wulffen posited that, like animals, women are “more strongly dependent on [their] innate instincts” than men.<sup>54</sup> While these instincts “endow wom[e]n with...intuition,” “the great dependence of the instincts may bring on evils when they are expressed to no social purpose; when excessively stimulated by external conditions they may lead [women] in false or in purposeless directions.”<sup>55</sup> Women are “easily beset by this danger when exposed to corruption or destitution.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, Wulffen, much like Lombroso and Ferrero, deemed all women to be prone to crime, vice and immorality due to their inherently “deficient” minds, constitutions and biology.

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<sup>53</sup> Wulffen, Erich. *Woman as a Sexual Criminal*. North Hollywood, CA: Brandon House, 1967. 22. This 1967 printing of the book does not indicate the name of the individual who translated it from German to English. Wulffen’s book was originally published in German in 1923 as *Das Weib als Sexualverbrecherin; ein Handbuch für Juristen, Verwaltungsbeamte und Ärzte*.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

In addition to the African-American drummer, the presence of the Native American head painted on the drum is evocative not only of the *Amerikanismus* fad but of violence as well. The painted Native American head calls to mind stereotypes about the American “Wild West” that was believed to be populated by heroic cowboys and “savage Indians.” These stereotypes of “uncivilized” Native Americans were encouraged by popular adventure novels written by authors such as Karl May which were popular not only with Dix but with other Weimar artists including George Grosz and Rudolf Schlichter.<sup>57</sup> The German fascination with Native Americans carried over into cheap illustrated novels and Weimar cabaret performances which often featured plotlines pertaining to unsavory, anti-bourgeois characters. In fact, by the early nineteen-twenties, stories of criminals, murderers and apaches who enjoyed committing crimes against the bourgeoisie were so popular that a “regular cult of so-called apaches” was already a distinct presence.<sup>58</sup> The term, “apache” was “generally used for all muggers and killers who wandered back alleys (dressed in picturesque striped shirts and caps, smoking cigarettes and with the occasional scar)” but the “apache myth” particularly referenced “pimps...whose prostitutes would lure an unsuspecting customer into a back alley where he [the pimp] was waiting and together they would rob and kill the bourgeois gentleman.”<sup>59</sup>

Thus, the presence of the Native American head on the drum not only references American popular culture that had invaded interwar Germany but it also alludes to “degenerate” elements within German urban society. In particular, the negative connotations of the term “apache” implicate the urban, jazz-loving milieu in which the

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<sup>57</sup> “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World,” 182.

<sup>58</sup> Lareau, Alan. *The Wild Stage: Literary Cabarets of the Weimar Republic*. Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995. 81.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

painted Native American head is found. In addition, the “apache myth” associated with image of the Native American, incriminates female sexuality and links sex, specifically sex with prostitutes, with robbery and, more notably, with death. As a result, the image of the Native American head on a musical instrument thereby also links music and the dances performed to it with this web of sex and death.

Dix himself greatly enjoyed dancing; however, in this work, he does not portray himself dancing. Instead, he stands rigid and stone-faced as he presides over the scene from the center of the composition. Yet, unlike the mannequin and the hairdresser’s bust who appear to watch but whose fake eyes cannot see, Dix observes and processes the scene. He is not active in the way that the dancing couple is active but he is acutely aware of what is happening. He mentally records and actually communicates the evening’s events via telephone rather than passively allowing them to occur around him. He has painted himself in a slim-cut, fashionable American style gray suit, white shirt and thin green tie. His blondish-brown hair is slicked back off his impassive face in what was also considered an American style. Indeed, he shows himself to be a fashionable New Man. In his 1925 article “*Amerikanismus*,” Rudolf Kayser claimed that the following traits characterized “the [male] European’s new (Americanized) appearance:” “beardless with a sharp profile, a resolute look in the eyes, and a steely thin body...”<sup>60</sup> Based upon photographs of Dix taken during the interwar period, such as Hugo Erfurth’s 1926 photograph (Figure 15), the artist appears to have dressed and styled his hair similarly in real life.

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<sup>60</sup> Kayser, Rudolf. “Americanism.” *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Kaes, Anton, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994. 395. Kayser’s article was originally published as “*Amerikanismus*” in *Vossische Zeitung*, no. 458 on September 27, 1925.

Dix confidently stands erect with his arms akimbo. He glances sideways to his left and his line of sight intersects with the head of the African-American drummer who similarly glances off to his left. The cut and fit of Dix's American-style suit resembles that of the American musician. The position of both men's right arms is the same and, if the drummer lowered his left arm, this arm's position would match as well and the drummer would grasp his drumstick in the same manner in which Dix grasps the receiver of a recent-model rotary telephone. Indeed, Dix seems to cast the drummer as his "lesser, alter ego."<sup>61</sup> His proximity to the African American drummer and his obvious appreciation for aspects of American popular culture, including jazz music and men's fashions, allow him to associate himself with certain stereotypic American features, including sexual prowess, masculinity and musicality. However, Dix maintains his distinctness from the drummer by placing him to the side and slightly behind the prominent, centrally positioned self-portrait of the artist.<sup>62</sup>

At the time, jazz was evocative of American modernity and energy but it was also associated with the African "exotic" and with stereotypic ideas pertaining to notions of racial "primitivism." Dance, which was perceived as having tribal African origins, and individuals of African descent were regarded as being "vitalistic metaphors of instinctual, savage and sexual forces."<sup>63</sup> Thus, the inclusion of the stereotypic African-American drummer seems to be a racially charged reminder of not only his supposedly "primitive" sexuality but also of the overt, Dionysian sexuality believed to be encouraged by modern jazz and the dances that accompanied it. Hence, this image links modern jazz music and

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<sup>61</sup> Tower, 92.

<sup>62</sup> "A Man's Place in a Woman's World," 181, 183.

<sup>63</sup> Tower, 91-92.

its complementary modern dances with blatant, troubling sexuality. Dix links himself with a particular interpretation of potent, American male sexuality while still maintaining his distinctness as a white, German man. The fact that the effeminate man and the *Neue Frau* dance to the jazz music played by the African-American drummer also connect jazz with forms of modern, “deviant” sexuality. Within this discourse, Dix strives to define himself as a modern, masculine New Man against the ambiguous, troubling sexuality of both the New Woman and her androgynous partner.

Through visual parallels between Dix and the African-American drummer, the painter establishes his own modernity, vis-à-vis American culture, which was considered the paragon of modernity in Germany at the time, while also demonstrating his own masculinity and heterosexuality in contrast to the effeminacy and possible homosexuality of the dancing man to the left. Dix’s fondness for modern dancing of the type demonstrated by the androgynous couple on the left has already been noted. However, although Dix’s slicked back hairstyle and white powdered face connect him to the fashionable American style of the time, they also visually link him to the effete dancing man on the left. Male sexual potency, especially in the wake of World War I, was an issue that caused a great deal of anxiety during the Weimar years and it was one of the primary areas of contention regarding the New Woman.

The *Neue Frau*’s refusal to acquiesce to traditional gender roles and sexual mores was perceived by some as a threat to men’s sexual dominance. Women’s increased participation and visibility in the workforce were regarded by some as upending conventional norms which held that women were to remain at home to tend to the children and other domestic duties. Furthermore, although by 1925 only approximately

thirty-six percent of women were employed, some felt that these women were taking jobs away from able-bodied men, even veterans, who needed jobs to support their families.<sup>64</sup> In addition, the declining birthrate caused concern and, according to the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, was officially connected with the usage of birth control and with sexual immorality.<sup>65</sup> The anxiety this caused was heightened by women's increasingly vocal campaigning for increased access to birth control and for the overturning of Paragraph 218, which outlawed abortion. As a result, modern women were perceived as eschewing their traditional roles as wives and mothers to become "masculinized," promiscuous working women. These goals ran counter to established bourgeois conventions regarding gender roles and, thus, such women were accused of endangering the already tenuous state of German interwar masculinity. New Women were accused of subverting patriarchal authority which, by extension, was not only perceived as threatening the stability of Germany's long-established cultural mores but also of undermining the nation's attempts at political and economic restoration.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, in *An die Schönheit*, Dix associates himself with the African-American drummer enough to benefit from stereotypical attitudes regarding African heterosexual virility and prowess and from the association with American modernity. Through his deliberate evocation of American culture, Dix depicts himself as a Weimar *Neuer Mann* whose manliness and sexual power were evident and whose physical appearance

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<sup>64</sup> Von Ankum, Katharina. "Introduction." *Women in the Metropolis: Gender & Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Ed. Katharina Von Ankum, Katharina. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. Von Ankum cites the statistic that, by 1925, only 35.6% of all German women were employed. This was only 0.7% more women than in 1907. She suggests that it was the increased visibility of women in the workforce rather than the actual numbers that proved to be a source of anxiety during the interwar years.

<sup>65</sup> Apel, 370. In 1915, an official memorandum from the Prussian Ministry of the Interior drew a direct connection between the declining Germany birthrate, access to birth control and perceived sexual immorality.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 5.

suggested the *Neue Sachlichkeit* “values of precision, order and discipline...”<sup>67</sup> This deliberate evocation of American popular culture is coupled with Dix’s commanding pose and position in the center foreground; visually, he dominates every other figure in the scene. In contrast to the effete, dancing man Dix’s virility as a New Man is not in question so the “masculinized,” “deviant” New Frau poses no threat to the stern-faced self-assertion of his evident, Americanized masculinity.

In Dix’s *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber* of 1925 (Figure 16), the artist again took up the themes of sexuality, deviance, dance and modernity but he did so via the body of a thin, pale-faced female dancer in a form-fitting dress. While she is shown alone rather than with a dance partner, this painting links dance in general and the *Neue Frau* in particular with sexuality, depravity, and death. Berber is depicted wearing a modified version of the costume she wore for her “*Morphium*” (“Morphine”) dance routine in which she metaphorically danced the death of a drug-addicted streetwalker. As the title of the dance suggests, in this routine, Berber played a prostitute and morphine addict who injected herself with the drug, convulsed to the music and ultimately slumped dead across a large armchair. Fittingly, this dance emulating a drug-induced eroticized death was set to composer Mischa Spoliansky’s song “*Morphium*.”<sup>68</sup>

Unlike *An die Schönheit*, the setting of *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber* is ambiguous. The figure of the notorious dancer poses in front of a glaring red background. Dix’s choice of vermillion as the background was telling as he ascribed

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<sup>67</sup> “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World,” 171. Funkenstein specifically describes Dix’s fondness for American clothing and hairstyles as a type of “drag.” By adopting American styles, Dix a German man, “dragged” as an American man. In this way, he “performed Americanness by wearing its styles.”

<sup>68</sup> Gordon, Mel. *The Seven Addictions and Five Professions of Anita Berber, Weimar Berlin’s Priestess of Depravity*. Los Angeles: Feral House, 2006. 97-98. Gordon refers to Spoliansky’s song as “Morphine” rather than “Morphium.”

particular importance to color in portraiture. According to Dix, “Nun ist nicht nur die Form, sondern auch die Farbe von größter Wichtigkeit und ein Mittel, das Individuelle auszudrücken. Jeder Mensch hat seine ganz spezielle Farbe, die sich auf dem ganzen Bild auswirkt.”<sup>69</sup> The amorphous red background has been interpreted as a theater curtain, which would be a fitting backdrop for a performer, but also as being symbolic of “the ‘red-light’ district she frequented.”<sup>70</sup> Given Berber’s scandalous dances and reputation for “indecent” both on and off the stage, the use of the color red to reference the illicit sexuality of a red-light district is entirely possible, especially considering her rumored tendency to prostitute herself in times of economic need.<sup>71</sup> However, another, less literal interpretation is also plausible. The glaring red shade of the background varies in tone; some places are a darker, oxblood shade of red while other portions of the canvas, especially those closest to Berber’s body, are a lighter shade of red tinged with orange. In fact, Berber’s legs, especially her right leg, seem to be rimmed in a yellowish-orange flame-like hue. Thus, rather than being suggestive of a stage curtain, as would be appropriate for a performer, the red background seems fiery and infernal.

Indeed, the intense red background, bears some resemblance to the insidious reddish glow of the background of Norwegian painter Edvard Munch’s (1863-1944) angst-ridden

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<sup>69</sup> Dix, Otto. “*Gedanken zum Porträtmalen*,” quoted in *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1981. 224. Dix made these remarks in March 1955. Dix’s quote translates to the following: “Now not only the form but also the color is of the utmost importance and a means to express the individual. Each man has a special color that affects the entire image.” This quote is also noted in the Neue Galerie catalogue entry for “Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber” in *Otto Dix*, New York: Prestel Publishing, 2010, 210.

<sup>70</sup> Funkenstein, Susan Laikin. “Anita Berber: Imaging a Weimar Performance Artist.” *Woman’s Art Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring - Summer, 2005), 29.

<sup>71</sup> In Lothar Fischer’s *Tanz zwischen Rausch und Tod: Anita Berber, 1918-1928 in Berlin*, he includes Martha Dix’s recollection of Berber propositioning men on the street in Düsseldorf to have sex with her for two hundred marks. In *The Seven Addictions and Five Professions of Anita Berber, Weimar Berlin’s Priestess of Depravity*, Mel Gordon claims that Berber occasionally accepted money in exchange for sex in order to fuel her cocaine addiction.



albeit more tonally subdued *Selvportrett i Helvete* (*Self-Portrait in Hell*) of 1903 (Figure 17). Dix certainly knew and appreciated Munch's work and both works do feature a lone figure standing before a menacing red abstract background. However, while Munch seems characteristically melancholic over the psychological hell in which he finds himself and which threatens to subdue him, Berber seems indifferent to the ruby-hued inferno in which she appears. Rather than being tormented by the hellish redness around her, she seems to be a part of it as though she were some kind of demon.

In his overdramatic article, "*Kokainismus*" ("Cocaineism"), which was first published in *Das Tagebuch* in 1921, the physician and biologist<sup>72</sup> Carl Ludwig Schleich (1859 – 1922) referred to addictions as "the demonic-pathological" ("*Dämonisch-Krankhafte*") and consistently linked drug addicts and drug addiction with demons.<sup>73</sup> Schleich studied the "anesthetic effects of subcutaneous cocaine"<sup>74</sup> and realized that one of the unfortunate side effects of using cocaine anesthetic was addiction.<sup>75</sup> He referenced addiction by metaphorically describing it as a "*Kokaindämon*" ("cocaine demon") that "gripped its victim too tightly in its vampire claws."<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, he noted "the enormous danger" posed by such "demons" ("*Dämonien*") due to the fact that "their secret priests always

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<sup>72</sup> Greenway, John L. "Strindberg and Suggestion in 'Miss Julie.'" *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (May 1986). 22.

<sup>73</sup> Schleich, Carl Ludwig. "*Kokainismus*." *Das Tagebuch* 42, No. 2. October 29, 1921. 1311.

<sup>74</sup> Greenway, 22.

<sup>75</sup> Goerig, Michael. "Carl Ludwig Schleich and the Introduction of Infiltration Anesthesia into Clinical Practice." *Regional Anesthesia and Pain Medicine*. Vol. 23, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1998). 538. At the time, cocaine anesthetic was so popular that it replaced chloroform.

<sup>76</sup> Schleich, 1314. The full sentence in German is as follows: "Zu fest hält der Kokaindämon seine Opfer in seinen Vampirklaunen, die Gier nach Reizsteigerung erreicht ungeheure Spannungs- und Qualhöhe, und zwar auf ganz rapidem Wege."

search for comrades in their infernal cult” and “that every vice searches for accomplices at the devil’s altar.”<sup>77</sup>

With her scarlet dress, dyed red hair and ruby lips, Berber seems to be an extension of the vermillion setting. According to Schleich’s rationale, as a drug addict, Berber would have been on the hunt for others to partake in her “*Höllenkultus*” (“infernal cult”) of addiction.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, both her pincher-like right hand, her claw-like left hand and her sharp fingernails lend her a predatory appearance. She gazes intently at something or someone beyond the confines of the canvas as though she, Weimar’s “priestess of depravity,”<sup>79</sup> has a particular individual in her sights.

The almost bestial rendering of Berber’s hands implies animality or demonality, while her provocative pose and fitted dress draw the viewer’s attention to her sex which lends an aspect of danger to her allure. Dix, in fact, took artistic liberties with the fit of Berber’s dress. He had seen Berber perform twice in 1925 and the “*Morphium*” dance was still part of her repertoire at the time. He used Berber’s actual costume (Figure 18) as the inspiration for the dress in the portrait, but he intentionally altered it in the painting. While the actual dress was form-fitting, the dress in the painting is even tighter and hugs every curve of her body like a second skin. Although the dress has long sleeves, a high collar and a hemline that extends below the border of the three-quarter length portrait, the tight fit of the dress clearly reveals the outline of the body beneath it.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. The German quote is as follows: “Aber es ist die ungeheure Gefahr der Dämonien aller, daß ihre geheimen Priester immer nach Genossen ihres Höllenkultus fahnden, , daß jedes Laster Mitschuldige des Teufelsfrons sucht ...”

<sup>78</sup> Schleich, 1314.

<sup>79</sup> Gordon, Mel. *The Seven Addictions and Five Professions of Anita Berber Weimar Berlin’s Priestess of Depravity*. Los Angeles: Feral House, 2006. iii. Gordon calls Berber a “priestess of depravity” but he does not indicate whether he was the originator of this title or if he read it in a primary source about Berber.

Berber's "red-hot exaggerated sexuality" is further emphasized by "her modified *Venus pudica* pose [which] is anything but modest."<sup>80</sup>

Berber's right arm is bent outward and she rests her right hand on her hip which accentuates her rounded abdomen. Her elongated left arm, which seems almost boneless, appears molded to her curves and snakes down the left side of her body while her left hand is curved in a way that draws attention to her genitals. Furthermore, the folds in the lower portion of her dress are arranged in a diagonal that begin at her right knee and extend upward across her genital area to her left hip. Thus, the sensual false modesty of the traditional *Venus pudica* pose, which draws attention to that which it ostensibly makes an effort to conceal, becomes both alluring and menacing and gives Berber the appearance of a diabolical *femme fatale*. Furthermore, this allusion to the pose of the *Venus pudica* constitutes a deliberate affront as the classical pose suggests demureness and a limiting of visual and sexual access while Berber's pose implies the opposite.

In addition to referencing hell, Schleich consistently referenced death. Obviously, in order to be in hell and, thus, tormented by demons, one must be dead. Furthermore, his descriptions of the physical features of addicts call to mind traits possessed by the dead or the dying. Schleich lamented "*chronischen Kokainsünder*" ("chronic cocaine sinners") and specifically mentioned the corpse-like trait of "hollow eyes surrounded by green-brownish shadows"<sup>81</sup> as being one of the identifiable attributes of a cocaine addict. He continued his melodramatic description of addicts, specifically cocaine addicts, by noting that the shine ("*Glanz*") has disappeared from addicts' eyes and instead, "over [their]

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<sup>80</sup> Funkenstein, 26.

<sup>81</sup> Schleich, 1314. Schleich describes cocaine addicts' eyes as being "hohle, grünbräunlich umschattete Augen."

surface, the first veil of mist of death fleetingly flutters.”<sup>82</sup> Due to her cadaverous appearance in Dix’s portrait Berber appears to be dead already. Her cachectic appearance is accentuated by her gaunt, violet cheeks and dark, sunken eyes. Her eyes, reminiscent of Schleich’s description, are rimmed with black eyeliner and her eyelids are covered with a muddy palette of purplish-black and greenish-brown eye shadow. If such hollow eyes and Berber’s infamous reputation were not enough to notify the viewer of the dancer’s addictions and implied demise, then her left nostril, which is red as though irritated or bleeding—a common problem for those who snort large quantities of cocaine—is an additional indication of the lethal level of her drug dependency. Furthermore, one of Berber’s dances was entitled “*Kokain*” (“Cocaine”) (Figure 19). As it was part of the same dance program as “*Morphium*,” it is likely that Dix saw it as well. In this dance, Berber wore a dark-colored corset and performed bare-breasted. She played a drug-addicted prostitute who, by the light of a street lamp, spun and convulsed to *La Danse Macabre* Op.40 (1875) by composer Camille Saint-Saëns.”<sup>83</sup> At the end of the routine, she sank to the floor and, presumably, died as a result of her dependence on the eponymous drug.<sup>84</sup>

Later, Schleich referred to addicts as those who have “slurped” (“*schlürft*”) from the “poisonous cup” (“*Giftbecher*”) of addiction. This reference to poison, a deadly substance, obviously refers to addicts’ demises and calls to mind the corpselike visage of Anita Berber. Although she did wear white stage makeup for her dance performances, in

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. The relevant section of his description is as follows: “Hohle, grünbräunlich umschattete Augen, deren Glanz dahin ist, und auf deren Spiegelfläsche die ersten Nebelschleier des Todes flüchtig wallen...”

<sup>83</sup> Elswit, Kate. “Berlin, Your Dance Partner is Death!” *TDR: The Drama Review*. 53:1 (T201). Spring 2003. 87.

<sup>84</sup> Gordon, 92-93. Gordon refers to the song as *Valse mignonne*.

the portrait, her extremely pallid complexion has been exaggerated to the point that her face resembles a death mask. Furthermore, due to its extreme pastiness, her face seems “masked in [an] arsenic-like application of grease and powder.”<sup>85</sup> Although arsenic-laced powder was no longer used by ladies or performers in the nineteen-twenties, the sickly pallor of her complexion calls to mind the deadly effects of this poisonous substance.

Although it is not known if Schleich personally knew either Dix or Berber, it is possible, if not likely, that he had at least heard of both the artist and the dancer. He traveled within bohemian circles and often met his literary and artistic friends at the Berlin café *Zum schwarzen Ferkel*.<sup>86</sup> For instance, he was friends with the Swedish playwright and poet August Strindberg (1849 – 1912), the German poet Gerhard Hauptmann (1862 – 1946) and even with the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (1863 – 1944). Thus, it is likely that Dix or Berber, if not both, were discussed in his circle at some point. In addition, he practiced in Berlin for many years and had a clinic in *Belle-Alliance Platz*, which is now *Mehringplatz*. Given the nature of his interest in cocaine anesthesia and his own rumored addictions to alcohol and morphine, it also seems feasible that Schleich knew about Anita Berber, if only by reputation.<sup>87</sup>

Berber was only twenty-six years old at the time Dix painted her portrait, but he deliberately exaggerated her aged appearance in order to heighten her connection to death and depravity. Her gaunt face, which is marked by lines on her chin and on both sides of her mouth, and her sunken, glassy eyes make her seem timeworn. Her skeletal, decrepit

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 151. Arsenic-laced face powder was not in use in the nineteen-twenties but the sickly whiteness of Berber’s skin calls to mind the effects of this powder.

<sup>86</sup> Greenway, 22.

<sup>87</sup> Goerig, 539. Schleich died in a sanatorium near Berlin on March 7, 1922. At the time, it was rumored that he suffered from addictions to both alcohol and morphine.

body, sagging breasts and distended abdomen also give her the appearance of being senescent. These features are accentuated by her form-fitting dress; however, despite its slinky cut, the fabric of the dress is loose and wrinkled in some places, especially at her neck and along her arms. These creases appear to be the wrinkles of her own skin, much like those in the skin of an old woman. Berber's self-destructive tendencies, including her abuse of both drugs and alcohol, undoubtedly would have had an effect on her physical appearance. However, when one compares Dix's portrait to photographs of Berber from around the same time (Figures 18 and 19), it is obvious that he purposefully subjected her to extreme aging. In such photographs, in which Berber poses seductively, she is young, svelte and attractive. Her breasts do not sag and her skin is not marred by signs of age. Although she wears pale face makeup, dark eye makeup and lipstick, her cosmetics do not appear to conceal wrinkles. As a result of Dix's decision to subject Berber's visage to dramatic signs of aging, she appears old and decrepit if not dying. In fact, considering the degree of her physical emaciation, the deadly corpse-like pallor of her face and the hellfire red background, she seems to already be dead and decaying.

Thus, Berber is depicted as being a *femme fatale* in both the figural and literal senses of the word. Her suggestive pose and slinky dress demonstrate her persona as a seductive vamp while her decaying, poisonous physical state mark her literally as a "fatal woman"—fatal not just to others, specifically to men, but to herself as well. Her addictions and debauched lifestyle, which were eagerly covered by the tabloids as they viewed her as a symbol of Weimar vice in general and the degeneration of Berlin specifically, arguably contributed to her premature demise only three years after Dix painted her portrait. Similarly, in many of the dances she performed onstage, the

characters Berber portrayed were precariously balanced between life and death as they quickly transitioned from dancing to dying.

These dances, coupled with her supposedly indecent offstage behavior, were the source of Berber's notoriety. Her dance training was fairly standard and her early dances were traditional pieces largely inspired by ballet and *Ausdrucksanz* (Expressive Dance).<sup>88</sup> During the nineteen-twenties, *Ausdrucksanz* was often tied to conservative ideologies pertaining to the body and Berber increasingly distanced herself from these associations by deliberately eroticizing herself via her costumes and choreography. Thus, Berber's nude dances, in which she danced either bare-breasted or completely nude, were especially infamous because of their deliberate evocation of sexual eroticism and its cultural associations with the perceived corrosion of German values and culture by modernity, especially the modernity represented by America and *Amerikanismus*.<sup>89</sup>

During the years of the Great War, onstage nudity was strictly censored by the government of Kaiser Wilhelm II.<sup>90</sup> Despite this, "*Nackttanz*" (Naked Dance) was a popular form of entertainment in cabarets and nightclubs. However, most of these dancers did not actually perform entirely in the nude; instead, many donned silk scarves or bejeweled coverings.<sup>91</sup> After the war, the new democratic government lifted many of the censorship laws governing stage performances. The new laws permitted performers

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<sup>88</sup> As a child, Berber was enrolled by her grandmother in Emile Jacques-Dalcroze Institute near Hellerau, Germany, which he founded in 1910. Dalcroze's dance instruction was largely informed by Eurhythmics. Dalcroze also taught Mary Wigman and Rudolph Laban, both of whom rebelled against their teacher and took their choreography in different directions.

<sup>89</sup> Mackenzie, Michael. "From Athens to Berlin: The 1936 Olympics and Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*." *Critical Inquiry*. Winter 2003. 314. 321-324.

<sup>90</sup> "A Man's Place in a Woman's World," 166. During World War I, Kaiser Wilhelm II's government also banned social dancing. The ban was lifted when the war ended.

<sup>91</sup> Gordon, 35.

to be nude onstage if they remained stationary by simply posing in the background as if part of the set. Female dancers were legally required to cover their genitals so most “Naked Dancers” were only naked from the waist up. Despite its illegality, Berber often danced totally nude, although the date of her first nude dance performance is unknown.<sup>92</sup> This blatant disregard for the law and her embrace of decadent modernity and eroticism rather than conservative corporeal ideals<sup>93</sup> via her dances was interpreted by some as further proof of “her sexual freedom, licentiousness or scandalousness.”<sup>94</sup>

Although she was most known for her highly sexualized dances, she also starred in a number of films that were considered provocative for the time. In these films, Berber continued the creation of her “degenerate” persona by choosing roles in which “deviant” sexuality was linked with or even resulted in death. Most notably, she took roles in several *Aufklärungsfilme* directed by the controversial film maker, Richard Oswald.<sup>95</sup> These sex education films, sometimes called “Social-Hygiene Films”<sup>96</sup> addressed contentious sexual themes and were often censored by the state. In these *Aufklärungsfilme*, Berber, via the characters she played, was associated with supposedly “deviant” sexuality. This is especially obvious in the film *Die Prostitution (Prostitution)* (Figure 20) of 1919, which was later renamed with the censored title *Das gelbe Haus (The Yellow House)*.<sup>97</sup> In this film, which was officially banned in multiple German

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<sup>92</sup> Funkenstein, 26, 28.

<sup>93</sup> Mackenzie, 321.

<sup>94</sup> Funkenstein, 28.

<sup>95</sup> Fischer, Lothar. *Anita Berber Göttin der Nacht: Collage eines kurzen Lebens*. Berlin: Edition Ebersbach, 2006. 57. Berber made her film debut in Oswald’s 1918 production, *Dreimäderlhaus (House of the Three Girls)*, which was a typical romantic *Liebesfilm*. Oswald began directing *Aufklärungsfilme* in 1919 and he cast Berber in several of these productions.

<sup>96</sup> Gordon, 55.

<sup>97</sup> Fischer, 59.



towns in 1921,<sup>98</sup> Berber played an unfortunate woman who fell into prostitution and was killed by one of her clients.<sup>99</sup>

The themes of sexuality and death also extended to another 1919 film (not an *Aufklärungsfilm*) starring Berber, Conrad Veidt and Reinhold Schünzel. This film, *Unheimliche Geschichten* (*Tales of the Macabre*), was an “*Episodenfilm*” that was comprised of five, fairly dark short tales or “episodes.” The film’s narrative opened in a bookstore at night in which the three lead actors appeared as living pictures on the walls; Berber was a prostitute, Veidt was death and Schünzel was the devil.<sup>100</sup> This scene visually correlates the “deviant” sexuality of the prostitute played by Berber with both mortality and the devil thereby linking both Berber and nontraditional female sexuality with evil and death.

The film transitions into the tales, three of which link sexual desire, specifically the sexual longing for Berber’s characters, and death. For instance, in “*Die Hande*” (“The Hand”) by Robert Liebmann, Berber’s character performs a dance that links her both with death and with the fatal downfall of one of the male protagonists. The characters played

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<sup>98</sup> Gordon, 55.

<sup>99</sup> Fischer, 59. In this film, Berber plays a character named Lona. The background of this character is established through a novel flashback-like device in which the deceased is subjected to a final judgment. She is accused of prostitution and the circumstances of her life are offered as a defense of her moral “crimes.” An inter-title, ending with the magnanimous proclamation “Die Prostitution wird freigesprochen. Wir wollen helfen, die Not lindern, menschliche Gesetze schaffen, den wir haben kein Recht zu richten.” indicates that she is acquitted of the charge of prostitution.

<sup>100</sup> Fischer, 61. *Unheimliche Geschichten* literally translates to *Sinister Tales* and is sometimes also referred to as *Weird Tales*. The film also contained the following episodes: “*Der Spuk*” (“The Ghost”) by Richard Oswald, “*Die Hande*” (“The Hand”) by Robert Liebmann, and *Die Erscheinung* (“The Apparition”) by Anselm Heine, “*Schwarzer Katze*” (“The Black Cat”) based on Edgar Allan Poe’s story of the same name and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Selbstmörderklub* (“Suicide Club”). Berber does not appear in the tale “*Selbstmörderklub*” which follows an undercover policeman (Schünzel) who infiltrates a gentleman’s society devoted to the game of Russian roulette. “*Spuk*” is a comedic tale in which a gentleman (Schünzel) recounts embellished tales of his own courage to a Baroness (Berber). Her unimpressed husband, the Baron (Veidt), dresses up as a ghost and scares off the frightened gentleman. He then unveils himself to his wife and they both laugh at the cowardly gentleman’s hasty retreat.

by Schünzel and Veidt both fall in love with the dancer played by Berber; the former's character murders the latter's character because the younger man poses a threat to the older man's sexual desires. Years later, the older man once again sees the dancer perform at a cabaret. In this scene, Berber performs a dance, clearly inspired by ballet, which concludes with her slowly descending to the floor as if she is dying. The manner in which Berber descends to the floor recalls the death of Veidt's character both at the end of this episode and in the previous one. After this performance, both the older man and the dancer attend a séance at which the ghost of the younger man appears and murders Schünzel's character.<sup>101</sup> Thus, this particular episode specifically links Berber's character with death via the particular dance movements she performs, which recalls the *Totentanz*. Furthermore, this episode and others that comprise the film, imply that the men's sexual desire for her character contributes to their demises.

Throughout the episodic stories told in the film, the sexual allure of the character played by Berber is consistently linked with death. Either her character's sexual desirability leads to the downfall of the male protagonist or is intermingled with the male protagonist's urge to kill her. Furthermore, in "*Die Hande*," the act of dancing is visually tied to the act of dying both through Berber's action of sinking to the floor at the end of her dance and through the parallel's with the manner in which the male protagonist dies. This nexus of dance, sex and death recalls Nietzsche's discussions of the Dionysian which Dix would later address in his artistic engagement with the public persona Berber performed.

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<sup>101</sup> Gordon, 63-64. Immediately after the dance performed by Berber's character, Schünzel's character sees the ghost of the young man and passes out. Thus, when the ghost of the young man appears at the séance, it is actually the second time his ghost appears.

This connection between death and dancing occurs after the episode, “*Die Erscheinung*” (“The Apparition”), which casts Berber as an enticing woman who not only dies of the plague but also causes the deaths of a young suitor and numerous townspeople.<sup>102</sup> As the *Totentanz* was a popular motif in the visual arts in the years following the outbreak of the bubonic plague, the order of the film’s episodes in which the story involving the plague precedes the one in which Berber’s dance evokes death could be a subtle reference to the Dance of Death. While it is unknown whether or not Dix saw this particular film, it is clear that, from early on in her career, Berber, the characters she played and even her dance routines were associated with the themes of death, sexuality and decay that she later incorporated into her provocative dances. Dix was a documented admirer of these dances and he ultimately addressed these themes, albeit with a distinctly Nietzschean influence, in his portrait of her.

The combined effect of Berber’s film roles, dances, especially those she performed with her partner Sebastian Droste (1892 – 1926), and public persona was the linking of Berber with “depravity,” wanton sexuality and death. The provocative dance programs Berber created with Droste and continued to perform after the dissolution of their partnership, such as *Tänze des Lasters, des Grauens und der Ekstase* (*The Dances of Vice, Horror and Ecstasy*), encouraged and capitalized on Berber’s association with these themes.<sup>103</sup> As Dix had seen Berber perform and had personally interacted with her, he

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<sup>102</sup> *Die Erscheinung* (“The Apparition”) is based on a 1912 novella by Anselm Heine. In this episode, Veidt’s character makes advances on a “Mysterious Woman” played by Berber. The following day, his character is the only one who has any memory of the woman so he rushes around the city searching for her. Instead, he comes across a funeral procession and spies the woman’s corpse in a coffin; she died of the plague. Most of the city, including the man, has been infected and the tale ends with him collapsing in death.

<sup>103</sup> Fischer, 41, 99. Droste was born Willi Knobloch. He and Berber first performed together on November 14, 1922. The title of their performance was *Einzigster Tanz-Abend* as it had not yet been titled *The Dances*

was well aware of the deliberate correlation between Berber and the aforementioned themes. This awareness and his desire to re-appropriate German Old Master imagery partially accounts for his decision to visually link Berber with the popular medieval motifs of the *Totentanz* and Death and the Maiden.

Given Berber's morbid, death-themed dances and Dix's desire to surpass the Old Masters, the *Totentanz* motif must have appeared to be a logical choice as a way to depict the supposedly depraved dancer. However, this motif also had cultural resonance during the interwar years. The *Totentanz* motif arose and gained popularity in the wake of the devastating outbreak of the Black Death that occurred in the thirteen forties. In *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (1919), John Huizinga, analyzed the plague and its aftermath and asserted that the particular artistic motifs utilized in the wake of the plague were a "screen" onto which society projected its "ideological anxieties."<sup>104</sup> Huizinga asserted that the *Totentanz* revealed the pessimistic attitudes and distinct crisis of confidence felt by individuals, especially wealthy aristocrats, during the Late Middle Ages. The chaotic situation in which they found themselves was beyond their control. Additionally, the popularity of the overtly morbid *Totentanz* motif was evidence of the "intellectual rise of a death culture" that was intensely preoccupied with "mortality, sin and [the] macabre."<sup>105</sup>

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of Vice, Horror and Ecstasy. In 1923, Gloriette-Verlag in Vienna published a book of their poetry and sketches of their costumes and sets under the name *Tänze des Lasters, des Grauens und der Ekstase*. A short documentary film of their dances that was directed by Wolf Zuber and produced by Freisler-Film in Vienna bore a similar title: *Moderne Tänze und Tänze des Lasters, des Grauens und der Ekstase*.

<sup>104</sup> Cantor, Norman F. *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World It Made*. New York: Perennial, 2001. 201. Cantor paraphrases Huizinga.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 202. 213.

These emotions and ideas reappeared, albeit in an altered form, during the Weimar Republic so Dix's choice of the *Totentanz* motif not only confronted Germany's history but also engaged its present. The prewar enthusiasm for battle, which had partially been inspired by Nietzsche's musings on death and regeneration, and the postwar omnipresence of reminders of the dead, including crippled veterans, widows and commemorative activities, fostered a cult of death in Germany during the years both prior to and after World War I. As a result of the country's defeat and of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, many Germans reeled as the turbulent political, economic and social upheavals that occurred during the Weimar Republic seemed completely beyond their control. Attempts to bring order to the interwar chaos manifested themselves in a variety of ways including concerns with disease, death and general societal depravity.<sup>106</sup> At this time, "degeneracy was [often] linked with Woman"<sup>107</sup> and "deviant" women, such as New Women and prostitutes, often served as convenient scapegoats for a variety of problems facing the Republic. Consequently, the dancer, Anita Berber, who was regarded by some as the embodiment of Weimar degeneracy, was perceived by Dix not only as an extreme manifestation of the *Neue Frau* but also as a representative of uncontrollable eroticism and dissolution glorified by Nietzsche but reviled by the interwar bourgeoisie. Berber's chaotic life and morbid dances mirrored the turmoil of the Republic and the demise of long-held cultural values that were deteriorating, if not disappearing, with the onslaught of modernity. Thus, through the evocation of the *Totentanz*, Dix engaged a complicated network of interconnected discourses while using Berber's body as a site onto which a wide variety of interwar anxieties were cast.

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<sup>106</sup> In addition to sexually transmitted diseases, influenza was also a serious concern. The influenza pandemic of 1918 was especially deadly and caused the demise of millions of people around the world.

<sup>107</sup> Lewis, 207.

Although the theme of the *Totentanz* became immensely popular in Europe after the initial outbreak of the Black Death in the fourteenth century, it subsequently underwent numerous adaptations and modernizations throughout the continent, including the German-speaking lands of Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Old German masters such as Hans Holbein the Younger and Albrecht Dürer each created images pertaining to the *Totentanz* and artists who were roughly Dix's contemporaries, such as Berlin Secessionist, Lovis Corinth, and German Expressionists, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Emil Nolde, created images addressing the same theme.<sup>108</sup> For example, in 1918, Kirchner specifically created a woodcut entitled *Selbstbildnis mit dem tanzenden Tod* (*Self-Portrait with Dancing Death*) (Figure 21) which distinctly depicts the skeletal figure of Death in the act of dancing.<sup>109</sup>

Imaging Death as a dancing skeleton was a long-established pictorial convention, especially in prints, although it took on more than one variation. In images such as Michael Wolgemut's woodcut, *Death Triumphant*, from "*Liber chronicarum mundi*" by Hartmann Schedel of 1493 (Figure 22), a skeleton holding a wind instrument to its mouth plays a tune while three skeletons, who still have wispy remnants of hair, join hands and dance around a grave. Their carousing has awakened the skeletal inhabitant of the grave around which they dance; this skeleton, who has snakes slithering about its body, sits up

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<sup>108</sup> German artist Kathe Kollwitz, who is often classified as belonging to the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, also created numerous images depicting women and death. However, most of these images pertain to the theme of maternity and mortality as the figure of death is often shown trying to take a child from his or her distraught mother.

<sup>109</sup> Eichenberg, Fritz. *Dance of Death: A Graphic Commentary on The Danse Macabre Through the Centuries*. New York: Abbeville Press, Inc., 1983. 70-73. Eichenberg also mentions and includes images of Nolde's etching, *Der Patient, Der Arzt und Der Tod* (*Patient, Doctor and Death*) of 1911 and Corinth's etching *Der Künstler und der Tod* (N.D.) (*The Artist and Death*). Eichenberg does not note the current location or the dimensions of Kirchner's woodcut.

in the grave and extends its arm in order to link up with the dancing chain formed by the other bony dancers.

In other traditional images of the *Totentanz*, the skeletal figure of Death claims human “representatives of the secular and ecclesiastical social hierarchy”<sup>110</sup> by dancing with them. “Death [acts as] the Equalizer” and brings about the demise of his intended victims regardless of their earthly rank, class, age or gender.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, dance was also an equalizer as anyone, regardless of class, status or gender could participate in it. Furthermore, dancing implies the presence of music and, in the *Totentanz*, it seems that the infernal music to which Death dances compels the victim to dance; he or she is unable to resist dancing to such music just as one is unable to prevent oneself from dying. In such images, the intangible, death, is made visible not only through the personification of death as a skeleton but also through dance itself. When Death dances with a partner, that individual is not merely dancing; he or she is actually dying. Thus, the act of dying is visualized through the act of dancing.

In *Totentanz* imagery, particularly in “the German iconography of Death,” the skeletal figure of Death is usually “gendered...as masculine.”<sup>112</sup> However, as demonstrated by Hans Holbein’s *Danse Macabre*, Death is occasionally shown wearing female garb, as in *Die Keyserinn (The Empress)* (Figure 23), or performing female tasks in the domestic realm, as in *Die Gräfin (The Countess)* (Figure 24), in order to gain access to a female victim. Although the Death and the Maiden variant of the *Totentanz* theme sometimes involves Death disguised as a gentleman suitor in order to prey upon an

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<sup>110</sup> Hertel, Christiane. “Dis/Continuities in Dresden’s Dance of Death.” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, No.1 (Mar. 2000), 83.

<sup>111</sup> Hertel, 99.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 95, 98.

unsuspecting, often young and beautiful, lady (Figure 25), Death can also assume the guise of an attractive woman in order to seduce an unassuming, usually young, man (Figure 26). In such depictions, Death becomes the Maiden and, in so doing, visualizes the concept of the *femme fatale*, the “fatal woman.” Images such as these, in which Death is disguised as an alluring admirer with seemingly romantic intentions, “stress the *vanitas-voluptas* aspect of the theme” and often function as admonitions against lust and sins of the flesh.<sup>113</sup> The suggestion of Death being gendered as female in work featuring the *Totentanz* motif and related themes and the presence of sexual implications in such depictions sets a precedent for the personification of Death as a sexually enticing female who is linked with dance and with the demise of an ill-fated man. Such associations were later used by Dix in his portrait of Berber to modernize these Old Master motifs by portraying the vampy, interwar dancer as both Death and the “maiden.”

The idea of depicting Death not merely as woman-like but as feminine and promiscuous appears in a series of six wood engravings entitled *Auch ein Totentanz* (*Another Dance of Death*) (1849) by Alfred Rethel. Plate V of this series depicts a slight modification of the idea of Death as a seductive paramour as Death is shown standing atop a mattress positioned behind a barricade (Figure 27). Several men shoot at unseen enemies outside the frame while others appear to have been blown off their feet by some sort of explosion. Amidst the chaos of battle, Death stands on the mattress with legs spread. Death’s right hand holds a white flag attached to a long pole while the other hand pulls up his jacket to provocatively expose the bones of his upper thigh, pelvis and lower spine. The sexual nature of this revelation is heightened by the fact that Death turns his

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<sup>113</sup> Rosenfeld, Hellmut. *Der Mittelalterliche Totentanz: Entstehung, Entwicklung, Bedeutung*. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1968. 115, 144.



head to suggestively nibble on the collar of his jacket. In some ways, this image is similar to Hans Holbein the Younger's woodcut *Der Kaufmann* (*The Merchant*, ca. 1524-1525) but, the "cubic bundle of [the merchant's] merchandise" in Holbein's image has become a mattress in Rethel's scene.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, in Rethel's plate, "Death seems to be both merchant and prostitute, offering himself on a deathbed."<sup>115</sup> As Berber had the reputation for being promiscuous and was rumored to engage in prostitution,<sup>116</sup> Rethel's suggestion of death as a prostitute relates to the previous incarnations of Death as a seductive woman but alters them by casting death as a "deviant" or "fallen" feminine figure who is paid to provide sexual services but brings death instead of sexual pleasure.

In Rethel's plate, Death is still represented as wearing masculine attire but his "vanity and coquettishness,"<sup>117</sup> as evidenced by his saucy pose and erotic self-display before a group of men, can be construed as being feminine. Furthermore, it was also fairly conventional to link female prostitutes with Death as evidenced by Urs Graf's woodcut, *Zwei Landsknechte und eine Frau mit dem Tod im Baum* (*Two Mercenaries and a Woman with Death in a Tree*) (Figure 28) in which the coy woman below the tree has been identified as a prostitute.<sup>118</sup> In this image, Death is not actually a prostitute, but it clearly correlates "deviant" sex with a prostitute with violence and death. Dix explicitly mentioned being impressed by Graf's works<sup>119</sup> and this image by Graf specifically links

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<sup>114</sup> Hertel, 83, 85, 98. Rethel's series was produced by in Dresden, Germany.

<sup>115</sup> Hertel, 95.

<sup>116</sup> For elaboration on Berber's rumored prostitution, see footnote 69 of this chapter.

<sup>117</sup> Hertel, 95.

<sup>118</sup> Eichenberg, 28. Technically, Urs Graf was a German-speaking Swiss artist but he lived and worked in both Basel and Zürich which are both quite close to Germany. Eichenberg refers to the image as *Two Mercenaries, Whore and Death*.

<sup>119</sup> Dix, Otto. "Aus Gesprächen bei verschiedenen Gelegenheiten." quoted in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1981, 279. In a conversation with Schmidt, Dix mentioned several artists, including Graf, whose works he had admired when he saw them at the

death with selling one's body for violence as a paid soldier and selling one's body for sex as a prostitute.

Rethel's soldiers are revolutionaries rather than mercenaries but the association of soldiers and fighting with sex, specifically solicited sex with prostitutes, also prominently features in Dix's wartime images including *Frontsoldat in Brüssel* (*Frontline Soldier in Brussels*) (Figure 29) and *Besuch bei Madame Germaine in Méricourt* (*Visit to Madame Germaine's at Méricourt*) (Figure 30) both of which are part of Dix's 1924 series of prints, *Der Krieg* (*War*). During World War I, the German High Command was responsible for the "establishment of official field bordellos."<sup>120</sup> These supervised brothels, in which "everything had a fixed price," were "organized and run by the military, with separate brothels for officers and enlisted men."<sup>121</sup> The goal of these field brothels was neither to offer the soldiers romantic love nor to offer legitimate companionship; their purpose was simply "to maximize fighting efficiency and minimize the risk of sexually-transmitted diseases" and, thus, they were run "in a completely unromantic, objective, no-nonsense way."<sup>122</sup> However, side effects of having "military brothels behind [the] front lines" included "the brutalization of sex"<sup>123</sup> and the linking of violence and death with sex, especially non- or extra-marital non-procreative sex, and female prostitutes.

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Kunstmuseum in Basel, Switzerland. In "Neue Sachlichkeit in Germany: A Brief History." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, Matthias Eberle also notes this quote.

<sup>120</sup> Carstens, Belinda Horton. *Prostitution in the Works of Ödön von Horváth*. Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982. 50. The Austrian army also established official field brothels during World War I.

<sup>121</sup> Brockmann, Stephen. "Weimar Sexual Cynicism." (165) *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*. Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann, eds. Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, Inc., 1994. 171.

<sup>122</sup> Brockmann, 171.

<sup>123</sup> Lewis, 220.

In this *Der Krieg* series, Dix also included an image which specifically references the *Totentanz*. This work, entitled *Totentanz anno 17 (Höhe Toter Mann) (Dance of Death 1917 [Dead Man Heights])*<sup>124</sup> (Figure 31), depicts a gruesome scene in which the dead bodies of multiple soldiers hang in the air suspended by bayonets and sections of a barbed wire fence. The bodies of these impaled soldiers, which are contorted into variety of positions, are roughly arranged in a circle. It almost appears as though the soldiers partake in a convulsive dance of death not unlike the frenzied, frolicking skeletons in *Totentanz* images, such as the woodcut by Wolgemut.

Even in some of the images Dix created prior to his *Der Krieg* series, the link between violence, decay, death and sex is evident. Despite serving at the front while in the German army, Dix continued to create works of art, especially drawings. His 1917 black chalk drawing, *Grab—toter Soldat (Grave—Dead Soldier)* (Figure 32) depicts the decaying corpse of a soldier. The man's prone body decomposes into the hilly, flowered landscape. His slender fingers appear bony and it seems that the flesh has already partially rotted off his right arm. His head is also skeletal as his eye sockets are dark and hollow and his mouth is set in a grimace. In the same year, Dix also used black chalk to draw *Liebende auf dem Grab (Lovers on the Grave)* (Figure 33) which shows a couple having sex atop several graves. Both of these drawings demonstrate Dix's Nietzschean interest in the relationship between sex and death in the human life cycle and his

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<sup>124</sup> The title of this work is also sometimes translated into English as *Dance of Death 1917 (Dead Man's Hill)*.

fascination with, as he phrased it, “wie sich die Materie Mensch auf dämonische Weise verändert” (“how in a demonic way human matter changes”).<sup>125</sup>

In *Liebende auf dem Grab*, three identical cross grave markers appear in the upper left corner of the image. Given the date and the subjects of the other works Dix created at this time, it is possible that the man in the drawing is intended to be a soldier. Many of Dix’s drawings of 1917 depict subjects related to the battlefield and, obviously, a soldier would be at the front whereas a civilian man’s presence is less likely. If the man in the drawing is a soldier, then it is possible that the woman is a prostitute. The work does not depict a brothel but, as prostitutes were present at the front due to the military-run brothels, the woman with whom the man has sex could likely be a prostitute from one of the military bordellos; these brothels were locations in which Nietzsche’s vitalistic, Dionysian nexus of violence, sex and death was dramatically apparent.

Berber had the reputation of occasionally prostituting herself in times of economic necessity and the Dixes actually witnessed her attempts to sell herself after a performance. The couple met Berber in 1925 when she and Henri Châtin-Hoffmann (1900-1961), her third and final husband, were guest performers at the Kabarett Jungmühle in Düsseldorf.<sup>126</sup> The couple was so intrigued with Berber that they traveled to Wiesbaden in order to see her again. In an interview with Lothar Fischer, Martha Dix

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<sup>125</sup> Schmidt, 279. Dix’s quote comes from a conversation with Schmidt. His remark was specifically in reference to his interest in works by certain artists, including Urs Graf, whose works he saw at the Kunstmuseum in Basel, Switzerland. In his essay “Neue Sachlichkeit in Germany: A Brief History” in *Glitter and Doom*, Matthias Eberle also notes this quote.

<sup>126</sup> Fischer, 142-143. In early 1923, Droste abandoned Berber and boarded a ship to New York City. She subsequently filed for divorce. Berber met American dancer Henri Châtin-Hofmann in Berlin in late 1923, possibly in August, and they were married on September 10, 1923. They remained married until her death in 1928. Despite Droste’s departure, Berber continued to dance many of the same dances with her new partner and many of her post-Droste dances still featured themes that intertwined sexuality, vice and death. Berber’s first husband, whom she married in 1919, was Eberhard von Nathusius (1895-1942).

noted that Berber not only drank an entire bottle of cognac in front of the couple but, when the Dixes and Berber went for a walk around Wiesbaden, the dancer also attempted to prostitute herself. Martha recounted that whenever someone approached the dancer, she said “Two-hundred Marks.” Martha seems to have taken Berber’s behavior at face value and claimed that she was not offended by Berber’s behavior because, as a dancer, Berber probably did not make much money and, in addition to making a living, Berber’s costumes were expensive and she had to pay for them herself. However, despite Berber’s antics, Martha was still complimentary of her and claimed she found her to be a lovely, charming (“*charmant*”) person.<sup>127</sup>

Although Martha Dix accepted Berber’s behavior as evidence of her limited economic means, it is possible that Berber was performing her “degenerate” persona for the well-known painter and his wife. It is true that Berber had financial troubles, as evidenced, among other things, by several letters she wrote to Dix asking for money.<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, by 1925, Berber was a celebrity and her scandalous addictions and overt sexual “transgressions” had been tabloid-fodder for years. Such provocative behavior was a crucial aspect of her persona; indeed, her popularity and the validity of her “dances of vice” were integrally connected with her provocative image. Thus, while it is possible

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<sup>127</sup> Fischer, Lothar. *Tanz zwischen Rausch und Tod: Anita Berber, 1918-1928 in Berlin*. Edition Jule Hammer. Haude & Spener, 1984. 142. In the footnotes, Fischer notes that he had a conversation with Martha Dix about the couple’s interactions with Berber but he does not give a date for the conversation. According to Fischer, Martha said the following: “Während sich Anita eine Stunde lang schminkte trank sie dazu eine Flasche Cognac.—Ja, und das Auf-das-Strich-Gehen, das war ja klar. Wir gingen in Wiesbaden spazieren und sie nahm jede Gelegenheit wahr. Jemand sprach sie an, und sie sagte ‘200 Mark.’ Ich fand das nicht so furchtbar. Irgendwie musste sie ja Geld verdienen. Die teuren Kostüme waren selbst zu stellen, wenn sie auftrat als Tänzerin. Das konnte ja gar nicht viel einbringen. Die war eben so charmant, so lieb, einfach ganz natürlich und reizend.”

<sup>128</sup> Anita Berber wrote Dix at least two letters in 1925. One is undated and the other is dated October 22, 1925. On September 7, 1925 Henri Châtin-Hofmann, Berber’s husband at the time, also wrote Dix a letter inquiring about his painting of Berber. All of these letters can be found in the Deutsches Kunstarchiv im Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg.

that Berber would have engaged in sexual intercourse with various men in Wiesbaden for two-hundred Marks, one must consider the possibility that Berber was simply staging an act of vice and illicit sexuality for the Dixes much as she did in her actual dance performances. Furthermore, while Berber was an alcoholic, her decision to drink an entire bottle of cognac in front of the Dixes, likely had an element of consciously staged “depravity” in addition to being symptomatic of her alcohol addiction.

Regardless of the level of performance present in Berber’s displays of alcoholism and prostitution, these manifestations of counter-cultural extremes fascinated Dix. The artworks he created during his years of military service and in the years preceding his depiction of Berber demonstrate a distinct fascination with sex, specifically with prostitutes, decay, and death or, at least with the performance of these things. Similarly, Dix’s paintings from the early nineteen-twenties reveal his interest in dance, particularly modern forms of dance, *Neue Frauen*, liberated sexuality and, more subtly, violence and death. Dix’s interest in these matters, which was encouraged by his adherence to Nietzschean philosophy, enabled him to see Anita Berber as the living embodiment of these themes.

Dix had long been interested in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche so it not surprising that he interpreted Berber’s personal and professional engagement of emotional extremes, sex and death in a Nietzschean manner or that he had a vested interest in adopting the qualities of Nietzsche’s lauded *Übermensch* for himself. In an interview with Maria Wetzel, Dix discussed his philosophical beliefs and noted the following: “Wir waren Nihilisten, waren gegen alles. Schon 1911 habe ich Nietzsche gelesen und mich gründlich

mit seine Ansichten befaßt.”<sup>129</sup> Dix was twenty years of age at that time and, he was so taken with the philosopher’s theories that, the following year, he created an almost life-sized, green-tinted plaster bust of Nietzsche in homage.<sup>130</sup> He even kept a copy of one of Nietzsche’s books with him at the front for the duration of the war.<sup>131</sup> Throughout Nietzsche’s works, the author discusses his concept of the *Übermensch*, the “overman” or “superman,” who was considered to be “a stronger species, a higher type that arises and preserves itself under different conditions from those of the average man.”<sup>132</sup> According to Nietzsche, artists are closer to being “overmen” than other men because they belong to a “stronger race.”<sup>133</sup> He asserted that “what would be harmful and morbid in us [average men], in him [the artist] is nature.”<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, according to Nietzsche, “to represent terrible and questionable things is in itself an instinct for power and magnificence in an artist: he does not fear them...”<sup>135</sup> This “preference for questionable and terrifying things is a symptom of strength; while a taste for the pretty and dainty belongs to the weak and

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<sup>129</sup> Dix, Otto. “Ein harter Mann, dieser Maler. Gespräch mit Maria Wetzel 1965.” Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 266-267. Although the interview was conducted in 1965, Dix was discussing his youth and the works he created in the nineteen twenties. Dix’s quote translates to: “We [Dix and George Grosz] were Nihilists, against everything. Already in 1911 I had read Nietzsche and had thoroughly concerned myself with his views.”

<sup>130</sup> Schubert, Dietrich. “Death in the Trench: The Death of the Portrait? Otto Dix’s Wartime Self-Portraits, 1915 – 1918.” Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 33. This bust was in the collection of the Städtische Kunstsammlungen Dresden but it was confiscated by the Nazis in 1937. In 1939, it was auctioned in Lucerne along with other confiscated art works. It was not, however, sold at the auction and there is no record of the work after that time; it was, presumably, destroyed.

<sup>131</sup> Rewald, Sabine. “Skat Players.” *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006.57. Rewald proposes that the work was either *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* or *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. In *The Life and Works of Otto Dix: German Critical Realism* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1975), Linda McGreevy suggests it was *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*. Based upon the date (1914) Dix wrote in his copy of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, I posit that work as the likeliest candidate.

<sup>132</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. NY: Vintage Books, 1968. 463. This particular quote comes from Book Four of *The Will to Power* which is entitled “Discipline and Breeding.” It is included in number 866 which was written in the spring through the fall of 1887 and was revised in the spring through the fall of 1888.

<sup>133</sup> *The Will to Power*, 430. This quote comes from Book Three of *The Will to Power* which is entitled “Principles of a New Evaluation.” It is included in number 812 which was written in March through June of 1888.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. This quote also comes from Book Three. It is found under number 821 (March – June 1888).

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 435. This quote also comes from Book Three. It is found under number 821 (March – June 1888).

delicate.”<sup>136</sup> Thus, as per Nietzsche’s philosophy, as an artist with a penchant for unflinchingly representing difficult subject matter, Dix was closer to being an *Übermensch* than not only non-artists but also artists who refrained from depicting such subjects.

Yet, the strength and genius of the artist was of an Apollonian rather than a Dionysian variety. In *Götzendämmerung*, Nietzsche noted that “the power of vision” is gained through “Apollonian frenzy” and, as such, “the painter, the sculptor, the epic poet are visionaries par excellence.”<sup>137</sup> In contrast to the Apollonian “compulsion to have visions,” Dionysian frenzy manifests itself “as a compulsion to an orgiastic state;” the former occurs “in dream” while the latter takes place “in intoxication.”<sup>138</sup> Frenzy, according to Nietzsche, is “indispensable” to the creation of art and, among the different types of frenzy that have the ability to sufficiently excite one adequately to create art are, “the frenzy of sexual excitement” and the frenzy reached “under the influence of narcotics.”<sup>139</sup> In addition, he asserts that Apollonian dreams release the “artistic powers” of “vision, association, poetry” while Dionysian intoxication liberates the “artistic powers” of “gesture, passion, song, dance.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *The Will to Power*, 449. This is also found in Book Three under number 825 (Spring – Fall 1887; revised Spring – Fall 1888).

<sup>137</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. “Twilight of the Idols.” *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1977. 519. This is found under part 10 in the section entitled “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man.” Dix owned Nietzsche’s *Götzendämmerung* at the time of his death.

<sup>138</sup> *The Will to Power*, 419-420. This discussion occurs in under the heading “IV. The Will to Power as Art” under number 798 (March – June 1888).

<sup>139</sup> “Twilight of the Idols,” 518. He calls sexual frenzy “the most ancient and original form of frenzy.” He also includes the following frenzies: “the frenzy that follows all great cravings, all strong affectets; the frenzy of feasts, contests, feats of daring, victory, all extreme movement; the frenzy of cruelty; the frenzy in destruction; the frenzy under certain meteorological conditions, as for example the frenzy of spring; ir under the influence of narcotics; and finally the of will, the frenzy of an overcharged and swollen will.”

<sup>140</sup> *The Will to Power*, 420.



Dance, in fact, features prominently in many of Nietzsche's writings. He considered it to be a life-affirming activity and claimed that "dancing in itself...brings with it a kind of intoxication of the whole vascular, nervous and muscular system."<sup>141</sup> He noted that "intoxication is precisely an exalted feeling of power" and that "in the Dionysian intoxication there is a sexuality and voluptuousness."<sup>142</sup> He strongly correlated dance with sexuality and the arousing of life-affirming passions and, often, he specifically associated women with dancing. For instance, in the "Dancing Song" of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, the eponymous title characters and his disciples interrupt a group of dancing women in a field. However, Zarathustra encourages them to continue dancing as he could never be "an enemy of godlike dances."<sup>143</sup> By "godlike," Nietzsche is presumably referring to Dionysus, thus complimenting the women on their passionate, life-affirming dance.

Although Nietzsche's philosophical ruminations regarding the dual Apollonian and Dionysian natures of humanity were primarily correlated with men, the persona and performances of Anita Berber strongly link her with the Dionysian elements so praised by Nietzsche. Indeed, as an artist, an avid follower of Nietzsche, and a dancer, Dix seems to have recognized these traits in the notorious performer and appreciated them as being Dionysian in spite of her femaleness. Despite his profuse praises for artists and his misogynistic musings, Nietzsche did at times compare artists and Dionysian types to hysterical women. Nietzsche died in 1900 so his use of the word "hysteria" was not originally laden with the post-World War I connotations of the "war hysteria" suffered by

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 425. He asserts this in 807 (Summer – Fall 1888) of Book Three.

<sup>142</sup> *The Will to Power*, 420. These quotes comes from numbers 800 and 799 of Book Three (both of March - June 1888) respectively.

<sup>143</sup> "Thus Spake Zarathustra," 219.

traumatized war veterans. At the time of Nietzsche's writing, the word "hysterical," stemming from the Greek word "hystera" meaning "womb," had inherently female connotations because of this "link[age] to the female reproductive system."<sup>144</sup> The prevailing attitude of the time is concisely summarized in the words of one French doctor, "A man cannot be hysterical; he has no uterus."<sup>145</sup>

Yet, in several works, Nietzsche referred to artists as being hysterical. For instance, in *Der Wille zur Macht*, he asserted that "one may today consider 'genius' as a form of neurosis" and that "artists today are painfully like hysterical females."<sup>146</sup> However, he briefly qualified this statement to assure readers that this comparison was a reflection of the times rather than a critique of artists, whom he seemed to admire. Similarly, in his discussion of Apollonian and Dionysian frenzy in *Götzendämmerung*, he praised the Dionysian state for "the ease of metamorphosis" which is crucial to expression and communication. He likened this metamorphosis, this "inability *not* to react," to "certain

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<sup>144</sup> Lerner, Paul. *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003, 24.

<sup>145</sup> Lerner, 24. Lerner does not name the doctor. He does note that the quote was taken from Mark S. Micale's book *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and Its Interpretations* which was published by Princeton University Press in 1995.

<sup>146</sup> *The Will to Power*, 430. This quote is found in number 812 (March – June 1888) of Book Three. A copy of *Der Wille zur Macht* was in Dix's possession at the time of his death. He did read it as indicated by marks made throughout the text. *Der Wille zur Macht* is controversial in Nietzsche studies. Nietzsche died in 1900 and the work was published in 1901 by the philosopher's sister, Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche. For many years, the work was regarded as being Nietzsche's grand achievement and philosophical masterpiece. Alfred Bäumler started working on his postscript to the one volume edition of *Der Wille zur Macht* in 1930. The editions that featured Bäumler's postscripts were the most expensive and, thus, among the most popular. However, Bäumler was a Nazi. Consequently, his thoughts on Nietzsche fell out of favor after World War II and the status of *Der Wille zur Macht* suffered due to its association with Bäumler. Although the work is unique, Nietzsche scholars, such as Walter Kaufman, dismiss the idea that the work should be disregarded. It contains selections from Nietzsche's notebooks written between the years 1883 and 1888. These notes were not intended to be published in the form in which they are currently found and minor details such as the numbering and specific arrangement were not determined by the philosopher. However, Nietzsche had intended to write a book entitled *Der Wille zur Macht* and scholars such as Kaufman argue that the work cannot be ignored. As avid Nietzschean, Dix certainly read the work; indeed, he owned a copy of it. Furthermore, Bäumler did not write his postscript until 1930 and additional revisions and rearrangements occurred after that date. Dix likely read the work prior to 1930 so the scholarship surrounding the work was not nearly as controversial as it became after World War II.

hysterical types who also, upon any suggestion, enter into *any* role.”<sup>147</sup> This reference to role-assuming hysterics could potentially reference the famous “Tuesday lectures,” which occurred under the directorship of Jean-Martin Charcot (1835 – 1898) at the foremost insane asylum in Paris, the Salpêtrière hospital. At these lectures, some of Charcot’s female hysteric patients were hypnotized and performed their hysterical symptoms at his behest in front an audience seated in a five-hundred seat amphitheater. In addition to attracting large crowds, a photography studio was installed in the asylum in 1876 and photographic records of these hysteric patients were published annually in the *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* and were circulated worldwide.<sup>148</sup> These lectures were well-known at the time as they were attended by various members of the press and the intelligentsia. Thus, Nietzsche was certainly aware of them either through written accounts or the photographic records themselves and his reference to “hysterical types” performing certain roles at someone’s suggestion likely references Charcot’s lectures at the Salpêtrière. The patients used for these lectures were initially all female which gives Nietzsche’s reference to role-playing hysterics and, consequently to Dionysian metamorphosis, a feminine cast.<sup>149</sup>

Furthermore, as noted above, Nietzsche linked dance with vital passions and sexuality and tended to specifically reference dancing females. He also discussed couples dancing and implied sexual passions due to the close contact between men and women.<sup>150</sup> Dix

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<sup>147</sup> “Twilight of the Idols,” 519.

<sup>148</sup> Kaes, Anton. *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009. 63.

<sup>149</sup> The final volumes of the *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpêtrière*, included photographs of “male hysterics” that were taken by Albert Londe. Although Charcot did not initially believe that “male hysterics” actually existed, he changed his mind by the end of his career.

<sup>150</sup> *The Will to Power*, 425. Nietzsche discusses “dances and other social events” which involve close contact between the sexes in number 807 of Book Three.

makes the sexual undertones of couples dancing evident in works such as *An Die Schönheit* and *Modernes Tanzpaar* (1922). In light of the interwar attitudes about the sexual primitivism of jazz music and the modern dances performed to it, the Dionysian aspects of dance in these works are strongly implied. Furthermore, in associating dance with women, women are thereby linked with certain Dionysian attributes. Interestingly, Nietzsche specifically linked women with the Dionysian in his dedication of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (*The Birth of Tragedy*) in which he honored his “Apollonian Grandfather” and his “Dionysian Grandmother.”<sup>151</sup>

Anita Berber was unapologetic in her embrace of sex, primal states and intense passions which, in turn, inspired her dances. Her nude, sexually provocative dances and her emancipated life in which she did what she pleased were evocative of the orgiastic Dionysian sexual and creative agitation and will to power praised by Nietzsche. Furthermore, given Berber’s well known addictions, it is perhaps not surprising that her stage presence was evocative of Dionysian frenzy. Moreover, she often danced under the influence of these substances thereby compounding and amplifying the Dionysian, animalistic embrace of her senses, creativity and life. Additionally, Berber was undoubtedly aware of her own reputation and, likely, exaggerated her “sinful” behavior and “deviant” persona for effect and to capitalize on the attention they caused. Dix, as a devoted reader and follower of Nietzschean philosophy, undoubtedly recognized the Dionysian commingling of Eros and Thanatos that existed in Berber and her persona and was demonstrated in her life and performances. Thus, in his portrait of her, his

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<sup>151</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. “The Birth of Tragedy.” *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Walter Kaufmann, trans and ed. New York: Modern Library, 2000. 1.

manipulation of her physical condition references her drug and alcohol usage which, on a Nietzschean level, evokes Dionysian intoxication and frenzy.

Furthermore, his rendering of her skin-tight dress and her provocative pose, coupled with her corpse-like appearance, visually link sex and death in her person. Dix's pronounced use of the color red in Berber's portrait acknowledges this link. With regard to portraiture, Dix asserted the following:

"...not only the form but also the color is of great importance and one way to express the individual. Everyone has a special color, which has an effect on the entire painting....The essence of every person is expressed on his *outside*; the *outside* is the expression of the *inside*—that is, the outside and inside are identical. That goes so far that even the folds in a person's clothing, his attitude, his hands, his ears immediately give the painter information about the soul of a model..."<sup>152</sup>

Dix believed that red was "the color of Eros and death"<sup>153</sup> and, clearly, based on his portrait of Berber, he decided that this color expressed the unique combination of those qualities that he felt defined her both as an individual and as a performer. Furthermore, his manipulation of Old Master images of the *Totentanz* via the person and body of Berber casts her in the role of a Dionysian death-dancer who rejected classical, controlled Apollonian intellectuality in favor of embracing animalistic, Dionysian impulses. Thus, her lifestyle, which was interpreted by many at the time to be self-

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<sup>152</sup> Peters, Olaf. "Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber, 1925." Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 210. This quote appeared in Dix's "Dedanken zum Porträtmalen" of March 1955 and was subsequently quoted on page 224 of Diether Schmidt's book *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis* (1981). The emphasis is Dix's.

<sup>153</sup> Whyte, Iain Boyd. "Otto Dix's Germany: From Wilhelmine Reich to East/West Divide." *Otto Dix: 1891 – 1969*. London: Tate Gallery, 1992. 33.

destructive, becomes life affirming in the Dionysian sense as, in Nietzsche's ideology, both production and destruction were essential to "*continual creation*."<sup>154</sup>

Even the hellfire background and her demonic appearance can be interpreted in a Dionysian light. In his 1881 collection of aphorisms entitled *Morgenröte*, Nietzsche criticized Christianity for condemning human "passions" as "evil and insidious."<sup>155</sup> He lamented that "Christianity has succeeded in turning Eros and Aphrodite...into hellish goblins" and has corrupted "sexual feelings" through "slander" and "the transformation of Eros into the devil."<sup>156</sup> Like Nietzsche, Dix was also critical of Christianity and glorified Eros rather than reviling it. Thus, Dix's portrait of Berber can be seen as a Nietzschean compliment of her Dionysian embrace of all aspects of existence despite the supposedly repressive machinations of bourgeois, Judeo-Christian morality. As noted previously, the red color of her portrait is evocative of Eros and her stance, a revised *Venus pudica* pose, links her with Aphrodite, the goddess of sexual love and lust. Thus, in Dix's portrait, she is the devilish Dionysian Venus of Eros and Thanatos who revels in the intoxicated frenzy brought about through dance, sex and narcotics and whose simultaneously creative and destructive existence is "an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life."<sup>157</sup>

In addition, Dix's allusion to the *Venus pudica* pose also specifically references canonical works of art from Praxiteles' famous Late Classical sculpture the *Aphrodite of Knidos* (ca. 350 – 340 B.C.) to a variety of works by Dürer, Cranach and Baldung Grien,

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<sup>154</sup> *The Will to Power*, 539. The emphasis is Nietzsche's. This is come Book Four, number 1049 (1885 – 1886).

<sup>155</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Dawn." *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1977. 79.

<sup>156</sup> "The Dawn," 79.

<sup>157</sup> *The Will to Power*, 339. This quote is from number 1050 (March – June 1888) of Book Four.

among others. This pose was the hallmark of the supposedly “chaste” Venus which was often considered to be the paragon of female modesty. As Venus was also the goddess of beauty, this pose represented the intersection of ideal female beauty and exemplary female modesty which reflected Classical ideas regarding the relationship between “the beauty of forms and the goodness of the soul.”<sup>158</sup>

However, with his suggestion of this pose, Dix’s intention was not solely to reference the Old Masters and canonical works of art. Instead, his work strips away the façade of female beauty and reveals that traditional ideals of female beauty and its presumed linkage with female virtue are all illusory. Berber’s physical appearance does not conform to conventional, art historical standards of beauty nor does her sexualized pose adhere to previous ideals relating to female modesty. Rather, Dix has peeled back the layers of pretense and falsehoods regarding female physical and spiritual beauty to show the reality that lies beneath. As will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, Dix’s 1922 painting *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* (*Girl before the Mirror*) which depicts an ostensibly attractive young prostitute gazing at her haggard, old reflection in the mirror, engages this dialogue by showing the prostitute’s mirror image to be the true reflection of her physical state and character. Although an actual mirror is absent in his portrait of Berber, Dix utilizes the allusion to the *Venus pudica* pose to imply that the depraved dancer is not simply a Counter-Venus but the true, mirror image of the deceptively beautiful and virtuous female figure who set the canonical precedent for the pose.

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<sup>158</sup> Eco, Umberto, ed. *History of Beauty*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Trans. Alastair McEwen. New York: Rizzoli, 2005. The idea of the relatedness of the good and the beautiful is expressed by the Greek term “*Kalokagathia*.”

This suspicion of female beauty is linked to the tradition of the German Old Masters. Many of the German artists to whom Dix looked for inspiration, including Dürer, Cranach and Baldung Grien, lived during the Reformation era in Germany and their art was directly influenced by new Protestant conceptions of image making. In particular, these artists were suspicious of beauty, especially in religious art, as they believed that “art and beauty and luxury” in religious images distracted from faith.<sup>159</sup> Koerner traces this suspiciousness of beauty, especially with regard to religious images, to the Bible which he claims demonstrates an “aesthetics of the ugly, not the beautiful.”<sup>160</sup> “The aesthetics of the ugly” stem from Christ’s distinctly horrific death on the cross which not only concealed the divinity of Christ but also turned the “true likeness” of God into “the ugliest of things.”<sup>161</sup>

However, in Dix’s painting of Berber, the Old Master distrust of beauty in religious imagery is displaced and becomes a distrust of female, sexual beauty. Yet, this suspicion comingles with a Nietzschean-inspired desire to celebrate the creativity and visual inventiveness that the Dionysian state, interpreted by lesser, repressed beings as “depravity,” could inspire. In order to accomplish this, while mitigating the threat of Berber as a *femme-fatale*, Dix had to portray his own identity as that of a powerful, Apollonian artist and an interwar New Man. Obviously, Dix did not actually depict himself in his portrait of Berber but, in the self-portraits he created in the early and mid-nineteen-twenties, he shows himself in a similar way. For instance, in his two

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<sup>159</sup> Koerner, Joseph Leo. *The Reformation of the Image*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004. 27, 59. The quote regarding “art and beauty and luxury” comes from a printed circular written by Franz von Sickingen in 1522 in which he discussed saints and images.

<sup>160</sup> *The Reformation of the Image*, 124.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, 124-125. Koerner ultimately argues that the Protestant aesthetic of ugliness is a provisional stage because, in the end (i.e. with the Resurrection of Christ), the divinity, beauty and power of Christ are revealed.



watercolors entitled *Selbstporträt (Self-Portrait)* of 1922 and 1923 (Figures 34 and 35) and in his oil painting, *Selbstbildnis mit Staffelei (Self-Portrait with Easel)* of 1926 (Figure 36), he depicts himself in much the same way as he did in *An die Schönheit*. In these images and others like them, his light-colored hair is slicked back in an American style, his gaze is steely and his square jaw is firmly set. He wears a collared shirt and tie in both watercolors and a slim-cut American suit jacket in one of them. He dons a similar suit in *Selbstbildnis mit Staffelei* but he wears a bow tie and stands before an easel. Similarly, in photographs taken of Dix in the nineteen-twenties, whether alone (Figure 15), with his wife, or with his children, he presents himself in a comparable fashion. In these images, Dix utilizes American sartorial codes to construct and present a particular masculine identity. This “self-projection of [his] artistic identity”<sup>162</sup> enables him to perform the identity of a controlled, rational, masculine yet fashionable New Man by reaffirming his own potency through the deliberate reference to American masculinity.

This “cool persona” of the *Neuer Mann* that Dix attempts to assume in his self-portraits is that of “Nietzsche’s North Pole voyager” who “cast[s] a mercilessly distinguishing gaze back from the canvas.”<sup>163</sup> The “cool persona” of Dix as a lucid male artist who is in control of himself and who is able to rationally engage his surroundings is distinctly Apollonian in character. However, due to the highly unstable situation of the interwar years, Dix’s composure seems strained. He attempts to appear calm and controlled in a setting that was turbulent and highly volatile. Thus, Dix performs the controlled persona of the *Neuer Mann* in much the same way as Berber performed her

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<sup>162</sup> Jones, Amelia. “‘Clothes Make the Man:’ The Male Artist as a Performative Function.” *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1995), 18.

<sup>163</sup> Lethen, Helmut. *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002. 105.

persona of an uncontrollable, debauched *Neue Frau*—*femme fatale*. Although there were elements of truth in both personas, both the artist and the dancer exaggerated the aspects of their character that they either hoped to possess or which they felt would aid their respective careers.

The calm precision of the New Man persona appropriated by Dix is in direct contrast with the fevered chaos of the Dionysian. In part five of “Zarathustra’s Prologue” in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, the eponymous prophet asserts the following: “I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.”<sup>164</sup> Berber was not only a “dancing star” in the sense of being a famous dancer, but she also possessed and exaggerated the necessary Dionysian qualities to make such creative productivity possible. Indeed, the Dionysian chaos that marked not only her life but also her dances is palpable in Dix’s portrait of her.

As with much of Nietzsche’s philosophy, the causes and consequences of Dionysian states are cyclical. Indeed, they arise out of and cause destruction. In discussing the “Dionysian madness” “out of which...art develop[s],” the philosopher rhetorically asked if “madness [is] perhaps not necessarily the symptom of degeneration, decline and the final stages of culture.”<sup>165</sup> Ignoring the Nietzschean context of this remark, many conservative Weimar critics would have argued that Berber, and others like her, were likely mad, certainly degenerate and undoubtedly the epitome of cultural and moral decline. In particular, the so-called “depravity” of the sexually liberated and economically independent *Neue Frau* was often unfairly correlated with the prostitute who engaged in sex for profit. Some Weimar moralists and social theorists considered

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<sup>164</sup> “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” 129.

<sup>165</sup> “The Birth of Tragedy,” 21.

female prostitution to be a natural outgrowth of the *Neue Frau*'s sexual and financial emancipation and women like Berber, who rebelled against society's cultural mores and occasionally engaged in prostitution, were considered proof of the depths to which the *Neue Frau* was destined to descend.

Such sentiments are found in Dr. Erich Wulffen's *Das Weib als Sexualverbrecherin*, in which he asserted the following correlation between prostitutes and sexually active working women:

"The fact that the common prostitute sells her body to several men in one night while the office girl merely changes her lovers every half year and only permits him to take her out, spend on her and give her presents does not make much of a difference; the latter is merely a more refined representative of the same general phenomenon of prostitution."<sup>166</sup>

Wulffen also further linked modern, New Women with prostitutes and "deviant" sexuality in his discussion of exhibitionism. He did not restrict his discussion to supposedly morally "defective" individuals who have sex in public locations whether for profit or for pleasure. Rather, he extended his definition of supposed immorality to include fashionable modes of dress, especially those favored by the *Neue Frau*. He asserted that clothing which displays a woman's bare arms, neck and chest and the newly stylish short skirts and dresses, which "allowed for ample showing of the legs and knees" are "to a certain extent, mild exhibitionism."<sup>167</sup> For Wulffen and others who shared his beliefs, the "new freedom" of "the newer generation" of women in Germany and

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<sup>166</sup> Wulffen, 345.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 255. Wulffen similarly asserts that the increasingly skimpy nature of bathing suits was also a form of exhibitionism.

elsewhere, evidenced in women's increasingly revealing clothing and in women's greater sexual and economic liberation, were really just demonstrations of New Women's "loose morality" that would "ultimately lead to the degeneration and devaluation of woman" in general.<sup>168</sup> Dix was "reported to have owned and carefully studied" Wulffen's earlier book *Der Sexual Verbrecher (The Sexual Criminal)* of 1910<sup>169</sup> so he was likely to have been familiar with Wulffen's ideas, many of which were reiterated and further discussed in *Das Weib als Sexualverbrecherin*.

As in Wulffen's book, Dix's *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber* links the ideas of female sexuality, modern dance, physical decay and death. It blurs the boundary between New Women and prostitutes, both of whom could be viewed simultaneously as Dionysian exemplars and threats to interwar German masculinity. As noted previously, in self-portraits he created in various media through the nineteen-twenties, Dix represented himself as a controlled, rational, masculine, modern man and sexually potent artist. In *An die Schönheit*, Dix included himself as a cool observer of the scene. While an image of Dix is not physically present in the image of Berber, Dix as the controlled observer-creator occupies a place outside the painted scene. He was a Weimar *Neuer Mann* and controlled, Apollonian artist in contrast to the outrageous, Dionysian *Neue Frau* who both inspired and intimidated him.

His unique creative position allowed him to appreciate the Dionysian sexual furor of the New Woman and her depraved doppelgangers, prostitutes. He was both awed and appalled by their unabashed sexuality, their simultaneously evocation of creation and

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 253.

<sup>169</sup> Lewis, 224. Lewis notes that Dix supposedly used Wulffen's book prior to creating a *Lustmord* oil painting in 1920.

destruction and their lack of regard for repressive conventions. Yet, his control where they lacked it and his identity as an artist, which was denied women in Nietzsche's view, identified him as a powerful, superior *Übermensch*. Indeed, he was redeemed by his art as both "*the man of knowledge*" who saw and "want[ed] to see" "the terrifying and questionable character of existence" and "*the man of action*" who "not only [saw] the terrifying and questionable character of existence but live[d] it, want[ed] to live it."<sup>170</sup> Thus, he was not only a New Man in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* sense of the word but also an "over-man" (*Übermensch*) in the Nietzschean sense.

The Weimar discourse pertaining to women, especially those such as New Women and prostitutes, who did not conform to the traditional mores of the time were fraught with concern, if not panic, about perceived social decline and the loss of patriarchal control. As art historian Shearer West noted, these fears "were so exaggerated and distorted...that the *Neue Frau* of Weimar Germany became a sort of modernist icon, which served...as the new bogey in an uneasy male dominated society."<sup>171</sup> Due to his admiration for Nietzschean philosophy and his own personal fascination with sexuality, dance and death, Otto Dix, the Apollonian artist, was able to see in such women certain desirable traits that mirrored his own interests. Yet, as the ambivalent representation of a *Neue Frau*, who was rumored to be an occasional prostitute, in *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber* demonstrates, the lines between what was desirable and what was repellent were often blurred, much as the distinction between New Women and prostitutes was not always clear. These works project the complexities

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<sup>170</sup> *The Will to Power*, 452. These quotes come from Book Three, part two of section 853 entitled "Art in the 'Birth of Tragedy.'"

<sup>171</sup> West, Shearer. "Introduction." *Visions of the 'Neue Frau': Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*; Edited by Marsha Meskimmon & Shearer West Brooksfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1995. 1-2.

and tensions of interwar gender politics onto the bodies of the women at the heart of those, often contradictory, discourses. Despite Dix's admiration for the Dionysian self-actualization manifested in the "deviant" women of the Weimar Republic, he seems doubtful that the regenerative creation such a state would purportedly engender would actually occur. Indeed, his emphasis on death seems to indicate that destruction, rather than creation, would be the ultimate end of such pursuits. *Totentanz* imagery touts the idea that no one escapes death and, indeed, Berber collapsed onstage while dancing and met her own death three short years after Dix completed his painting.<sup>172</sup> Similarly, the Weimar Republic itself met its demise soon after, in 1933. As Dix's works imply, both seemed to be victims of the very Dionysian forces they embraced and, thus, succumbed to destruction and death too soon.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Fischer, 172 – 173. On a Middle Eastern dance tour with Châtin-Hofmann, Berber collapsed onstage in Damascus on 13 July 1928 while performing her new dance "*Tanz im Weiß*" ("Dance in White"). She died on November 10 of that year at Bethanien-Krankenhaus in Berlin. Dix and Martha visited her once while she was in the hospital. Among the attendants at her funeral were some prostitutes from *Friedrichstraße*.

<sup>173</sup> *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 183. Nietzsche stresses the importance of being the master of one's own fate by dying on one's own terms and when one is ready. Thus, dying at the right time rather than "too late" or "too early" is held up as being the "best" way for one's life to end.

### Chapter III Vanity, Thy Name is New Woman: Otto Dix's Appropriation of *Vanitas*

#### Motifs in his Images of Weimar Widows, Prostitutes and New Women

During the Weimar Republic, women who did not conform to Germany's conventional expectations of the female sex were often met with suspicion, criticism and, occasionally, outright hostility. Interwar New Women flouted Wilhelmine conventions regarding female chastity and economic dependence on men and ignored the calls from conservative Weimar circles to counter the declining birthrate by shunning birth control and embracing motherhood. Despite official documents from the Prussian Ministry of the Interior condemning so-called "sexual immorality," including promiscuity and prostitution, and the availability of birth control and suggested government proposals rewarding getting married and having children, interwar *Neue Frauen* embraced sexual liberation, birth control and economic independence.<sup>1</sup> Such behaviors were officially considered to cause "cultural decline" and, as non-reproductive sexuality was often associated with prostitution, New Women were often unfairly associated with prostitutes and cultural decline in the minds of conservative social critics. Due to the perceived immorality of non-reproductive sexuality, both prostitutes and women who delayed or eschewed marriage and motherhood were perceived as violating or perverting the "basic maternal nature" of woman.<sup>2</sup> However, the simplistic categories of "good" women who had husbands and children versus "deviant" women who disregarded traditional German mores became increasingly imprecise in the wake of World War I when the garments of

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<sup>1</sup> Apel, 370. Apel notes that such official memos were drafted by the Prussian Ministry of the Interior as early as 1915.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Apel specifically refers to the perceived "deviance" of the unproductive sexuality of prostitutes. However, New Women were also criticized for their unproductive sexuality and for disregarding their supposedly inherent, biological nature as females.

widows, who were perceived as “respectable women,” became almost synonymous with prostitutes, who were obviously considered “fallen” and corrupt.<sup>3</sup> As a keen observer of society and as an artist determined to prove himself worthy of, if not superior to, the German Old Masters, Dix was aware of this sliding scale of female “deviancy” and adjusted traditional *vanitas* motifs in order to address the tenuous demarcation between prostitutes and non-prostitutes, to challenge the supremacy of the Masters and to make a case for himself as a Nietzschean-inspired *Übermensch*—Weimar *Neuer Mann*.

The increased numbers of working women on Germany's streets, their freedom of movement and the less restrictive, more revealing fashions connoted both economic and sexual independence. However, to some, this burgeoning female liberation signaled a dangerous development as the ways New Women dressed and acted were considered to be distressingly similar to the dress and behavior of prostitutes, whose numbers were also increasing out of economic opportunity or need. Indeed, this increasing ambiguity in differentiating between “respectable” ladies and “deviant” women generated a large amount of uneasiness during the interwar years and even drew war widows into the controversy.

It is this post-World War I ambiguity between prostitutes and non-prostitutes, specifically widows, that Dix explored through his negotiation of *vanitas* motifs and the related motif of Death and the Maiden. As allegorical representations reminding viewers of the imminence of death, *vanitas* motifs coincided with Dix's morbid fascination with

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<sup>3</sup>Simmons, Sherwin. “Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury and Immorality in Berlin, 1913-1916.” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (Mar., 2000), 130. Simmons refers to the article “Keine ‘Trauerkostume,’” which was featured in *Der Kunstwart* 27, no. 24 (1914). In this report, an officer in the German military expressed his disapproval for advertisements for fashionable mourning clothes for women. He felt this was inappropriate for several reasons including the fact that, since the war, prostitutes had appropriated widow's attire for their own purposes.



death and decay. In the wake of the Great War, lingering reminders of Death weighed heavily on the collective German psyche and were visually manifested in both the presence of war widows and in the noticeable absence of the many men who died. Similarly, the decay of the flesh, evidenced by dismembered corpses left to rot on the battlefield, was also displayed via the mutilated bodies of war cripples whose presence in city streets was an unfortunate reminder of the carnage of war. Thus, Dix's macabre interest in death coincided with the heightened sensitivity to and awareness of death in the years after the war.

Attendant upon this new mindfulness of mortality was a distinct undercurrent of shame, not only because of Germany's loss in the war but also because of that defeat's implications for German masculinity. The war was regarded as a testing ground for German manliness; thus, Germany's wartime failure was also perceived as evidence of the inadequacy of German males in contrast to the triumphant masculinity of American male soldiers. After the war, these feelings of male inadequacy were exacerbated by the shifting sex and gender roles soldiers experienced upon their return. Women were increasingly visible on the streets not only as clerks and office girls but also as widows and prostitutes. Concurrent with that were the diminishing visual and behavioral distinctions between "good" women who were not prostitutes and "deviant" women who were. Furthermore, sexual promiscuity, venereal diseases, abortions and contraception usage were on the rise while the birth rate was on the decline.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the pervasive social concerns over interwar gender politics often contained a distinct undercurrent of sexual anxiety.

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis, 207, 213.

Consequently, the identity of the *Neue Frau* affected the construction of the *Neuer Mann* persona that took place during the Weimar Republic. Although the idea of the New Man was not a Weimar phenomenon, the particulars of the characteristics of the *Neuer Mann* were, to some extent, formulated in relation to the identity and reputation of the *Neue Frau*. The New Man of the Weimar Republic was “somewhat rebellious” but he was still “closely aligned with normative masculinity” and, in fact, “shared with it the traits of discipline, order and restraint...”<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly, the sartorial style adopted by such New Men was reflective of the fascination with American culture including clothing and hairstyles.<sup>6</sup> This *Amerikanismus* was the result of a variety of factors ranging from American movies and jazz bands to the 1924 implementation of the Dawes Plan, America’s strategy to assist Germany in making its reparation payments.<sup>7</sup> American troops had demonstrated their prowess during the war and had claimed victory at the expense of a German defeat. In contrast to the struggling German economy and uncertain political situation, the American economy and government were comparatively stable and powerful. Thus, German men who wanted to try to assert dominance via the construction of an ideal masculine public persona, adopted certain traits of their American conquerers and tailored them to fit traditional German standards of masculinity.

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<sup>5</sup> “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World,” 170. Funkenstein notes that during World War I, the New Man was perceived as being “anti-war [and] anti-nationalistic” as well as a “spiritual individualist and hoped-for leader of the masses.” After the war, the Dadaists of Berlin regarded the New Man as “a general symbol of rebellion against the status quo.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 171.

<sup>7</sup> Weitz, Eric D. *Weimar Germany: Promise & Tragedy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. 104. The Dawes Plan, which was accepted by the Reichstag on August 24, 1923, was named for Charles G. Dawes, an American banker and statesman. It revised the war reparations bill and altered the proposed schedule of Germany’s reparation payments. Consequently, it slightly eased the precarious situation in which Germany found itself due to its post-war treaty obligations.

The persona of the masculine, “rational and matter-of-fact” New Man interested a variety of artists and intellectuals associated with the *Neue Sachlichkeit*.<sup>8</sup> However, Dix’s adoption of this particular persona had a decidedly Nietzschean cast. The philosopher celebrated creativity and advocated the ““creation of new values and norms.””<sup>9</sup> This “openness in principle” was perceived as “an invitation to stake one’s own path.”<sup>10</sup> Such experimental self-determination was also constitutive of ideas of the *Übermensch*. As ““part of the determination of the *Übermensch* [was] not to be determined,”” many of Nietzsche’s followers, including Dix, were seemingly intrigued with the “call for dynamic self-realization, for completion of the vision.”<sup>11</sup> For Dix, the culmination of the Nietzschean ideal of the *Übermensch* seems to have been his own hybridized conception of the *Übermensch*, as an artist, a “man of knowledge” and a “man of action,”<sup>12</sup> combined with the Weimar *Neuer Mann* as a man of leadership, virility, and control. This rational and in-control persona was likely adopted as a foil to the distinctly irrational and out-of-control nature of the Weimar Republic itself. Thus, the combination of normative German masculinity and undisputed American masculinity that comprised this particular construction of Nietzschean-Weimar manhood was seemingly used by Dix to assert his own sexual and artistic prowess and to deflect the threat posed by “deviant” female sexuality.

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<sup>8</sup> “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World,” 170-171. In 1921, George Grosz sketched a work entitled *Der neue Mensch* (*The New Man*).

<sup>9</sup> Ascheim, Steven E. *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1900*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992. 8. Ascheim quotes Walter Kaufmann’s *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1950] 1974), 414.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Ascheim quotes Kurt Rudolf Fischer’s remarks in the discussion of Robert E. McGinn’s “Verwandlungen von Nietzsches Übermenschen in der Literatur des Mittelmeerraumes: d’Annunzio, Marinetti, und Kazantzakia,” *Nietzsche-Studien* 10/11 (1891-1982), 611.

<sup>12</sup> *The Will to Power*, 452. This quote comes from number eight-hundred fifty-three, “Art in the ‘Birth of Tragedy,’” which is found in Book Three of *The Will to Power*; Book Three is entitled “Principles of a New Evaluation.”

Dix's interest in Nietzschean vitalism and the cyclical nature of human life likely contributed to his fascination with *vanitas* motifs. Some *vanitas* motifs, especially those by Hans Baldung Grien that also evoke the motif of Death and the Maiden, utilize the bodies of nude females to further heighten the dramatic impact of the moral being conveyed; such themes also engaged Dix's additional interest in the linkage of women and death. Through his engagement with *vanitas* motifs, Dix manipulates the motif's emphasis on the brevity of life and the ephemerality of earthly things to address the precarious position of prostitutes and widows, whose actions and associations rendered them literally if not also emblematically close to decay and death. The distinctions between these women were not always immediately apparent and, in Dix's adaptations of *vanitas* motifs, the ideas of death, decay and ephemerality are linked with eroticized females whose identities are not always obvious to the viewer. In these representations of "fallen" or potentially "fallen" women, he both evokes and alters the Death and the Maiden theme by troubling the sexual purity implied by the designation of "maiden." Furthermore, rather than depicting Death as assuming the form or attributes of his victim,<sup>13</sup> in these instances the "maiden," the female victim instead seems to assume the decayed visage of Death. Thus, just as the distinctions between prostitutes and non-prostitutes are elided so too are the differentiations between Death and the Maiden diminished.

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<sup>13</sup> Koerner, Joseph Leo. "The Mortification of the Image: Death as a Hermeneutic in Hans Baldung Grien." *Representations*, No. 10 (Spring, 1985), 76. Koerner remarks on the "parodic strain" present in many images in which Death comes for his intended victim and notes that, often, Death's form and attributes are somehow influenced by those of his victim.

Widows were seemingly omnipresent during the years following World War I as Germans comprised five million of the total fifteen million war dead.<sup>14</sup> Beginning with the start of the war, prostitutes began wearing the characteristic attire of widows.<sup>15</sup> In particular, widow's veils (Figure 37) were appropriated by some prostitutes as a way to furtively advertise their trade.<sup>16</sup> As previously addressed, for the sake of public propriety, prostitutes during the Weimar Republic were compelled to practice their trade discretely. Thus, rather than making blatant overtures to potential clients they often casually loitered near store fronts or entryways or made subtle gestures, sustained eye contact or voiced brief euphemistic remarks to gauge a potential client's interests.<sup>17</sup> In *Das Weib als Sexualverbrecherin*, Erich Wulffen observed that prostitutes had so "completely adapted themselves to the public, in dress, habit and manners" that "no one but a connoisseur" was able to "pick them out from the crowd."<sup>18</sup> As a result, prostitutes were "able to lure men with a look, word or gesture without causing any public censure."<sup>19</sup> Wulffen's remarks confirm statements Robert Hessen made in his 1910 book *Die Prostitution in Deutschland* regarding the behavior of street prostitutes. He noted that, in the capital city in particular, "Die Berliner Polizei beabsichtige, eine Prostitution spazieren zu lassen, die

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<sup>14</sup> Rewald, Sabine. "Widow." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. Ed. Sabine Rewald. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. 220.

<sup>15</sup> Simmons, 130.

<sup>16</sup> Haxthausen, Charles W. "'A New Beauty': Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Images of Berlin." Haxthausen, Charles W. and Heidrun Suhr, eds. *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*. Minneapolis, 1990. 58.

<sup>17</sup> Abrams, Lynn. "Prostitutes in Imperial Germany, 1870-1918: Working Girls or Social Outcasts?" *The German Underworld: Deviants and Outcasts in German History*. Ed. Richard J. Evans, ed. London: Routledge, 1988. 203. Abrams notes that many German prostitutes hovered in the foyers of buildings such as theaters and auditoriums. She also remarks that this contrasts with American prostitutes whose presence in the third tier of theaters was acknowledged if not accepted.

<sup>18</sup> Wulffen, Erich. *Woman as a Sexual Criminal*. North Hollywood, CA: Brandon House, 1967, 358. This 1967 printing of the book does not indicate the name of the individual who translated it from German to English. Wulffen's book was originally published in German in 1923 as *Das Weib als Sexualverbrecherin; ein Handbuch für Juristen, Verwaltungsbeamte und Ärzte*.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

sich ebenso manierlich benahm wie anständige Frauen.”<sup>20</sup> However, due to the prostitutes’ masquerade as “anständige Frauen” (“respectable women”), Hessen observed the following: “Darum durften die als käuflich bekannten Weiber in der Friedrichstraße...unter keinen Umständen zurückblicken, oder an ein Schaufenster treten, oder mit einem Herrn stehen bleiben, oder gar einen anreden.”<sup>21</sup> While the subtlety practiced by Germany’s prostitutes may have spared some citizens’ delicate sensibilities from being affronted by the sight of blatant solicitation, it also had the unintended consequence of occasionally making it difficult to determine whether some women were actually prostitutes. As a result, a specific and cautious protocol was enacted lest an unsuspecting non-prostitute be mistaken for a streetwalker.<sup>22</sup>

As a result of the increased number and visibility of widows after the war, some prostitutes capitalized on the “delicate ambiguity” between decent and indecent public displays of Weimar womanhood and began to wear widow’s veils and, sometimes, mourning clothes as well. Wearing such attire was a particularly effective deterrent because the “false arrest of a genuine war widow would be particularly embarrassing” for the police.<sup>23</sup> As there was a high risk of affronting a genuine widow, confronting a suspected prostitute who was dressed in widow’s attire was a decidedly complicated endeavor. The complexity and delicacy of the matter were further exacerbated by the

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<sup>20</sup> Hessen, Robert. *Die Prostitution in Deutschland*. Munich: Albert Langen, 1910. 116. In English, Hessen’s remarks translate as follows: “The Berlin police intend to allow prostitutes to walk (the streets) who behaved properly like respectable women.”

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 197. The English translation of the quote is as follows: “Therefore, under no circumstances were the notorious women for sale on Friedrichstraße to look back [at a man], or come to a shop window or stand still with a gentleman or even address one.”

<sup>22</sup> Von Ankum, Katharina. “Gendered Urban Spaces in Irmgard Keun’s *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (*The Artificial Silk Girl*).” *Women in the Metropolis: Gender & Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Ed. Katharina von Ankum. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. 166.

<sup>23</sup> Haxthausen, 81.

fact that many women whose husbands had actually been killed in the war were reduced to selling themselves for money if they could not find other means of employment. After the war, there were nearly two-million eight-hundred thousand widows in Germany who were barely able to subsist on their inadequate pensions.<sup>24</sup> Even though some widows were able to find jobs, they did not necessarily make enough money to survive. Thus, out of desperation, some of these women, regardless of age, turned to prostitution. As a result, not only did some non-widowed prostitutes adopt widow's garb in order to deter arrest, some genuine widows were also prostitutes.

In his 1931 book, *Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin* (Guide to "Naughty" Berlin), the "novelist, editor, translator and cultural critic,"<sup>25</sup> Curt Moreck included "junge Witwen" ("young widows")<sup>26</sup> in his discussion of "amateur, occasional prostitutes"<sup>27</sup> known as "die Fünf-Uhr Frauen" ("the Five O'Clock Ladies").<sup>28</sup> In addition to widows, married and single women were also among the ranks of the "Five O'Clock Ladies."<sup>29</sup> Many of these women were "secretaries, shopkeepers and office clerks," which were professions that were often associated with New Women. Despite their employment and regardless of their marital status, some of these women became prostitutes in order to supplement their meager incomes. In fact, they were called "Five

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<sup>24</sup> Usborne, Cornelia. *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties*. London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1992. 82.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, Jill Suzanne. "Just How Naughty was Berlin? The Geography of Prostitution and Female Sexuality in Curt Moreck's Erotic Travel Guide." *Spatial Turns: Space, Place, and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture*. Eds. Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010. 55.

<sup>26</sup> Moreck, Curt. *Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin*. Leipzig: Verlag moderner Stadtführer, 1931. 67.

<sup>27</sup> Gordon, Mel. *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin. Expanded Edition*. Los Angeles: Feral House, 2002. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Moreck, 62.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 67. Moreck also includes the following women among those who are "die Fünf-Uhr Frauen:" women who are "probably divorced" ("wohl Geschiedene"), "bachelorettes" ("Junggesellinnen"), and even some married women ("wives," "Ehefrauen").

O’Clock Ladies” because that particular time—when most workdays ended—was “their preferred time of contact.”<sup>30</sup> As this example demonstrates, differences between “decent” females and “depraved” ones, not only in Berlin but in other cities as well, were confusingly fluid and imprecise. Further adding to the uncertainty described above was the fact that some widows who were not prostitutes rented rooms to actual prostitutes in order to bolster their income.<sup>31</sup> As a result, even “respectable” widows were associated with prostitutes and their illicit sexuality.

Observations about the ubiquity of prostitution and the occasional difficulties in determining who was actually a prostitute were made by WEKA, whose real name was Willi Pröger, in his 1930 work of reportage, *Stätten der Berliner Prostitution von den Elends-Absteigequartieren am Schlesischen Bahnhof und Alexanderplatz zur Luxus-Prostitution der Friedrichstraße und des Kurfürstendamms* (*Sites of Berlin Prostitution from the Elends Flophouse Quarters at the Schlesischen Bahnhof and Alexanderplatz to the Luxury Prostitution of Friedrichstraße and the Kurfürstendamm*). In this account, he recorded descriptions of Berlin’s prostitutes and the environs in which they worked and he also noted the variety of women, who regardless of age, marital status or appearance were reduced to prostituting themselves in the big city. Although some women recorded in WEKA’s account were quite obviously prostitutes, there were others who were more covert in practicing their trade. In fact, in one incident in which a young boy solicited

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<sup>30</sup> Gordon, 28. According to Gordon, “during the Inflation Era,” the Five O’Clock Ladies were referred to as “Dodgers” because they were not registered with the police. They were sometimes also called “Half-Silks.”

<sup>31</sup> WEKA, *Stätten der Berliner Prostitution von den Elends- Absteigequartieren am Schlesischen Bahnhof und Alexanderplatz zur Luxus-Prostitution der Friedrichstraße und des Kurfürstendamms*. Frankfurt: Buchdruckerei Wilhelm Bohn, 1930. 10. Although WEKA’s reportage specifically refers to Berlin, his observations are valid for other large cities. He observed that, even though the police often closed down accommodations or confiscated rooms in which prostitution was being practiced, the women typically found other accommodations, often from widows who needed or wanted the additional income.



WEKA for a woman who was, apparently, his widowed mother, the author did not immediately comprehend the situation.<sup>32</sup> This incident clearly illustrates the interwar conundrum of determining whether a woman was or was not actually a prostitute and demonstrates just one possible awkward encounter that could occur as a result of this ambiguity.

This visual ambiguity between prostitutes and non-prostitutes, specifically between actual widows and prostitutes, is found in many of Dix's paintings from the Weimar period. As discussed previously, Dix depicted prostitutes in the works he created during the war years and his interest in this subject continued long after the war ended. He was infamous for the unflattering images of prostitutes that he created throughout the years of the Weimar Republic. In some of these works, the prostitutes wear veils, which visually link them with war widows. For instance in 1920, Dix painted a watercolor entitled *Strichdame (Prostitute)* (Figure 38) which depicts a spectral, veiled, blank-faced prostitute against a blackish-blue background. She appears to wear a brown fur stole around her shoulders which she grasps with her left hand which is covered by a white glove. The dark shading between her fingers, coupled with the elongation of her digits, gives this hand a skeletal appearance.

This woman wears a pale, bluish hat that appears to have feathers or some sort of decorative accent on the back portion. Her oval-shaped eyes are set in a vacant stare and

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<sup>32</sup> WEKA, 41-42. This incident is described under the heading "Das Kind als 'Schlepper.'" WEKA was walking along Frankfurter Allee when he was approached by a young boy who was approximately ten to twelve years of age. The boy briefly talked to WEKA and convinced the writer to go with him. WEKA, who decided the boy was not a robber, did not immediately realize that he had been solicited to have a sexual encounter with a woman the boy claimed was his sister. He wrote the following: "Ich beteure nochmals Verstandnislosigkeit und become endlich heraus, daß ich "ihr" die Schwester "lieben" soll." WEKA then spoke with the woman who was at least in her late thirties. She remarked that her husband was long dead and claimed that the boy was only her step-son. Before he left, without engaging her sexual services, she told him that she had resorted to prostitution in order to "get by" ("Nun geht es so eben.")

her mouth is slightly open revealing her crowded teeth. A grayish-blue veil hangs over her face and the veil's edges have been sketchily drawn in with ink. The watercolor only shows a three-quarter length view of her body and the dark background does not give an indication of the setting. However, as she wears a fur stole, a hat and a veil, she is, presumably, outside and it is likely that she is either walking along or standing beside a street.

Dix included a written inscription in the center of the page above the woman's hat; it reads "Diese Schrichdame schenk ich dem Mutzlein!,"<sup>33</sup> indicating that it was given to his wife, Martha, whom he nicknamed "*Mutzli*."<sup>34</sup> However, aside from this inscription and the title of the work, which specify that the woman is a prostitute, there are no obvious indications of her identity. Visually, one can only infer that she is a prostitute because of Dix's tendency to depict prostitutes wearing fur stoles and the fact that the veil is bluish-gray rather than black. Yet, if not for the title, this woman could easily pass for a non-prostitute as her identity as a streetwalker is not overtly established through visual means.

In *Dame mit Nerz und Schleier* (*Lady with Mink and Veil*) (Figure 39) also of 1920, Dix depicts a woman wearing the same accessories as the woman in the *Strichdame* watercolor, but her identity as a prostitute is more evident. The title of this work, which was given posthumously,<sup>35</sup> is clearly a misnomer as the white-skinned

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<sup>33</sup> Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 147.

<sup>34</sup> Rewald, Sabine. "The Artist's Wife, Martha Dix." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. Ed. Sabine Rewald. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. 250.

<sup>35</sup> Peters, Olaf. "Lady with Mink and Veil." *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 159. This work was rediscovered in the mid-1990s and given its current title. As there is no record of the work's existence prior to its rediscovery, the original title of the work is unknown. Peters does not indicate the names of the individuals who rediscovered the work or who retitled it.

woman in the painting is anything but ladylike. This woman, who is shown in a three-quarter length view, sits on a wicker-backed chair with a wooden frame. Her short-dark hair is topped by an emerald green hat which is held in place by a blue hat pin and is accented by a bright blue widow's veil. The woman's ghostly pale, heavily rouged face is visible through the netting of the veil. She sits with her dark-lipped mouth open to display a missing upper incisor in her toothy grin. Her dingy white chemise is edged with blue thread and accented with large blue bows at the shoulders. However, the left strap has slipped down over her shoulder so the bow rests at her left elbow and highlights the prominent blue veins in her arms. Her state of dishabille reveals the red patches on her chest and her dramatically drooping bust. In addition, the craquelure of the thick impasto paint on her chest gives it the appearance of being aged and wrinkled. Draped over her left shoulder and extending behind her back to her right arm is a mangy mink stole; the creature still has all its limbs and stares blankly with red glass eyes.

It is interesting that, despite the woman's obvious identity as a prostitute, the work was titled *Dame mit Nerz und Schleier* when it was rediscovered in the mid-nineteen nineties. Perhaps the presence of the veil and the fur stole, which are both accessories one might find on a "real" lady, contributed to the decision to include the word "*Dame*" ("lady") in the new title. However, if any sort of masquerade is intended by the prostitute, it is unconvincing. She is clearly a prostitute rather than an actual lady or a widow but, due to her gaping smile, she seems rather satisfied with herself and her attire. Regardless of the original title, in this instance, Dix seems to mock her rather than regard her as a threat to his masculinity as constructed according to his conception of the *Übermensch-Neuer Mann*. In his images of women whose identities are unclear, he

depicts them with what seems to be a simultaneous fear of and peculiar respect for the masquerade as long as it is convincing. However, this woman's dissembling is noticeably unsuccessful so it is presented as being ridiculous rather than dangerous to German manhood in general or to Dix's virility in particular.

A veiled woman whose identity is more inconclusive can be found in Dix's *Elegante Vorübergehende (Elegant Passerby)* of 1922 (Figure 40) which depicts a woman walking along the street in front of a multi-storied white building. This "elegant" woman wears a red cape around her shoulders and a fur stole around her neck. She also dons a hat with a blue feather that seems to flutter as she walks; a transparent bluish-colored veil extends from the hat and falls over her face. Her right arm is bent up against her chest and, in the crook of her arm, she holds a small, white lapdog. In her gloved, left hand she holds the ornate handle of a folded red umbrella. She leans forward at a forty-five degree angle which gives the impression that she is in a hurry. Although she wears a veil, she is not identified as a prostitute or as a widow; she is simply referred to as an "elegant passerby." This designation does not help identify her and she could either be a prostitute or a "respectable" lady walking down the street.

In contrast to the prostitutes in the earlier works discussed above, this woman's identity is uncertain. However, one could argue that she is a prostitute based on her attire and accoutrements. In Dix's painting *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße (Three Prostitutes on the Street)* of 1925 (Figure 41), all three prostitutes are well-dressed and wear fashionable hats. The older brunette woman on the left wearing a yellow hat and red gloves holds a small, black lapdog to her breast. The florid, blonde woman on the right who wears a green hat with a vaginal embellishment has wrapped her shoulders in a fur stole and

holds a distinctly phallic umbrella handle. The dark-haired prostitute in the center wears a hat with a lacey, red widow's veil; she pinches her posterior which overtly establishes her identity as a streetwalker. The central woman is the only one of the three whose identity as a prostitute is evident. Indeed, aside from her accessories, which resemble genitalia, the woman on the right looks like a fashionable New Woman in her purple coat. If not for the title, the woman on the left could certainly be mistaken for a chic lady rather than a prostitute.

The ambiguous nature of the women's identities creates a degree of difficulty in the viewer's process of visually identifying them. This uncertainty is further complicated by Dix's refusal to either romanticize or condemn the women. The viewer cannot make an immediate judgment about them as their status as either "good" or "deviant" women is not immediately apparent. By delaying or perhaps suspending the viewer's judgment, he has shifted the parameters of the viewer's inner debate about the three women. Rather than debating whether the women's practice of prostitution is offensive, he instead encourages the viewer to consider that the women's feigning of respectability is, in fact, more of an affront to bourgeois norms than their actual "immoral" occupation.

Similarly, the "elegant" woman in Dix's 1922 watercolor is stylishly dressed but she combines the attire and accessories of the three prostitutes in the aforementioned painting. She carries a lapdog, clutches an umbrella handle, wears a veiled hat and dons a fur stole around her neck. These accessories are linked with the prostitutes in *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße* and many of the prostitutes Dix depicts in his other works, including those in the side panels of *Großstadt (Metropolis)* (1927-1928) (Figure 42), wear fur stoles. However, these items do not automatically or unequivocally indicate that

the woman is a prostitute. Thus, while it is possible that she too is a prostitute rather than a well-dressed widow or a *Neue Frau* out for a stroll, one cannot make this assertion with complete certainty. The indistinct contrast between fashionable women, especially New Women, and prostitutes complicated their identification both in reality and in some of Dix's works. The uncertainty of such women's identities in his works contributes to the suspension of the viewer's immediate judgments about the character of these figures. Thus, the viewer is forced to confront the reality of the situation and to engage the depicted women as individuals rather than instantaneously condemning them on so-called "moral" grounds. Dix neither overtly denounces nor sentimentalizes these women. Instead, he uses them to suggest that narrow minded, hypocritical, bourgeois attitudes toward morality and sexuality are deserving of further consideration if not renunciation.

This lack of certainty about the identities of veiled women is also manifested in two watercolors from 1922, both entitled *Die Witwe (Widow)* (Figures 43 and 44), which similarly depict lone women wearing veiled hats.<sup>36</sup> These works each show an older woman with dark eyebrows and blonde hair that has either been cut short or pinned up. One widow (Figure 43), with reddish eyes, is shown closer up while the other (Figure 44), who has brown eyes, appears farther away as more of her upper body is visible. The latter woman has slightly darker blonde hair but, as they both have black eyebrows, it is obvious that both women either bleach their hair or pencil in their eyebrows. Both have pronounced wrinkles around their mouths and eyes and between their eyebrows which indicate that they are at least middle-aged, if not older. The jaw of the brown-eyed

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<sup>36</sup> Although only two watercolors featuring widows are discussed here, Dix painted six watercolors of widows in 1922. In addition, as Sabine Rewald notes in *Glitter and Doom*, Dix painted another work entitled *Die Witwe (The Widow)* in 1925. This work was in the collection of the Kunsthalle Mannheim but, in 1937, it was confiscated by the Nazis and subsequently lost or destroyed.

widow is less pronounced but is more noticeably sagging. Despite this, she has a more pleasant expression on her face. The red-eyed widow, whose expression is wearier, has a pointed nose and a longer face. Their hairstyles are almost identical although the curled bangs of the red-eyed woman fall into an off-center, V-shaped part and her hair covers her ear. The brown-eyed woman's bangs fall evenly over her forehead and her hair appears slightly shorter as her ear is still visible.

Although their faces are different, their attire is essentially the same. They both wear a black, open necked garment with a diaphanous, high-collared inset extending from the chest to the upper portion of the neck. They both wear rounded drop earrings of which only one is visible and both don a wide-brimmed black hat that is ornately decorated with feathers. Each of these hats has a veil with black polka-dots hanging down over the woman's face. Both women face left and neither is placed in a specific setting; the background for both works is simply the color of the paper over which a few thin washes of dark watercolor have been applied.

However, the red-eyed woman is distinguished from the other by her red lipstick and by her possible usage of dark makeup to rim her eyes. The inclusion of bright, red lipstick is peculiar for several reasons. As noted Weimar cultural and film historian, Sabine Hake, observes, prior to World War I, "only prostitutes and demimondaines wore makeup during the day."<sup>37</sup> Although the use of make-up became more accepted after the war, wearing visible make-up during the day was still stigmatized due to its association with prostitutes. Indeed, when describing the appearances of prostitutes in *Statten der*

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<sup>37</sup>Hake, Sabine. "In the Mirror of Fashion." *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Ed. Katharina Von Ankum. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. 189.

*Berliner Prostitution*, WEKA noted their makeup and specifically mentioned the “*knallrot*” (“bright red”) lipstick of streetwalkers who wear it.<sup>38</sup> Even for those women who did use cosmetics, wearing heavier makeup, such as dark eye makeup and bright red lipstick, was considered to be an evening look. In addition, younger women were generally more receptive to make-up products than were older women. Some respectable bourgeois women lightly applied face powder but they usually avoided both rouge and mascara as they were too artificial and were associated with overt female sexuality.<sup>39</sup> Presumably, these “respectable” women would also have been wary of red lipstick due to its obviousness and its loaded sexual and social implications. The “image of red painted lips,” in particular, was linked with both prostitutes and the controversial figure of the *Neue Frau* and “united different social groups against the threat of a liberated femininity.”<sup>40</sup>

However, the absence of a specific setting makes it impossible to determine the time of day or the specific location of these watercolors. Both women wear veiled hats and black mourning garments so one can assume that they are not in their homes and are, presumably, out of doors; however, beyond that, one can only speculate about the particulars. The brown-eyed woman does not appear to have on any make-up so her appearance is less suspicious than the red eyed-woman whose brightly painted lips casts doubt on her designation as a “respectable” widow, especially if she is out during the day. Her noticeable red lipstick certainly calls her identity into question as it would have been

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<sup>38</sup> WEKA, 23. WEKA specifically used the adjective “*knallrot*” to refer to the lipstick of a prostitute who he believed to be about fifty years old. He later also discussed the smudged red lipstick of younger prostitutes.

<sup>39</sup> Hake, 189.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



unusual for an older woman, especially a widow wearing mourning clothes, to wear such an obvious cosmetic product.

In addition, both women wear ostentatious plumed hats which, during the interwar period, were associated with prostitutes.<sup>41</sup> In a section of his book dedicated to older prostitutes, WEKA expressly noted a similar, broad-brimmed hat when describing his meeting with an older, “gaunt” prostitute in a black coat.<sup>42</sup> Thus, there is a certain degree of ambiguity with regard to the identities of both women in Dix’s watercolors. These elaborate hats both have black veils that do not obscure the women’s faces. Rather than being lace, these veils are decorated with opaque black dots that almost appear to be black marks on the women’s skin. The black dots on the veils may be a sly reference to syphilis, a disease commonly associated with prostitutes during the Weimar Republic. Syphilitic rash manifests itself as dark spot-like chancres on the skin, including the face, and Dix even represented an older prostitute with syphilitic facial sores in the drawing *Dirne und Kriegserletzter (Prostitute and War Wounded)* (Figure 45) of 1923. Thus, the dotted veils which give the illusion that the women have marks on their faces could allude to the fact that many prostitutes, some of whom were or masqueraded as widows, were infected with syphilis, which was often referred to as “the Great Imitator.”<sup>43</sup>

The identity of the woman wearing red lipstick is especially questionable because of the redness of her eyes and the pathological appearance of her right eye. Several

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<sup>41</sup> Haxthausen, 81.

<sup>42</sup> WEKA, 46. He referred to the hat as having a “*breite Krempe*” and described the older prostitute as being “*eine große, hagere Gestalt in schwarzem Mantel*.” The section in which he discusses prostitutes ranging from forty to sixty years of age is entitled “*Die ‘Freuden’ Greisin*.”

<sup>43</sup> Hayden, Deborah. *Pox: Genius, Madness and the Mysteries of Syphilis*. New York: Basic Books, 2003. VXII. Syphilis was referred to as “the Great Imitator” because its symptoms often mimicked the symptoms of a variety of other diseases and was, therefore, difficult to diagnose, particularly in later stages.

sexually transmitted diseases cause ocular problems, including eye redness. In particular, untreated, secondary syphilis can cause inflammation of the iris (iritis) or retinal inflammation (neuroretinitis).<sup>44</sup> In addition, although the red-eyed woman's left pupil is normal in shape, the pupil of her right eye is misshapen. The black circle of her pupil has been enlarged, distorted and interrupted by red blotches. This could refer to a scarring of the cornea and the iris which can occur when an ulcer forms on the eye or inflammation develops in the eye of an untreated syphilitic.<sup>45</sup> Thus, when coupled with the black spots that mar her face due to the veil, the woman's red eyes and distorted right pupil could imply that she suffers from a sexually transmitted disease, such as syphilis, and is, therefore, likely a prostitute. Interestingly, just as Dix inscribed his 1920 watercolor painting of a prostitute to his wife, he included a similar inscription on the painting of the red-eyed woman: "Für M utzlein am 23.Juli 1922."<sup>46</sup>

However, despite these potential clues, the identities of the women remain uncertain. Although they are referred to as widows, their appearances, especially that of the red-eyed woman, leave room for suspicion which was very much the case with real women who dressed as widows during the Weimar years. Some actually were widows while others simply appropriated their garments, especially widow's veils, in an effort to discourage arrest. Furthermore, both during and after the war, various medical, scientific and sociological writings took up the topic of the sexuality of widows. For instance,

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<sup>44</sup> Heyman, Albert. "Syphilis." *Harrisons Principles of Internal Medicine*. Sixth edition. Vol. 1. Eds. Raymond D. Adams, Ivan L. Bennett, Jr., Eugene Braunwald, Kurt K. Isselbacher, Robert G. Petersdorf, George W. Thorn and Maxwell M. Wintrobe. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970. 888.

<sup>45</sup> Duke-Elder, Sir Stewart and Arthur George Leigh. "Diffuse Interstitial Keratitis: Bacterial Infections – Syphilitic Diffuse Interstitial Keratitis." *System of Ophthalmology. Volume VIII. Diseases of the Outer Eye. Part II: Cornea and Sclera*. St. Louis: The C.V. Mosby Company, 1965. 815.

<sup>46</sup> Peters, 245. "Mutzlein" was one of Dix's nicknames for his wife, Martha. The inscription indicates that he gave this work to her as a gift.

Wulffen addressed this issue by describing accounts of widows having unpaid sex, sometimes with complete strangers, almost immediately after their husbands' deaths.<sup>47</sup> In instances such as these, he mused that "the connection between sexuality and mourning seems to be very strong" and that "there seems to exist a mysterious psychological relation between the sexual instinct, which is life-bringing, and death."<sup>48</sup>

Continuing the fascination with the sexuality of widows, in his work *Die sexuelle Untreue der Frau* (*The Sexual Unfaithfulness of Woman*), Dr. Enoch Heinrich Kisch discussed "the most essential causes leading to prostitution," and, among these, he included the intense desire for sex by widows who had become accustomed to sexual intercourse as married women but who no longer had a reputable outlet for their sexual longings due to their husbands' deaths.<sup>49</sup> According to Kisch, "excessively strong sexual impulse[s]" by females, including widows, adulteresses and others, could lead them astray and into prostitution.<sup>50</sup> Thus, in the literature of the period, widows were associated with death and sexuality, in particular with the illicit sexuality of prostitutes.

While the link to prostitution was discussed with great concern in a variety of Weimar-era commentaries on war widows, the association of veils and women was not a post-war invention. Indeed, for centuries, the idea of veiling the female body has served as a visual signpost linking female sexuality with implied sexual naiveté or modesty.

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<sup>47</sup> Wulffen, 243. Wulffen describes one instance in which a widow has sex with a stranger on top of the coffin of her recently deceased only two or three days after the man's death. He also notes another incident in which a widow has sex with a man on top of her newly dead husband's fresh grave.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 244.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 349. Wulffen paraphrases Kisch's arguments from *Die sexuelle Untreue der Frau. Zweiter Teil: Das feile Weib. Eine sozialmedizinische Studie* which was published in Bonn by Marcus & Weber in 1918. Kisch was an Austrian gynecologist and author.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. According to Wulffen, in addition to widows and adulteresses, Kisch also implicates neglected wives and the spouses of impotent men in his discussion of women at risk of descending into sexual immorality and, ultimately, into prostitution due to sexual reasons.

Historian Ludmilla Jordanova remarks that such notions are particularly evident in the veiling of brides and nuns as, in both cases, the act of “veiling is linked to female chastity and modesty on one hand and submission to authority on the other.”<sup>51</sup> Obviously, the veiling of widows indicates mourning but, in Western cultures, it also often indicates sexual unavailability as the propriety of established codes of mourning precluded a widow from sexual activity during the mourning period and, ideally, until such time as she remarried. Thus, the adoption of widow’s veils by prostitutes during the Weimar Republic met with such disapproval not only because it further obscured the distinction between prostitutes and non-prostitutes but also because it made a mockery of established conventions. The use of veils by women whose profession was contingent upon their sexual immodesty flouted the association of veils with virginal, chaste women.

In addition, the face is considered to be “the locus of shame and guilt” and it is often covered in public as a way to indicate the “social acknowledgment of a moral transgression.”<sup>52</sup> Women are typically subject to such public veiling so it represents an instance in which femininity and disgrace are connected. As the veiling of women is expressly connected with ideas pertaining to female sexual virtue, the shame which veils connote when worn by females is of an implicitly sexual nature. Prostitutes who wore widow’s veils, thus, embodied interwar Germany’s discourses of shame and death.

Widows, both real and feigned, were a reminder of the staggering number of soldiers who

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<sup>51</sup> Jordanova, Ludmilla. *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Enlightenment and Twentieth Centuries*. Hertfordshire, England: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989. 89. In the chapter entitled “Nature as Unveiling Before Science,” Jordanova examines the gendered, often sexual, implications of veiling. She then utilizes this discussion of the veiling of the female body and its attendant implications to address images of the veiled female body. Although she uses these images to elaborate on the nature of veiling within a medical or scientific context, she makes general observations about the sexual politics and associations of veiled females in general.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

were killed during the war and of Germany's humiliating military defeat. Widows who resorted to prostitution were painful displays of the country's lack of adequate support for women whose husbands died for the fatherland. Prostitutes who used widow's veils to deter arrest manipulated the country's postwar disgrace and cautious codes of official public behavior which was one reason for the critical indignation they provoked. Moreover, their appropriation of widow's attire was unnerving to some as it acted as a visualization of the link between women and death. Not only did the presence of widows keep the deaths of their husbands fresh in the minds of the citizenry but the use of widow's veils by prostitutes gave further credence to the idea that women, especially "immoral," "deviant" ones, were carriers of disease, including sexually transmitted diseases, decay, and death.

In 1925, Dix again took up the theme of widows in his *Stilleben mit Witwenschleier* (*Still Life with Widow's Veil*) (Figure 46). Unlike his earlier works pertaining to widows, this painting does not actually depict the figure of a widow; instead, as the title indicates, the work is a still life that does not represent any actual people. The work, which is vertical in format, depicts a portion of a wooden table; however, this table has been covered by a rumpled grayish-white sheet or tablecloth so only the left corner of the table is actually visible. Atop this table rests a clear glass pitcher that has been filled halfway with water. Two dark, purplish-black irises with long green stalks extend from this pitcher. Due to their deep purplish hue, the irises can be identified as Germanica irises<sup>53</sup> which are sometimes referred to as "black irises."<sup>54</sup> In

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<sup>53</sup> Koch, Robert A. "Flower Symbolism in the *Portinari Altar*." *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Mar., 1964), 71. Germanica irises are dark blue or purple in color whereas Florentina irises are white. Koch

addition to suggesting the brevity of life, these flowers often appear in scenes of the Nativity as symbolic references to the impending anguish the Virgin Mary later suffers due to Christ's crucifixion.<sup>55</sup> In particular, in traditional Northern European still lifes and religious works, the iris had long been associated with the Virgin Mary.<sup>56</sup> The leaf of the iris resembles the blade of a sword so the flower was termed the "sword-lily." Thus, the plant was used to "symbolize the sword that Simeon prophesied would pierce the heart of the *Mater Dolorosa*," Mary as the "sorrowful mother."<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the color purple "stands for the psychological state of melancholy,"<sup>58</sup> which underscores the flower's connection to sadness.

Behind the table on a slender, wooden stand resembling a coat stand without pegs hangs an anatomically incorrect human spinal column and ribcage. The ribs, which are erratically spaced, hang at unusual angles from the spine, especially on the left side where the middle ribs dangle in clumps and the lowermost ribs droop dramatically. The two sides of the ribcage encircle the wooden stand and their ends almost meet in some places, as though the ribcage is embracing the stand on which it hangs. The ribcage is oddly elongated and the ribs, some of which are broken, extend the full length of the spinal column, which is anatomically inaccurate. Perched atop the wooden stand on which the bones hang is a white-trimmed black widow's cap with a long, diaphanous black mourning veil that extends down behind the ribcage. Some of the veil has fallen softly

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specifically addresses the *Portinari Altar* by Hugo van der Goes but the symbolic meanings of the flowers are relevant to other works of art as well.

<sup>54</sup> Hartley, Keith and Sarah O'Brien Twohig. "Still Life with Widow's Veil, 1925." *Otto Dix, 1891-1969*. London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1992. 136.

<sup>55</sup> Hartley, 136.

<sup>56</sup> Mahon, 36.

<sup>57</sup> Koch, 75. In Luke 2:25-35, Simeon sees the child Jesus in the temple and subsequently prophesizes that a sword will pierce Mary's soul which refers to the sorrow Mary would feel at Jesus' death.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 74.

onto the corner of the table and rests on top of the white cloth. Hanging on the wall in the upper right corner of the work is a mask of the human face. This mask, which is possibly a German carnival mask, has pale, bluish-lavender skin with round, faintly-colored pink circles on the cheeks. Its amber-colored eyes are framed by bushy, blond eyebrows and a patch of white on the crown of its head which may be a shock of white hair. Above the mask's lip and on the chin are sections of white that are evocative of a mustache and goatee. The gender of the mask is ambiguous.<sup>59</sup> While the eyes and rosy cheeks are feminine, the shaggy eyebrows are masculine and the white paint around the mouth is suggestive of facial hair. Regardless of the gender, as the work addresses the fact of death, the mask is reminiscent of death masks. As the painting specifically references a widow, the mask, if male, could represent the death mask of the widow's husband.

The title of the work identifies it as a still life but, due to the items depicted, it can be interpreted as a *vanitas* still life. *Vanitas* still life paintings are “the most obviously symbolical genre within still life painting” and their purpose “as already implied in [the] name, is to moralize on the vanities of the world...”<sup>60</sup> Ideas about death and the transience of life are further suggested by the widow's veil that encircles the bones. Obviously, a widow is a woman whose husband has died so the presence of a widow's veil immediately connotes death. In Western culture, black is the color of mourning, so the color of the veil also underscores the suggestion of death.

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<sup>59</sup> In *Otto Dix, 11891-1969*, Eva Karcher suggests that the mask depicts a female face. The catalogue entry for the work in *Otto Dix, 1891 – 1969* (Tate Gallery) also suggests that the mask is intended to be female. The entry notes that the mask was based on a plaster cast Dix made of his sister, Hedwig's, face in 1912. However, this does not mean that Dix intended the mask in *Stilleleben mit Witwenschleier* to specifically be female or to represent his sister.

<sup>60</sup> Bergström, Ingvar. “Disguised Symbolism in 'Madonna' Pictures and Still Life: II.” *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 97, No. 632 (Nov., 1955), 345.

Skulls, suggestive of human mortality and decay, are often found in *vanitas* still lifes and Dix included one in his more conventional *vanitas* still life, *Blühen und Vergehen* (*Growth and Decay*) of 1911 (Figure 47).<sup>61</sup> In this earlier work, a human skull, an emblem of death, is mounted on a stand and has been placed beside a blue vase of yellow flowers, which are suggestive of the frailty of life. Both objects rest in front of a window and the sun is reflected off both the glass vase and the rounded back section of the skull. Just as the flowers bloom, wither and die in a relatively short span of time, so too do humans quickly pass from youth and life to old age, decay and death. The allegorical intent of this work is quite clear and it obviously acts as a *vanitas* motif. It unmistakably expresses the idea, encompassed by the theme of *memento mori*, that one should remember death because it is inevitable.

In *Stilleben mit Witwenschleier*, a human skull is not pictured; instead, Dix painted a human vertebral column and ribcage. The presence of the skeletal ribs and vertebrae can be regarded as a variation of the skull as the inclusion of these skeletal remains still evokes ideas of transience and human finitude. Whereas the depiction of a human skull, as in *Blühen und Vergehen*, is clearly suggestive of death, the image of ribs and vertebrae is much more evocative of the process of decay and the distorted anatomy of the dangling ribs suggests a traumatic death, perhaps a tragic war injury. Although bones are the end result of the decomposition of the human body, in the *vanitas* still lifes of Northern European Old Masters, including Jacques de Gheyn (Figure 48) and Pieter Claesz (Figure 49), skulls are symbolic of death. Obviously, the deterioration of the human body is implicit in the idea of death; however, the presence of the skull in such

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<sup>61</sup> In *Otto Dix 1891 – 1969* (Köln: Taschen GmbH), Eva Karcher lists the English title of *Blühen und Vergehen* as *Waxing and Waning*.



still lifes specifically emphasizes human mortality and the transience of various earthly pursuits rather than physical decay. In contrast, the ribs and vertebrae present in Dix's modified *vanitas* still life place the idea of bodily degeneration in the forefront of the viewer's mind. Skulls are immediately suggestive of death and, while the presence of any sort of human bones are likewise evocative of death, human ribs and vertebrae are also suggestive of the putrefaction of the body. The organs once shielded by the ribcage are gone leading one to assume they have rotted away. Furthermore, the body once supported by the ribcage is also missing which highlights the absence of the complete human body.

*Vanitas* still lifes derive their allegorical meaning from symbolism conveyed through inanimate objects. Yet, in *Stilleben mit Witwenschleier*, Dix modifies this convention by transferring human-like qualities, via the presence of the widow's veil and the mask and the vertical orientation of the bones, to the skeletal remains of the rib cage and the vertebrae. In so doing, he not only emphasizes the idea of death as found in older *vanitas* still lifes, but he also specifically highlights the inevitability of the decay of the flesh. This decomposition is made more tangible through the anthropomorphizing of the skeletal remnants placed upright behind the table. Thus, the inevitable result of death—the decay of the human body—is made manifest through skeletal fragments that are evocative of both life and death.

In the context of this painting, the presence of the flowers takes on multiple meanings. Flowers are often included in *vanitas* still lifes because they bloom, wither and die within a fairly short period of time and are, thus, evocative of the passing of

time<sup>62</sup> in general and the human life cycle in particular. Flowers, in Western cultures, are used in both weddings and in funerals. The widow to whom the veil belongs likely had flowers at her wedding and there were probably also flowers at the funeral of her now dead husband. Furthermore, flowers are often placed on gravesites such as the grave of the widow's husband. The flowers are linked to both life and death, to happy occasions and to sad ones and, thus, allude to the cycle of human life and the fleeting nature of earthly things.

Although the ephemeral nature of flowers evokes human mortality, in general, they are typically associated with women, rather than with men. Flowers suggest the fresh beauty of youth, the diminished physical attractiveness of middle age and, ultimately, death. They function as familiar, readily discernible signs of frailty and impermanence which, in Western culture are often related to cultural values involving femininity.<sup>63</sup> The association of flowers with women is evident in *Stilleben mit Witwenschleier* as the suspended widow's veil is visually connected to the flowers on the table. Just as the purplish-black iris blooms top slender stalks, the black widow's veil rests atop the narrow, wooden "stalk" of the coat or hat rack. The centermost bloom even visually intersects a section of the widow's veil that hangs behind it. The oddly clumped ribs on the left side of the ribcage (the viewer's right) hang down in pointed groups that resemble inverted leaves of the iris stalks. Prior to actually dying, the irises will wither and the blooms will lose their beauty. Similarly, the widow, who is visually correlated

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<sup>62</sup> Mahon, Dorothy. "A New Look at a Seventeenth-Century Dutch Still Life." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New Series, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Winter, 1993-1994), 36. Showing various flowers that bloom in each of the four seasons is a more obvious way to symbolize the passage of time via flowers.

<sup>63</sup> Seaton, Beverly. "Towards a Historical Semiotics of Literary Flower Personification." *Poetics Today*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Winter, 1989), 680. Seaton's discussion pertains to flowers and women in literature but many of her ideas are also pertinent to the visual arts.

with the flowers, will also pass from the beauty of youth to the decay of old age and inevitable death. The widow, who is personified by her veil, is linked to the brief life-span of the flowers and the bones around which the veil hangs further associate her with death and decay. The iris's reference to sorrow is appropriate as many women lost husbands (and sons) who were sacrificed to the German state during the war. Although the war was long over by 1925, the year in which Dix's still life was painted, the newly cut irises, the widow's veil and the human bones imply that the sadness caused by the war is still fresh in the minds for those who suffered its effects.

Moreover, the correlation of the widow's veil with a flower associated with the Virgin Mary is intentionally ironic. As previously established, by the mid-nineteen twenties, the widow's veil was highly fraught with social and sexual implications. In addition, the notion of disguising oneself, as prostitutes sometimes did with widow's veils, is evoked by the mask. In *vanitas* still life paintings, masks frequently reference "the difficulty of appearing different from one's essential being" which is "often a problem of those who are slaves to the ephemeral."<sup>64</sup> This notion of masking or veiling one's actual identity is ironically commented upon in the choice of the iris which is the attribute of the Virgin Mary as the "Lady of Sorrows." In Dix's work, this flower, which is heavily laden with religious import, is simultaneously linked with the genuine sorrow of war widows and with an accessory utilized by women on the opposite end of the sexual spectrum, prostitutes. Thus, the "virgin-whore" dichotomy that has often been used to simplistically categorize women is subtly alluded to and confounded via some of the items in this still life. Furthermore, author Eva Karcher has suggested that the folds

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<sup>64</sup>Zuffi, Stefano, ed. *Angels and Demons in Art*. Trans. Rosanna M. Giammanco Frongia. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003. 191.

of the table cloth are evocative of female genitalia which lends additional sexual import to the work. Due to the indeterminate associations of the widow's veil and the subsequent effects of this ambiguity on the other items in the still life, Dix seems to have created a deliberately inconclusive visual language that resists attempts at straightforward analysis.

Not only did veils obscure the face and some of the body of the wearers, but they also partially concealed their identities and motives. In the case of widows, veils both hid their grief and acted as overt symbolic markers and public demonstrations of that sorrow. For Weimar prostitutes, veils acted as means to obscure their illicit identities while simultaneously designating them as prostitutes who operated according to certain visual codes of attire that were specific to the Weimar period. Furthermore, as veils are often transparent enough to suggest what lies underneath, they encourage the beholder to imagine "the real thing" prior to actually seeing it.<sup>65</sup> In *Stilleben mit Witwenschleier*, the woman in question has unveiled herself in order to hang the widow's veil on the wooden stand. The erotically charged associations of the veil and the conflation of prostitutes with war widows leads one to wonder if the owner of the veil is a prostitute who has unveiled herself for a client.

The combination of concealing and revealing explains the erotic appeal of veils and suggests that truth lies beneath an external layer which only a select few, typically men, are privileged enough to expose. This eroticization of the idea of unveiling women satisfies male longings that are linked with fantasies of possession and display. However, this unveiling does not simply precede control or ownership; it is "an encounter with risk

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<sup>65</sup> Jordanova, 90.

and danger and so also with excitement and pleasure.”<sup>66</sup> These ideas are especially pertinent to Weimar prostitutes who wore widow’s veils as they not only made their bodies sexually available for a price but they also literally unveiled themselves for men in order to do so. Just as during a wedding ceremony the lifting of the bride’s veil symbolically indicates the groom’s possession of the woman and foreshadows the sexual consummation of their union, so too did prostitutes wearing widow’s veils remove these veils in order to complete their sexual transactions with clients who “possessed” them for a fee. Thus, it is entirely possible that Dix suggests a scenario in which the woman whose presence is implied in *Stilleben mit Witwenschleier* is a veil-wearing prostitute who may have removed her veil in order to entertain a client.

In light of this interpretation, the *vanitas* motif takes on a slightly different meaning. Unveiling, as noted above, evokes mystery and danger in addition to suggesting the potential for gratification. The former elements are implied because, as the purpose of veils is to shroud someone, one cannot be entirely sure of the identity of the person in question until the veil has been removed. Thus, as veils connote uncertainty, there is the underlying possibility that the individual underneath the veil might not meet the expectations or satisfy the desires of the one for whom the veiled woman is unveiled. With veiled Weimar prostitutes, the danger involved with unveiling one of them was that the client might contract a sexually transmitted disease, such as syphilis, which was a distinct concern at the time. Thus, the idea of being veiled takes on another meaning as some venereal diseases, such as gonorrhea, do not visibly manifest themselves and others, such as syphilis, are externally manifested initially but are

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 90-97.

“hidden” in later, more advanced stages. Therefore, the theme of the transience of health implied by *vanitas* motifs assumes a specifically sexual and modern cast in Dix’s still life as it alludes to female prostitutes and the spread of venereal diseases.

Furthermore, this insinuation of sexually transmitted diseases specifically implicates women. This cautioning against succumbing to sexual temptation by alluding to its dangerous, even fatal, consequences relates to the *vanitas-voluptas* aspect of the *vanitas* theme. As venereal disease is suggested to be a consequence of having sexual relations with a prostitute, this still life also references the idea of the *femme fatale* that Dix explored in his works addressing the *Totentanz*. In Dix’s still life, the freshly-cut flowers reference the fleetingness of beauty and life and thus allude to decay and death. The human spinal column and ribcage hanging near the widow’s veil suggest the same ideas and the proximity of the skeletal remains to the veil link them. If the woman to whom the veil belongs is a prostitute, then, while she might genuinely be in mourning for the loss of her husband, she could also act as the bringer of disease, decay and ultimately death. It is unclear to whom the skeletal remains belong. While they could belong to or reference the death of the widow’s husband, they could also suggest the demise of one of the veiled-prostitutes clients or even the passing of the woman herself. Regardless of the identity of individual from whom the bones came, the ideas of war, illicit sex, decay and death are linked and a “fallen” woman is placed in the center of this Nietzschean nexus.

As a Nietzschean, Dix was intrigued with the philosopher’s constant musings on the interrelation of sex and death. “The frenzy of sexual excitement” was a crucial

aspect of an artist's Dionysian creativity.<sup>67</sup> Not only that, but this embrace of Eros was also a vital aspect of one's, specifically man's, path to self-actualization and becoming an *Übermensch*. Nietzsche "insisted that man could only achieve his full potential by ceasing to live predominantly through his intellect, by opening himself out to the most intense experiences of his senses, and specifically to his sexuality."<sup>68</sup> Pursuant to this, Nietzsche promoted "activities or emotions that can lead to the experience of intense feelings" including "music, singing, dancing, sexual excitement, making love, giving birth, hatred, fighting and war."<sup>69</sup> For Dix, the figure of widow-prostitute seems to have embodied the themes of sex and death. Furthermore, in the wake of World War I, her presence also evoked the activities of fighting and going to war. Thus, just as Dix seems to have perceived Anita Berber as a Dionysian death dancer for the Nietzschean qualities he saw personified in her, he similarly appears to have regarded the widow-prostitute as an incarnation of Dionysian ideals.

The embrace of danger also appears in Nietzsche's writings as a way to affirm the Dionysian in one's life. For instance, one of the aphorisms in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* proclaims "believe me, the secret of the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is: to *live dangerously!*"<sup>70</sup> Nietzsche was not specifically referring to the physical or health-related dangers posed by having sexual intercourse with a prostitute. However, the idea of excitedly embracing life's perils and the unknown as a way to

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<sup>67</sup> "Twilight of the Idols," 518. This is found under part 10 in the section entitled "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man."

<sup>68</sup> Twohig, Sarah O'Brien. "Dix and Nietzsche." *Otto Dix: 1891 – 1969*. London: Tate Gallery, 1992. 41.

<sup>69</sup> Twohig, 41.

<sup>70</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Gay Science." *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1977. 97. This quote comes from aphorism number 283. *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* was first published in 1882. The title is sometimes translated into English as *Joyful Wisdom*. However, as Walter Kaufmann notes, this is a mistranslation; the title is correctly translated into English as *The Gay Science*. The emphasis is Nietzsche's.

affirm all aspects of life in the Dionysian sense correlates with the notion of embracing other physical acts and mental states that would lead one down the path of Dionysian self-realization. Thus, in keeping with Nietzsche's philosophical values, the act of participating in a potentially precarious sexual encounter with a prostitute, especially a widow-prostitute, fulfilled multiple conditions of the philosopher's existentialist road to becoming an *Übermensch*. Even though Dix's paintings of widows do not specifically show them engaged in sexual acts, the specter of prostitution looms over them which links them to Nietzsche's Dionysian web of sex and death and the promise of fulfilling one's vitalist potential.

In the nineteen-twenties, Dix's interest in updating *vanitas* motifs to suit the interwar period was not limited to images of widows who may or may not have been prostitutes. In fact, several of his most striking *vanitas* images from the early years of the Weimar Republic, obviously depicted prostitutes. For instance, in 1921, Dix painted *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* (*Girl in Front of the Mirror*) (Figure 50) which depicts a prostitute standing in front of a free-standing, oval-shaped mirror. Although the work was destroyed during World War II,<sup>71</sup> a small black and white photograph of it still exists as does a description of the work which can be read in the transcript notes from Dix's 1923 indecency trial. This particular painting was exhibited as the Juryfreien Kunstaustellung in Berlin in 1922, and it was confiscated by the police on October 30 of that year.<sup>72</sup> In June 1923, Dix was tried for indecency<sup>73</sup> in Berlin's district court.<sup>74</sup> A

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<sup>71</sup> Peter, Olaf. "Intransigent Realism: Otto Dix between the World Wars." *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 21. Sometimes, the work is referred to as being missing or the location is listed as being unknown. However, it was probably destroyed by the Nazis during World War II.

<sup>72</sup> "Mädchen am Spiegel—Otto Dix freigesprochen." *Berliner Lokal. Anzeiger*. 27 June. 1923., Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 202. In



detailed description of the work was written down and Dix was compelled to answer questions about the work. However, ultimately, he was acquitted and the seizure of the painting was lifted.<sup>75</sup>

According to the trial's transcript notes, the subject of this contentious painting is "eine alternde Dirne dar, die vor einem Spiegel steht und sich die Lippen schminkt."<sup>76</sup> However, this "aging prostitute" is seen from behind and nothing about the appearance of her back indicates that she is an old woman. Seen from the back, the viewer would likely presume that she is a young woman. Her face and the front of her body are visible in the reflection cast by the oval-shaped mirror into which she gazes.<sup>77</sup> One would expect to see an alluring and seductive young woman gazing back in the mirror. However, such expectations are thwarted as the mirror reveals a bony, haggard old prostitute instead. Her face is lined, especially around her mouth and eyes, and her grin reveals several missing upper teeth. In addition, as per the trial notes, "der ganze Körper ist knochig und verblüht, die Brüste sind völlig welk und die Hautfarbe von schmutzig graugelber Farbentönung."<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the bones of her ribcage are visible under the skin of her chest

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total, five works by Dix, Erich Goldbaum Godal and Georg Kobbe were seized on the grounds of obscenity.

<sup>73</sup> Rewald, Sabine. "Girl before a Mirror." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. Ed. Sabine Rewald. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. 230. In the *Otto Dix* catalogue for the Neue Galerie exhibition, Olaf Peters refers to the exhibition as the "*Juryfreie Kunstschau*".

<sup>74</sup> "Mädchen am Spiegel—Otto Dix freigesprochen," 202. At Dix's trial, the painters Hermann Sandkuhl, Carl Hofer, and Max Slevogt and the art historians Max Osborn, Willy Wolfradt and Cohn Wiener appeared as expert witnesses.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> "Prozeß um das Gemälde 'Mädchen am Spiegel'. Berlin 1923," Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1981. 201. The English translation of this sentence is as follows: "an aging prostitute stands in front of a mirror and puts on lipstick."

<sup>77</sup> "Prozeß um das Gemälde 'Mädchen am Spiegel'. Berlin 1923," Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1981. 201. The trial transcript notes describe her pose as follows: "Sie wendet dem Beschauer den Rücken an, so daß das Spiegelbild sie von vorn zeigt."

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 202. In English, the description found in the trial notes is as follows: "the whole body is bony and faded, the breasts are completely wilted, and the skin color is of a dirty, gray-yellow hue."

and “*völlig welk*” (“completely wilted”) is an apt description of her drooping, exposed breasts.<sup>79</sup>

The trial transcript indicates that the color of the prostitute’s skin is “*schmutzig graugelber*” (“dirty gray-yellow”).<sup>80</sup> However, it is unclear if this description, which appears in the context of describing the woman’s unattractive image in the mirror, also refers to the skin tone of the woman standing in front of the mirror rather than just her reflection. In Dix’s watercolor of the same theme, which is also entitled *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* (*Girl in Front of the Mirror*) (Figure 51) and which will be further discussed below, the complexion of the woman is rosier and livelier than that of her pallid mirrored counterpart. Thus, one can assume that the complexion of the woman in the oil painting *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* was less sickly-looking than the skin tone of the haggard prostitute in the mirror.

In addition, the trial transcript notes further remark on the prostitute’s physical state by contrasting it with her comparatively pretty yet revealing garments. The document states the following: “Im krassen Gegensatz zu dem geradezu abstoßend häßlichen und ausgemergelten Körper der Dirne stehen auf dem Bilde die dargestellten wenigen Kleidungsstücke, die sie trägt.”<sup>81</sup> The notes go on to describe the “*himmelblauer Farbe*” (“sky blue color”) of her corset and the lace ruffles and pink bow (“*Spitzenvolants und Schleifen von rosa Farbe*”) that adorn it.<sup>82</sup> Despite the disparity

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> “*Prozeß um das Gemälde ‘Mädchen am Spiegel’*. Berlin 1923,” 202. In English, this description translates as follows: “The few depicted garments she wears stand in glaring contrast to the absolutely repulsively ugly and emaciated body of the prostitute in the picture.”

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. The full description of the prostitute’s clothing as found in this section of the trial transcript is as follows: “Das Korsett ist von himmelblauer Farbe, mit Spitzen und rosa Schleifen besetzt, die Hosen sind

between the prostitute's attractively adorned garments and her decrepit body as seen in the mirror, the primary objection to the work's supposed indecency was the revealing slit in her bloomers. Indeed, the trial notes expressly mention that, although the forms are initially difficult to make out due to the dark shadows, the opening in the prostitute's bloomers reveals not only "the curves of the buttocks" ("*die Rundungen des Gesäßes*") but her pubic hair ("*die Schamhaare*") as well.<sup>83</sup>

Despite objections to the graphic depiction of the prostitute's aging body and her revealing outfit, Dix was ultimately acquitted. His defense was aided by his claims that he had not intended for the work to be sexually titillating;<sup>84</sup> rather, he asserted, that the work was meant to be moralizing by functioning as a warning about the real consequences of prostitution.<sup>85</sup> The trial notes state that "Der Körper der Dirne trägt deutlich die Spuren des durch ihr Gewerbe hervorgerufenen Verfalls..."<sup>86</sup> Later, it is noted that Dix, referred to as "*der Angeklagte*" ("the defendant"), intentionally painted the prostitute's body in such an unappealing way in order to deter men from pursuing

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übersät mit Spitzenvolants und Schleifen von rosa Farbe. Durch gleiche Bandschleifen sind auch die Strumpfbänder angedeutet."

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 201-202. The relevant section of the trial notes reads as follows: "Bekleidet ist die dargestellte Frauensperson nur mit einem Korsett und einer Hose, die vorn und hinten offen ist, so daß man die Schamhaare und die Rundungen des Gesäßes erkennen kann. Der Geschlechtsteil ist infolge des von dem Bande des Korsetts geworfenen Schattens in starkes Dunkel gerückt, so, daß die Schamhaare zunächst nicht deutlich erkennbar sind."

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 202. According to the trial notes, "Einen Sinnreiz auf die männlichen Beschauer ausüben zu wollen, habe ihm völlig fernegelegen."

<sup>85</sup> "*Prozeß um das Gemälde 'Mädchen am Spiegel'. Berlin 1923*," 202. With regard to the painting being moralizing, the trial transcript states the following: "Er sei auch gar nicht auf den Gedanken gekommen, daß das Bild möglicherweise habe schamverletzend wirken können, weil er der Überzeugung gewesen sei, daß die abstoßende Wirkung jeden anderen Eindruck zurückdrängen müsse und daß die moralisierende Tendenz des Bildes so stark hervortrete, daß sie sein Gefühl der Scham- und Sittlichkeitsverletzung gar nicht aufkommen lasse."

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. In English, this quote translates as follows: "The body of the prostitute clearly carries the traces of the decay caused by her trade."

sexual relations with prostitutes and to dissuade women from taking up the trade.<sup>87</sup>

Indeed, during the trial Dix claimed that such an unflinching depiction was necessary to his desire to depict the bodily “decay” (“*Verfall*”) caused by the prostitute’s lifestyle; essentially, his reasoning was that the more graphic the depiction of the prostitute’s physical decline, the stronger the deterrent for both future prostitutes and future clients.<sup>88</sup> In fact, when questioned about the unflinching realism of his portrayal of the prostitute’s haggard body, Dix remarked that as his goal was to contrast the prostitute’s body with that of a “healthy, pure” individual so the work could have been even more graphically “realistic”.<sup>89</sup>

Dix was still a master pupil at the Düsseldorf Academy and his defense was greatly aided by the support of his renowned colleagues who affirmed the high-minded, ethical nature of his works.<sup>90</sup> Without their substantiation of his claims, the painter might not have been acquitted.<sup>91</sup> Given their knowledge of both and Dix his works, it seems unlikely that these colleagues actually believed his moralizing defense. Rather, they appear to have supported him in the name of avant-garde artistic freedom. Outside the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. The trial notes that are relevant to Dix’s defense are as follows: “Der Angeklagte bestreitet, daß sein Bild eine unzüchtige Darstellung sei. Seine Absicht sei gewesen, den Menschen vor Augen zu führen, wohin die Ausübung des schimpflichen Gewerbes der Unzucht letzten Endes führe und sie vom Verkehr mit Freudenmädchen bzw. vor einer Nachahmung ihres Lebenswandels abzuschrecken.”

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. My summation of Dix’s defense was culled from the following section of the trial notes: “Dies habe er nur dadurch erreichen zu können geglaubt, daß er das Bild in stark realistischer Weise geschaffen habe. Er habe deutlich den Verfall zeigen wollen, den das Gewerbe der Unzucht nach einer gewissen Zeit am menschlichen Körper hervorrufe. Damit, daß er die Schamhaare und das Gesäß sichtbar gemalt habe, habe er den abschreckenden Eindruck durch besonderen Realismus der Darstellung und die hierdurch erhöhte abschreckende Wirkung verstärken wollen.”

<sup>89</sup> *Mädchen am Spiegel—Otto Dix freigesprochen*, 202. Dix’s quote is as follows: “Ich glaube, daß ich sogar noch nicht realistisch genug die Dinge in ihrer verheerenden Wirkung dargestellt habe. Das Bild sollte den Gegensatz zu dem Körper eines gesunden, reinen Menschen darstellen.”

<sup>90</sup> Zeller, Ursula. “The Reception of Dix’s Work.” *Otto Dix, 1891-1969*. London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1992. 52. Zeller does not mention the names of the colleagues who supported Dix.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. Zeller claims that Dix was only acquitted because of the support of his colleagues.

Academy, many still regarded Dix's art as shocking, if not pornographic, and some, undoubtedly, disbelieved his claims about the morally edifying nature of his works.<sup>92</sup>

The sincerity of Dix's claims that the harsh realism of the work was intended to discourage the sexual immorality of either visiting or becoming a prostitute is unknown. However, as he once dismissed fellow artist Conrad Felixmüller's calls for him to join the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (Communist Party of Germany) by saying "I don't want to hear about your stupid politics—I'd rather spend the five marks' membership fee on a whore,"<sup>93</sup> one can assume that Dix's moralistic defense of his works was a calculated legal tactic. Even if Dix's statement to Felixmüller was made in jest, it still undermines the moralizing high-mindedness found in his remarks at the indecency trial for *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel*. Furthermore, when reflecting on art later in his life, Dix remarked that "Künstler sollten nicht bessern und bekehren....Nur bezeugen müssen sie."<sup>94</sup> If he, in fact, believed that artists should neither attempt to "reform" nor "proselytize" through their art and that they should simply "attest" to what they have

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Zeller notes that, during the nineteen-twenties, Dix earned the reputation of painting political, pornographic or revolutionary pictures. She even remarks that he was considered a "seditious" painter. This was largely due to the controversies sparked by *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel*, *Der Salon II*, and *Der Graben* (*The Trench*, 1923).

<sup>93</sup> Spanke, Daniel. "The Eye of the World: Otto Dix and the New Objectivity." *Otto Dix and the New Objectivity*. Ed. Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, ed. Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012. 23. Spanke spells Felixmüller's first name as "Konrad" but other scholars, such as Ilka Voermann and Birgit Schwarz, in the same catalogue spell his name "Conrad." This quote is also found in Sergiusz Michalski's 1994 book *New Objectivity: Painting, Graphic Art and Photography in Weimar Germany, 1919 – 1933*. Originally, the quote was found in Felixmüller's letter to Dieter Gleisburg which was written on January 18, 1971 and can be found in the exhibition catalogue *Conrad Felixmüller. Werke und Dokumente* (Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, 1981, p. 75). While both Spanke and Michalski recount that Dix said this to Felixmüller, Iain Boyd White claims that Dix said "Leave me alone with your idiotic politics—I'm off to the brothel!" in response to George Grosz's attempts to convince him to join the KPD. This can be found in White's essay "Otto Dix's Germany: From Wilhelmine Reich to East/West Divide" in *Otto Dix 1891-1969*, Tate Gallery; London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1992. 27.

<sup>94</sup> Dix, Otto. "Gespräch im Wartezimmer. 1958," Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 228. In English, this quote translates as follows: "Artists should not reform or proselytize....They must only attest."

seen, then positing a traditional, moralizing interpretation to *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* runs counter to this sentiment.

However, regardless of whether Dix's moralistic explanation was genuine, his acknowledgement of the possible moralizing interpretation of his work further links the painting with Old Master works featuring similar subjects and themes, such as *vanitas* motifs. In fact, in his defense of the supposedly excessively disturbing realism of *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel*, Dix specifically mentioned that viewers can see an even more "blatant depiction" ("*krassere Darstellung*") in many Old Master paintings hanging in galleries.<sup>95</sup> Yet, he asserted, school groups see such Old Master works without causing the uproar his painting elicited.<sup>96</sup>

It cannot be conclusively determined whether Dix actually believed that *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* was less scandalous than various Old Master works. However, given his desire to manipulate and appropriate the subjects and motifs found in works by the Old Masters, it is likely that Dix intended just the opposite. Regardless of whether he anticipated the possibility of an indecency trial, he was certainly aware that his work would be perceived as controversial. Indeed, it is likely that he deliberately courted controversy in this and other works he created throughout his career. He was "part bad boy, part rising star, and part enigma" and he seemed to have been cognizant of his self-presentation and how this was perceived by others.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *Mädchen am Spiegel—Otto Dix freigesprochen*, 203. The full sentence from which the quoted words were taken is as follows: "In den Galerien hängen Bilder alter Meister, auf denen oft eine noch krassere Darstellung zu sehen ist."

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Dix was quoted as saying, "Obwohl häufig Führungen von Schulen erfolgen, hat man noch niemals eine derartige Wirkung festgestellt."

<sup>97</sup> "A Man's Place in a Woman's World," 164.

Dix seemingly wanted to be included in the pantheon of Old Masters in general and Old German Masters in particular and his mention of the Old Masters during his trial defense is a backhanded way of including himself among them. His remark that, despite the lack of outcry, many Old Master works with more shocking depictions than that in *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* were hanging in galleries seems to be a thinly veiled boast. If the subjects found in such Old Master works were truly more shocking to Weimar-era audiences than Dix's works, then some sort of public outcry or critical discussion would have evidenced this. Instead, Dix was brought to trial on charges of indecency indicating that, contrary to his assertion that Old Master representations were more scandalous, the public felt otherwise. Indeed, it seems that his goal was to be ranked among or even supersede the German Old Masters; thus, the controversy that erupted over *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* was likely interpreted by Dix as way for him to distinguish himself from if not "one up" them.

In addition, Dix's claim that the purpose of the work was to serve a moralizing function can also be interpreted as a manipulation of Old Master strategies. As previously noted, *vanitas* motifs were common, moralizing themes in which the artists used a variety of objects to evoke ideas pertaining to the transience of earthly life. However, Nietzsche, whose philosophy was so influential to Dix's thinking and beliefs, was openly skeptical, if not hostile, to popular, especially Christian, conceptions of morality. For instance, in *Der Wille zur Macht*, Nietzsche asserted "*all of us seek states in which bourgeois morality no longer has any say, and priestly morality even less...*"<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *The Will to Power*, 73. This quote comes from number one-hundred nineteen of Book One of *The Will to Power* which is entitled "European Nihilism." This segment was written between the fall and spring of

According to Nietzsche, one of “the advantages of the Christian moral hypothesis” was that “it granted man an absolute value, as opposed to his smallness and accidental occurrence in the flux of becoming and passing away.”<sup>99</sup> According to Nietzsche’s understanding, Christian morality provided the false assurance that one had fixed value in a world of transience. It was, in his mind, a crutch for those who were too weak to accept their reality and fate in the face of the existential sublime. Instead of facilitating self-actualization, such “morality [was] a way of turning one’s back on the will to existence.”<sup>100</sup> Thus, it would be counter to Dix’s own desire, as a follower of Nietzsche’s philosophy, to espouse moralizing themes.

Furthermore, Nietzsche essentially dismissed traditional morality as relative and mutable by claiming that moral “values and their changes are related to increases in the power of those positing the values.”<sup>101</sup> Thus, rather than interpreting *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* as displaying a *vanitas* motif in a graphic but traditional sense, one could view it as demonstrating the idea, inspired by Nietzsche, that concepts of morality are themselves fleeting. According to Nietzsche, those who are in power adopt and alter their values relative to their status and needs upon gaining or losing that status; thus, morality, or at least human conceptions of it, are themselves transient, fleeting things that are subject to change and decay. In addition, Nietzsche dismissed the Christian ideas of God and heaven. If there is no heaven in which one should store spiritual treasures and if anything

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1887 and revised in 1888. In this section, Nietzsche is discussing the “progress” of the nineteenth century contra the eighteenth century.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 9. This particular quote comes from number four of Book One, Section One of *The Will to Power* which is entitled “Nihilism.” This particular portion was written on June 10, 1887.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 11. This quote comes from number eleven of Book One, Section One of *The Will to Power*. This particular portion was written on June 10, 1887.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 14. This particular quote comes from Book One of *The Will to Power* which is entitled “European Nihilism.” It is included in number 14 which was written in the spring through the fall of 1888.



beyond the present is uncertain,<sup>102</sup> then spiritual virtues are just as ephemeral as material things. Thus, Dix's manipulated *vanitas* motif can be seen as mocking the traditional, religious moralizing ideas espoused in Old Master *vanitas* images. As such, his moralizing defense of the work during his indecency trial can be regarded as tongue-in-cheek rather than sincere.

Regardless of the veracity of his claims during the trial, this particular motif certainly intrigued Dix as he created two variants of it in 1922, the year after he painted *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* in oils; he painted one of the variants using watercolor (Figure 51) and created the other as an etching (Figure 52). As the oil painting is only known through a black and white photograph and no color was added to the etching, the watercolor (Figure 51), which is also entitled *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel (Girl in Front of the Mirror)*, is marked by Dix's use of color. The placement of the figure and the mirror in the watercolor are almost identical to the oil painting but the woman's pale blue corset has been accented with pinkish-red ribbon. However, in the watercolor, the mirror has been placed in front of a wall with wallpaper patterned with gray and green dots and a window accented with a grayish-pink, ruffled curtain. Also, the oval-shaped mirror in the watercolor has been decorated with several pinkish-red flowers with green stems and leaves that have been woven around it. The motif is essentially the same as an ostensibly young, brunette prostitute wearing a corset, black stockings and crotch-less bloomers gazes at herself in a mirror and is greeted by the withered reflection of an aged prostitute with sagging breasts, a bony chest and a wrinkled, gaunt face. However, in this work, the prostitute has long hair that has been pinned up with a decorative, yellow comb and the

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<sup>102</sup> *The Will to Power*, 40. In Book I ("European Nihilism") Part II ("History of European Nihilism"), Number 57 (1884), Nietzsche wrote that "one lives for tomorrow as the day after tomorrow is dubious."

worn-out, old prostitute reflected in the mirror has light colored hair, as though Dix outlined it with pencil but did not paint it with watercolor.

Dix's etching of this motif, *Am Spiegel (At the Mirror)* (Figure 52), is very similar to the other two works as the placement of both the figure and the mirror are unchanged. The mirror, however, is rectangular rather than oval in shape. The prostitute again wears a corset, this time with vertical stripes, bloomers that reveal her genitals and stockings. Her long, dark hair is pinned up with a comb in a style very similar to the woman's in the watercolor. The room in which she stands is bare and resembles the austere setting of the oil painting. In the etching, the prostitute's wizened reflection is the least dramatic. Aside from her small, drooping breasts and bony chest, her appearance has not radically aged to the extent of the reflections in the other two works. Her face is slightly lined and sagging around the mouth, but there are no other obvious signs of age or decrepitude.

The prostitute's reflection has been subjected to the most extreme aging in the oil painted version of *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel*; however, all three depict the back of a female prostitute who appears to be young but whose reflection in the mirror reveals a worn-out, old woman instead. The subject of a young woman gazing at herself in a mirror is an established convention in *vanitas* motifs as it references the impermanence of youth, beauty and life itself while also evoking the pointlessness of human conceit. Dix's 1922 painting was actually inspired by Hans Baldung Grien's *Die drei Lebensalter und der Tod (Death and the Three Stages of Life)* of 1509 to 1511 (Figure 53).<sup>103</sup> Baldung Grien's painting depicts an attractive young woman with long blonde hair gazing into a

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<sup>103</sup> Silver, Kenneth E. *Chaos & Classicism: Art in France, Italy and Germany, 1918-1936*. New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2010. 161. This work is sometimes also referred to as *Three Ages of Woman and Death*.

handheld, convex mirror, which is a traditional *vanitas* symbol.<sup>104</sup> The mirror reflects the skeletal visage of Death but the young woman does not appear to notice. She is nude except for a diaphanous length of fabric that has been pulled across her pubic region and is held at one end by the bony hand of Death. As she stares into the mirror and pulls her hair back from her face, she appears so taken with her own beauty that she is oblivious to the rotting, skeletal corpse of Death who stands behind her and holds an hourglass above the woman's head. However, the wrinkled, older, nude woman to the left of the canvas, who "helps the girl hold up the mirror (thus showing her to herself)"<sup>105</sup> attempts to push Death's arm away with her hand. The presence of the old woman indicates that Death has not come to claim the young woman as a victim; rather than killing her, Death's presence reveals and emphasizes her mortality. Death further reminds her of the temporality of her life by holding the hourglass above her head.<sup>106</sup> Lost in her narcissistic reverie, the young woman seems oblivious to Death's presence while the old woman, who has been subjected to the decrepitude of age, is all too aware of Death's encroachment. In the lower left corner, a small baby kneels and holds a length of the gossamer fabric above her head, perhaps attempting to shield herself from the dreadful

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<sup>104</sup> Janson, Anthony F. "The Convex Mirror as Vanitas Symbol." *Notes in the History of Art*. Vol. 4. No. 2/3. Winter/Spring (1985). 51. Janson observes that the convex mirrors began to be used as *vanitas* symbols between the years of 1500 and 1550. He even remarks that the image of a nude woman holding such a mirror functions as a personification of Vanitas.

<sup>105</sup> Koerner, 94.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. In his discussion of this painting, which he refers to as *Death and the Maiden*, Koerner claims that Death functions as hermeneutic. This, he notes, is in contrast to other examinations of the work, including Gert von der Osten's *Hans Baldung Grien: Gemälde und Dokumente* (Berlin, 1983) and Jean Wirth's *Le Jeune Fille et la mort: Recherches sur les themes macabre dans l'art germanique de la Renaissance*, Hautes Études médiévales et modernes, no. 36 (Geneva, 1979). As Koerner notes, both von der Osten and Wirth assert that Death is there "to claim or least to try to claim, its victim."

sight of death.<sup>107</sup> She cranes her neck upward and stares helplessly as Death counts down the time remaining in the woman's life.

The depiction of the three stages of life, infancy, youth and old age, as found in Baldung Grien's work, is related to *vanitas* motifs because it references the finitude of human life. The changes the body undergoes through the years, as evidenced by the altered physical states of the figures representing the three stages, not only visualizes the passage of time but also evokes the idea of physical decay that occurs after one dies. The concept of bodily decay is echoed by Baldung Grien's depiction of Death as a decomposing corpse. The rotting flesh hangs from Death's legs and has decayed to such an extent that the bones are visible in the knees and lower thighs. Additionally, in contrast to the luxurious, flowing locks of the blonde maiden, Death's stringy hair has started to fall out, especially near the crown of Death's head. As noted previously, the hourglass Death holds above the young woman's head reinforces the fact that just as the maiden's youth and beauty are finite so too is her life on earth only temporary.

Furthermore, in *Die drei Lebensalter und der Tod*, Baldung Grien alters the theme of the inescapable deterioration of the body, which recurs in German art, by giving it a more positive cast. By the depicting the young female as especially healthy and vigorous he seems accepting of the cyclical nature of the human life cycle.<sup>108</sup> Obviously, Baldung Grien created this painting hundreds of years before Nietzsche outlined his philosophy, but this interpretation of the German Old Master's painting resonates with Nietzsche's ideas about the interrelation and cyclical nature of sex, birth, death and regeneration. It is

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<sup>107</sup> Koerner, 94. Koerner also suggests that the figure I have called a "baby" is perhaps shielding herself. However, Koerner calls the figure a "putto" and uses the gender neutral designation of "it" rather than assigning the figure a specific gender.

<sup>108</sup> Russell, Francis. *The World of Dürer 1471 – 1528*. New York: Time Incorporated, 1967. 166.

possible that Dix recognized the potential for a Nietzschean interpretation in Baldung Grien's painting which might partly explain his interest in this particular work by the German Old Master and his subsequent fascination with the *vanitas* motif of a woman gazing at herself in a mirror that he created in response to it.

Although inspired by Baldung Grien's painting, Dix's works entitled *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* and the similar work *Am Spiegel* did not simply copy the figures used by the German Old Master artist. Instead of a generalized, attractive young female, the women in the aforementioned works by Dix are obviously prostitutes and were easily recognizable as such by the viewers of Dix's day. Dix has altered the Three Ages of Woman motif by only depicting a young woman and an old woman. However, the old woman is the mirror image of the younger rather than a separate individual; as a result, he has conflated the image of Death with the image of the old woman. The maiden in Baldung Grien's painting seems oblivious to the image of Death reflected in her mirror while the young prostitute in Dix's works is seemingly unaware that her own reflection is that of an aged, withered crone who, in addition to foreshadowing the unfortunate effects of age and exploitation, also echoes traditional images of Death such as those created by Baldung Grien.

Old Master *vanitas* images featuring Death and an attractive young woman, such as Hans Baldung Grien's variations on the Death and the Maiden motif (Figures 54 and 55), clearly continued to interest Dix and in 1932, he returned to the representation of *vanitas* motifs in his painting *Vanitas (Jugend und Alter)* (Figure 56). This work depicts a young, nubile, nude woman standing in front of a decrepit, nude, old hag. The figures are shown in front of a neutral, brownish-colored background which focuses the viewer's

attention on the two women. The rosy-cheeked blonde woman is displayed for the viewer but she does not face the viewer directly; rather, her body is slightly turned away from the viewer in a three-quarter turn. Despite her nudity, the woman seems to be a contemporary nude woman rather than a prostitute. As seen in many of Dix's images of nude prostitutes, including the painting *Sitzender rothaariger Akt mit Strümpfen vor rosa Tuch* (*Seated Female Nude with Red Hair and Stockings in Front of a Pink Cloth*) of 1930 (Figure 57), many of these women are shown wearing thigh-high stockings and shoes or boots with pointed toes.<sup>109</sup> The bodies of these prostitutes are either obese and bloated or thin and emaciated. Invariably, however, their breasts sag and their bodies seem physically worn out. In addition, many of these women have garishly colored hair and wear obvious makeup, such as thickly applied white foundation or powder, bright red lipstick, heavy eyeliner and eye shadow and dark eyebrow pencil. Despite this cosmetic artifice, Dix's prostitutes often look ill or exhausted if not both.

In contrast to many of Dix's images of nude prostitutes, the young blonde woman in *Vanitas (Jugend und Alter)* does not wear any garments to fetishize any of her body parts. Although her feet cannot be seen, she does not wear any sort of hosiery so she, presumably, does not wear any shoes either. In contrast to some of Dix's fleshier nude models, such as decidedly larger busted and fuller figured female in *Selbstbildnis mit nacktem Modell (Self-Portrait with Nude Model)* of 1923 (Figure 58), this woman is slender with small, pert breasts. Her abdomen is slightly rounded and, although her hips are slim, her thin waist and her turned pose accentuate the curvature of her body. Unlike

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<sup>109</sup> Today, stockings that end at the mid-thigh are referred to as "thigh-high" stockings. However, during the nineteen twenties, that term was not used and would have been redundant as that particular length was the only length of stocking available.

Dix's depictions of prostitutes, the blonde woman in *Vanitas (Jugend und Alter)* looks decidedly fit. Her body is slender but not scrawny and the skin tone of both her body and her face is even and healthy rather than ashen or sickly. She is distinctly fresh-faced; her flushed cheeks and pink lips look natural rather than rouged. Similarly, her dark blonde hair does not appear to be dyed or bleached. The length of her hair, which has been cut above her shoulders, is modern. It is not so short as to be considered "boyish" but it is certainly much shorter than the styles that were fashionable during the Wilhelmine period. Indeed, the length of her hair, which seems to a long bob, is long enough to still be considered feminine but it is short enough to be deemed modern and fashionable by interwar standards.

Behind and in stark contrast to this attractive, young woman stands an extremely frail old woman. Her dramatically shriveled, wasted body is angled at a three-quarter turn toward the right side of the canvas. Her shoulders are hunched over and she seems to struggle to keep her aged head upright atop her wrinkled neck. She raises her left forearm and appears to touch the edge of the canvas with her left hand as though she is unsteady and requires some form of external assistance to remain standing. The bones in her chest protrude against the skin and her deflated breasts sag dramatically. The sunken features of her face are marked by deep furrows, gaunt cheeks, shadowy eye sockets and a pointed nose. Her head is mostly bald except for a few wispy lines of silvery-white hair that still remain. These features, combined with her grayish-brown skin tone, give the appearance that the old woman is on the verge of decomposition. Indeed, the color of her skin resembles the brownish hue of the background which gives the impression that the old woman could disintegrate into it at any moment.

The specific identities of the two women are unclear but, given the title of the painting, it seems that, despite the absence of a mirror, the dramatically aged and enfeebled old woman is the future vision of the pretty, young blonde. However, the young woman seems blissfully ignorant of the old woman's presence directly behind her. Given the reference to *vanitas* in the title of the work, the young woman's unawareness of the old woman's presence seems to indicate that she is preoccupied with temporal matters, such as her youth, attractiveness and fit body. She appears too distracted by mortal concerns to pay Death, envisioned as the withered shadow of her youthful self, any heed. Much like the vain, nude woman in *Die drei Lebensalter und der Tod*, who is too enamored of her own reflection to acknowledge Death's proximity, the nude blonde in *Vanitas: Jugend und Alter* seems too self-absorbed to entertain the inevitability of old age, death and decay. Despite her apparent lack of concern, the addendum to the work's title indicates that, as in traditional *vanitas motifs*, the obvious contrast between the physical states of the two women and the intimation that the old woman is the looming specter of Death are meant to reinforce the ideas that youth, beauty, health and similar preoccupations are impermanent and that illness, old age and death will inevitably befall everyone, even those who seem unaware of such harsh realities.

Although the young blonde woman in *Vanitas (Jugend und Alter)*, is not ostensibly a prostitute, her sexual allure and availability are emphasized. Her obvious nudity and physical attractiveness emphasize her desirability. She is clearly on display and her pose accentuates her sexual appeal and accessibility. Her posture is quite erect and she seems to roll her shoulders back, which causes her breasts to seem more prominent. The angle at which her body is turned emphasizes the v-shaped curvature that



marks the left side of her small waist and highlights her rounded left hip. The young woman's right hand rests on her hip which draws the viewer's attention down to her genital region. The position of this hand and the manner in which it accentuates her genitals is reminiscent of the placement of Anita Berber's right hand in *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber* (*Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber*) (Figure 16) which Dix painted seven years prior. In addition, the canvas itself ends directly below her genitals which also draws the viewer's attention to her sex.

The young woman's left arm hangs straight at her side and the fingers of her left hand are cut off by the edge of the canvas. The old woman's right hand is positioned behind but slightly above the blonde's hand so the old woman's fingers and knuckles are still visible. The placement of the wizened old woman's hand obscures her genitals as does the dark shadow that is cast over the area. The position of this hand recalls the *Venus pudica*, or "modest Venus", pose that is found in a variety of images of goddesses and mortal women from multiple time periods. An ironic variant of this pose is even featured in Dix's *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber*. However, in *Vanitas (Jugend und Alter)*, the position of the old woman's right hand does not call attention to her sex in an enticing way. Rather, it serves as a further contrast between her covered, shadowy pubis and the overtly displayed, accentuated sex of the young blonde. The old woman no longer poses a sexual threat. Her visual appeal is so diminished that her desirability is literally overshadowed by the youthful, attractive blonde who dominates the composition.

The sexual desirability of the young, nude woman in Dix's painting is consistent with the women in Baldung Grien's images of young women being accosted by skeletal figures representing Death. However, in Dix's painting, both the young woman and the

old, deathly hag are women. In fact, it can be assumed that they are versions of the same woman. In contrast, Baldung Grien genders Death as masculine and there are menacing, sexual undertones in the interactions between Death and his maidenly victim. For instance, in Baldung Grien's *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (*Death and the Maiden*) of 1517 (Figure 54), Death seemingly appears as a sexual predator which links erotic desire and the experience of death. Death grabs a weeping, partially veiled woman from behind and attempts to push her into an open grave. With his right hand, he pulls the distraught woman's hair and prepares to bite her while, with his left hand, he appears to grasp at her breast. Interestingly, in Latin, the word "bite," *morsus*, is very similar to the word, "death," *mors*, which further links the act of biting with the woman's demise.

The garments of the frightened woman open to display her naked body although it is unclear whether she is deliberately revealing herself or if, in her attempt to fend off Death, her garments have slipped. Either way, as art historian Joseph Leo Koerner notes in his discussion of this painting, the woman's uncovered state renders her "more vulnerable both to the grasping arms of Death and to the open eyes of the beholder."<sup>110</sup> This eroticizing of the moment of death is heightened by the fact that the painting captures the fleeting moment before Death's teeth have sunk into her flesh and before her garment has fallen thereby revealing her genitals. Indeed, it seems that Death's teeth will penetrate her neck at the very instant her garment, which is evocative of a funeral shroud, falls to the ground. Thus, the painting "situates [the viewer] at that moment when Eros and Thanatos merge: sexuality, expressed in the concealing/revealing of the flesh and in

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<sup>110</sup> Koerner, 78, 85. Koerner refers to this painting as *Death and the Woman*. In his remarks on the woman's falling garments, Koerner notes that, given its shape, the cloth could not have actually clothed the woman so its true purpose is to "suggest that she is unclothed." In addition, with regard to the slippage of these garments, he refers to it as "the woman's striptease."

the gesture of the corpse (were its bite a kiss), becomes identical with death...”<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, as the exposed woman is presented both as an object of desire for the viewers and as a victim of Death who fulfills this desire, “sexuality becomes linked to repulsion;” through the vicarious fulfillment of their erotic desires, the viewers “encounter [themselves] in the image of Death.”<sup>112</sup>

Similarly, in another work titled *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (*Death and the Maiden*) also of 1517 (Figure 55), Death sneaks up behind a nude woman, who is swathed in a transparent veil. While not as sinister as the above painting in which Death bites the young woman, the manner in which Death leers at the nude young woman and pulls her hair has distinctly sexual and predatory undercurrents. In this painting, the woman clasps her hands in terror or in prayer and the figure of Death firmly clutches a lock of her hair. Death’s act of clutching the woman’s flowing hair perhaps functions as a subtle *vanitas* motif as the woman’s blonde tresses, symbolic of her youth and beauty, will thin and fall out with age and, after death, will resemble Death’s sparse, decaying patches of hair. This action, coupled with Death’s gesture toward an open grave in the lower left corner of the canvas, could also reference the mistaken belief that a hair continues to grow even after one’s demise.<sup>113</sup> However, this erroneous idea is clearly no consolation to the teary-eyed young woman whom Death tries to coerce into the waiting grave. At the top of the painting, Baldung Grien painted the words “Hie must du yn” (“Here you must go”), which make Death’s intentions for his victim unmistakably

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<sup>111</sup> Koerner, 78, 80.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 80. Koerner asserts that this sexuality is connected to revulsion specifically within the viewer’s “experience of the painting.”

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 57. Koerner references this “superstition” in his discussion of Baldung Grien’s woodcut *Death Overtaking a Knight* (c.1510- 1512). Obviously, hair does not continue to grow after a person dies. Rather, due to dehydration, the skin around the hair follicles retracts giving the appearance that the length of the hair has increased.

clear.<sup>114</sup> As in the above painting, the woman's body is exposed to the viewer; the transparent veil that is wrapped around her body does not conceal her genital region but rather draws attention to it. Furthermore, Death's gesticulation toward the grave also functions as a presentational gesture highlighting this display. Thus, as in Baldung Grien's other painting of *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, this work presents an attractive female as both an alluring object presented to the viewer and as the prey for Death thereby linking eroticism and death and engaging in both the seduction and repulsion of the viewer.

The relationship between eroticism and death and between the simultaneous attraction and revulsion of the viewer also occurs in Dix's *Vanitas [Jugend und Alter]*. However, as the young woman and the deathly hag in Dix's painting are both females, if not the same person, the dynamic of their pairing is different than in Baldung Grien's paintings. As in the *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber*, Death is the maiden. In Dix's painting of the famed dancer, Death and the maiden were conflated into one body, that of Anita Berber. In *Jugend und Alter (Vanitas)*, Death and the maiden are present as two figures. However, as the two women are really the same woman shown at different ages, the maiden is Death although this might not become readily apparent until the aging process becomes more visible.

In contrast to Baldung Grien's images of the Death and the Maiden, there are no implications of violence in Dix's painting. The old woman does not attempt to get the young woman's attention. While she does raise her left arm, she does not grasp the young, blonde woman as the figures of Death in Baldung Grien's works do.

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<sup>114</sup>Koerner, 55. Koerner refers to this painting as *Death and a Woman*.

Additionally, there is no sexual tension between the figures in Dix's painting. Although the old woman lurks behind her younger counterpart, she does not make any untoward sexual advances on her. Indeed, the old woman seems just as indifferent or ignorant to the young woman's presence as the young woman is to hers. Instead, the sexual tension exists between the viewer and the nude woman.

The viewer and Dix as the artist-viewer simultaneously experience attraction and revulsion; the viewer is both attracted to the attractive, nude, young woman and repelled by the unattractive, feeble, old woman. The sexually available young, blonde woman seemingly promises the fulfillment of the viewer's desires while the wrinkled, old woman counters the desire of the pleasures of the flesh. The emotional dichotomy between attraction, or lust, and disgust is further complicated and denied a satisfactory resolution if the two women are different manifestations of the same person. If the old woman is a withered shade of the younger, then the causes of the viewer's simultaneous attraction and revulsion are not only placed in close proximity, they are actually the same. Thus, despite the fact that there is no mirror present in *Vanitas [Jugend und Alter]*, the idea that the old crone is a version of the young woman is similar to the motif found in Dix's *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* in which a young woman casts a haggard, aged reflection in a mirror. Both works are variations of *vanitas* motifs in which beauty, youth, health and other attributes are shown to be transient while aging, death and bodily decay are inescapable.

In addition to the lack of mirror, there is another, more pressing dissimilarity between the two aforementioned works. The woman in *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* and its watercolor and graphic variations is decidedly a prostitute. Her clothing and the boudoir

setting are evidence of this. In contrast, as discussed earlier, there is no evidence that the nude blonde woman in *Vanitas [Jugend und Alter]* is a prostitute. Instead, her short hairstyle and slim body suggest that she is a modern *Neue Frau*. Thus, through the linking of the *vanitas* motifs in these two works, prostitutes and *Neue Frauen* are connected both thematically and visually. Indeed, just as Weimar prostitutes dressed as widows elided the distinction between “the women *on* the street with the women *of* the street,”<sup>115</sup> Dix suggests that New Women similarly blurred the lines between streetwalkers and emancipated women who walked the streets.

As previously noted, this idea featured prominently in the discussion of war widows and prostitutes who wore widow’s clothing. However, this mindset was also found in the writings of social critics who lamented the so-called immorality of the liberated *Neue Frau*. For instance, in his “*Die Verhuring Berlins*” (“Berlin is Becoming a Whore”) of 1920, Thomas Wehrin essentially conflated prostitutes and non-prostitutes in his lament of German cultural decline as evidenced by women in Berlin. In his article, which appeared in *Das Tage-buch*, Wehrin decried not only the corruption of ostensibly “fine, strong” (“*wohlgeratene, kräftige*”) German men by prostitutes, whom he referred to as “abhorrent females” (“*abschreckender Weiber*”), but also the general “corruption of the bourgeois woman” (“*die Korruption der bürgerliche Frau*”).<sup>116</sup> In his tirade against this supposed “corruption,” Wehrin condemned various behaviors and attitudes he observed among contemporary non-prostitutes in Berlin. He criticized young girls who

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<sup>115</sup> Meskimmon, Marsha. *We Weren’t Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. 38.

<sup>116</sup>Wehrin, Thomas. “*Die Verhuring Berlins*.” *Das Tage-buch*, Heft 43. Jahrg. 1, Berlin: 6 November 1920. 1381. In his discussion of prostitution, Wehrin briefly mentions prostitutes in Paris and Naples but asserts that they cater to the dregs of society whereas prostitutes in Berlin corrupt decent German men. With regard to Berlin, he says the following: “In Berlin aber sach ich äußerlich wohlgeratene, kräftige in ihrer Art gewiß liebesfähige Männer ohne Gene am Arm abschreckender Weiber.”

had love affairs in their teenage years and condemned contemporary women who only seemed to be concerned with the “sale of their physical charms” (“*die Veräußerung seiner körperlichen Reize*”).<sup>117</sup> As evidence of this, he cited the infatuation of Weimar-era women with going to the cinema, wearing short skirts that hit above the knee, purchasing popular culture magazines such as *Elegante Welt*, extensive shopping, especially on the *Kurfürstendamm*, and secretly having sex with multiple partners unbeknownst to their husbands or fathers.<sup>118</sup> These women, whom Wehrlin chastised for being tantamount to prostitutes, bore the markers of being New Women although Wehrlin did not specifically refer to them as such. Based on his description, they wore modern clothing, specifically short skirts, and ventured out into the streets on their own in order to go shopping or see a film. This also indicates that the women had disposable income and were, thus, employed. Additionally, the women Wehrlin described were sexually emancipated as well. Thus, it seems that Wehrlin condemned all the qualities which were typically associated with New Women and correlated them with prostitution and social decay.

Furthermore, Wehrlin also explicitly blamed the usage of contraception, a topic inextricably tied to discussions of the *Neue Frau*, for causing women to turn to prostitution. He boldly asserted that “*der alltägliche Gebrauch von Mitteln zur Verhinderung der Befruchtung führt unwillkürlich zur Verhütung der Frau.*”<sup>119</sup> For

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<sup>117</sup> Wehrlin, 1381. Wehrlin recounts that he overheard a young Berlin girl rhetorically asking if there are twenty year olds who are not having affairs (“*Verhältnisse*”). He then scoffs at the girl’s suggestion of twenty years of age and suggests that seventeen or even fifteen would be accurate as well. With regard to women’s preoccupation with “selling their physical charms,” his assertion is as follows: “Ein Geschlecht von Weibern ist aufgewachsen, das gar nichts im Kopf hat als die Veräußerung seiner Körperlichen Reize.”

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Wehrlin, 1383. In English, this translates to the following: “the daily use of devices for the prevention of fertilization spontaneously leads to women becoming whores.”

Wehrlin, this embrace of measures to prevent pregnancy correlated with the devaluation of motherhood he perceived among the Weimar populace, especially women. He reported with great concern that metropolitan New Women, “these short-skirted, silk-stockinged females” (“*dieser kurzröckigen, seidenstrumpfigen Weiber*”) pursued pleasure and had no interest in becoming mothers.<sup>120</sup> He interpreted this perceived blatant disregard for women’s supposed biological destiny as a sign that German society was stuck “in the morass of the most hopeless degeneration” (“*im Moraste hoffnungslosester Degeneration*”).<sup>121</sup>

Just as Dix’s earlier works evince the conflation of widows and prostitutes that occurred in the immediate post-war period, so does *Vanitas [Jugend und Alter]* demonstrate that even in the later years of the Weimar Republic, the contrast between New Women and prostitutes remained distressingly unclear. As previously mentioned, the identity of the woman in *Vanitas [Jugend und Alter]* is uncertain. She does not bear any of the characteristic signifiers of Dix’s many representations of “depraved” prostitutes. Yet, the painting’s obvious *vanitas* motif and this motif’s similarity to those found in *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* and the variants of that image link the unidentified woman in this later painting with the prostitutes in Dix’s earlier works. In *Vanitas [Jugend und Alter]*, the blonde woman’s hairstyle and slim physique suggest that she is a *Neue Frau* and interwar writers and critics, such as Wehrlin, decried the behavioral, moral and even sartorial similarities they perceived between such women and prostitutes. For them, the turning away from traditional, Wilhelmine mores not only led to social

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid. To a lesser extent, Wehrlin also scolds city men for allowing women to deviate from their traditionally prescribed path of becoming wives and mothers.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. Wehrlin bases this assertion on one of Robert Hessen’s writings in which he remarks that an age has to be judged by how it feels about the symbol of the mother and child. He paraphrases Hessen as follows: “Ein Zeitalter ist danach zu beurteilen, wie es das Symbol der Mutter mit dem Kinde empfindet.”



decay but also meant that determining if a woman was a prostitute or simply a liberated *Neue Frau* was sometimes problematic.

In his *Führer durch das 'lasterhafte' Berlin*, even the decidedly nonjudgmental Curt Moreck concluded that the “young, single, sexually active women in the metropolis who adopt the open flirtatiousness and the once-distinctive style of the prostitute, particularly the prostitute’s use of cosmetics and more revealing fashions” were rendered akin to prostitutes in the eyes of many observers.<sup>122</sup> For instance, in his discussion of “*Taumentziengirls*,” prostitutes who worked along *Taumentzienstraße*, which was well-known for prostitution, he specifically linked prostitutes and non-prostitutes. He described *Taumentziengirls* as “der Inbegriff einer gewissen Verruchtheit, einer raffinierten Weiblichkeit, einer dämonisch schillernden Perversität”<sup>123</sup> which implies that he was drawn to, if not dazzled by them, despite his acknowledgement of their depravity.

With regard to the relationship between prostitutes and non-prostitutes, he remarked:

*“Die Taumentziengirls von damals sind in die Jahre gekommen und haben heute Töchter, die auf den Sportplätzen mit ihren männlichen Altergenossen in schönen Kämpfe wetteifern. Die Taumentziengirls von damals sind Mutter geworden, wenn sie auch vielleicht dank Bubikopf und Kosmetik aussehen, als wären sie nur die Älteren Schwestern ihrer Töchter. Die Taumentziengirls von damals lächeln heute*

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<sup>122</sup> Smith, 70. This is not a direct quote from Moreck’s guide. Rather, Smith notes conclusions that can be drawn from Moreck’s observations.

<sup>123</sup> Moreck, 24. Moreck’s full quote with the English translation is as follows: “*Taumentziengirls* –das war der Inbegriff einer gewissen Verruchtheit, einer raffinierten Weiblichkeit, einer dämonisch schillernden Perversität.” (“*Taumentziengirls* - that was the epitome of a certain wickedness, a refined femininity, a demonic resplendent perversity.”)

*darüber, daß man ihnen als Laster und Verruchtheit nachsagte, was heute so natürlich und selbstverständlich ist. Ihre Extravaganz von damals ist heute ein Gewohnheitsrecht der weiblichen Jugend.*”<sup>124</sup>

In this passage from Moreck’s guide, “prostitutes and ‘New Women’ are—quite literally—related.”<sup>125</sup> He “implies that emancipated women are the progeny of prostitutes” although their modern *Bubikopf* hairstyles and their use of cosmetics “make them look more like sisters.”<sup>126</sup> Later, he observed that, although the prostitute’s “daring, cheeky flirtation” (*verwegener, frecher Flirt*) was still “a frivolous provocation of bourgeois morality” (“*ein frivole Procokation der bürgerlichen Sittlichkeit*”), it was “no longer a forbidden, frowned upon adventure” (“*ein nicht mehr verbotenes und verpöntes Abenteuer*”).<sup>127</sup> In the context of his previous remarks, it is implied that such sexually overt behavior was no longer considered scandalous due to the attitudes and comportment of young, New Women. New Women functioned as “daughters” of these prostitutes because the streetwalkers’ hairstyle, makeup, boldness and brazen sexuality had, in a sense, been passed on to a new generation of women who also walked the streets but did so in a different context. During the Weimar Republic, the actions and outlooks of these New Women were considered commonplace which, although they were still perceived as being indecent according to bourgeois sensibilities, ironically seemed to be an extension

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 24-25. The translation of the passage is as follows: “The *Tauentziengirls* of that time have aged and today have daughters who compete on the sports field in a beautiful competition with their male peers. The *Tauentziengirls* of that time have become mothers, even if, perhaps thanks to their bobbed hair and cosmetics, they look as if they were only their daughter’s older sisters. The *Tauentziengirls* of the time now smile that what once was said to be their vice and wickedness is today natural and self-evident. Their extravagance of yesteryear is an established right of female youth today.” Jill Suzanne Smith also notes and provides her own translation of this passage in her article.

<sup>125</sup> Smith, 71.

<sup>126</sup> Smith, 71-72. Specifically, Moreck states that the prostitutes resemble the older sisters of the New Women.

<sup>127</sup> Moreck, 25.

of the attitudes of streetwalkers of the previous generation. The shared attributes Moreck observed among prostitutes and New Women can either be regarded as “a form of solidarity between prostitutes and sexually emancipated women or perhaps as a sign of their contemporaneous visibility in Berlin’s social scene.”<sup>128</sup> Either way, the correlation Moreck drew between prostitutes and liberated New Women is hardly flattering to the latter.

This imprecise division between prostitutes and New Woman finds a thematic and visual counterpart in Dix’s *Vanitas [Jugend und Alter]*. He barely differentiates prostitutes from New Women; the specter of the withered old crone looms behind the nude young blonde woman just as the mirror image of the decaying hag stares back at the young prostitute in *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel*. In both works, Dix correlates sex, death and decay while positioning both types of “deviant” women on the same sliding scale of liberated female sexuality. Dix’s recurring engagement with these themes and with using the bodies of women to investigate them indicates that he was simultaneously intrigued by and wary of emancipated female sexuality. Indeed, in Dix’s works, the visual slippage between a working woman who was sexually available and a working woman whose means of employment was her sexual availability seems to indicate that this tension was unresolved for the artist both in his works and, likely, in his own attitudes as well.

Although one can regard Dix’s moralizing defense of *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* with skepticism, it is hard to overlook the fact that his prostitutes and the blonde New Woman and, by extension, all New Women share the same fate, that of decay and death.

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<sup>128</sup> Smith, 72.

Despite their inner or future decrepitude, they still are (or were) sexually alluring as demonstrated by the back views of the mirror gazing prostitutes and the nude posing of the blonde woman. Indeed, both types of “deviant” women seem to both attract and repel Dix whose own feelings seem to ambivalently sway between creative inspiration and macho displeasure. After all, such women seemed to perfectly embody the Dionysian attributes that Dix, as a Nietzschean, so admired and to which he personally aspired. However, Nietzsche’s own philosophy was notably misogynistic; thus, the notion that women could so perfectly embody Nietzschean maxims regarding sex and death would have further complicated an already thorny issue.

The philosopher once remarked that “in the background of his feelings for a woman, the male still feels *contempt* for the female sex.”<sup>129</sup> Yet, this emotion is countered by desire or lust and, to some extent, the celebration of certain aspects he perceived “in or about the female—as a symbol of life, truth, creativity and eternity.”<sup>130</sup> Indeed, Nietzsche’s misogyny was often accented with moments of indistinctness about the feminine. For instance, sailing ships feature prominently in passages from *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* and *Morgenröte*. As philosopher professor David Farrell Krell notes, “the sailing ship is the ambiguously female-male image Nietzsche so often invokes in order to suggest both the mystery of woman & the mastery of an emphatically masculine ‘free spirit.’”<sup>131</sup> Thus, while Nietzsche is

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<sup>129</sup> Krell, David Farrell. *Postponements: Woman, Sensuality and Death in Nietzsche*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986. 7. Nietzsche’s remark comes from a quote of 1882. Krell quotes it from *Kritische Studienausgabe* which was edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montanari (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980). It is from *mette* number one, aphorism forty-seven, volume ten, page twenty-three.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, 3. Although these attributes about females can be observed in Nietzsche’s writings, particularly in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Krell regards such statements as “overcompensation” on Nietzsche’s part.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, 4-5. *Morgenröte* is sometimes translated into English as *The Dawn*.

sometimes wary or dismissive of women, he occasionally uses imagery that is “equivocal” in its reference to both the feminine and the masculine.<sup>132</sup>

Similarly, Dix’s images of prostitutes and New Woman, which simultaneously conflate and differentiate them, and his stance contra these women as a Weimar New Man mirror the ambiguity found in Nietzsche. Dix the artist and *Neuer Mann* is both attracted to and repelled by these women whose sexual and financial emancipation mark them as “deviant” women rather than traditional females in the established Wilhelmine sense. The attraction-revulsion dichotomy is, in turn, paralleled by duality of the *Neue Frau-Neuer Mann* which Dix’s works also construct. While the New Woman was diametrically opposed to conventional codes of German womanhood, the heterosexual, creative, self-controlled, sexually potent New Man was, in fact, fairly “closely aligned with normative masculinity.”<sup>133</sup> As the *Neue Frau* was often regarded as being masculine, she was perceived as a threat to this new manliness.

In his overview of Dix’s artistic development and subsequent role in the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Daniel Spanke, curator at the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, notes that “in all his images of women, Otto Dix is present as a male viewer, or to put it differently: Those very images of women do not depict objective reality...but rather the artist’s perception of women.”<sup>134</sup> Thus, even though Dix does not actually depict himself in his paintings of widows, in his images of a prostitute before a mirror or in the depiction of a New Woman in *Vanitas [Jugend und Alter]*, he is still present on some level. As a result, his representation of these “fallen” women reflects the persona he wished to put forth

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>133</sup> Funkenstein, 170.

<sup>134</sup> Spanke, 20.

publically just as much as paintings in which he actually includes a self-portrait such as *An die Schönheit* which was discussed in the preceding chapter. Consequently, New Women and their sister “fallen” females, prostitutes, are visualized vis-à-vis Dix’s Nietzschean-influenced conception of the Weimar New Man who usurped certain American qualities to bolster his own wounded ego.

Although Dix’s works blur the boundaries between prostitutes and New Women, they simultaneously use this comparison to demonstrate the dichotomy between “deviant” femininity personified by the *Neue Frau*-prostitute and the largely traditional masculinity typified by the New Man in general and by Dix in particular. Thus, despite the threatening “deviant” femininity/masculinity of “fallen” women, Dix’s works evince a certain degree of admiration for the Nietzschean qualities he perceived in them. The potent Dionysian sexuality he observed in them and their embodiment of the cycle of life and death made them curiously appealing to the Nietzschean artist. These fascinations—with New Women, American masculinity and the Old Masters, which were tinged with desire, jealousy, respect and disdain, provided creative inspiration while directing his goal of becoming not only a hybridized Nietzschean *Übermensch*-Weimar *Neuer Mann* but also a German master artist in the vein of, but superior to, Old Masters such as Hans Baldung Grien.

Chapter IV Fallen Women, “Overman:” The Impact of Old Master Images of the  
Judgment of Paris and Witches on Otto Dix’s Paintings of Groups of Prostitutes

The misogynistic idea that women were temptresses who lured men into sin and, often, set in motion the events that precipitated man’s moral or physical ruin did not originate during the Weimar Republic. In fact, the notion of women causing man’s downfall appears in many ancient myths, especially in the Judgment of Paris, and is often found in Old Master art works vinspired by such stories. Otto Dix intervened in this discourse by confronting Old Master images that engaged this theme; he further manipulated these motifs by finding inspiration in Old Master images of witches. Both witches and goddesses seemed to exert a supernatural, erotic pull over men despite the obvious dangers they posed and, for Dix, this inexplicable magnetism seemed to find a corollary in the strangely seductive appeal of prostitutes. In culling castrating women from Old Master motifs and by visually correlating women of ill repute, specifically prostitutes, with witches and other females who caused harm to man, Dix utilized and updated such past motifs not only to assert his own Nietzschean artistic superiority as a New Man but also to produce a visual structure for his perception of Weimar gender politics via the bodies of interwar women who pushed the bounds of bourgeois respectability.

In the interwar period, determining accurate figures regarding the number of active prostitutes was incredibly problematic because many avoided registering with the German “morals police.” On the eve of World War I, authorities estimated that, in cities throughout Germany, there were ten “clandestine” or unregistered prostitutes for every

one registered prostitute. The number of “clandestine” streetwalkers was estimated to be even higher after the war.<sup>1</sup> The idea of regulating prostitution by forcing prostitutes to register with the so-called “morals police” stemmed from the idea that, while morally wrong, prostitution could never be completely eliminated. Supposedly, men were unable to control their sexual urges whereas normative female sexuality was wholly centered on giving birth and raising children. Thus, as men were regarded as being victims of their biology, which they were purportedly unable to regulate, the male clients of prostitutes were absolved of responsibility for their actions. In contrast, as the average woman was perceived as a maternal rather than an erotic being, prostitutes and other sexually liberated women were regarded as being sexually depraved and were treated with suspicion. This view, which was common during the Weimar years, made excuses for indiscriminate sexual activity by males while denouncing women for similar behavior.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Weimar panic over the rise in the number of female prostitutes brought the issue of normative versus “deviant” female sexuality to the forefront of public debate, the stigmatizing of women who engaged in sexual activities for reasons other than procreation was nothing new. Indeed, in her article “The Mobility of the German Woman,” which was published in *The American Journal of Sociology* in 1915, Frieda Bertha Zeeb noted that, with regard to a woman’s social standing and her perceived validity as a female, “the centuries-old motto [of Germany] seems to have been, ‘She has not a woman’s right who is not married.’”<sup>3</sup> As a woman’s social value was

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<sup>1</sup> Roos, Julia. *Weimar Through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Women’s Emancipation and German Democracy, 1919-33*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 29.

<sup>3</sup>Zeeb, Frieda Bertha. “The Mobility of the German Woman.” *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 21, (Sept., 1915), 235.



predicated upon whether or not she was married, unmarried women were considered deficient, thus, were without the respect and protections afforded to married women. Married women were not only theoretically under the control of a man but they also presumably bore children and thus fulfilled their traditionally, socially proscribed gender and sex roles. Women who behaved otherwise were socially and morally suspect as Zeeb implied with her recounting of a popular “old German proverb” which stated that “Every woman without a ring on her third finger is a witch.”<sup>4</sup> The suspicion of “deviant” women that underlies this maxim reveals a distinct undercurrent of anxiety about traditional assumptions about female behavior and sexuality that existed throughout history but took on new visual manifestations in the images of prostitutes that Dix created throughout the years of the Weimar Republic.

Indeed, since ancient times, witches have been associated with prostitutes. For instance, in his *Dialogi Meretricii* (*Dialogues of the Courtesans*) ancient Greek rhetorician, Lucian, included a discussion between two *hetaerae* in which one addresses the fact that the mother of another courtesan is a known witch adept at performing love-related enchantments that subsequently drive men to humiliation, madness and death. In this discussion, the link between such witchcraft and the activities of the courtesans and their effects on men is strongly implied. Such works by classical authors were well known to later German humanist scholars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who, citing an assortment of detailed descriptions in classical references, observed similarities

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<sup>4</sup> Zeeb, 235.

between women of their own era who violated conventional standards of behavior and women of the past who practiced witchcraft.<sup>5</sup>

These humanist scholars influenced artists such as Albrecht Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien. Dürer was involved in the humanist culture of his day and had multiple humanist acquaintances in Nürnberg. Thus, it is likely that his decision to introduce the witch as a subject in his art stemmed from his humanist fascination with classical literature. Similarly, Baldung Grien, who had worked with Dürer and had seen his works depicting witches, lived and participated in the humanist atmosphere of Strasbourg. His humanist interests, which contributed to his knowledge of ancient literature and art, influenced both the choice of his subject matter, including witches, and the manner in which he addressed his subjects.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to the depiction of witches, both Dürer and Baldung Grien created works that evidenced inventive interpretations of an ancient subject. For instance, in contrast to earlier, medieval representations of fully clothed witches, nudity seems to have been essential to Dürer's interpretation of witches. This original conception indicates that although he utilized antique sources, he was committed to engaging the material in original ways.<sup>7</sup> This parallels Dix's desire as a modern German painter to innovatively utilize the themes and motifs addressed by his Old Master predecessors

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<sup>5</sup>Sullivan, Margaret A. "The Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien." *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer 2000), 345, 348. In her discussion of "love magic," Sullivan quotes Lucian's "Glycera and Thais" from *Dialogi Meretricii (Dialogues of the Courtesan)*, 7:359. Specifically, one courtesan says to the other: "Don't you know that her mother...is a witch who knows Thessalian spells, and can bring the moon down? Why, they say she even flies at night. She's the one who's sent the fellow out of his senses by giving him a drink of her brew, and now they're making a fine harvest of him."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 351-352, 355, 363-364, 370. As a young man, Baldung Grien worked with Dürer from around 1503 to 1507. Thus, there maybe have been a humanistic connection between the two artists in terms of their interests and the subjects of their art.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 354-355.

while simultaneously updating their works in an attempt to surpass them. Baldung Grien's fascination with representing the underside of conventional classical motifs and his enduring interest in the female form were melded in his images of witches and are echoed in Dix's Nietzschean desire to portray life in all its aspects, including the unpleasant ones, and his focus on representing Weimar women, especially "deviant" females such as prostitutes and New Women.

Dix openly admired the works of Old Master artists and was interested in addressing contemporary issues via an updated visual language from the past. In his article "Objekt gestaltet Form" ("Object shapes Form"), which was published in the *Berliner Nachtausgabe* (*Berlin Night Edition*) on December 3, 1927, Dix asserted the following: "Für mich bleibt jedenfalls das Objekt das Primäre, und die Form wird erst durch das Objekt gestaltet."<sup>8</sup> In his discussion of the object's role in determining the subject, he remarked that "Jedenfalls liegt für mich das Neue in der Malerei in der Verbreiterung des Stoffgebietes, in einer Steigerung der eben bei den alten Meistern bereits im Kern vorhandenen Ausdrucksformen."<sup>9</sup> Thus, for Dix, painting was, to some extent, derivative, as one only stylistically altered expressive forms that had essentially already appeared in works by the Old Masters. Consequently, he concluded that, "Neue Ausdrucksformen zu schaffen, bleibt jedem Künstler, welcher Gattung er auch angehören

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<sup>8</sup> Dix, Otto. "Objekt gestaltet Form." *Berliner Nachtausgabe* (Dec. 3 1927). Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 206. The English translation of Dix's quote is as follows: "In any case, for me, the object remains the primary thing, and the form is shaped only by the object."

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 205-206. The English translation of Dix's quote is as follows: "Anyway, for me, the new in painting lies in the widening of the subject matter, in an increase of the forms of expressions already in existence at the core of the Old Masters."

mag, vorbehalten. Nur ist fraglich, ob das, was er für neu halt, auch wirklich neu ist.”<sup>10</sup>

Finally, he ends his article by questioning the distinction between the old and the new by asking “Wie soll man da entscheiden, wo das Alte aufhört und das Neue beginnt?”<sup>11</sup>

While Dix may have not perceived his own unique engagement with Old Master motifs via contemporary subjects and his personal artistic style as “new” per se, he seems to have regarded it as a strategy to envision their works anew thereby demonstrating not only his appreciation for the Old Masters but also asserting his own artistic skill via his reinvigoration of their works through contemporary artistic manipulation.

Dix’s desire to participate in the legacy of the Old Masters while simultaneously attempting to assert his own artistic superiority can be seen in his depictions of groups of female figures. For instance, in one of his early Weimar paintings of prostitutes, *Der Salon (The Salon I)* (Figure 59) of 1921, Dix depicts four prostitutes sitting at a table in the front room of a brothel. In such rooms, prostitutes were displayed for potential clients who would then choose from amongst them. A plump, topless prostitute sits on the near side of the table while, on the far side, three prostitutes wearing translucent chemises sit on a green, cushioned seat. The table is covered by a red tablecloth with a white lace runner that is decorated with white and yellow embroidery. The placement of the runner leads the viewer’s eye to the curtained doorway through which the prostitutes would lead clients in order to access the boudoirs. Additionally, this runner has been

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<sup>10</sup> “Objekt gestaltet Form,” 206. In English, Dix’s quote translates to, “Every artist reserves the right to create new forms of expression, to choose to which genus he also belongs. But, it is questionable whether that which he thinks is new is really new.”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. In English, Dix’s question translates to “How should one decide where the old ends and the new begins?”

embellished with a cluster of four stitched flowers which is perhaps a subtly ironic comment on the group of women who have long since been deflowered.<sup>12</sup>

The middle-aged prostitute on the left with auburn hair (Figure 60) wears a peachy pink chemise with thin straps and gold trim accented with green beads. Her hair is adorned with a golden diadem-like ornament and a pink dahlia-like flower which accent her attire. To her pale face, she has heavy-handedly applied bright pink rouge that extends from her cheeks, over her eyelids, up to her eyebrows. She has folded her left arm across her chest and rests it on the table. Her breasts droop over her arm which both accentuates them and calls attention to their saggiess. She sets her right elbow on the table and rests her right cheek in her hand. The position of her right arm shows off a golden pinky ring, a gold ring with a green stone on her ring finger and a bracelet from which hangs a small, green pig charm (Figure 61). This pig charm could be intended as an unflattering reference to the woman or her character. It could also allude to the sorceress, Circe, who turned Odysseus' crew into pigs and who will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The pose of the auburn-haired prostitute, which is traditionally associated with melancholy, as found in Dürer's famous *Melancholia I* engraving of 1514 (Figure 62), makes her seem bored or inured to her surroundings. The torpor of Dürer's figure of *Melancholia* has been interpreted as indicating that she is so consumed by her own thoughts that she is unable to continue her work. Hence, her inactivity is a not a sign of laziness; instead, due to her unrewarding mental thought processes, her work has become

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<sup>12</sup> Rewald, Sabine. "The Salon I, 1921." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 64. Rewald, "The Salon I, 1921." 64-65.

pointless to her.<sup>13</sup> Although Dix's morose prostitute engages in "work" of a different sort, she too seems lost in thought. She appears indifferent to or unimpressed by the presumed presence of a potential client leading one to infer that, as with the figure of *Melancholia*, the auburn-haired prostitute's "work" has become meaningless to her.

In addition, due to the influence of Neo-Platonic thought, specifically ideas found in Marsilio Ficino's *De Vita Triplici* of 1489, melancholy was typically associated with artistic activity and creative genius.<sup>14</sup> However, it seems unlikely that Dix was remarking on the intellectual ingenuity or imaginative originality of the prostitute who assumes the usual pose of melancholy. Just as Dürer's *Melancholia I* has been interpreted to reveal something of the artist's personality and aspirations,<sup>15</sup> the melancholic pose of the auburn-haired prostitute in *Der Salon I* can be understood as insinuating Dix's own claims to artistic genius and his desires to be recognized as being creatively on par with or even surpassing canonical artists such as Dürer.

To the right of the auburn-haired prostitute sits a young girl with black hair (Figure 63). She wears a sheer black chemise with tiered ruffles and bright red straps. In the middle of her chest rests a gold necklace with a central rectangular green stone; three drop-shaped stones that appear to be green, red and purple dangle from the center stone. This necklace and the placement of the dangling stones lead the viewer's eye down to the girl's pert breasts which are distinctly visible through her diaphanous chemise. A red

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<sup>13</sup> Panofsky, Erwin. *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*. First Princeton Classic Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. 160.

<sup>14</sup> Bartrum, Giulia. *Albrecht Dürer and his Legacy: The Graphic Work of a Renaissance Artist*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. 188.

<sup>15</sup> Panofsky, 170-171. Panofsky notes a variety of possible meanings pertaining to Dürer's own supposedly melancholic personality and genius. Such assertions range from the tension between artistic inspiration and the limitation of the medium to somberness due to familial issues.

headband is wrapped around her forehead and is further decorated with a large red bow that rests on her right temple. In the center of the band, the girl has pinned a brooch. The brooch is a seven-pointed star with a blue jewel in the center; several white feathers emanate from the top. She also wears heavily applied blush on her cheeks and near her eyes but it is bright reddish pink in color. This red blush is accentuated by the juxtaposition of the black kohl that rims the girl's eyes. In contrast to the slouched posture of the middle-aged prostitute discussed above, this raven-haired girl sits upright with her back flat against the couch. Her hands are hidden by the table but she appears to clasp them and rest them in her lap. She appears to look attentively at someone outside the frame, presumably a client who is surveying the brothel's offerings.

To the right of the young, dark-haired prostitute sits an aged, blonde woman with black eyebrows (Figure 64). Her sagging, deflated breasts are visible beneath her pale blue chemise which has darker blue straps and embroidered trim. Due to her placement on the end of the seat and her translucent garment, the upper portion of her left thigh is visible and she appears to wear a thigh-high stocking. She has adorned herself with a pearl necklace which seems too elegant for her attire and surroundings. Although she has made herself up with facial powder and red lipstick, the lines on her face are quite obvious, especially around her mouth and eyes. Her short hairstyle displays her neck and, thus, reveals the wrinkles found all the way around it and even under her jaw. Her sculpted, waved hairdo is accented by a hair ornament on the underside of her head and a large green bow on top of her head; the latter seems too youthful to be worn by a woman of her age. She gazes off into the distance and rests both of her veiny hands, adorned with multiple rings, on the table.

The proximity of this old woman to the young woman and the middle-aged woman who sit alongside her on the bench, evoke the motif of the Three Ages of Woman. It is implied that the young woman in the center will become middle aged, like the auburn-haired prostitute, and then old, like the blonde prostitute. Thus, three ages of these women also evoke death as, after old age, it is the last, inevitable step. Even the room itself alludes to the idea of decay and death as, to the blonde prostitute's left, the patterned wallpaper is marred by a large, diagonal tear or crack. Not only does this crack indicate the shoddy state of the brothel but it also likely alludes to the run-down state of the old prostitute herself which will one day be shared by the attractive, young dark-haired prostitute who seems unaware of her ultimate fate.

Seated across the table from these three women, is another prostitute whose attire is distinct from the others (Figure 65). Of the four women, this figure is the only one of whom Dix created a detailed sketch (Figure 66).<sup>16</sup> Instead of a chemise, this full-figured brunette wears white bloomers with lacey, embroidered trim on both thighs. This ornate trim echoes the intricate stitching of the lacey white runner that rests atop the deep red tablecloth. Although her legs cannot be seen in their entirety, she wears a bright pink garter on each leg indicating that she probably wears thigh-high stockings as well. In contrast to the other three prostitutes, she is completely bare breasted. She crosses her arms below her breasts and squeezes her right breast with her left hand, which is a gesture Dix uses in other images of prostitutes including the watercolor *Matrose und Mädchen (für Mutz)* (*Sailor and Girl [For Mutz]*) of 1925 (Figure 67). Although no male client is visible, her breast squeezing gesture is likely intended to entice a patron to select

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<sup>16</sup> "The Salon I, 1921." 64.



her. Furthermore, as Dix created other images of prostitutes in which the male client grasps a prostitute's breast, as in *Erinnerungen an die Spiegelsäle in Brüssel* (*Memory of the Hall of Mirrors in Brussels*) (Figure 68) of 1920, the prostitute's gesture of grabbing her own breast can be viewed as a surrogate action that stands in for that of the male artist or a male viewer. In addition, the depiction of German soldiers participating in such amorous encounters can be perceived as an attempt by the artist to display German male virility. Both images were created after the war so the sexualized machismo depicted in the works can be interpreted as an effort to reassert the male potency that was compromised by Germany's defeat. *Erinnerungen an die Spiegelsäle in Brüssel* is especially indicative of this as the work features a man in military dress. Moreover, the word "*Erinnerungen*" indicates that Dix has memories of this encounter because he was present which suggests that his sexual potency as a German soldier is not in doubt. While his implied presence also indicates his own willingness to engage in Dionysian sexual excitement, he depicts another soldier rather than himself.<sup>17</sup> He remains outside the scene and, thus, in control of it. He benefits from the association with the Dionysian sexuality of the prostitute without being threatened by her.

The bare-breasted prostitute in *Der Salon* wears pink rouge, heavy eye makeup and dark lipstick and her hair has been elaborately pinned up. A wide marigold yellow ribbon is pulled across her forehead and culminates in a large bow on the right side of her head. A bejeweled hair ornament is only partially visible behind her distinct waves and large bun. Although she wears two gold rings on her left hand, her jewelry is not as

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<sup>17</sup> Dix did not have a mustache as the man in the watercolor does. Nor does the man have Dix's facial characteristic. A pencil and watercolor image by Dix from 1922 is entitled *Ich in Brüssel* (*Me in Brussels*). Dix wears a similar uniform but he has no mustache and the facial features are clearly his own. With regard to *Erinnerungen an die Spiegelsäle in Brüssel*, if the depicted man was intended to be Dix, he would have likely explicitly indicated that in the title and the man's facial features would be different.

ornate as that worn by the other women. Instead of a gold or pearl necklace, she wears a small oval pendant on a black cord (Figure 69) which contains the profile images of a pale, blonde woman wearing a blue dress with pink, floral accents at the bust.

It is unclear whether the image in the bare-breasted prostitute's pendant is intended to be a photograph or an enamel painting. It is also unclear who the woman is supposed to be although it has been posited that the image depicts the bare-breasted prostitute in her younger days. This suggestion, which insinuates that the haggard, half-nude prostitute is a pale shade of the youthful and attractive girl she once was, aligns with the motif of the Three Ages of Woman implied by the other prostitutes. Additionally, it leads one to wonder how the slim, elegant, well-dressed woman in the pendant's image became the plump, crass prostitute reduced to working in a rather shoddy brothel whose clientele was likely working class men and sailors.<sup>18</sup>

The radical transformation of the young lady in the pendant image into the vulgar prostitute echoes much Weimar literature that worryingly recounted the "fall" of many young women into prostitution. For instance, in Margot Klages-Stange's article "Prostitution," which was published in *Die Weltbühne* in 1926, she expressed concern that the majority of girls who worked as prostitutes were domestic servants from the countryside.<sup>19</sup> She lamented that, often, these recent transplants from the country had no support system and their wages were not high enough to cover the cost of fine, material

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<sup>18</sup> "The Salon I, 1921." 64-65.

<sup>19</sup> Klages-Stange, Margot. "Prostitution," *Die Weltbühne* 22, no. 15 (April 13, 1926), 579. Klages-Stange's original quote is "Die Hauptmasse, der gewerbsmäßigen Kontrollmädchen kommt aus dem Dienstbotenstande."

goods they desired.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the girls came by the money through prostitution or, as Klages-Stange euphemistically stated, “*auf anderm Wege*” (“in other ways”).<sup>21</sup> Klages-Stange also singled out “*Choristinnen, Ballettmädchen, Bardamen*” (“choir singers, ballet dancers and barmaids”) and girls who worked in the clothing manufacturing trade (“*Konfektion*”) as engaging in prostitution due to low wages in the case of the three former or due to staff cuts in the case of the latter.<sup>22</sup>

After her discussion of the women who resort to prostitution due to insufficient wages Klages-Stange commented on “*Verkäuferinnen und Stenotypistinnen*” (“sales girls and typists”).<sup>23</sup> Tellingly, she conflated these women, whose professions were often mentioned in discussions of the *Neue Frau*, with prostitutes. These women were no longer under parental supervision and, for what Klages-Stange implied were financial reasons, were willing to engage in sexual relations outside of marriage and, in fact, viewed them as a “natural right” (“*natürliches Recht*”). She remarked that such an attitude was “far beyond the scope of actual ‘prostitution’” but intimated that the promiscuity of such liberated young women was tantamount to prostitution.<sup>24</sup> In addition, she listed specific numerical figures for the ratio of men to women prior to and after World War I and concluded that the decreased number of men meant that almost two and one-half million women were “condemned to remain single” (“*verurteilt, ledig*

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Klages-Stange states “Oft hat das Mädchen Keinen, dem es sich anvertrauen Kann, und das Anlehnungsbedürfnis führt es auf abwege. Das Lohn reicht fast nie aus, um einen in der Großstadt gesteigerten Schmuckverlangen zugenügen und so wird das fehlende Geld ‘auf anderm Wege’ beschafft.”

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. For the full quote, see footnote 20 of this chapter.

<sup>22</sup> Klages-Stange, 580.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. She states that “Das ist weit über den Rahmen der eigentlichen ‘Prostitution’ hinaus der Fall” and subsequently laments that “Virginität bis zur Ehe hat in den Großstädten aufgehört zu existieren.”

zu bleiben”).<sup>25</sup> Due to the shortage of men, Klages-Stange asserted that these single women would engage in extramarital sex and possibly become prostitutes thereby contributing to the troubling “increase in sexually transmitted diseases.”<sup>26</sup>

Thus, while Klages-Stange seemed to voice legitimate concerns about the situation of certain women living in metropolitan areas, she simultaneously upheld traditional, sexist notions about marriage and woman’s proper role as wife within that institution. Consequently, women who deviated from proscribed, conventional female roles by working outside the home and engaging in non-marital sex were, to some extent, pitied but were also condemned for their material and sexual desires and blamed for the dangerous spread of diseases. Not only have the distinctions between prostitutes and New Women essentially been erased but their “deviant” behavior is faulted for supposedly causing social decay in the form of disease and moral corruption.

With regard to the choice of the number of women pictured in *Der Salon I*, Dix was intrigued with depicting images of three women as such groups recalled the motifs of the Three Graces, the Three Ages of Woman and, occasionally, the Judgment of Paris. The three women on the far side of the table can be interpreted as referencing the Three Ages of Woman. The auburn-haired prostitute could represent middle age, the dark-haired girl in the center could reference youth and the withered blonde on the right could indicate to old age. In this context, suggesting the Three Ages of Woman alludes to the transience of life as female beauty and sexual allure develop and then diminish with age

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. She notes that prior to World War I, the ratio of men to women in Germany was 1,000 to 1,024. After the war, there were 1,000 men to 1,084 women. For fifteen to twenty year olds, the ratio was 1,000 males to 1,116 females. Consequently, she asserts, “So sind fast 2 ½ Millionen Frauen verurteilt, ledig zu bleiben, also außerehelichen Verkehr zu suchen.”

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Klages-Stange says, “Die große Gefahr dabei ist die Zunahme der Geschlechtskrankheiten, bedingt durch die wachsende Ziffer der sich gelegentlich prostituierenden Frauen.”

as evidenced by the three seated prostitutes of varying ages. Additionally, as in many German Renaissance images, the suggestion of death often accompanies images of aging thereby correlating of the loss of youth and beauty with the loss of life. Thus, the allusion to the Three Ages of Woman, especially the presence of the aged prostitute on the right, coupled with the specter of disease, if not death, that hovered over the practice of prostitution during the interwar years subtly implies that the likelihood of death increases with the passing of years, especially for those who participate in such a risky profession.

However, there are four women in *Der Salon I* so allusions to historical motifs featuring trios fail to include the plump, bare breasted woman seated on the other side of the table. An Old Master motif that sometimes depicts groups of four women is that of witches. For instance, Albrecht Dürer's engraving of 1497, *Die Vier Hexen* (*Four Witches*) (Figure 70) features four young, nude women, each of whom dons a unique headdress or veil, standing in an interior chamber. Although a fourth woman has been added, the poses of the three foreground women are similar to those found in depictions of the goddesses in representations of the Judgment of Paris. The presence of a small devil prowling amidst flames on the left side of the image and the human skull and bone strewn on the floor at their feet indicate that these women are witches rather than more benign female entities.

Specifically, the nude witches in *Die Vier Hexen* have been interpreted by art historian Margaret A. Sullivan as evoking "the image of Diana Triformis (*Triplex Diana*,

*Dea Triformis*) or the triple Hecate (*Trivia Hecate*).<sup>27</sup> Although Diana and Hecate were ancient goddesses, the latter was the goddess of death and fertility and was believed to be the progenitor of witches.<sup>28</sup> Hecate was also associated with the underworld and was conflated with the goddess, Diana, who not only was identified with the underworld, but was also regarded as the goddess of hell and death, the patroness of black magic and the materfamilias of witches. Due to the triform interpretation of these witch goddesses, Hecate was often depicted as possessing three bodies and three faces which symbolically evoked the three manifestations of Diana. In this context, the attractive woman whose back is to the viewer possibly references the goddess, Diana, as her three faces, shown in different views, reveal her actual threatening and malevolent character.<sup>29</sup> The meaning of the letters “O.G.H” on the lamp above the four women remain a matter of conjecture but one possible meaning is “Orcus, Gehenna, Hades.”<sup>30</sup> As these three terms reference hell or the underworld, such an interpretation would support an infernal interpretation of this work.

During the Renaissance period, nudity was often correlated with sinfulness. Thus, the four nude women are automatically suspect and are implied to be women of

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<sup>27</sup> Sullivan, 355.

<sup>28</sup> Stumpel Jeroen. “The Foul Fowler Found Out: On a Key Motif in Dürer’s ‘Four Witches.’” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, Vol. 30, No. 3/4 (2003), 143.

<sup>29</sup> Sullivan, 343-344, 356.

<sup>30</sup> Panofsky, 71. Hades was the Greek god of the dead and the word later came to reference the underworld in general. Orcus was the Roman equivalent of Hades. Early Jews and Christians referred to hell as “Gehenna.” Panofsky also mentions the following possible interpretations of “O.G.H”: “O Gott hütte.” (“May God forbid”), “Origo Generis Humani” and “Obsidium Generis Humani.” However, he dismisses such interpretations as arbitrary. He also remarks that the interpretations of “Öffentliches Gasthaus” and “Ordo Gratiarum Horarumque” are ridiculous. In his interpretation of the work, Panofsky posits that the scene may be related to a particular incident in the *Malleus Maleficarum* in which a pregnant woman miscarries due to the actions of a witch.

questionable morality.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the presence of the skulking devil reinforces the sinful, diabolical undertones of the scene. The devil, visible through a doorway, seems to be located in recessed room off the primary chamber. However, due to the particular rendering of the perspective, its head appears just beyond the buttocks of the leftmost female whose back is turned to the viewer. Interestingly, the creature holds an object that appears to be two slender sticks with string attached to them (Figure 71). This implement appears to be a device used to catch birds; however, the instrument was often used in a metaphorical sense to reference the ensnaring of a person, particularly by the devil or by a woman. In fact, the use of birding or fowling as a metaphor for the luring and trapping of men by women was not uncommon.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Dürer's work perhaps implies that the alluring, nude female witches function as beguiling decoys to lure men to their deaths, as indicated by the skull and bone, if not their damnation, as implied by the background devil.

This ideas of exposing the real, wicked and dangerous nature of the otherwise attractive witches and of tempting women luring men to their downfall that are evidenced in Dürer's engraving are relevant to Dix's representations of prostitutes. The auburn haired and black haired witches in *Der Salon* are conventionally attractive and, ostensibly, seem healthy. However, just as their transparent chemises seductively reveal their bodies, the presence of the aged, blonde prostitute reveals not only the ravages of time but also the physical hardships of the profession. The wrinkles of her aging face are noticeable despite her makeup and her droopy breasts are visible through her chemise.

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<sup>31</sup> Grössinger, Christa. *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997. 13-14.

<sup>32</sup> Stumpel, 146-150. The bird-catching device was known as a *Klobe*, *Klob*, or *Clob*. The goal was to somehow catch the unsuspecting bird between the two sticks.

These aspects reveal the difficulties of the women's lots in life despite the superficial glamour of the makeup, jewelry and hair ornaments. In addition, although the auburn prostitute looks bored, the dark-haired prostitute seems prim and the blonde prostitute appears disinterested, the bare breasted prostitute's pose marks her as lusty and vulgar. Her pose thereby exposes the real character of such women. Moreover, in contrast to the other three slender prostitutes, the bare-breasted woman is quite fleshy. Thus, her flabby physique perhaps serves as an indicator of her insatiable appetite for things of the flesh and further reveals the supposedly "true" morally corrupt nature of this variety of "deviant" women.

The poses of these standing women in Dürer's engraving differ from those of the seated prostitutes in *Der Salon I* but the numerical link to *Die Vier Hexen* cannot be overlooked and establishes a precedent for linking prostitutes with witches that Dix further explores in later works. Additionally, Dürer's images of witches stem from his strong interest in the darker side of antiquity which parallels Dix's interest in the unpleasant aspects of his own society. Furthermore, the correlation of prostitutes with witches, especially within the context of emphasizing the fleetingness of youth, beauty and life itself implied by the Three Ages motif, adds an additional negative dimension to the representation of these "degenerate" women. During the Renaissance period, witches were defined by their unappeasable lust and they were supposedly so sexually voracious that they participated in orgies with the devil as part of their rites during witches' sabbaths.<sup>33</sup> Just as female witches of the Renaissance period were associated with female sexual deviancy and the degradation of society, so too were "degenerate"

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<sup>33</sup> Grössinger, 131.



Weimar women such as prostitutes and *Neue Frauen* often regarded as causing all manner of societal problems.

Continuing his fascination with the themes and motifs found in *Der Salon*, in 1921, Dix painted another work whose subject matter was very similar. *Der Salon II* (*The Salon II*) (Figure 72), which is, unfortunately, no longer extant, likewise portrays four prostitutes in a brothel parlor. However, in contrast to the previous work, all four women are nearly naked except for stockings and shoes and the male client is shown standing in their midst as he makes his selection. The clean shaven young man, who stands in the left middle ground, stands with his feet shoulder width apart and clasps his hands behind his back. His hair seems to be slicked back and he wears a dark colored, slim-cut suit with a vest, a white collared shirt and a striped tie. He stares directly at the young blonde prostitute in the middle ground and one can assume she is the one whose services he is interesting in purchasing.

In the background, a young prostitute with white lace-up boots, short, wavy hair and a large bow on her head stands before a mirror. She grins and poses for the potential client with her left arm bent behind her head. She holds a semi-open fan in her right hand and she uses it to coyly obstruct the view of her genitals which calls to the traditional *Venus pudica* pose that recurs in Dix's works. In the foreground, an overweight prostitute with dark hair sits in a chair while staring at the patron and smoking a cigarette. She drapes her left arm over the back of the chair and splays her legs outs. However, her bulbous stomach protrudes over her genital region and obscures the view her pose would otherwise reveal. Behind her to the right stands a young, curvaceous blonde prostitute with a bow in her hair. She stands with her right hand on her hip and gestures to the

curtained doorway with her left arm. She appears to make eye contact with the client, who shares the middle ground space with her, and she crosses her right leg over her left as though she is about to shift her weight and lead him through the curtain to her boudoir. An aged prostitute with dark hair, drooping breasts and sagging buttocks occupies the right foreground. She mirrors the young blonde's pose as she rests her left hand slightly above her hip. The young blonde's left hand, with which she gestures to the door, appears right below the aged prostitute's right breast. The former stands behind and to the left of the aged prostitute; however, due to Dix's rendering of the figures, the young woman almost appears to cradle the older woman's breast in her hand. This seems to be a subtle variant the breast-grabbing pose found in Dix's other works including those discussed above. Rather than crossing one leg over the other, the aged prostitute stands with her left leg slightly out and her knee bent. A cigarette dangles from her mouth as she gazes at the man through droopy eyelids.

The room in which this scene takes place is more furnished than the parlor in the previous painting. A potted palm-like tree rests on a white stand to the right of the vertically-oriented mirror. The mirror seems to be set in a carved wooden frame and an additional chair is visible in the reflection. A chandelier with three tulip-shaped shades hangs from the ceiling and illuminates the scene. Regrettably, the work was destroyed and it is only known through a black and white photograph. Thus, detailed visual analysis with regard to the color palette is impossible.

*Der Salon II* is obviously related to *Der Salon I* in terms of subject matter. Both depict four women waiting in a brothel parlor while a client chooses among them but *Der Salon II* actually shows the client in question while the earlier painting does not. As the

presence of a male client is implied in the earlier work, it can be interpreted as subtly referencing the Judgment of Paris. However, the slightly later work, in which a dapper male client chooses among a group of prostitutes rather than between the goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, is more overt in its reference to the ancient story and has been interpreted as satirizing the Judgment of Paris.<sup>34</sup>

This ancient myth of the Judgment of Paris was commonly represented by German Old Masters, including Lucas Cranach the Elder who painted multiple versions of it including *Das Urteil des Paris* (*The Judgment of Paris*) of 1530 (Figure 73). Interestingly, in Cranach's renditions of the subject, there are four adult figures present in addition to Paris who is shown as a seated, bearded German man wearing a suit of armor. The three goddesses from which Paris must choose, Aphrodite, Athena and Hera stand to the right and pose in ways that best display their charms and physical beauty. In the Renaissance period, female corporeal attractiveness was linked with a lack of chastity as such beauty was believed to tempt men from mere aesthetic appreciation into lust and sins of the flesh.<sup>35</sup> They are nude except for necklaces, hair ornaments and a swath of transparent material that teasingly flutters in front of their genitals. As female nudity was also associated with carnal sin, their lack of clothing coupled with their physical beauty implies that the sexual temptation offered by these goddesses is almost too much for Paris to overcome.

Directly to Paris' right, the god Apollo, in the guise of an older, white haired man with a long beard, functions as the goddesses' accomplice by rousing the Trojan prince

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<sup>34</sup> "The Salon I, 1921." 65.

<sup>35</sup> Grössinger, 16.

from his slumber in order to choose the most comely of the three nude deities. The presence of the figure of Apollo indicates that an Old Master precedent exists for representing Paris and four additional figures that Dix later altered in his work, *Der Salon II*, which depicts four nude women and one man. In an interview with Hans Kinkel, Dix expressly mentioned his admiration for Cranach and was undoubtedly familiar with his oeuvre.<sup>36</sup> However, Dix was not content simply to acknowledge an artistic respect for such great artists; rather, in *Der Salon II*, Dix's decision to transform the male figure of Apollo into an additional female prostitute is further evidence of his desire to trump the Old Masters.

As is well known, the beauty contest between the goddesses ended with Paris choosing Venus. The goddess bribed Paris with the offer of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, the wife of King Menelaus of Greece. This resulted in the calamitous Trojan War when Menelaus laid siege to Troy in order to get her back. However, Cranach's work shows absolutely no sign of the ultimate, unfortunate outcome of these events; instead, he focuses on a particular moment that occurs in mythological, rather than actual, time.<sup>37</sup>

Dix's *Der Salon II* also depicts a modern German man making a decision between several women. Rather than a Trojan prince wearing armor, the person who selects his preferred female is a clean-shaven, young man wearing a three-piece suit. Although this man lacks a princely title, his power over the women is implied by his status as the one

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<sup>36</sup> Dix, Otto. "Gespräch mit Hans Kinkel, 1961/1967." Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 252. Although the interview with Kinkel occurred in 1961/1967, Dix's remark about Cranach was made in reference to art the former created in the nineteen twenties.

<sup>37</sup> Russell, 171.

who chooses. The women are little more than objects to be evaluated and selected based upon their perceived ability to fulfill the man's desires. However, these women are prostitutes rather than elegant goddesses. The seated, fleshy prostitute smoking in the foreground and the aged prostitute with sagging breasts standing in the curtained doorway are especially antithetical to Cranach's graceful goddesses. The figure of the male god, Apollo, in Cranach's work has been replaced by an additional prostitute. The man in the brothel parlor seems to gaze directly at the young blonde prostitute standing in front of him which indicates that he will select her. Although he chooses the most conventionally attractive woman in the room, the connection with the Judgment of Paris implies that, as with the prince of Troy, the man's decision will not end well. Paris' lusty choice of Venus' offer of a beautiful woman ultimately led to violence, chaos and death. While the man in Dix's work may enjoy sexual satisfaction from his choice, however, given the prevalence of venereal diseases among Weimar prostitutes and Nietzsche's pontifications regarding dangerous, Dionysian women, it is possible his choice will prove unwise as well.

The story of Paris illustrates the weakness of some men before the promise of female beauty and sexual allure. Additionally, it seemingly proves Dix's Nietzschean theory, which he recorded in his war diary from World War I, that "in the final analysis, all wars are waged over and because of the vulva."<sup>38</sup> Such a view results in the notion of men being led to destruction through their unwavering desire for sex. Thus, the Nietzschean cycle of sex, procreation, destruction and death is strongly implied by Dix's

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<sup>38</sup> Tatar, Maria *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. 74. This statement is an English translation of a statement Dix recorded in his private war diary. The quote was originally found in Otto Conzelmann, *Der andere Dix: Sein Bild vom Menschen und vom Krieg* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983), 132-133.

statement. Inherent in these ideas is a distinct undercurrent of misogyny as Nietzsche essentially admitted when he remarked that “in the background of his feelings for a woman, the male still feels *contempt* for the female sex.”<sup>39</sup> Specifically, Nietzsche “abhors” “the incomplete woman, the ‘botched’ (*verunglückte*) female who cannot be made pregnant and thus defused and domesticated.”<sup>40</sup> Such feelings relate to Dix’s paintings of prostitutes and liberated New Women as the goal of such women was to avoid pregnancy and various contraceptive means were utilized in order to prevent pregnancies from occurring. Thus, in a Nietzschean interpretation, such “deviant” vitalistic females were castrating women because they thwarted men’s attempts at control and domestication thereby calling masculine power and authority into question. Consequently, despite exercising the masculine privilege of choice, the man in *Der Salon II* seems destined to be emasculated by one of the phallic women whose Dionysian allure he cannot resist regardless of the potential danger.

Although they are not all conventionally attractive, these four prostitutes seem to hold some strange allure for the prospective client and for other potential customers who are not depicted. The shamelessness of their nudity, the provocative nature of their poses, and the brazenness of their gazes seem to exert a seductive attraction over the male customer that cannot be denied despite the hazards posed by the nature of a sexual encounter. This extraordinary attraction is perhaps suggested by the allusions to the witches and to the three goddesses from whom Paris made his choice. Despite their dark, wicked nature and the implication that interaction with such women will result in demon-

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<sup>39</sup> Krell, 7. The emphasis is Nietzsche’s. The quote comes from a note Nietzsche wrote in 1882 in aphorism 47 of the first notebook.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 25. Krell references passages from volume six, pages 305 and 306 from Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo*. Nietzsche specifically mentions Maenads, the frenzied followers of Dionysus.

inflicted horrors, Dürer's nude witches are erotically appealing. Similarly, Cranach's goddesses are aesthetically attractive and Paris cannot seem to refuse the temptation of selecting one regardless of the repercussions for himself or others. Thus, the pull exerted by the prostitutes is somehow implied to be otherworldly or at least beyond rational explanation. For Dix, the Nietzschean concept of the Dionysian could explain such male bewitchment or entrancement by the female sex that causes men to pursue sexual fulfillment and to seek heightened emotional and physical extremes regardless of the ultimate cost.

Another ancient example of dangerous females sets the precedent for depicting four women in a group rather than the three shown in images of the Judgment of Paris. In some Old Master representations of witches, including Dürer's *Die Vier Hexen*, witches are shown in groups of four. Not only does this engraving depict four nude women standing in an interior room but the layout and details of the room are similar to those in Dix's painting. For instance, the lamp with three shades that hangs from the ceiling toward the center of Dix's work echoes the unusual, round object hanging from the ceiling of Dürer's engraving.<sup>41</sup>

Additionally, in *Der Salon II*, there is a door on left and a curtained passageway on the right which parallels the room in *Die Vier Hexen* which has a door in the back left and an arched doorway on the right. While in Dix's work, the male client stands before the doorway as though he has just entered the room, in Dürer's engraving, a small demon or devil, stands in the doorway but has yet to enter the room occupied by the women. Just as in *Der Salon* Dix combined the motif of the Three Ages of Woman with an image

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<sup>41</sup> Stumpel, 143.

of witches, in *Der Salon II*, he similarly blends an allusion to the Judgment of Paris with a reference to a depiction of witches. In so doing, Dix tempers any positive associations with goddesses and attributes such as beauty with a reference to witches and the negative physical, spiritual and moral implications they traditionally connote.

Just as the story of the Judgment of Paris can be interpreted in a Nietzschean light so too does the theme of witches relate to the writings of the philosopher. For instance, in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse (Beyond Good and Evil)*, Nietzsche referenced Circe, the witch of Homer's *Odyssey*, who turned Odysseus' crewmen into swine.<sup>42</sup> In this discussions of cruelty found in this work, he specifically mentioned her and the "spicy potions" she used to transform Odysseus' men into swine.<sup>43</sup> In some of his critiques, Nietzsche aligned females with "the interiorized cruelty and rancor of morality," the latter of which he referred to as Circe.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, in *Der Wille zur Macht*, Nietzsche contemplated "the Dionysian power of intoxication, and the relation of this power to artistic creation."<sup>45</sup> This passage applauds Dionysus and the powers of Eros and intoxication. In this discussion, Nietzsche specifically mentioned Circe when he asserted that the magic of love is illusory as it does not coincide with any known reality; it functions as a reality unto itself and the fictions it creates propagate other splendid fictions. For Nietzsche, erotic intoxication is life

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<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. "*Jenseits von Gut und Böse.*" *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, Inc., 2000. 320, 349. *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* was published in 1886. Nietzsche references Circe twice in Part Six. He mentions her once in aphorism number 208 and once in aphorism number 229.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 349.

<sup>44</sup> Krell, 9.

<sup>45</sup> Nussbaum, Martha C., "The Transfigurations of Intoxication: Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Dionysus." *Arion*, Third Series, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring, 1991), 106. Nietzsche references Circe in aphorism 808 of Book Three, which is entitled Principles of a New Evaluation. It was written from March through June of 1888.



affirming. Tellingly, in creative matters, his philosophical ideology holds that, rather than stemming from practical concerns, art is essentially the product of an overwhelmingly erotic interest.<sup>46</sup>

Dix, as an avid disciple of Nietzsche, was surely aware of the philosopher's musings on Circe and her associations with cruelty, deception and "the masculine disappointment of the feminine."<sup>47</sup> Thus, while he does not specifically represent an image of Circe, as fellow *Neue Sachlichkeit* artist and Nietzsche reader George Grosz did,<sup>48</sup> he would have been receptive to the idea of representing Dionysian women, specifically prostitutes, whose lives were ruled by Eros, as witches. Furthermore, if he agreed with Nietzsche's claim that art was the product of intensely erotic concerns, then it would seem fitting to create a work in which a man, perhaps a proxy for the artist himself, also acts out of Eros-related interest.

Consequently, this Nietzschean interpretation of *Der Salon II* casts doubt on the claims Dix made when he was put on trial due to the controversy that erupted over the work. In 1923, the painting was placed on view in Darmstadt and caused an uproar which resulted in Dix's second obscenity trial.<sup>49</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, Dix had already faced an obscenity trial in 1921 due to the furor surrounding his painting,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 107-108.

<sup>47</sup> Babich, Babette E. "The Metaphor of Woman as Truth in Nietzsche: The Dogmatist's Reverse Logic or *Rückschluß*." *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, No. 12, Nietzsche and Women (Autumn 1996), 23.

<sup>48</sup> Tatar, 108-109. Tatar includes an image of Grosz's *Circe* from 1912/13. Grosz also painted a watercolor image of Circe in a 1927 watercolor of the same name.

<sup>49</sup> "The Salon I, 1921." 65.

*Mädchen am Spiegel*. Two years later, he was again charged with “distributing obscene representations” (“*Verbreitung unzüchtiger Darstellungen*”) over *Der Salon II*.<sup>50</sup>

In defending his work against the charges, Dix utilized a strategy similar to the one he employed during his trial for *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel*. He denied that the work was intended to titillate and claimed instead that his work was meant as a condemnation of prostitution and its deleterious effects. He claimed: “Die Idee des Bildes ist, die Prostitution in ihrer ganzen grauenhaften und entmenschenden Wirkung wahrheitsgemäß darzustellen, als gesellschaftliches Übel zu geißeln und ihre für Körper und Geist verheerenden Folgen überzeugend zu schildern.”<sup>51</sup> Despite the presence of the overly sexual nude prostitutes, Dix asserted that the work was intended to elicit feelings of “disgust” (“*Abscheu*”) and a reaction that was “the opposite of lecherousness” (“das Gegenteil von Lüsternheit”) from viewers.<sup>52</sup>

The court was convinced by Dix’s argument and determined that his moralistic defense regarding the motive for creating the painting “appear[ed] credible” (“erscheint glaubhaft”).<sup>53</sup> However, “his moral intention could be called into question by a fascinating anecdote: years after he was acquitted, it is said, someone asked him about his persuasive argument, and he replied by bursting into a fit of laughter.”<sup>54</sup> Although the

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<sup>50</sup> “Prozeß um das Gemälde ‘Salon II.’ Darmstadt 1923,” 203. The quote is taken from an excerpt of a document from the Hessian prosecuting attorney’s office which discusses Dix’s defense of the work and the verdict of the case.

<sup>51</sup> “Prozeß um das Gemälde ‘Salon II.’ Darmstadt 1923,” 203. Dix’s quote can be translated as follows: “The idea of the picture is to depict prostitution in all its atrocious, dehumanizing effects, to castigate it as a social evil and to portray its devastating consequences on the body and mind.”

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Dix’s exact quote is as follows: “Die ganze Darstellung zielt darauf hin, Abscheu, also gerade das Gegenteil von Lüsternheit zu erregen.”

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. The court determined “Diese Angabe des Beschuldigten über das dem Bilde zu Grunde liegende künstlerische Motiv erscheint glaubhaft...”

<sup>54</sup> Voermann, Ilka. “The Artist as Witness: Otto Dix and Christian Schad.” *Otto Dix and the New Objectivity*. Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, ed. Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012. 42. The anecdote

specific reason Dix laughed at this inquiry is uncertain, one can only speculate that he did not genuinely believe the moralistic rationale he used in his own trial defense. As a similar defense had worked in Dix's favor during the 1921 obscenity trial over *Mädchen am Spiegel*, it seems logical to conclude that the artist decided to use a comparable defense in an attempt to achieve the same outcome, being found innocent of the charges against him. However, as discussed in the preceding chapter, rather than genuinely reflecting Dix's actual motivations, his moralizing claims regarding *Mädchen am Spiegel* were likely calculated to insure a sympathetic verdict. Nietzsche mocked traditional Christian morality; thus, as a devotee of the philosopher, it seems highly unlikely that Dix actually intended to convey a conventional, Judeo-Christian moralistic message about prostitution being an affront to moral decency. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Nietzsche praised Dionysian erotic intoxication as being life affirming and asserted that eroticism was an underlying factor, if not *the* underlying factor in the creation of art.<sup>55</sup> Thus, as *Der Salon II* seems to coincide with Nietzsche's claims it is reasonable to assume that Dix's moralizing defense of *Der Salon II* was deliberately crafted to encourage a favorable outcome rather than genuinely presenting his true motives.

Undeterred by his experience at the obscenity trial, Dix again engaged the Judgment of Paris motif by taking up the theme of a group of prostitutes in his 1925 painting *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße* (*Three Prostitutes on the Street*) (Figure 41). However, in contrast to *Der Salon I* and *Der Salon II*, this work depicts three prostitutes plying their trade in the street rather than in a brothel. This painting recalls one of Dix's

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about Dix's later reaction to his defense of *Der Salon II* can be found in "Berühmt und berüchtigt. Otto Dix 1891 – 1969. Biographie" by Andrea Hollmann and Ralph Keuning which is included in *Otto Dix. Zum 100. Geburtstag 1891 – 1991*, Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart/National Galerie Berlin, 1991, page 19.

<sup>55</sup> Nussbaum, 108.

etchings from his 1924 *Der Krieg* (War) series entitled *Frontsoldat in Brüssel* (Frontline Soldier in Brussels) (Figure 74) because both works show several prostitutes walking down an urban sidewalk. However, whereas the painting features three prostitutes, the etching depicts four voluptuous women who are ostentatiously dressed in fur wraps, large hats and slinky dresses. As suggested by their ornate, plumed hats<sup>56</sup> and the manner in which Dix represents their breasts and buttocks, these women are obviously prostitutes. They walk in various directions along a sidewalk and pass in front of what appears to be a shop window which perhaps alludes to their status as commodified, sexual objects.<sup>57</sup> This interpretation is substantiated by the presence of a soldier in uniform who stands nearby and ogles the women as one would gaze at an item for sale in the window. Indeed, it seems likely that he is a potential customer who will soon purchase sex from one of the prostitutes, who are representative of commercialized sexuality. The suggestion that the male soldier has the opportunity to choose from amongst the prostitutes who parade before him seemingly alludes to the Judgment of Paris motif in which the eponymous prince singled out the most appealing goddess from the three displayed before him.

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<sup>56</sup> Haxthausen, 84. Haxthausen specifically notes that the large, feathered hats worn by women in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's paintings of females in metropolitan settings, specifically Berlin, were specifically associated with prostitutes. Although most of Kirchner's street paintings were created between 1911 and 1915 and Dix's etching of prostitutes in *Frontsoldat in Brüssel* from *Der Krieg* was not created until 1924, the hats worn by the women in Dix's work strongly resemble the plumed hats donned by prostitutes in Kirchner's works. This links the post-war image of prostitutes with a pre-war visual language of streetwalkers.

<sup>57</sup> Deutsche, Rosalyn. "Alienation in Berlin: Kirchner's Street Scenes." *Art in America*. January 1, 1983. Vol. 7. 71. Deutsche specifically refers to Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's *Fünf Frauen auf der Straße* (Five Women on the Street) of 1913. In this painting, the women stand before and gaze into a centrally placed window. She argues that they are effectively contained within it and are, thus, represented as little more than consumer goods. Dix's *Frontsoldat in Brüssel* was created years after Kirchner's painting; however, the presence of the prostitutes in front of a store window suggests that the work engages the theme of commodification as well.

While the composition of *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße* is similar to *Frontsoldat in Brüssel*, the later work only depicts three prostitutes and no male client is present. Furthermore, the edge of the canvas cuts the women off at their knees rather than showing their entire bodies. While the etching is composed on a diagonal, the three prostitutes in the painting are positioned in a horizontal line across the picture plane; the viewer is positioned directly in front of them. Additionally, in contrast to the etching and to some of Dix's other paintings and the directness of the title notwithstanding, the fact that the women in *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße* are prostitutes is not immediately evident. This is reflective of reality as streetwalkers had to be careful that their clothing was not too conspicuous while still indicating that they were for sale. For instance, several photographs from WEKA's *Stätten der Berliner Prostitution von den Elends-Absteigequartieren am Schlesischen Bahnhof und Alexanderplatz zur Luxus-Prostitution der Friedrichstraße und des Kurfürstendamms*, including *Prostituierte in der Friedrichstraße* (Figure 75) and *Prostituierte in der Münzstraße* (Figure 76) depict groups of three relatively inconspicuous prostitutes. Indeed, if not for their loitering in the street, nuances in their attire and the titles of the photographs, one might have difficulty determining that the women in the photographs are actually prostitutes rather than New Women walking around the city.

As streetwalkers rather than brothel prostitutes, the fully-clothed women in Dix's *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße* are similarly more subtle about their prostitution than Dix's nude or scantily clad prostitutes waiting in bordello foyers. However, the title and a few other details indicate the women's profession. Of the three women, the older, woman on the left with short, light brown hair is most covert about her profession. She wears a

pleated light green skirt and a shiny, long-sleeved, marigold-yellow blouse of either silk or artificial silk (rayon). She wears a patterned, yellow hat with an unusual fan-like ornament on it. She purses her red lips and glances back at the veiled prostitute behind her. With her right hand, she holds a small, black lapdog to her chest. As neither her clothing nor her pose is revealing or overt, her identity as a streetwalker is alluded to by her red leather gloves which may indicate a particular area of sexual expertise.<sup>58</sup> For instance, the “Boot Girls,” who were identified by their calf-length leather boots in a variety of colors that signaled each girl’s particular sexual specialty.<sup>59</sup> Thus, it is plausible that the prostitute’s red leather gloves similarly designate a particular sexual request she was willing to grant for the right price.

In contrast to this fairly demure-looking woman, the thin brunette in the center is more readily identifiable as a prostitute. She holds a red clutch, wears a mustard yellow skirt and an acid green blouse, and also dons a red hat complete with a lacey, translucent widow’s veil. As noted in the preceding chapter, widow’s veils were popular accessories for streetwalkers during the interwar years as, due to the large numbers of war widows, prostitutes believed they would enable them to be more nondescript. Yet, in this painting, the red color of the veil and her brightly colored attire clearly indicate that she is not an actual widow. In addition, Eva Karcher suggests that the woman’s mouth shows evidence of syphilis which would also allude to her illicit profession.<sup>60</sup> Her overtly provocative pose, in which she places her right hand on her hip and grasps a portion of

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<sup>58</sup> Rewald, Sabine. “Three Prostitutes on the Street, 1925.” *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 64.

<sup>59</sup> *Voluptuous Panic*, 28. After 1926, the Boot Girls wore patent leather boots. In 1930, their estimated numbers in Berlin were between three hundred and three hundred fifty.

<sup>60</sup> Karcher, Eva. *Otto Dix 1891-1969*. Köln: Taschen GmbH, 2012. 90. Karcher refers to the woman’s “syphilitic mouth” but does not elaborate on her description.

her skirt, further demonstrates that she is a streetwalker rather than a widow. However, she seems to direct her gesture toward the more proper looking woman on the left rather than toward a male client.

The brunette's short bobbed hair accentuates the gauntness of her face and her red lipstick draws attention to her large lips and the lines around them. Upon close inspection, she seems older than her hairstyle or attire would initially imply. Indeed, it is possible that the widow's veil is as much an attempt to camouflage her age as to discourage arrest. Her wrinkles continue to her neck which is encircled by a pearl necklace. The white of the strand of pearls is echoed by the small, lacey sliver of her chemise that is visible above her neckline. Additionally, one of the straps of her chemise has slipped off her shoulder and is visible on the upper portion of her right arm. These slight glimpses of her undergarment are sign of disarray and perhaps hint that she has recently been with a client. Both her necklace and the border of her chemise draw the viewer's eye to her boney décolletage. The flowing cut of the lower portion of her top makes it difficult to determine if the billowing section directly above the waistband of her skirt is the result of the blousing of the fabric or of her dramatically sagging breasts.

A wide-eyed blonde walks to the right of the central brunette. This woman is swathed in a purple coat with a geometrically patterned trim at the bottom hem and the sleeve. Her pale face has been covered with brightly colored rouge which makes her wide, yellow-green eyes and pale nose stand out starkly against her otherwise florid skin. Her mouth and chin are not visible as she has draped her neck and shoulders with a fluffy fur stole. Her face is framed by blonde ringlets and she wears a pistachio-green hat. In the center of her hat is an unusual light pink ornament that is distinctly vaginal in shape.

A white adornment resembling one half of a bow extends from the ornament and further calls attention to it. Instead of carrying a purse, she holds an umbrella upside down by the handle. The deep blue of the umbrella itself is barely visible behind the wide sleeve of her coat but the dark-pinkish and decidedly phallic handle she grasps in her left hand is difficult to miss. Indeed, the phallic handle points upward and directs the viewer's attention toward her vaginal hat ornament. Although this woman is fully covered by her purple coat and fur stole, the phallic umbrella handle and the vaginal hat ornament allude to the fact that she is actually a prostitute.

These three women stand before the side of a building on which appears an image of a woman's shapely calf and foot standing on a floating globe; in fact, the ball of the woman's shoe seems to rest directly on top of the portion of Europe that includes Germany. The foot wears a green pump with a red heel, red trim and red ankle strap. Above the foot are the letters "RM" written in ornate script and underlined by a fanciful line that echoes the red ankle strap of the shoe below. This vertically oriented rectangular image of the woman's foot and the globe has been variously identified as a shop window or an advertisement for ladies stockings. The image of the female leg stepping on the globe has been interpreted as an allusion to Renaissance depictions of the goddess, Fortuna, and is perhaps intended to provide ironic commentary on the unfortunate situations of the three streetwalkers. Sabine Rewald, curator of modern art New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, contends that the letters "RM," written in ornate script, are possibly a subtle reference to the official abbreviation for the *Reichsmark*, which became the unit of currency in Germany one year before Dix created this painting and which ushered in a period of comparative economic security. She posits that one of the red



calligraphic tendrils underscoring the initials drifts over the ankle of the otherwise bodiless leg which links it both literally and metaphorically with Fortuna,<sup>61</sup> the Roman goddess of good fortune and success.<sup>62</sup> She concludes that through the positioning of the ribbon-like tendril, Dix suggests that the *Reichsmark* parallels Fortuna in its announcement of luck and prosperity for the country in general and for the three prostitutes in particular. She further asserts that their fashionable, comparatively upscale attire is indicative of positive economic changes already occurring in Germany.<sup>63</sup>

Rewald's optimistic interpretation references the *Reichsmark*; although this currency was adopted for use in Germany in 1924, the year prior, 1923, another currency that was abbreviated with the letters "rm" was introduced. On October 15, 1923,<sup>64</sup> the *Rentenmark* was introduced as a "temporary unit of currency."<sup>65</sup> Although the use of the new currency was able to curtail inflation,<sup>66</sup> it was still replaced by the *Reichsmark* the following year. Thus, rather than assuming that three prostitutes experienced success due to the introduction of the *Reichsmark*, if the figure stepping on the globe is indeed intended to be Fortuna, one can interpret the "rm" as indicating the fickleness of luck or good fortune. Just as the "rm" currencies changed overnight in 1924, so too could the fortunes of the women change overnight. However, their fates were not automatically

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<sup>61</sup> "Three Prostitutes on the Street, 1925." 65. 69. For these assertions, Rewald references Matthias Eberle's discussion of the work in *Tendenzen der zwanziger Jahre. 15 Europäische Kunstausstellung unter den Auspizen des Europarates Berlin*, Part 4, *Neue Wirklichkeit-Surrealismus und Neue Sachlichkeit. Tendenzen der zwanziger Jahre* (1977); Keith Hartley and SarahTwohig O'Brien in *Otto Dix, 1891-1969* (1992); Hans-Jürgen Buderer in *Neue Sachlichkeit: Bilder auf der Suche nach der Wirklichkeit. Figurative Malerei der zwanziger Jahre* (1994-95); and *Otto Dix: Metropolis* (1998).

<sup>62</sup> Forty, Jo. *Mythology: A Visual Encyclopedia*. London: PRC Publishing, 2001. 276. The Greek equivalent of Fortuna was Tyche.

<sup>63</sup> "Three Prostitutes on the Street, 1925." 69.

<sup>64</sup> Kaes, Anton, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994. 60.

<sup>65</sup> Leydecker, Karl, ed. *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic: Intersections of Literature and Politics*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006. 7.

<sup>66</sup> Leydecker, 7.

positive as, at any moment, they could be arrested by the police or picked up by a violent client, such as one of Dix's disturbing *Lustmörder*. Additionally, many women turned to prostitution for survival rather than to purchase finery for themselves. Despite the stabilization period, many prostitutes were simply trying to provide for themselves. Thus, the brightly colored outfits the women wear seem less likely to be manifestations of their economic well-being than attire strategically chosen to subtly display their charms in an ostensibly good neighborhood thereby attracting a higher class of clientele while simultaneously deterring arrest.

The presence of three women could be interpreted as being inspired by yet deviating from the motif of the Judgment of Paris as no male client is present as a proxy for Paris. As in *Der Salon I*, no male figure is depicted. In *Der Salon I*, it is implied that a male client who chooses among the women is outside the frame. In *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße*, the women are streetwalkers rather than brothel prostitutes so neither they nor their potential customers are confined to a foyer. As streetwalkers, any man who passes by is a prospective client. Rather than being forced by a brothel madam to accept any man who chooses her, no madam or pimp is shown holding sway over the three streetwalkers. Instead, the women choose their clients and, thus, take their fortunes into their own hands. Unlike the prostitutes in *Der Salon* and *Der Salon II* who wait in brothel parlors, the three women in *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße* walk around the city on their own. They solicit their own clients and have the option of turning down clients whose business they do not want. Thus, these Paris-less prostitutes invert the narrative of the Judgment of Paris. These Dionysian women are physically and sexually active as they have usurped traditionally male practices of independent mobility and sexual

license. These castrating, phallic women are, therefore, dangerous to male patriarchal authority. Indeed, the prostitute on the right with the decidedly penile umbrella literally holds a phallus.

In light of this interpretation, a different identity emerges for the figure whose foot is shown stepping on the globe. Although Albrecht Dürer created images of Fortuna stepping on an orb, from 1501 to 1503, he created an engraving entitled *Nemesis (Das GröÙe Gluck)* (*Nemesis [The Great Fortune]*) (Figure 77) that specifically depicts the winged goddess stepping on a levitating orb. In Greek mythology, Nemesis was the goddess of vengeance and retribution whose role was to curtail unwarranted or inordinate good fortune.<sup>67</sup> Through her actions, she maintained balance by ensuring that one was not excessively blessed by Tyche (Fortuna), goddess of luck or good fortune. In one account, Nemesis is also the mother of Helen of Troy. Zeus, in the form of a swan, pursued and caught Nemesis who was in the form of a goose. Helen of Troy was supposedly born from the egg that was a consequence of this union.<sup>68</sup>

If the disembodied foot in *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße* belongs to Nemesis rather than Fortuna, then the interpretation of the work is distinctly altered. Rather than insinuating that the prostitutes have either found good fortune with the introduction of the *Reichsmark* or have to contend with the whims of fate regardless of the currency, it is implied that the women will be punished for their pride and for challenging their traditional lot as females. Rather than bringing good luck to Germany, Nemesis steps

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<sup>67</sup> Forty, 304.

<sup>68</sup> Forty, 304. Castor and Pollux, the Dioscouri, were also supposedly born from the same egg. In another version of the Zeus—Nemesis myth, the goddess changes forms multiple times and is able to evade Zeus.

directly on it as though she is bringing retribution to it or its inhabitants. Given the presence of the prostitutes, it seems likely that her vengeance is directed toward them.

When he wrote about “die Verhuring Berlins” Thomas Wehrlin lamented that Berlin was being overrun by prostitutes if not becoming a “whore” itself.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, other writers decried the rising number of prostitutes in other German cities including Hamburg, Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main and Munich.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, to some, it seemed that all of Germany was being morally corrupted by prostitutes and other “deviant” women. These women, both prostitutes and New Women, who were often compared with prostitutes, were often condemned for being “masculine” due to their financial independence, their sexual activity outside of marriage and their apparent disregard for the traditional roles as wives and mothers.

Based on Dix’s painting, it seems that such women’s refusal to acquiesce to their prescribed female stations is met with vengeance by Nemesis who crushes Germany under her shoe. Thus, as such “deviant” women have dared to deviate from their traditional roles and have seized powers that were previously limited to the male domain, it is implied that the prostitutes will be punished for their actions perhaps via arrest, violence, disease or some other penalty. Furthermore, as a manipulated inversion of the Judgment of Paris story, this work is linked to Dix’s earlier paintings, such as *Der Salon II*, which were more traditional interpretations of the story. As Nemesis was sometimes

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<sup>69</sup> Wehrlin, 1382.

<sup>70</sup> Roos, 62. For information on prostitution in Hamburg, Roos cites Alfred Urban’s *Staat und Prostitution in Hamburg vom Beginn der Reglementierung bis zur Aufhebung der Kasernierung, 1807-1922* (Hamburg: Conrad Behre, 1927). For information about prostitution in Leipzig, see Helmut Richter’s *Die Prostitution in Leipzig: Eine kriminalistisch-statische Monographie* (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag der Werkgemeinschaft, 1932). For Frankfurt am Main, see *Statistisches Handbuch der Stadt Frankfurt a.M.* which was edited by Statistisches Amt Frankfurt am Main (Frankfurt am Main, 1928). For Munich, see *Statistisches Jahrbuch für den Freistaat Bayern* which was edited by Bayerisches Statistisches Landesamt (Munich, 1926).

considered to be the mother of Helen, this connection between the two works and the idea of man falling from grace due to “fallen” women is further strengthened.<sup>71</sup>

One year after painting *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße*, Dix again depicted a group of three prostitutes. However, unlike the three streetwalkers in *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße*, the three women in *Drei Weiber* (Figure 78) are located within a brothel interior which recalls the prostitutes depicted in *Der Salon I* and *Der Salon II*. Presumably, as with the women in *Der Salon I*, the women in *Drei Weiber* display themselves for a male client who is outside the frame and is, perhaps, implied to be the viewer. In contrast to the women in the earlier paintings, the women in this work are almost entirely nude except for thigh-high stockings, jewelry and other accessories. They brazenly exhibit themselves in a manner which demonstrates their Dionysian defiance of “false morality and false shame.”<sup>72</sup> The previous paintings were horizontally oriented while, for this work, Dix utilized a rather narrow vertical canvas. Consequently, the figures appear tightly compressed in the space of the painting and are pushed close to the space of the viewer; this creates a sense of immediacy and confronts the viewer with the shocking details of the work.<sup>73</sup>

On the left side of the canvas stands a tall, emaciated woman with long blonde hair. She is so tall that if she were to stand up straight, the top of her head would extend above the frame of the picture. Her slightly wavy blonde hair is adorned with a large white ribbon that seems oddly juvenile for a woman of her age. Her pale, twisted face

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<sup>71</sup> Helen of Troy was married to King Menelaus when she was seduced by Paris. Thus, her relationship with Paris was adulterous and she can, therefore, be considered a “fallen” or “disgraced” woman.

<sup>72</sup> Mosse, 10.

<sup>73</sup> Rewald, Sabine. “*Three Wenches, 1926.*” *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits of the 1920s*. Ed. Sabine Rewald. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 74.

has been painted with rouge and lipstick but the cosmetics cannot disguise her narrow eyes and under eye circles. The delicate pearl necklace she wears around her neck seems too elegant and calls attention not only to her extreme pallor but also her boney chest. She wears white stockings with pale lavender ribbons surrounding her slender thighs. Only her right foot is visible and it is covered by a red shoe with a square pearl ornament and a pearl ankle strap. Her nails have been painted with a color similar to that of the satin ribbons of her stockings.

The blonde prostitute bends her knees and appears to lean back toward an object that resembles a marble balustrade or stool. She rests her ringed right hand on the top of this object and, due to her arched posture, her hips and stomach are extended into the foreground which blatantly accentuates her genitals and encourages the viewer's eye to focus on them.<sup>74</sup> One of the columns of the marble object is visible between her legs and further directs the viewer's vision up to her genital region. She raises her left arm and holds up a translucent, pale blue veil that drapes over her left arm and behind her body. Her pose and the transparent veil reference Lucas Cranach the Elder's painting *Venus* of 1532 (Figure 79) in which the graceful, nude goddess of love daintily holds a gossamer veil before her nude body. Although the delicate, attractive Venus demurely holds the veil in front of her hips, the transparent material does not interfere with the viewer's ability to see of her pubic hair or genitalia. Ironically, as Cranach created the veil using delicate strokes of white paint, the folds in the translucent fabric are most visible against

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<sup>74</sup> Rewald, 74.

the background where there is nothing for it to conceal; against the fair skin of Venus, however, the veil is nearly invisible and reveals more than it conceals.<sup>75</sup>

In contrast to Cranach's *Venus*, Dix's blonde prostitute drapes the translucent veil behind her buttocks and thrusts her boney hips forward to accentuate her genitals. In Cranach's painting, the transparency of the material renders Venus' action of draping it in front of her body ineffective; her genitals are still visible. In Dix's work, the translucency of the veil is irrelevant as the prostitute makes no attempt to cover herself and drapes the material behind her body. Thus, the lack of success in Venus' attempt to drape herself and the blonde prostitute's failure to even try to cover herself have the same result: the bodies of both women are distinctly on display. However, Venus' failed attempt at modesty makes her appear demure and ladylike while the blonde prostitute's self-conscious display seems overt and vulgar.

Interestingly, two figures holding a length of material around their bodies in ways similar to the blonde prostitute in Dix's painting also appear in two works by Hans Baldung Grien. Dix's respect and appreciation for Baldung Grien was well-known and, he expressly noted his admiration for him in several interviews. Of particular interest is a comment Dix made in an interview with Sonja Kätsch in which he noted the artistic longevity of Baldung Grien and specifically wondered if any the works in his current exhibition would equal the Old Master's in terms of their lasting artistic merit.<sup>76</sup>

Although Dix did not discuss the precise nature of Baldung Grien's influence on his

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<sup>75</sup> Brinkmann, Bodo. *Hexenlust und Sündenfall: Die seltsamen Phantasien des Hans Baldung Grien*. Frankfurt am Main: Stadel Museum and Michael Imhof Verlag, 2007. 48

<sup>76</sup> Dix, Otto. "Gespräch mit Sonja Kätsch, 1950." Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 221. Although the interview occurred in 1950, Dix's admiration for Baldung Grien is documented much earlier. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that his desire to compare himself with Baldung Grien was present from early in his career.

work, his comments indicate that not only did he admire the earlier painter's skill and works but he also compared himself with him. Indeed, he seems to have been interested in whether his works would be perceived as measuring up to those of the German master painter.

Additionally, in an address to art students, Dix stressed the importance of studying the works of "*großer Meister*" ("great masters") either in person or via reproductions. He advised analyzing not only "the methods and techniques" ("*die Methoden und Techniken*") of these artists but also their "compositions and color application" ("*Komposition und Farbeanwendung*").<sup>77</sup> Based upon the manner in which Dix stressed the importance of studying a variety of aspects of works by distinguished painters, one can infer that this method of study played a significant role in his own practice as well. Combined with his apparent desire to measure his own works against those of Old Master painters, it seems likely that Dix utilized his analysis of such artists in his attempt to artistically surpass them.

The pose of Dix's blonde prostitute strongly recalls that of the skeletal figure in Baldung Grien's drawing *Tod mit einer invertierten Banner* (*Death with an Inverted Banner*) of 1505 to 1507 (Figure 80). The pose of the blonde prostitute is very similar to Death's but her body is oriented to the viewer's right while Death's body faces the viewer's left. Both extend their left arms to the level of their heads and extend their right arms downward to the level of their pelvises. The prostitute extends a length of

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<sup>77</sup> Dix, Otto. "Malerei und Komposition. Washington School of Arts, Lektion 19. 1958." Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 229. Dix addressed a variety of subjects in his lesson. His remarks about "great masters" of painting are found in the portion with the title "Wie man die Werke große Meister studiert" ("How to study the works of great masters").



transparent material behind her while Death unfurls a flag or banner; in so doing, each figure calls attention to his or her genital region. Interestingly, in this work, Baldung Grien based the figure of Death on Albrecht Dürer's Adam in his 1503 engraving *Der Sündenfall (Adam und Eva) (The Fall of Man [Adam and Eve])* (Figure 81). This representation of Adam is the canonical image of the ideal male figure in the art of the German Renaissance. Thus, in deliberately referencing the figure of flawless manhood in his image of Death, Baldung Grien demonstrates the consequences of the fall; "Adam, the cause of [human] mortality, becomes the emblem of his own effect."<sup>78</sup> Dürer's unspoiled Adam is depicted moments before the Fall so his physique is still impossibly beautiful and proportionate. However, as a result of the Fall, bodily decay and death were introduced; both decay and death are depicted in Baldung Grien's image of Death. In fact the purpose of the inverted banner is to indicate the victory of death in the triumph over life.<sup>79</sup>

Just as Baldung Grien corrupted Dürer's image of a perfect man by utilizing his figure in an image of a rotting corpse representing Death, Dix further appropriates this figure by turning it into a ghastly, bony woman. Dürer's perfect, pre-Fall man was turned by Baldung Grien into the rotting, post-Fall corpse of Death; in Dix's work, this figure becomes a skeletal, "fallen" woman. Baldung Grien's image of Death "actualized the effects of the Fall of Man"<sup>80</sup> and the emaciated, unattractive physical status of the blonde prostitute manifests the consequences of her "fall" into "deviance." The physical perfection of Dürer's Adam was intended to demonstrate that he was a divinely

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<sup>78</sup> Koerner, 72.

<sup>79</sup> Koerner, 72.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

synthesized assemblage of ideal parts; the decaying state of Baldung Grien's Death was meant to reflect the idea that Death is radically equalizing and humankind's shared fate of death is inescapable.<sup>81</sup> The physical defects of the blonde prostitute place her in distinct contrast to idealized Adam and instead align her with Death. However, as a prostitute, her actions would not only cause her own bodily deterioration but they could also cause the downfall of her male clients via sexually transmitted disease and, possibly, even death. Thus, her translucent blue veil which she drapes behinds her buttocks perhaps echoes Death's inverted victory banner and alludes to the perverse triumph of the "fallen" woman via the ruination of the lives of men who partake of her services.

In contrast to the pre-Fall Adam, whose divinely created origins were supposedly made evident through his physical faultlessness, the blonde prostitute obviously lacks physical attractiveness. Thus, instead of divine origins, one could assert that her demonstrable lack of beauty perhaps hints at infernal origins instead. Parallels also exist between Dix's *Drei Weiber* and Baldung Grien's 1523 painting *Zwei Wetterhexen* (*Weather Witches*) (Figure 82) which depicts two nude, attractive witches manipulating the weather through their occult powers. During the Renaissance period, witches were regarded as being especially dangerous because they defied traditional religious rules and attempted to operate outside the control of the Catholic Church.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, during the Weimar Republic, prostitutes fell under heavy suspicion for their perceived contempt of traditional religious and moral rules and their apparent refusal to submit to established, patriarchal authority.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 74-75.

<sup>82</sup> Grössinger, 131.

Baldung Grien was known for his variety of images of witches despite the fact that he never personally witnessed any persecutions of witchcraft. However, in the town of Strasburg, in which Baldung Grien had been a citizen since 1509, a theologian named Johannes Gelier von Kaiserberg had, since 1508, preached Lenten sermons addressing the actions and character of witches. In addition to his likely knowledge of these sermons, witches were also discussed among the humanist circles and the upper classes. Rather than having religious import, these debates, instead, addressed whether or not witches could actually fly and if then-contemporary witch-hunting techniques were actually practicable. Thus, while Baldung Grien's fascination with witches may have been partly religious in nature, there was also a humanist, secular aspect that contributed to his interest in using witches to address the magnitude of evil and the obvious power licentiousness and sensuousness, which he likened to bestial desires, exerted over humans.<sup>83</sup>

In *Zwei Wetterhexen*, Baldung Grien uses the motifs of witches to engage religious, artistic and intellectual themes while also attempting to balance eroticism and aestheticism in his rendering of nude, female witches.<sup>84</sup> The painting depicts a young, attractive, brown-haired witch who stands with her back to the viewer. However, she gazes at the viewer over her right shoulder and holds a length of white cloth in front of her. A section of the material is tucked between her left hip and left elbow. Her right arm is raised to a level that is slightly above her head and she bends her arm at ninety degrees. The fingers of her right hand are extended and she holds the cloth up and away

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<sup>83</sup> Grössinger, 134. Grössinger posits that Baldung Grien knew of Johannes Geiler von Kaiserburg's sermons because they were published in *Emeis (The Ants)* in 1517 and this work contained woodcuts that were based on Baldung Grien's woodcuts of witches.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 135.

from her body. The rest of the material falls to the ground where it almost completely covers a goat sitting on the ground. To the right, another, heavier set, nude brunette holds up a glass vessel containing a small, black creature; the glass bottle appears to have been sealed with red wax to prevent the creature from escaping. She sits on the goat and has draped the material in between her legs. The goat on which she sits possibly alludes to the idea of the “*Nachtfahrt*,” the night ride taken by witches across the night sky often on the back of a goat,<sup>85</sup> as seen in Dürer’s engraving *Die Hexe (The Witch)* (Figure 83). The goat also perhaps alludes to the base, animal sexual instincts of the nude witches. A small, chubby putto stands to the right and grasps the length of cloth. He holds a smoking torch. The smoke drifts upward and joins the billowing gray clouds that emanate from the lower right side of the canvas and drift across the entire top portion.

The witch with the length of material holds it above her head and bends her elbow at a near ninety degree angle in order to do so. Similarly, Dix’s blonde prostitute holds her veil up to her head and bends her elbow at an angle that slightly exceeds ninety degrees. Baldung Grien’s witch is turned away from the viewer and the manner in which she drapes the material in front of her highlights her toned buttocks. The blonde prostitute in Dix’s work faces the viewer but drapes the veil behind her in order to accentuate her genitals. The bodies of the prostitute and the witch are oriented in different directions but the location of the cloths—behind their bodies from the viewer’s perspective—is essentially the same. The witch uses the material to heighten her sexuality which is linked with the smoky disaster that occurs outside of the frame.

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<sup>85</sup> Brinkmann, 33-34. Brinkmann actually doubts the “*Nachtfahrt*” theory. He asserts that because the goat is used as a footstool and is partially covered by a veil, he is inactive. He also remarks on the corpulence of the witch who sits on the goat and uses her body type as evidence claim that the idea of a “night flight” is more fantasy than reality.

Likewise, the blonde prostitute, who stands before a grayish curtain rather than an ominous cloud, uses the veil to draw attention to her sex which, in light of the moralizing rhetoric of the Weimar period, was linked with disasters of the moral and health-related variety rather than natural disasters.

Seated to right of the blonde prostitute in *Drei Weiber* is an immensely obese woman with an incredibly short, masculine hairstyle that has been slicked back. She is so large that the back portion of her body is cut off by the right edge of the canvas. She is surrounded by a wooden piece of furniture, perhaps an armoire or a fireplace, that is located behind her and a table covered with a purple tablecloth that has been placed to her left. The gangly blonde and the marble object are positioned in front of her while the redhead in the foreground similarly blocks her path. The placement of these objects and people visually confines the dark haired woman to the chair on which she sits. This confinement accentuates her largeness as visually it seems that she is so massive she is stuck in her current location.

Her pale makeup has been applied with a heavy hand but it does not hide the blemish on her chin or the purplish discoloration around her eyes. The paint on her left cheek seems to have been thickly applied which gives her ruddy cheek the appearance of being marred by scaly or blotchy skin as caused by a condition such as eczema or rosacea. Her red drop earrings seem too delicate especially as they are in close proximity to her fleshy double chin. She crinkles her nose and appears to glare at someone or something outside the frame of the picture.

A length of dusky, rose-colored fabric is draped over the lower portion of the obese prostitute's lap. The wrinkly, loose-fitting material is too baggy, especially below her knees, to be stockings but the material appears to be fitted around her thighs. Perhaps she has pulled a pair of silky bloomers down to her mid-thighs for the purposes of display. This prostitute echoes the fleshy witch in Baldung Grien's *Zwei Wetterhexen*. Both are seated to the right of thin women holding fabric before their bodies. The plump witch has a distinct paunch that extends over her genitals and appears to rest lightly on her upper thighs. A section of the fabric held by the other witch rests under her right thigh and weaves above her left thigh which draws attention to rather than fully concealing her sex. Her upper thighs and both of her breasts are marked with patches of bluish spider veins that echo the vein-like pattern found in the unusual white marble object on which the sinewy blonde leans.

The massive, rotund stomach of the obese prostitute extends out and rests on her legs thereby covering her genitals. Her huge breasts similarly appear to rest on her large stomach. A swath of cloth rests across her legs at mid-thigh and is draped down over them. This fabric leads the viewer's eye up the prostitute's legs but the view of her genitals is obstructed by her large stomach. The seated witch gazes up and to the left at the standing witch beside her while the prostitute glares off to the left at someone, possibly a male client, who is outside the frame.

The genitalia of both the plump witch and the obese prostitute are concealed yet accentuated. The witch, through the presence of the bottled creature in her hand and the goat on which she sits, is linked with the paranormal clouds that billow through the work. The creature, which has sometimes been referred to as a demon is more likely a small

dragon. The glass bottle in which the creature is trapped appears to be a flask of the type one would find in an alchemist's laboratory. In alchemical texts, specifically the well-known and widely circulated *Donum Dei* which dates to approximately 1520, the dragon symbolizes a solution of quicksilver which must be stoppered because it evaporates at room temperature. An ointment made from quicksilver was the customary treatment for syphilis. Thus, the presence of the bottled dragon, which alludes to a sexually transmitted disease, coupled with the goat, which references animal sexuality, gives the work a distinctly erotic cast. These sexual undertones are given a distinctly hazardous cast as the potential for a sexually transmitted infection is strongly implied and the billowing clouds or smoke in the background suggest danger of another sort, such as a storm or an impending disaster.<sup>86</sup>

While the obese prostitute in Dix's work is, obviously, not linked with any weather-related catastrophes, her extreme corpulence, obvious veins and scaly complexion connect her to abnormal physical conditions and grievous states of ill health. As a prostitute, such poor health automatically conjures ideas of sexually transmitted diseases, especially syphilis, which was particularly serious and could even result in death. The witch's nudity and the accentuation of her sex due to the placement of the cloth between her legs implies that her infernal activities are inextricably bound to her sexuality and have disastrous consequences, as indicated by the confined dragon. Similarly, the nudity and "deviant" sexuality of the obese prostitute, who sits in a room that is obviously a brothel parlor, are implied to have unfortunate consequences not only

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<sup>86</sup> Brinkmann, 133-135. The *Donum Dei* was a very well-known and widely circulated alchemical text. The author is anonymous. Brinkmann specifically refers to a particular copy of the *Donum Dei* that was likely written and illustrated in Nürnberg around 1520.

for her own health and well-being but also, if not especially, for the strength and fitness of her potential male clients who, through a liaison with her, would be unwisely subjecting themselves to the possibility of contracting a debilitating venereal disease.

In the foreground, a woman with short, curly red hair is inelegantly posed on all fours on the floor while she plays with a small, female lapdog positioned between her outstretched arms. On her legs, which are partially cut off by the right border of the canvas, she wears pink stockings. The color of the stockings blends with the colors used in the floral patterned rug on which the woman crawls. Her proportions are exaggerated; her waist is quite slender while her hips are dramatically wide. Her pendulous breasts and two stomach rolls hang down and parallel the nipples of the brown dog that plays in front of her which draws an unflattering parallel between the prostitute and the female dog, the bitch, to whom her attention is directed.

An additional, uncomplimentary animal comparison can be drawn in light of *Drei Weiber's* compositional links to *Zwei Wetterhexen*. The blonde and obese prostitutes occupy positions that are comparable to those of the standing and seated witches respectively. In the absence of an additional witch in Baldung Grien's painting, the pose of the redheaded prostitute in Dix's work is akin to that of the goat. The goat crouches on all fours in the center foreground of the painting while the plump witch sits sidesaddle across its back. The redheaded prostitute has also dropped to all fours on the carpet that occupies the central foreground of Dix's painting. Although neither of the other prostitutes actually sits on her, the obese prostitute behind her to the right is seated at a level that roughly corresponds to the height of the redhead's back; this creates a visual link between the crouching redhead and the seated obese woman that is evocative of the



idea of Baldung Grien's witch sitting on the back of the goat. As previously noted, the goat can function as a symbolic allusion to crude sexual instincts or as a reference to the *Nachtfahrt*. Thus, in the context of animal lust, the position of the redhead and the idea of a "night ride" could be a vulgar reference to a particular sexual position suggested by her pose and the presence of the dog.

With regard to the presence of the goat, classical motifs exist that depict the goddess Aphrodite riding on a goat and escorted by the winged figure of Eros. Thus, the image of a witch riding a goat, as in Baldung Grien's *Zwei Wetterhexen*, was used by the artist to evoke the idea of an inverted image of the beautiful goddess, Aphrodite.<sup>87</sup> In Baldung Grien's painting, not only does a witch sit atop a goat but a small, naked putto, akin to the winged Eros or Cupid, stands behind them which further links them to the concept of Aphrodite or Venus. However, obviously as the woman is a witch not Venus, the motif has been inverted. The beautiful goddess of love is now a witch who maliciously manipulates the weather aided by her nude minion.

As the seated witch and the goat are paralleled by the obese and redheaded prostitutes, the latter are linked to motifs of Venus just as the emaciated blonde is linked to Cranach's painting of Venus. The witch controls the weather just as prostitutes use their sexual wiles to exert influence over their male clients. The witch astride the goat is a profanation of the motif of Venus riding a goat. Dix's subsequent appropriation of this theme and his application of it to the depiction of two lascivious, unattractive prostitutes not only parodies the idea of Venus as the goddess of love but also attempts to outdo

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<sup>87</sup> Sullivan, 359. Sullivan specifically refers to Dürer's *Rückwärts reitende Hexe auf einem Ziegenbock* (*Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat*) but the motif of a witch on a goat plays an important role in Baldung Grien's *Zwei Wetterhexen* as well.

Baldung Grien by augmenting the Old Master's inversion of an ancient image.

Furthermore, the concept of a "riding woman" can be interpreted as an overturning of traditional gender roles which poses a danger to patriarchally instituted social and moral norms.<sup>88</sup> Thus, the motif of the witch astride the goat and the image of the prostitutes that were inspired by it connect male emasculation and wavering patriarchal social control with female "masculinization" in the form of overt, female "deviant" sexuality and behavior.

The redheaded woman's pallid face is heavily made up with eye makeup, rouge and red lipstick. Her eyes are either closed or downcast to gaze at the dog and she seems uninterested in the human company that surrounds her. She wears several rings on her manicured fingers and a coiled bracelet in the shape of a serpent is wrapped around her left wrist. The serpent is perhaps also an allusion to Eve, who was represented often by Old Masters including Dürer and Baldung Grien. Eve was tempted to sin by the serpent in the Garden of Eden and was often misogynistically accused of causing Adam to sin due to her sexual enticements. Adding to the idea that the redhead is a "fallen" woman is the fact that Dix signed the work in the form of a tattoo on the inner forearm of her right arm. The tattoo is in the shape of Dix's "D" monogram with the year "1926" written below it. Martha Dix recalled that, in the early nineteen twenties, Dix was "very interested in tattoos" and purchased a book featuring pictures of individuals with tattoos.<sup>89</sup> In addition, at the time, tattoos were still considered somewhat taboo, especially for women, and were often associated with rough masculine figures, such as

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<sup>88</sup> Sullivan, 359. Here Sullivan paraphrases the argument of Charles Zika's "Dürer's Witch, Riding Women and the Moral Order" in *Dürer and His Culture*, edited by Dagman Eichberger and Charles Zika, and published by Cambridge University Press in 1998.

<sup>89</sup> Karcher, 62.

criminals, sailors and soldiers. Thus, the presence of such a marking on the redheaded woman is a further indication of her position outside bourgeois moral norms and also marks her as a masculinized woman.

In addition to the correlation between *Drei Weiber* and *Zwei Wetterhexen*, the arrangement of the three women in the former work, with one standing, one sitting and one on all fours, recalls the composition of Hans Baldung Grien's work *Hexensabbat* (*Witches' Sabbath*) of 1514 (Figure 84) which depicts several nude witches sitting in a smoke-filled room. As in Dix's work, a nude female figure occupies the center of Baldung Grien's composition. Although she is fuller figured and more conventionally attractive in appearance than Dix's tall blonde prostitute, Baldung Grien's witch similarly arches her back thereby pushing her hips forward. However, whereas Dix's prostitute leans back onto a small balustrade, the woman in Baldung Grien's drawing is supported by the arm of another aged witch who carries a pitchfork and soars horizontally through the air. The extremely rotund prostitute seated on the right side of Dix's work recalls the plump, seated witch in Baldung Grien's work who holds a fire-spewing lantern. In the foreground, an additional witch, holding a pitchfork and a sheet of paper, sits with her legs extended in front of her. One of her hands is placed between her legs and it is possible that she is masturbating. Masturbation, which was considered by the Catholic Church to be a sinful act, was also sometimes linked with witchcraft as it was associated with "diabolical fantasies."<sup>90</sup> Unlike the redheaded prostitute in Dix's work, she is not positioned on all fours; however, she is still oriented in a horizontal position causing her body to dominate the foreground. Furthermore, although she does not play with a small

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<sup>90</sup> Roper, Lyndal. "'Evil Imaginings and Fantasies': Child-Witches and the End of the Witch Craze." *Past & Present*, No. 167 (May, 2000), 131.

dog as does Dix's redheaded women, she is surrounded by animals on three sides. A hissing cat sits on the left side of the canvas near her backside and another cat is located behind her; however, due to the particulars of Baldung Grien's perspective, the cat appears directly above her head. At her feet, sits a goat that is being climbed on by a small putto.

Another drawing by Baldung Grien from 1514 is also entitled *Hexensabbat* (*Witches' Sabbath*) (Figure 85) and likewise depicts several nude witches in a similar arrangement. However, in this work, the standing nude female, who holds a platter bearing a human skull and bone, occupies the left rather than the center portion of the canvas. A stocky, seated nude witch, who holds a necklace adorned with amulets, bells and a small human skull,<sup>91</sup> occupies the right side of the canvas while another nude who sits with her legs extended out in front of her stretches across the foreground. A vomiting cat appears at the feet of the foreground witch.

In this drawing, the solidly built witch on the right appears to pleasure herself with the handle of the pitchfork which also passes between the legs of the witch who stands on the left. In addition, several sausages hang limply across the handle of the pitchfork and a particularly decrepit old witch places her hand on the centermost sausage. These flaccid sausages were likely intended as allusions to penises as, in the literature of the Renaissance period, it was not unusual for sausages to be associated with male

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<sup>91</sup> Brinkmann, 56.

genitalia.<sup>92</sup> In addition, witches purportedly used bewitchment to cause male impotence by making the genitals of unsuspecting males seem to disappear.<sup>93</sup>

The long-standing correlation between male sexual dysfunction and female witches dates back to the hugely influential manual, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the “Hammer of Witches,” which was printed in 1487.<sup>94</sup> This work contains a section entitled “Whether Witches Can Hebetate the Powers of Generation or Obstruct the Venereal Act.”<sup>95</sup> In this portion of the text, the authors, Heinrich Kramer, a Dominican inquisitor, and his assistant Jacob Sprenger, asserted that certain, sexually disreputable women, namely “adulterous drabs and whores” were prone to witchcraft and cast spells “upon the act of generation.”<sup>96</sup> In another section called “How, as it were, they [witches] Deprive Man of his Virile Member,” the authors included several accounts in which a young man’s “virile member” disappears “through some prestidigitory art so that [the member] can be neither seen nor felt.”<sup>97</sup> In the same section, they referenced witches who “sometimes collect male organs in great numbers, as many as twenty or thirty members together, and put them in a bird’s nest or shut them up in a box, where they move themselves like living members...”<sup>98</sup> Thus, the limp, penile sausages in Baldung Grien image can be interpreted as referencing this particular discourse of witchcraft.

Kramer and Sprenger specifically gendered witchcraft as being feminine and distinctly linked it with female sexuality. In fact, they asserted that “All witchcraft comes

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<sup>92</sup> Grössinger, 132.

<sup>93</sup> Kramer, Heinrich and James Sprenger. *Malleus Maleficarum*. Trans. Montague Summers. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1971. 118-122.

<sup>94</sup> Smith, Moira. “The Flying Phallus and the Laughing Inquisitor: Penis Theft in the ‘Malleus Maleficarum,’” *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Jan. – Apr., 2002), 85.

<sup>95</sup> Kramer, 54. This section is found under Part I Question VIII.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 118-122. This quote appears under Part II, Question I, Chapter VII.

<sup>98</sup> Kramer, 121.

from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable.”<sup>99</sup> Consequently, in addition to supposedly causing male impotence, witches were accused of all manner of sexual deviance, including copulation with devils.<sup>100</sup> Such beliefs about the sexual indecency of witches appear to be acknowledged in this version of Baldung Grien’s *Hexensabbat*, as the nude female witches are seemingly presented as sexually degenerate women; they find sexual pleasure without male assistance and, by extension, are sexually threatening to men to the point of magically and literally castrating them. The placement of the flaccid penis-like sausages on the erect handle of the pitchfork further accentuates their limpness and their location below the platter on which rest a skull and a bone link the demise of man’s sexual potency with man’s literal death. The three main witches in the scene each has something between her legs; the pitchfork passes between the legs of both the standing witch and the seated witch on the right while the seated witch in the foreground extends her arm between her legs in order to light a long candle on the flaming gases being discharged from her anus. Thus, each witch is presented as a frightening phallic woman who poses a distinct and direct threat not only to male sexual potency but also to male religious and social authority.

Dix’s *Drei Weiber* addresses the idea of sexually threatening females but does so using prostitutes rather than witches. As discussed in the previous chapter, in his article “*Die Verhuring Berlins*” of 1920, Thomas Wehrin decried the declining moral values he perceived in Berlin. He specifically condemned the large number of prostitutes and the sexual immorality he claimed to have witnessed from essentially all women in the city.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 47. This quote is found in Part I, Question V. The question is entitled “What is the Source of the Increase of Works of Witchcraft? Whence comes it that the Practice of Witchcraft hath so notably increased?”

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 41. Such accusations are found in Part 1 Question VI.

He was appalled to see German men who appeared to be “fine” (“*wohlgeratene*”) and “strong” (“*kräftige*”) arm-in-arm with “abhorrent females” (“*abschreckender Weiber*”).<sup>101</sup> The implication here is that these “degenerate” women will corrupt the otherwise “fine” men with whom they consort. Not only is the moral integrity of these men being compromised but, the mention of their strength implies that their physical health and wellbeing will also suffer due to their interactions with the city’s *Neue Frauen* and prostitutes.

Wehrlin also was alarmed that the blatant depravity he witnessed among modern, New Women and prostitutes was “eating deeply into the bourgeois family.”<sup>102</sup> Presumably, this moral degeneration could be prevented but he asserted that “fathers and husbands close their eyes because they lack the strength, the courage and the inner security to oppose the wanton degradation” that is occurring among middle-class females.<sup>103</sup> He claimed that the men were weak and their lack of manliness was evidenced by their inability to control their wives and daughters who had sexual relations with various men for money to purchase desired material goods.<sup>104</sup>

However, Wehrlin did not completely abandon hope for the female sex. He paraphrased Otto Weiniger and remarked that most women exist in a state between being a mother and being a prostitute and vacillate between the two. The balance of such women could be tipped in favor of motherhood if they are molded by the love of a good

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<sup>101</sup> Wehrlin, 1381. Wehrlin states: “In Berlin aber sah ich äußerlich wohlgeratene, kräftige in ihrer Art gewiß liebesfähige Männer ohne Gêne am Arm abschreckender Weiber.”

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. The exact quote is as follows: “Die Verhörung hat sich tief in die bürgerliche Familie eingefressen.”

<sup>103</sup> Wehrlin, 1381. Wehrlin claims that “Vater und Gatten schließen vor ihr die Augen, weil ihnen Kraft, der Mut, die innere Sicherheit fehlt der fressenden Verlotterung sich zu widersetzen.”

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 1381-1382.

man. Yet, Wehrlin noted the absence of such strong, decent men when he asked “Aber wo sind diese starken, tragenden Männer?”<sup>105</sup> He blamed the prevalence of birth control devices for enabling women to be sexually promiscuous and, thus, in his view, barely distinguishable from prostitutes. In his view, such modern, “deviant” *Neue Frauen* were more concerned with sex and fashion than with motherhood and were debased versions of what women should be as defined by their traditionally accepted “destiny” (“*Schicksal*”) as females.<sup>106</sup>

In Wehrlin’s article, he not only castigated prostitutes and urban women in general for their lack of moral turpitude but he also, albeit to a lesser extent, laid blame at the feet of men for being too weak to control their women’s behavior and too ineffectual to entice them away from the supposed lures of prostitution with their solid, manly virtues. Not only had men been corrupted by prostitutes but they had effectively been castrated by New Women who rendered the men sexually, socially and domestically impotent.

The prostitutes in Dix’s *Drei Weiber* embody the depravity with which writers and social critics like Wehrlin were obsessively concerned and this “degeneracy” was outwardly manifested in their appearances. Interestingly, the emaciated blonde and the morbidly obese dark-haired prostitute resemble a drawing of women deemed to suffer from “pathological emaciation” and “pathological fatness” (Figure 86) that was featured in the book *Die Frau als Hausärztin* (*Woman as a Family Doctor*) that was published in

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 1383. In English, this quote translates as “But where are these strong, bearing men?”

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 1383-1384.



1905.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, in the drawing, the “pathologically” thin woman, whose chest and rib bones are distinctly visible, leans back onto a solid balustrade in a manner that is similar to, although less overtly sexual than, Dix’s scrawny blonde prostitute. To the right, the “pathologically” overweight woman in the drawing has large, drooping breasts and a round, oversized stomach that sags down and partly covers her genitals. These features resemble those of Dix’s obese prostitute although they have not been exaggerated to the extent found in his painting.

According to the discussion that accompanied the image, these “deformed figures” were purportedly marked by “deficient hair growth, sagging breasts, ugliness and deformities in repulsive form.”<sup>108</sup> Supposedly, such bodily deformations were often hidden by “hypocritical, deceiving clothing” but doctors were able to see past such disguises and, thus, were aware of “how infinitely often they [such pathologically deformed women] can be found among the degenerate womanhood” of the period.<sup>109</sup> In the drawing and its supporting text, this alleged female deterioration as manifested by women purportedly suffering from pathological deformities was contrasted with the bodily perfection of a woman who is likened to a Medicean Venus “with her marvelous body forms and the grace of her limbs.”<sup>110</sup> The diseases of the “pathological” women were perceived as being the consequences of a compromised constitution. This health-related weakness was allegedly evidenced by physical disparities between the supposedly “pathological” women and those whose bodies conformed to enduring, aesthetic ideals as

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<sup>107</sup> Fischer-Dückelmann, Anna. *Die Frau als Hausärztin*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Stuttgart: Süddeutsches Verlags-Institut, 1905. 188. Cited in Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003. 73.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Fischer-Dückelmann, 188.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

found in the art of classical Greek antiquity. Such visually appealing females were represented by the woman standing in a pose that recalls Praxiteles' Late Classical Greek sculpture, the *Aphrodite of Knidos*. Whereas physical divergences from the ideal, classical norm were regarded as indicating some sort of physical or mental infirmity, healthiness and corporeal fitness were regarded as the requirements for an attractive body.<sup>111</sup>

Interestingly, the book in which the aforementioned drawing and discussion were found was written by a woman and self-proclaimed feminist named Anna Fischer-Dückelmann. However, pre-war feminist life reformers did not disagree with the perceived dissoluteness of the women of the era and many of their views were actually similar to those of misogynist social critics and reformers. Indeed, the image of the Weimar *Neue Frau*, who was infamous for defying established gender roles and norms, was already extant prior to World War I. However, although Fischer-Dückelmann agreed with traditionally, misogynist theories that inner "deviance" was outwardly manifested, she countered the prevailing arguments of the day by recommending that women pursue physical exercise. She believed that such physical training was a prerequisite for good health and a sound constitution which were essential to having an aesthetically pleasing figure. As illnesses were regarded as the products of an enfeebled constitution, physical abnormalities and departures from the classical Greek standard of beauty were perceived as being indicators of disease.<sup>112</sup> Thus, while she may have drawn different conclusions

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003. 70-73, 81. Hau notes that Anna Fischer-Dückelmann was actually the first German woman to receive a medical degree which she earned at the University of Zurich in 1890. At the time, German women were not permitted to enroll in German universities and medical schools.

than misogynist theorists regarding women's duty as it pertained to physical exercise, her underlying assumptions were essentially the same. Moral good was associated with outer beauty while deviations from the physical ideal were supposedly indicative of moral degeneration.

At this time, both supporters and detractors of the feminist cause projected their own moral values on the ideal, beautiful female body and, often, these particular values were discussed using hygienic terminology.<sup>113</sup> While feminists and their opponents disagreed on the particulars of what female health and feminine beauty indicated in terms of what constituted female self-fulfillment, they agreed that women who deviated from traditional signifiers of health and beauty were social deviants, pathologically sick or some combination of the two. Thus, just as the two "pathological" women in the drawing are deviations from the ideal set forth by Venus, Dix's three prostitutes are similarly divergences from the Weimar's model female type both in terms of their physical attributes and their actual behavior. Consequently, according to this ideology, the unattractive, even grotesque, physiques of the prostitutes in *Drei Weiber* would have been perceived as outward displays of their inner depravity and compromised physical or mental health.

During the Weimar Republic, some theories regarding the beautiful female body persisted; however, these ideas were directly influenced by the post-war situation in which conventional gender norms had been upended by the increased number and visibility of women in the workplace. Interwar discussions about illnesses and bodily health expressly indicated anxieties over the dramatic shifts in gender politics and some

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 73, 75.

were concerned that Weimar women were forsaking their long-established society roles.<sup>114</sup> Thus, writers such as Thomas Wehrlin, who were plagued by apprehension over shifting gender roles and relations were not alone in their fears that Weimar women were not only becoming suspiciously masculine in their physical appearance and their behavior but that they were also abandoning long-held cultural assumptions about the traditional roles, especially the public and sexual roles, that women should play. Consequently, “deviant” women, whether they were New Women or prostitutes were treated as suspect.

However, a telling detail mitigates the threatening sexuality of the dangerous, “deviant” women in *Drei Weiber*. As discussed above, Dix’s signed the work by placing his monogram and the date on the redheaded prostitute’s right forearm (Figure 87). The placement and the style of Dix’s dated monogram give it the appearance of a tattoo. The presence of a tattoo of Dix’s monogram suggests some sort of relationship, presumably a romantic or sexual one, between Dix and the prostitute. The presence of this monogram tattoo evokes ideas of property<sup>115</sup> and perhaps implies that she is “his.” Although it implies that he engaged in risky behavior by having a sexual relationship with a prostitute, such an action could be considered a Dionysian affirmation of life by embracing actions and passions that lead to a state of Dionysian intoxication, “the sexual and the destructive.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Hau, 174. Hau specifically references Austrian gynecologist, Paul Mathes, who wrote about both Austrian and German women, and German physician Gerhard Venzmer.

<sup>115</sup> Auer, Anna, et al. *Christian Schad Retrospective 1894-1982: Life and Work in Context*. Leopold Museum, Vienna: Wienand Verlag, 2008. 136. In the entry for Christian Schad’s painting *Maika* of 1929, it is noted that he signed his name on her left forearm in a manner that resembles a tattoo. As Maika, whose real name was Maria Lahmann, was Schad’s girlfriend from 1928 to approximately 1931, it is suggested that perhaps the tattoo indicates that she is his property.

<sup>116</sup> Twohig, 43.

Despite the sexual and social threats posed by these dangerous women, the presence of the monogram tattoo suggests that Dix managed to evade the danger they posed. Rather than allowing himself to be emasculated by the prostitutes, who were inspired by magically castrating witches, Dix brought their “deviant” female sexuality, particularly the voluptuous eroticism of the redhead, under his control. In painting his monogram as a tattoo on the redhead, he assumes a position of power by selecting her. He, as a Paris surrogate, exerts his masculine authority by choosing one and refusing the other two which demonstrates his authority over all three of them. He does not depict himself in the work so, while the women exert a Dionysian erotic pull on the artist, he is not physically present; thus, the threat they pose to his masculinity is mitigated. His position outside the scene suggests his authority over the potentially castrating women. The presence of Dix’s mark on the body of the red-headed prostitute indicates his influence over her and, thus, her crouching pose can, as it pertains to Dix, be regarded as submissive, both sexually and otherwise. Furthermore, the suggestion of a sexual relationship between Dix as client and artist, and the redhead as prostitute and subject is illustrative of Nietzsche’s assertion that art is the product of a profoundly erotic interest.<sup>117</sup> Thus, the tattoo not only physically marks the redheaded woman, but it also designates Dix as the Apollonian artist who successfully confronts the Old Masters while maintaining control of his subject and the Dionysian man who affirms life through his passionate engagement in all aspects of it. He is both the Apollonian and the Dionysian and is, consequently, a Nietzschean *Übermensch* in the form of a Weimar New Man who incorporates certain attributes of American masculinity in order to construct a new conception of German manhood.

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<sup>117</sup> Nussbaum, 108.

As with the depictions of prostitutes and *Neue Frauen* discussed in the preceding chapters, in his paintings of prostitutes that adapt the motifs of the Judgment of Paris and of witches, Dix's presence is still implied either as the viewer, the client, or the artist. Consequently, although he does not actually include himself in any of the works discussed above, he still reaffirms his Nietzschean-inspired masculinity as a *Neuer Mann* whose dominance is asserted via his artistic capturing of their forms which has distinct erotic overtones. He escapes the destruction these women have the potential to cause and reveals the degeneration these women bring upon themselves through their lifestyles. Not only does he triumph over the witch-prostitutes but he also places himself among the artistic pantheon of revered Old Masters such as Lucas Cranach, Albrecht Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien. Although Dix's paintings were inspired by Old Master motifs, his fusion of multiple motifs and his updating of these motifs to address a new group of "deviant" women, prostitutes, who appear to delight in causing male ruination, proclaim his Nietzschean unwillingness to submit and allow him to claim victory as a hybrid being of his own creation—a New Master, New Man, *Übermensch*. He refuses to bow before artistic precedence, castrating women or the questionable elements of life and, thus, in his own mind and in his art, he triumphs over them all.

## Chapter V Conclusion: Otto Dix: New Man, New Master

In his 1925 essay “*Die Maschine*” which was featured in *Standarte*, German author Ernst Jünger (1895-1998) remarked that elements of Friedrich Nietzsche’s writings “taught us that life is not only a struggle for daily existence but a struggle for higher and deeper goals.”<sup>1</sup> Otto Dix’s art, specifically works he created during the Weimar Republic, express this idea. During the postwar period, people were forced to contend with a variety of hardships, ranging from political turmoil and social upheaval to economic instability. Additionally, as a result of shifting social mores and debates about gender politics, issues of sexuality, gender, and one’s place in the home, the workplace and society in general became contentious issues. Dix was not immune to these issues and, like his contemporaries, he grappled with them both privately and publically. Through his manipulation of Old Master motifs in his Weimar works depicting “fallen” women, Dix wrestled with both his own status as an artist and with the new realities facing him and the society in which he lived. However, in addressing the complex web of associations and suspicions surrounding women who were perceived as “deviant,” Dix also endeavored to achieve aims that went beyond engaging contentious contemporary issues. Indeed, Dix shared Jünger’s fascination with Nietzsche and strove not only to embody ideals the philosopher espoused but also to challenge the artistic supremacy of the Old Masters. Ultimately, he was determined to portray himself as a Nietzsche-inspired modern *Neuer Mann* and artist who endeavored to maintain control over the chaotic elements of the era. If, due to the magnitude of the calamitous events of the

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<sup>1</sup> Jünger, Ernst. “Die Maschine.” *Standarte*, 15 (1925), p. 2. Cited in Iain Boyd White, “Otto Dix’s Germany: From Wilhelmine Reich to East-West Divide.” *Otto Dix: 1891-1969*. London: Tate Gallery, 1992. 37. Jünger was specifically discussing the “Renaissance landscape” which he noted in the writings of Nietzsche. White asserts that Dix’s *Self-Portrait with Jan* (1930) “endorses” this type of landscape.

period, Dix was unable to transcend what was occurring around him, his artistic and personal engagement with and response to the unstable circumstances of the interwar period enabled him to avoid being subsumed by the waves of chaos sweeping over Germany during these tumultuous years.

Throughout his life, Otto Dix both admired and strongly identified with Nietzsche and with the philosophical ideals he espoused. Indeed, even in 1934, Dix's friend from Dresden, Fritz Löffler, addressed Dix as "you old Nietzschean."<sup>2</sup> His fascination with the philosophy of Nietzsche was well-known and long-lasting; it influenced not only his artistic practice but also the manner in which he perceived his wartime and postwar experiences as well as his efforts to construct a particular public persona. Similarly, his admiration for the Old Masters and the rivalry he created with them began in his youth but continued to be a crucial element in his artistic practice until his death in 1969. As with his open appreciation for Nietzsche, his competitive respect for the Old Masters is well documented both in statements made by and about him, and is visually evidenced in works he created. The unique interaction that occurred between the inspiration Dix found in Nietzsche on one hand and the creative stimulation he garnered from the Old Masters on the other affected Dix as a man and as an artist. His nuanced engagement with certain themes embraced by these artists, especially those pertaining to death and decay, also shaped his own art in terms of techniques and choices of subject matter. Specifically, Dix reinvented the vocabulary utilized by the Old Masters to suit the time period in which he lived. However, his reinvention of this visual language was unique both to him and to the interwar period. He then shaped these motifs and themes to suit his own

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<sup>2</sup> Twohig, 46. Löffler referred to Dix that was in a letter to the artist dated 6 July 1934.



agenda as an artist who was concerned with both how he was currently perceived and with his legacy vis-à-vis the Old Masters. His unique artistic style and the manner in which he conceived his subjects reveals his personal anxieties as well as those of Weimar society in general.

Dix's self-construction as a Nietzschean Weimar *Neuer Mann* involved addressing the legacy of Germany's defeat in World War I and the appropriation of certain elements of American culture. Part of this engagement involved American music, specifically jazz, and American contemporary dances. In works, such as *An die Schönheit* (Figure 13) Dix portrayed himself as a masculine modern man engaged in aspects of *Amerikanismus* contra another byproduct of the postwar period, the Weimar *Neue Frau*. His self-portrait in this work highlights his deliberate emulation of American masculinity through his clothing and hairstyle. Through the portrayal of the African-American drummer and the racially-charged sexual implications of this musician, modern American dances and of jazz music in general, Dix links his engagement with *Amerikanismus* with stereotypical notions of sexual potency. By performing an Americanized ideal of manhood, Dix sought to claim elements of the victorious masculinity of his "enemy" for himself. In so doing, he hoped to reassert his own male self-worth in order to bolster his own ego as a soldier who had fought for the losing side in World War I and as a man who was trying to negotiate rapidly changing gender norms epitomized by the contentious figure of the *Neue Frau*. In light of the war's legacy of death and Dix's personal love of dance, the Old Master motif of the *Totentanz* enabled him to engage not only the art of past masters but also Nietzsche's philosophy and his personal anxieties about Weimar gender politics.

His *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber* (1925) (Figure 16), which is one of his most well-known paintings, updates the traditional motif of the *Totentanz*, functions as a Nietzschean homage to the Dionysian dancer and serves as a testimony of Dix's complicated relationship with Berber's extreme personification of the "wanton corrosion"<sup>3</sup> attributed to New Women. Dix knew Berber personally but their relationship seemed to be friendly rather than romantic in nature. Although he was intrigued with her as a dancer and a performer, his impression of her persona and perhaps even her personal life seems to have been more ambivalent. His painting of her, which markedly exaggerates her age and the physical toll her freewheeling lifestyle took on her body, is neither wholly critical nor purely an homage. Instead, it seems to exist in an in between state in which Berber, the "depraved" *Neue Frau* par excellence, is simultaneously admired for her Dionysian vitalism and unapologetic flouting of conventional morals and perceived as a threat because of her emancipation and her overturning of gender norms.

In linking Berber with the *Totentanz* motif and Nietzschean musings about ecstatic Dionysian dance, Dix links the New Woman in general and Berber in particular with ideas of dance, sexual "degeneracy," creativity and death. His concurrent admiration for and concerns about New Women and the impact of their perceived liberation on gender roles and German masculinity influenced his perception of Berber and affected the manner in which he constructed his persona. Accordingly, he attempted to portray himself as an artist who was inspired by but eclipsed the Old Masters. As a Nietzsche-inspired New Man, he wanted to be viewed as masculine, enlightened and modern but he was still anxious about shifting societal mores, changing gender roles and

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<sup>3</sup> Wehrlin, 1381. Wehrlin's phrase, "fressenden Verlotterung" can be translated as "wanton corrosion" or as "wanton degradation." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, the phrase is translated as the former.

the lessening of the perceived distinctions between purportedly promiscuous New Women and prostitutes.

These concerns about the changing status of women and the anxieties that such alterations in traditional gender norms revealed were evident in the figure of the widow. Interwar widows had to contend with their own grief and navigate their difficult economic circumstances, which sometimes involved turning to prostitution. In addition, they became shameful reminders of Germany's military loss as a nation and of the absence of able-bodied men whose deaths seemed to have been in vain. The fact that some prostitutes donned widows' garb compounded the plight of widows and increased the suspicion of and hostility toward prostitutes who were already linked with ideas of bodily decay and death.

Dix's images of widows, such as his *Witwe* watercolors of 1922 (Figures 43 and 44), and veiled women, including *Strichdame* (1920) (Figure 38), *Dame mit Nerz und Schleier* (Figure 39) (1920) and *Elegante Vorübergehende* (1922) (Figure 40) explore the visual ambiguity between "fallen" women and women mourning fallen men. The instability of this female identity is further addressed in Dix's *Stilleben mit Witwenschleier* (1925) (Figure 46) which modernizes the Old Master subject of the *vanitas* motif by incorporating a widow's veil into the subject matter. In so doing, Dix revamps a well-known art historical motif by engaging the interwar elision of the distinction between prostitutes and widows. He also integrates his interest in Nietzschean philosophy by exploring the philosopher's theories about lust, sex, death and the vitalistic cycle of life.

Dix further manipulates Old Master images of *vanitas* and Death and the Maiden motifs with the painting *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* of 1922 (Figure 50) and the variants he created as a watercolor (Figure 51) and an etching (Figure 52). These works reflect Dix's competitive engagement with works by canonical artists such as Hans Baldung Grien and alters the visual language of established motifs pertaining to ephemerality and death by substituting prostitutes for "maidens" and by envisioning Death as the mirror reflections of the female victims. Consequently, the prostitutes become emblems of their own decay and hint at the hazards posed to their male clients and to men in general by their dangerous, Dionysian sexuality.

Dix's engagement with these themes was subsequently addressed in *Vanitas (Jugend und Alter)* of 1932 (Figure 56). However, as the nude woman in this painting appears to be a *Neue Frau* rather than a prostitute, the work demonstrates the complexity of Weimar assumptions pertaining to the perceived sexuality and behavior of emancipated women. As widows, prostitutes and *Neue Frauen* were all regarded as slightly different shades on the "fallen" woman spectrum, they were treated with suspicion and fear due to their associations with disease, decay and death while concurrently being sexually objectified due to their Dionysian sexual allure. Consequently, the notion of *vanitas*, pertains not only to the transitory nature of youth, beauty and life itself but also relates to the idea of the precarious status of patriarchal control and, as Germany's military defeat demonstrated, the short-lived nature of pre-war societal constructs of masculinity. As a result, Dix utilized the images of "fallen" women and the ambiguity surrounding their visual identification to aid in his own self-presentation as a *Neuer Mann* who demonstrated his artistic skill by challenging the Old

Masters and asserted his Nietzschean will to power by attempting to control those “deviant” females who posed the greatest threat to his creative, masculine self-assertion.

Dix addresses the strange appeal of these women, whose sexuality is both threatening and alluring, in his paintings of groups of prostitutes. These works, including *Der Salon* (Figure 59) and *Der Salon II* (Figure 71), both of 1921, which depict brothel prostitutes, were seemingly inspired by a variety of Old Master subjects including the Three Ages of Woman, the Judgment of Paris and witches. Images of these latter two motifs were created by canonical artists Dix was known to have admired including Lucas Cranach the Elder, Albrecht Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien. These themes likely appealed to Dix as they engaged the idea of females who posed threats to male well-being but who simultaneously possessed qualities that made them almost impossible to resist. As a Nietzschean, Dix manipulates these themes by recasting the subjects as prostitutes and a pictured or implied male client. Thus, rather than recounting a mythological story or referencing diabolical pagan females, Dix shifts the themes’ focus to contemporary, dangerous female sexuality and the vitalistic allure of a sexual encounter that affirms life by bringing one into proximity with death.

Dix further engages these themes in *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße* of 1925 (Figure 41) which depicts streetwalkers. While the presence of a potential male client can be inferred, these women are more threatening because their sexuality is not contained by the controlled environment of a brothel. Additionally, the three women are not immediately recognizable as prostitutes which links them with Dix’s preoccupation with the problematic uncertainty between the identities of prostitutes and non-prostitutes that existed as a result of changing attitudes, social mores, and fashions. In contrast, the three

brothel prostitutes in *Drei Weiber* of 1926 (Figure 78) are clearly available to a client for a price and reflect the inspiration Dix found in images of witches and Death as well as the legacy of depictions of the Judgment of Paris. Despite their physiognomic exaggerations and their threatening sexuality, these prostitutes still seem to exert a strange erotic allure. Just as witches were once regarded as being socially malignant deviants, Weimar prostitutes were accused of causing harm to the moral fabric of interwar society and of damaging long-established gender norms. Via their supposed kinship with prostitutes, New Women were often reproached for effecting similar social and gender-related problems.

However, through the manner in which he depicts such “deviant” women and his implied status as the controlling man and artist who, despite the sexual temptation posed by such dangerous females, remains above the fray, Dix positions himself as the one in authority. Through his provocative engagement with Old Master themes and his Nietzsche-inspired interpretation of well-established themes, Dix asserts his artistic superiority by creating a new type of visual language that more adequately addresses the changing circumstances of the post-war period. Thus, this nexus of artistic subjects, thematic interests, creative aspirations, along with his personal agenda reveals his goal of constructing an ideal masculine persona as an artistic New Master and Nietzschean *Übermensch*. He also casts himself as the Weimar New Man whose bravado is partly inspired by, but not limited to, manifestations of American masculinity and whose self-mastery and sexual potency is, ultimately, not overcome by the “deviant” sexuality of Weimar’s much maligned “fallen” women.

These insights into the distinctive manner in which Dix adapted Old Master motifs, the nature of his longstanding commitment to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and his personal apprehension about changing aspects of German interwar society lend themselves to development in further research. Dix actively participated in the construction of his public persona as a man and an artist and did so in a highly nuanced way as a result of his rivalry with the Old Masters. This observation could be expanded upon in subsequent research. In addition, the assertions that his devotion to Nietzsche's philosophies pertaining to the self-actualized *Übermensch*, and his personal engagement with conflicts within Weimar society pave the way for further investigations into the nature of conceptions of ideal manhood and artistic self-construction during the interwar period. As Dix was very cognizant of the manner in which his public persona was perceived, additional investigations into the nuanced expressions of his masculinity as a soldier, a father and an artist in the post-Weimar period (Figure 88) could be undertaken.

In light of the research conducted in this dissertation, Dix's creation of a public self-image vis-à-vis his own experiences during and after the war and in relation to other types of individuals who did not fall into the categories of Old Masters or "deviant" women, such as his family, friends and acquaintances, subjects of his portraits and contemporary artists, could be engaged in order to elaborate on the particularities of his ideal standard of German manhood and the varying circumstances in which his persona developed. A similar line of inquiry could be adapted to suit the exploration of the self-construction of the artistic, masculine, and sexual identities and personas of other artists who participated in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* such as the Christian Schad (1894-1982)

(Figure 89), who was grouped with the Classicists or Magic Realists, although his work was both technically and thematically distinct from that of Dix.

Dix is one of the best-known artists of his generation and his Weimar works are evocative of both the actualities and the sensationalized reputation of that era. He was an image maker and highly skilled painter who not only confronted the artistic traditions of Germany's past but who also fully engaged the complexities of its Weimar present. Indeed, his unique aesthetic and his personal vision are inseparable from both the country's artistic heritage and the uncertainties and realities of the Weimar years. Consequently, through his singular vision, he was able to influence not only the way the period envisioned itself but also how subsequent generations perceive the interwar years in Germany. Through his extraordinary ability to engage and synthesize the past and the present, the philosophical and the socio-political, and the personal and the public via his nuanced approach and artistic style, he defies simplistic categorization or explanation thereby creating a vision of Weimar that is unparalleled in its multifariousness and complexity. Thus, studying Dix's art provides scholars with valuable insights not only into the remarkable art works created by a singularly talented artist but also a unique historical and socio-political perspective of the events that unfolded during the interwar period and how they were interpreted by a leading member of the artistic phenomenon known as the *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

Otto Dix's particular artistic vision that engaged the *Neue Sachlichkeit* style that developed during the Weimar years, was a way for him to wrestle with the uncertainty of the times and to attempt to assert some sort of order and thus, control, over his situation.



Indeed, in a 1947 letter to the Kulturstadt Gera, he remarked that “Malen ist ein Versuch, Ordnung zu schaffen.”<sup>4</sup> The works he created during the interwar period represent a personalized, idiosyncratic attempt to make sense of his ever-changing surroundings in the wake of the upheaval of World War I. In the same letter, he also remarked that “Kunst ist für mich Bannung.”<sup>5</sup> During the Weimar period, this “exorcism” manifests itself in Dix’s images of “fallen” women as he attempts to unpack and sort through the complex web of cultural, political and social issues and conflicts that had been projected onto the bodies of these supposedly “ghastly females.”<sup>6</sup> In his personal artistic “exorcism,” Dix projected his own anxieties about his masculinity and artistic legacy onto these women. In them, he perceived qualities that he admired and feared; as a result, he was both entranced and repelled by these women and created his images of them according to this complicated network of conflicting ideas. In his self-construction as a hybridized Nietzschean *Übermensch*, Weimar *Neuer Mann* and creative New Master, Dix exorcised his own personal demons by representing interwar “deviant” women in ways that evidenced disparagement and revulsion as well as praise and attraction. Thus, Dix’s distinctive artistic engagement with prostitutes, widows and *Neue Frauen* functions as just one lens through which to view the Weimar Republic’s complex and often conflicting ideas about the shifting roles of both men and women in a society that was struggling to make sense of the changes that were rapidly occurring in its very fabric.

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<sup>4</sup> Dix, Otto. “Brief an das Kulturstadt Gera 1947.” Cited in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 219. This quote can be translated into English as follows: “Painting is an attempt to establish order.”

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. This quote can be translated into English as “For me, art is exorcism.”

<sup>6</sup> Wehrlin, 1381. Wehrlin’s term “*abschreckender Weiber*” can be translated as “abhorrent females” or as “ghastly females.” In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, the phrase is translated as the latter.



Figure 1

August Sander, photograph of Otto Dix, 1928.

Herrmann, Ingo. "Biography: 1924-1933." *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 137. 238.



Figure 2

Postcard showing Otto Dix (standing in the back row) with the field artillery, ca. 1916.

Herrmann, Ingo. "Biography: 1914-1923." *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 137. 234.



Figure 3

Photograph of Otto Dix, ca. 1917.

Herrmann, Ingo. "Biography: 1914-1923." *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 137. 234.



Figure 4

Otto Dix, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, ca. 1914, green-tinted plaster, almost life-sized, formerly Städtische Kunstsammlungen Dresden, confiscated in 1937, missing since 1939.

Rewald, Sabine. "Dr. Heinrich Stadelmann, 1920." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. Ed. Sabine Rewald. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 86.



Figure 5

Otto Dix, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, ca. 1914, green-tinted plaster, almost life-sized, formerly Städtische Kunstsammlungen Dresden, confiscated in 1937, missing since 1939.

Schubert, Dietrich. "Death in the Trench: The Death of the Portrait?" *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 33.



Figure 6

Max Klinger, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 1902, bronze, 52.6 x 25 x 34 cm (20  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 9  $\frac{7}{8}$  x 13  $\frac{3}{8}$  in.), Inv. P 155. Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig Germany. (Photo: Ursula Gerstenberger).

Van Dyke, James A. "Otto Dix's Philosophical *Metropolis*" *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters.

Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 183.



Figure 7

Otto Dix, *Prometheus—Grenzen der Menschheit* (*Prometheus—Limits of Mankind*), 1919, oil on canvas. Dimensions unknown. Lost.

Schmidt, Diether. *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschel Verlag Kunst Und Gesellschaft, 1981. 55.



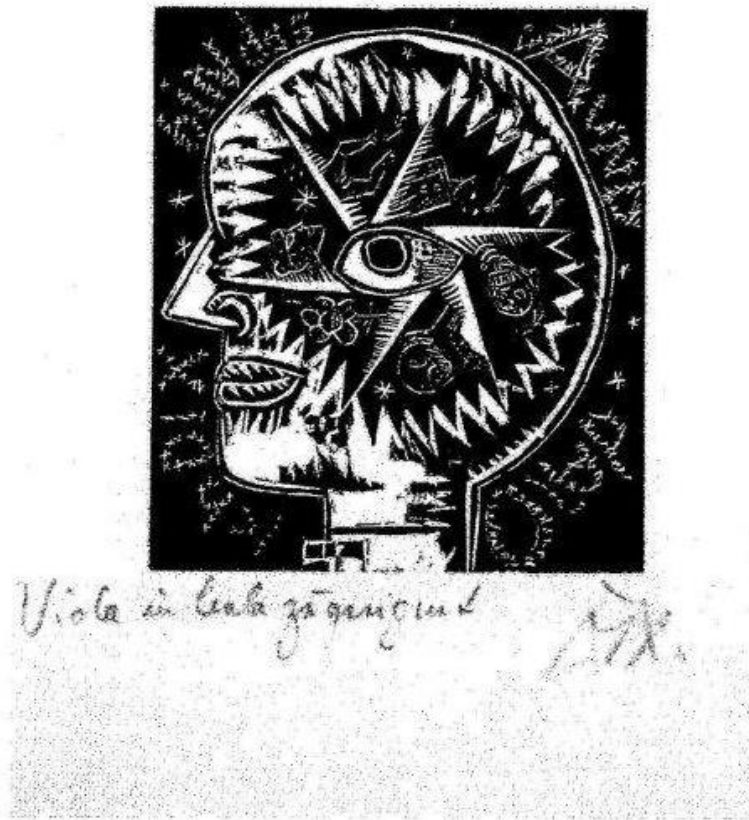


Figure 8

Otto Dix, *Ich DIX bin das A und das O* (*I Dix am the A and the O*), from the portfolio “WERDEN,” 1919, woodcut on paper, Image size: 18 x 15.8 cm (7 1/8 x 6 1/4 in.); Sheet size: 42.7 x 34.7 cm (16 3/4 x 13 5/8 in.). Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz-Museum Gunzenhauser.

Van Dyke, James A. “Otto Dix’s Philosophical *Metropolis*” *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 183.



Figure 9

Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis mit Nelke* (*Self-Portrait with Carnation*), 1912, oil on paper, 73 x 50 cm (28 ¾ x 19 5/8 in.). Formerly Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, confiscated in 1937, now in the collection of The Detroit Institute of Arts.

Schubert, Dietrich. "Death in the Trench: The Death of the Portrait? Otto Dix's Wartime Self-Portraits, 1915 – 1918." *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 32.

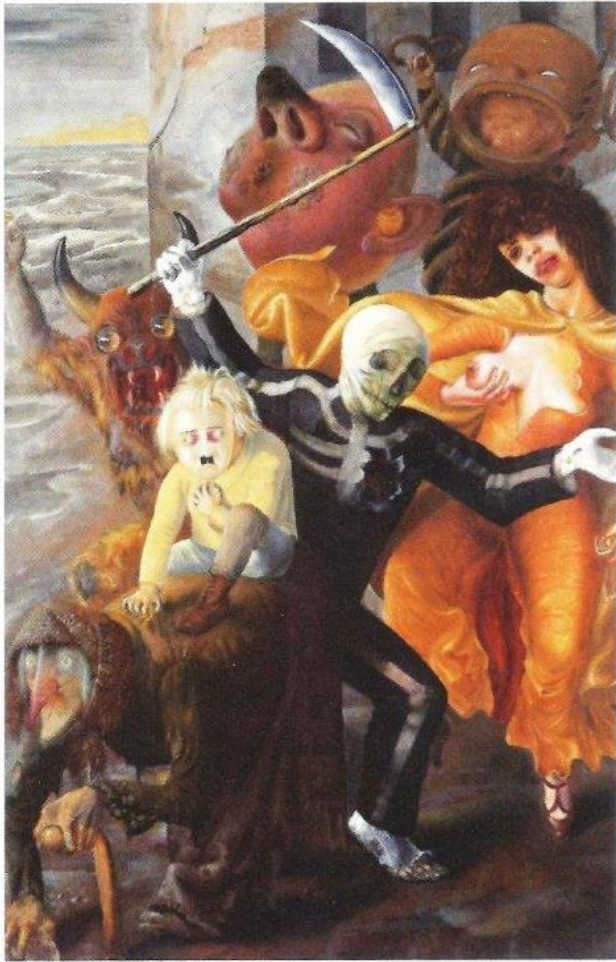


Figure 10

Otto Dix, *Die sieben Todsünden* (*The Seven Deadly Sins*, 1933, mixed media on wood, 179 x 120 cm (70 ½ x 47 ¼ in.). Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.

Peters, Olaf. "Intransigent Realism: Otto Dix between the World Wars." *Otto Dix*. Ed.

Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 26.



Figure 11

Hans Holbein the Younger, *Das Alt Weyb* (*The Old Woman*), 1538, from *Hans Holbein d.J.: Bilder des Todes*, Leipzig, 1931.

Van Dyke, James A. "Otto Dix's Folk Culture." *Otto Dix and the New Objectivity*. Ed., Kunstmuseum Stuttgart. Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012. 89.



Figure 12

Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis mit Gattin* (*Self-Portrait with Wife*), 1923, oil glaze over tempera on canvas. Formerly Museum Moritzburg, Halle/Saale, missing.

Schick, Karin. Olaf. *Otto Dix. Homage á Martha*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005.





Figure 13

Otto Dix, *An die Schönheit (To Beauty)*, 1922, oil and collage on canvas, 140 x 122.2 cm (55 1/8 x 48 1/8 in.), Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal.

Rewald, Sabine. "To Beauty." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 48.



Figure 14

Page of wax busts from a product catalogue, Wachsplastik, Berlin: Freud & Co. (1909).

Photo: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz Museum für Volkskunde.

Simmons, Sherwin. "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immorality in Berlin, 1913-16." *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (Mar., 2000), 125.



Figure 15

Hugo Erfurth, *Otto Dix*, 1926, photograph. Otto Dix Stiftung, Vaduz.

Rewald, Sabine. *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. 140.





Figure 16

Otto Dix, *Bildnis der Tänzerin Anita Berber* (*Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber*), 1925, oil and tempera on plywood, 120 x 65 cm. (47 ¼ x 25 9/16 in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Rewald, Sabine. "The Dancer Anita Berber." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 143.

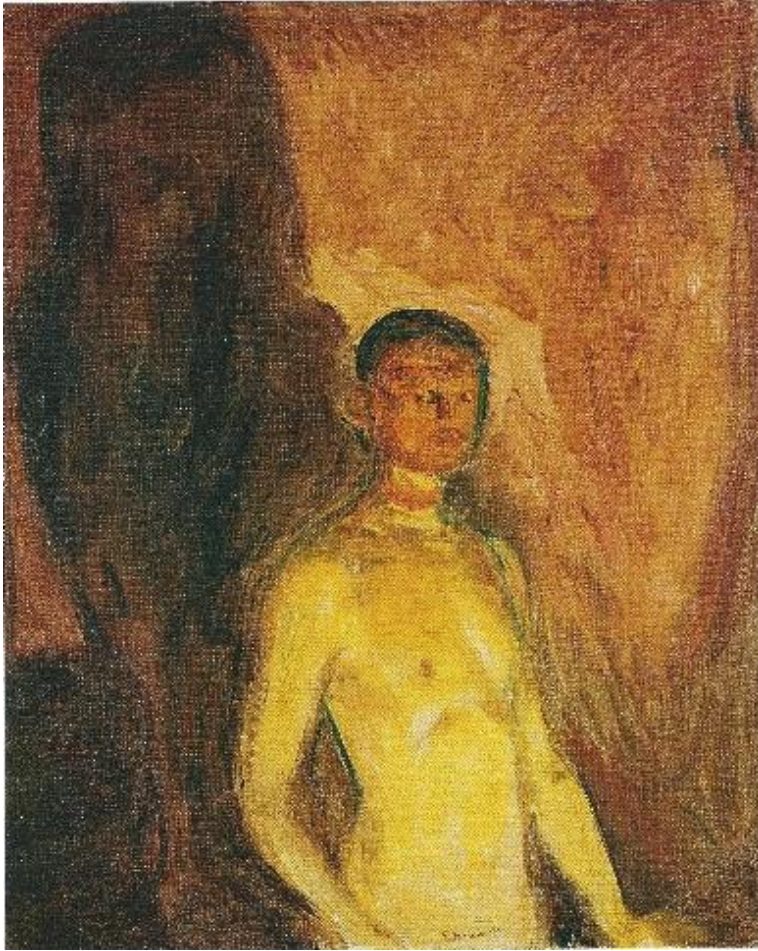


Figure 17

Edvard Munch, *Selvportrett i Helvete* (*Self-Portrait in Hell*), 1903, oil on canvas, 82 x 66 cm. (32 5/16 x 26 in.). Munch-Museet, Oslo.

McShine, Kynaston, ed. *Edvard Munch: The Modern Life of the Soul*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2006. 191.



Figure 18

Photograph of Anita Berber in her “*Morphium*” Costume which was used for Leo Lania’s book *Der Tanz ins Dunkel: Anita Berber, Ein biographischer Roman*. Berlin: Adalbert Schultz Verlag, 1929. Atelier Alex Binder, 1926.

Fischer, Lothar. *Anita Berber Göttin der Nacht: Collage eines kurzen Lebens*. Berlin: Edition Ebersbach, 2006. 169.



Figure 19

Promotional Photograph of Anita Berber in the Costume for her “Cocaine” Dance,  
Atelier D’Ora, 1922

Fischer, Lothar. *Anita Berber Göttin der Nacht: Collage eines kurzen Lebens*. Berlin:  
Edition Ebersbach, 2006. 133.





Figure 20

Josef Fenneker, Film poster for Richard Oswald's *Die Prostitution* (1919), 1919.

Fischer, Lothar. *Anita Berber Göttin der Nacht: Collage eines kurzen Lebens*. Berlin:

Edition Ebersbach, 2006. 59.



Figure 21

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Selbstbildnis mit dem tanzende Tod* (Self-Portrait with Dancing Death), woodcut, 1918.

Eichenberg, Fritz. *Dance of Death: A Graphic Commentary on The Danse Macabre Through the Centuries*. New York: Abbeville Press, Inc., 1983. 71.



Figure 22

Michael Wolgemut, *Death Triumphant*, from “Liber chronicarum mundi” (*Nuremberg Chronicle*) by Hartmann Schedel, 1493, woodcut on paper. Oxford Science Archive, Oxford, Great Britain.

Van Dyke, James A. “Otto Dix’s Philosophical Metropolis.” *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 185.



Figure 23

Peter Paul Rubens after Hans Holbein, *Die Keyserinn (The Empress)*, c. 1593? (Original 1524-25). Museum Plantin-Moretus / Stedelijk Prentenkabinet, Antwerp.

Regteren Altena, I.Q. van. *Peter Paul Rubens Drawings After Holbein's Dance of Death*; Amsterdam: H.D. Pfann, 1977. Plate 26.





Figure 24

Peter Paul Rubens after Hans Holbein, *Die Gräfin (The Countess)*, c. 1593? (Original 1524-25). Museum Plantin-Moretus / Stedelijk Prentenkabinet, Antwerp.

Regteren Altena, I.Q. van. *Peter Paul Rubens Drawings After Holbein's Dance of Death*; Amsterdam: H.D. Pfann, 1977. Plate 34.



Figure 25

Ferdinand Barth, “*Der Liebhaber, Nr. 17*,” from *Die Arbeit des Todes II: ein Totentanz von Ferdinand Barth*. München: Verlag von Braum et Schneider, 1866.

Kozaky, Stephan P., *Geschichte Der Totentänze: Dritte Lieferung; Der Totentanz von Heute*. Budapest: Magyar Történeti Múzeum, 1941. XXXVI.



Figure 26

J.R. Schellenberg, “*Getäuschte Erwartung*,” from *Freund Heins II: Erscheinungen in Holbeins Manier von J.R. Schellenberg*. Winterthur, bey Heinrich Steiner und Comp. 1785. Text by J.K.A. Musäus.

Stephan P., *Geschichte Der Totentänze: Dritte Lieferung; Der Totentanz von Heute*.

Budapest: Magyar Történeti Múzeum, 1941. XXVI.





Figure 27

Alfred Rethel, Plate V from *Auch ein Totentanz*, wood engraving, 1849. Suermondt

Ludwig Museum Aachen. (Photo: Anne Gold).

Hertel, Christianne. "Dis/Continuities in Dresden's Dances of Death." *The Art Bulletin*

Vol. 82, No. 1 (Mar., 2000). 97.



Figure 28

Urs Graf, *Zwei Landsknechte und eine Frau mit dem Tod im Baum* (*Two Mercenaries and a Woman with Death in a Tree*), woodcut, 1524.

Eichenberg, Fritz. *Dance of Death: A Graphic Commentary on The Danse Macabre Through the Centuries*. New York: Abbeville Press, Inc., 1983. 28.

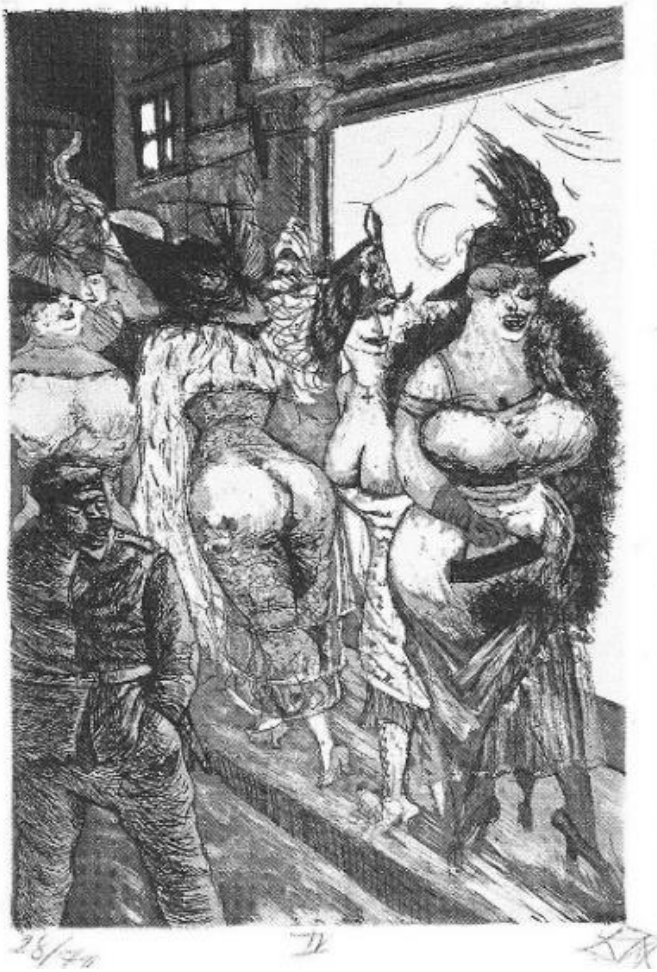


Figure 29

Otto Dix, *Frontsoldat in Brüssel* (*Frontline Soldier in Brussels*), from *Der Krieg* (*War*), etching, aquatint, and drypoint from a portfolio of fifty etching, aquatint and drypoints, 1924.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.



Figure 30

Otto Dix, *Besuch bei Madame Germaine in Méricourt* (*Visit to Madame Germaine's at Méricourt*), *Frontline Soldier in Brussels*, from *Der Krieg* (*War*), etching, aquatint, and drypoint from a portfolio of fifty etching, aquatint and drypoints, 1924.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.

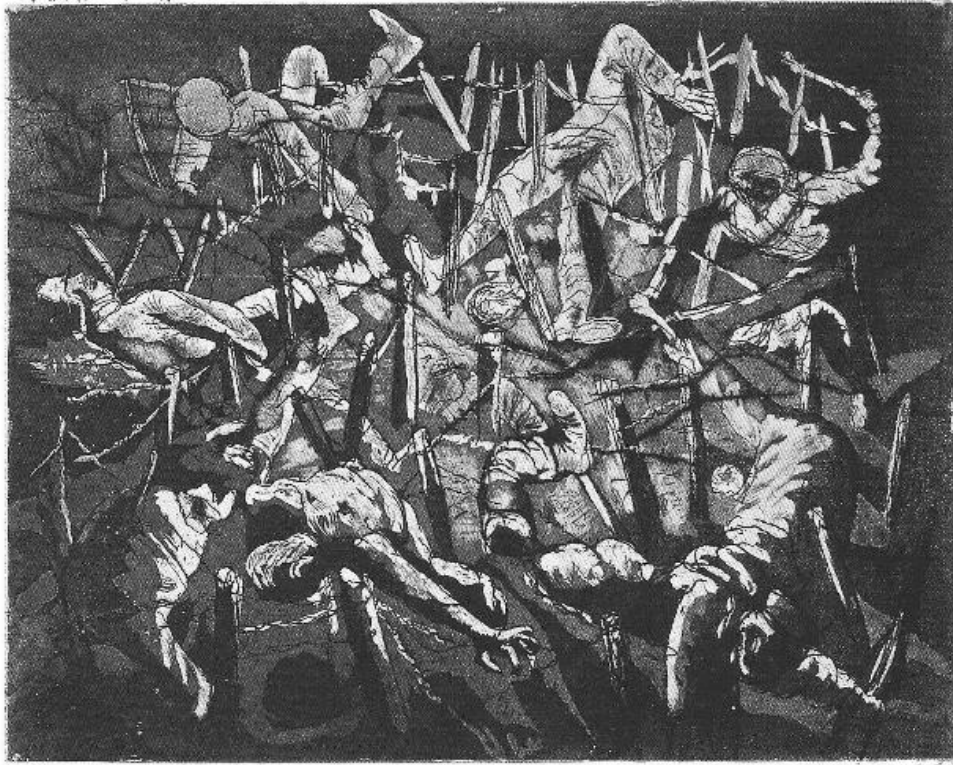


Figure 31

Otto Dix, *Totentanz anno 17 (Höhe Toter Mann)* (*Dance of Death 1917 [Dead Man Heights]*), from *Der Krieg (War)*, etching, aquatint, and drypoint from a portfolio of fifty etching, aquatint and drypoints, 1924.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.





Figure 32

Otto Dix, *Grab—toter Soldat (Grave—Dead Soldier)*, 1917, black chalk on yellowish paper. Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf im Ehrenhof.

Rewald, Sabine. *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. 33.



Figure 33

Otto Dix, *Liebende auf dem Grab* (*Lovers on the Grave*), 1917, black chalk on paper.

Kunstkabinett Klihm.

Rewald, Sabine. *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New Haven and

London: Yale University Press, 2006. 33.

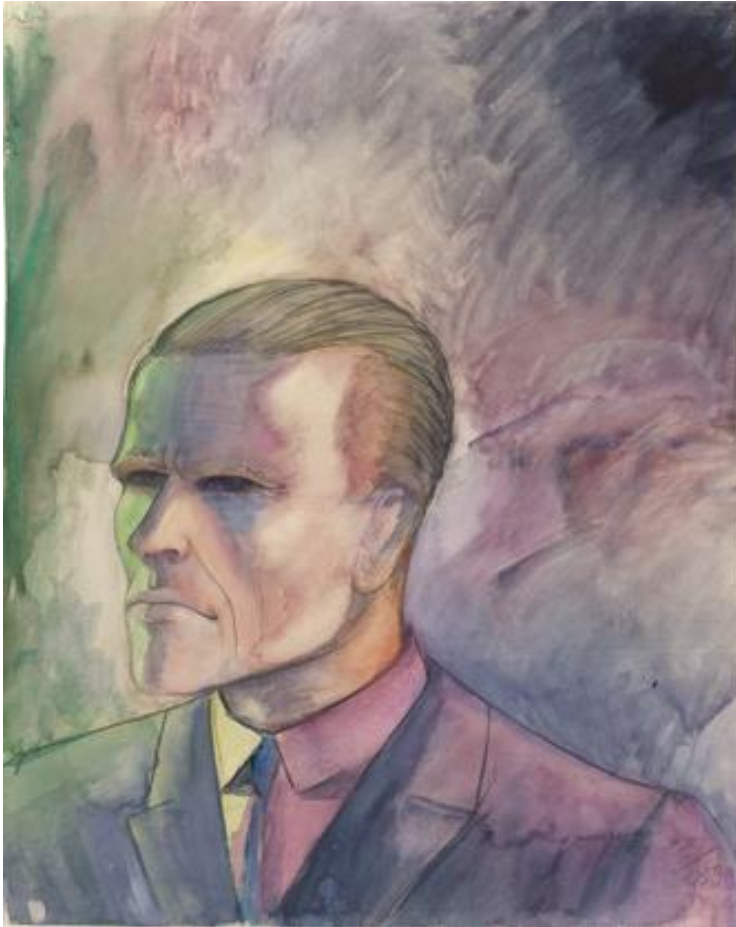


Figure 34

Otto Dix, *Selbstporträt (Self-Portrait)*, 1922, watercolor and pencil on paper, 49.2 x 39.3 cm (19 3/8 x 15 1/2") Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.

207.



Figure 35

Otto Dix, *Selbstporträt (Self-Portrait)*, 1923, watercolor and pencil on paper, 38.6 x 29 cm (15¼ x 22 3/8 in.), Stiftung Moritzburg, Kunstmuseum des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.



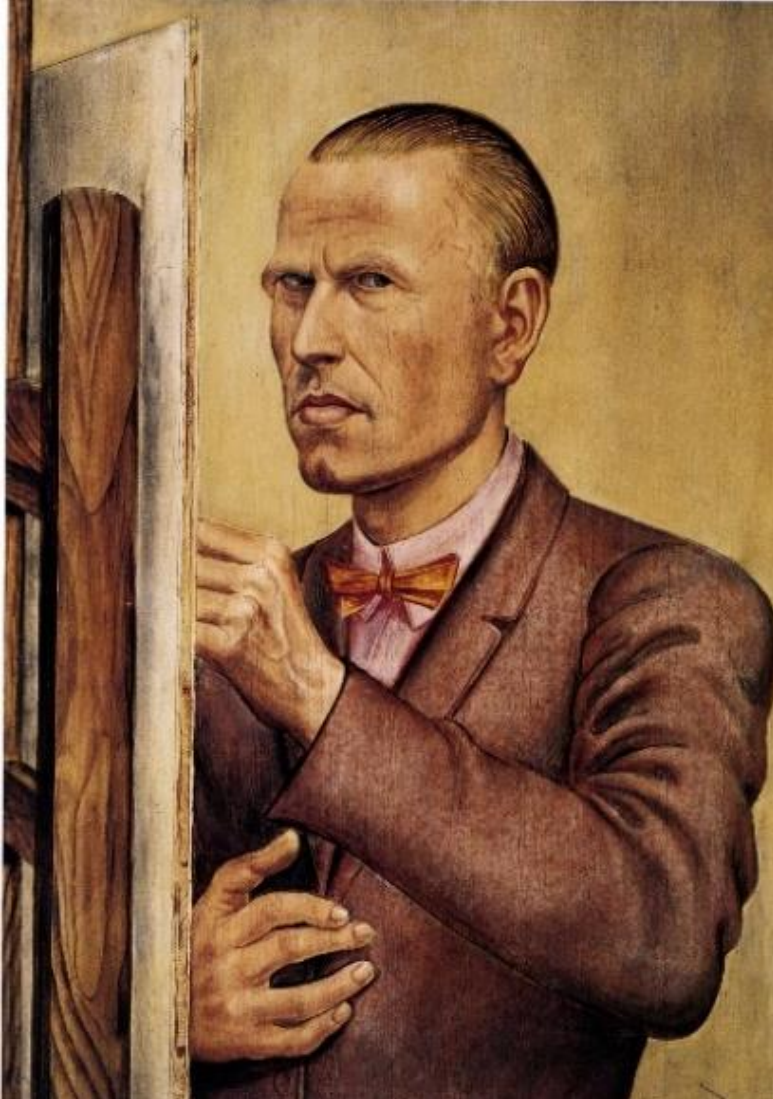


Figure 36

Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis mit Staffelei* (*Self-Portrait with Easel*), 1926, oil on wood, 80.5 cm x 55.5. cm (31  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 21  $\frac{7}{8}$  in.), Leopold-Hoesch Museum, Dresden.

Rewald, Sabine. "Self-Portrait with Easel." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 140.



Figure 37

Stephan Krotowski, advertisement for the *Trauermagazin des Westens*; Kleiststrasse 23, Berlin, 1914 (from Seidels Reklame 2, no. 10 [1914]; photo: Kunstbibliothek Berlin-Dietmar Katz.

Simmons, Sherwin. "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immorality in Berlin, 1913-16. *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (Mar., 2000), 134.



Figure 38

Otto Dix, *Strichdame (Prostitute)*, 1920, watercolor and ink over pencil, 47.5 x 38.5 cm (18 ¾ x 15 1/8 in.). Otto Dix Stiftung, Vaduz.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.



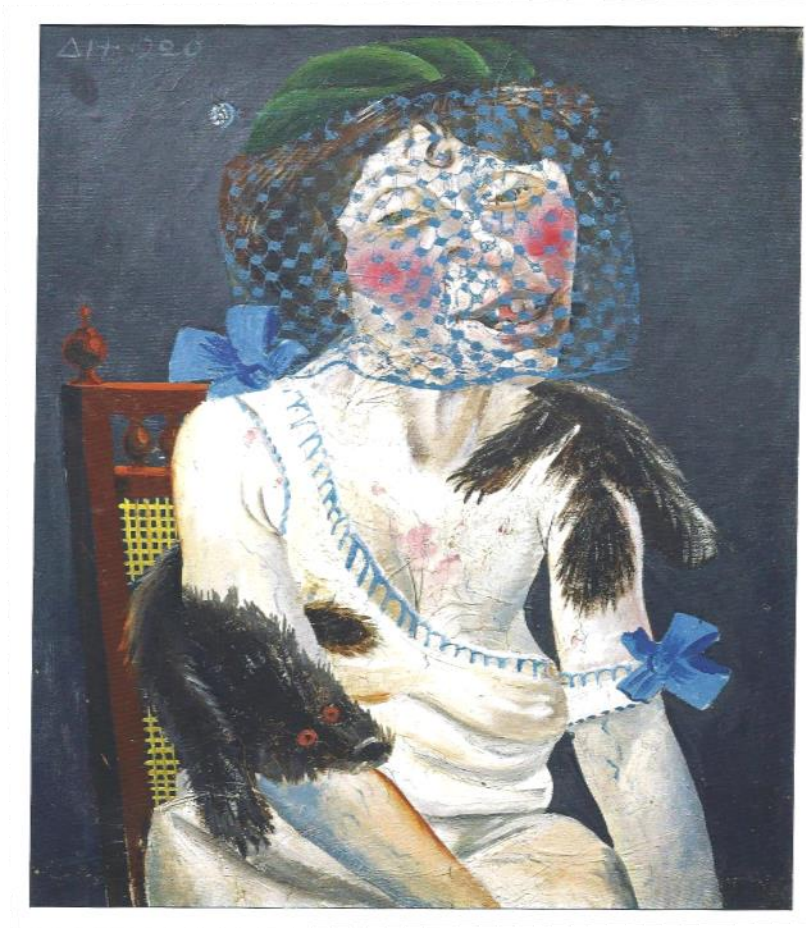


Figure 39

Otto Dix, *Dame mit Nerz und Schleier* (*Lady with Mink and Veil*), 1920, oil and tempera on canvas mounted on cardboard, 73 x 54.6 cm (28  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 21  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.). Collection Michael and Judy Steinhardt, New York.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.





Figure 40

Otto Dix, *Elegante Vorübergehende* (*Elegant Passerby*), 1922, watercolor, pen and ink, pencil, 49 x 39.5 cm (19 ¼ x 15 ½ in.). Stiftung Moritzburg, Kunstmuseum des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle/Saale.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.



Figure 41

Otto Dix, *Drei Dirnen auf der Straße* (*Three Prostitutes on the Street*), 1925, tempera on plywood, 95 x 100 cm (37 3/8 x 39 3/8 in.). Private Collection.

Müller, Karsten. "The Charleston and the Prosthetic Leg." *Otto Dix*. Ed. Olaf Peters.

Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 168.



Figure 42

Otto Dix, *Großstadt (Metropolis)*, 1927-1928, oil and tempera on wood, left panel: 181 x 101 cm (71 ¼ x 39 ¾ in.), center panel: 181 x 201 cm (71 ¼ x 79 1/8 in.), right panel: 181 x 101 cm (71 ¼ x 39 ¾ in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.

180.





Figure 43

Otto Dix, *Die Witwe* (Widow), 1922, watercolor and pencil, 49.7 x 44 cm (19 9/16 x 17 5/19 in.). Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.



Figure 44

Otto Dix, *Die Witwe* (Widow), 1922, watercolor and pencil, 58 x 48.5 cm (22 7/8 x 19 1/8 in.). Stiftung Saarländischer Kulturbesitz, Saarländisches Museum Saarbrücken.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.



Figure 45

Otto Dix, *Dirne und Kriegserletzter* (*Prostitute and War Wounded*), 1923, pen and ink on paper, 47 x 37 cm (18 ½ x 14 9/16 in.). Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.





Figure 46

Otto Dix, *Stilleben mit Witwenschleier (Still-Life with Widow's Veil)*, 1925, tempera on wood, 120 x 60 cm (47 ½ x 23 5/8 in.). Otto Dix Stiftung, Vaduz.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.



Figure 47

Otto Dix, *Blühen und Vergehen* (*Growth and Decay*), 1911, oil on cardboard, 63.5 x 48.5 cm (25 x 19 ¼ in.). Stadtmuseum Bautzen.

Hartley, Keith and Sarah O'Brien Twohig. "Still Life with Widow's Veil, 1925." *Otto Dix, 1891-1969*. London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1992.136.





Figure 48

Jacques de Gheyn, *Vanitas*, 1621, oil on wood, 117.5 x 165.4 cm (46 1/4 x 65 1/8 in.).

Yale University Art Gallery.

Merrill, David Oliver. "The 'Vanitas' of Jacques de Gheyn. *Yale Art Gallery Bulletin*,

Vol. 25, No. 3 (Mar., 1960), 6.



Figure 49

Pieter Claesz, *Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait*, c. 1628, oil on panel, 35.6 x 59.7 cm (14 x 23 ½ in.). Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg.

Photograph by Kaia L. Magnusen.



Figure 50

Otto Dix, *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* (*Girl in Front of the Mirror*), 1921, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Location unknown.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.

201.

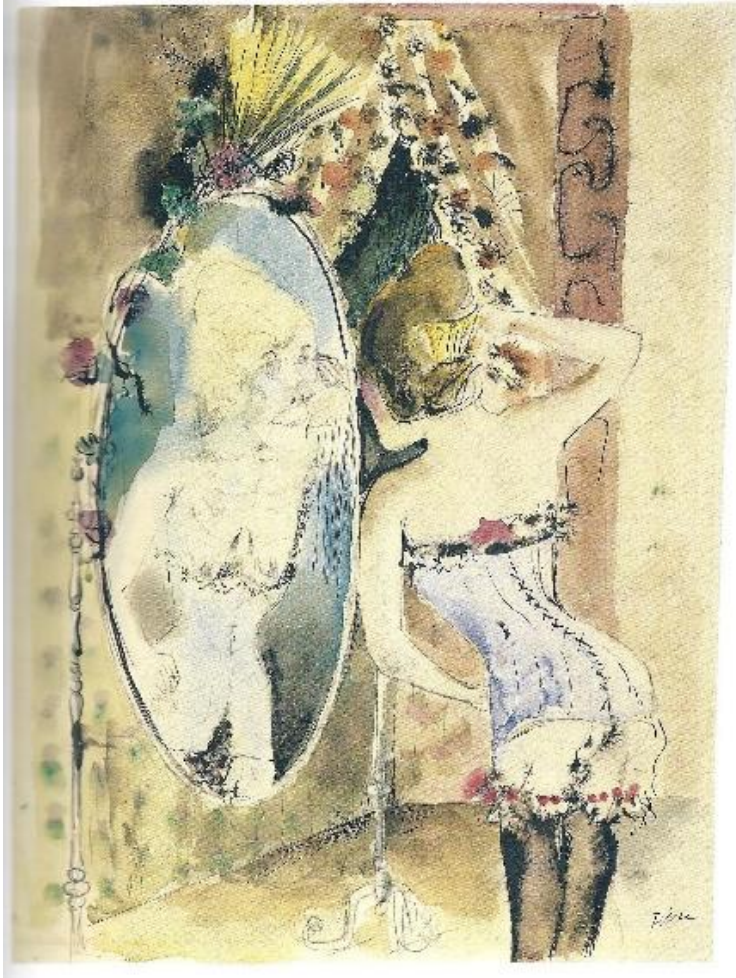


Figure 51

Otto Dix, *Mädchen vor dem Spiegel* (*Girl in Front of the Mirror*), 1922, watercolor, pen and pencil on paper, 58.2 cm x 43.1 cm (22 15/16 x 16 15/16 in.). Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Kupferstichkabinett.

Rewald, Sabine, ed. *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. 231.



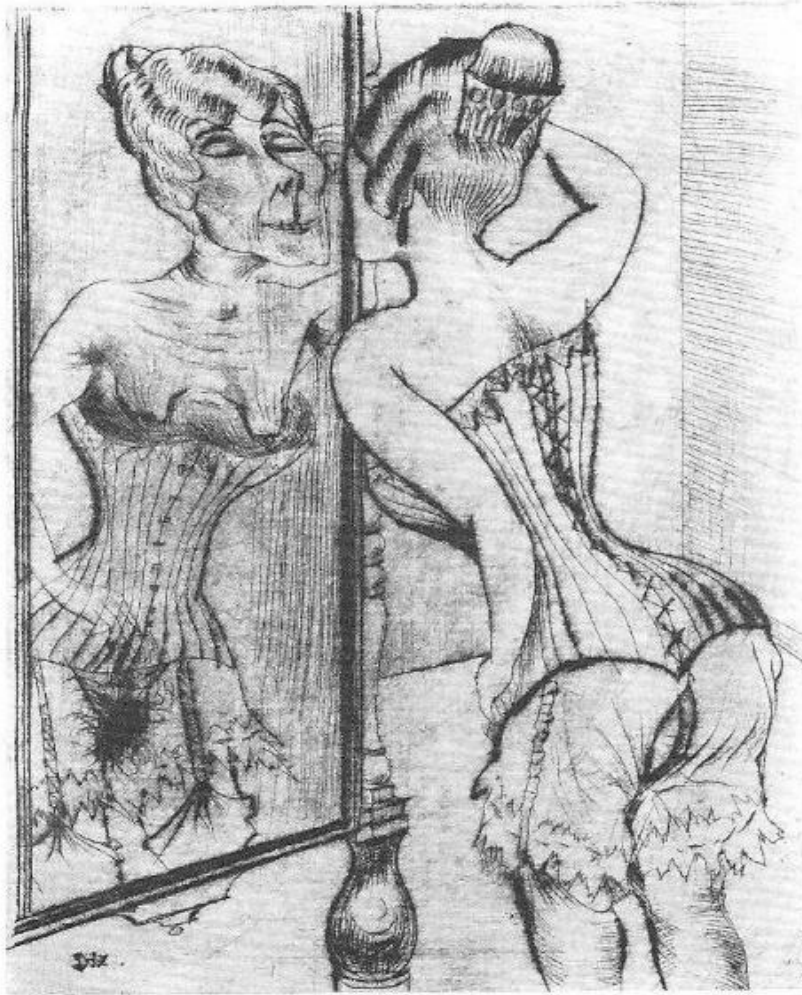


Figure 52

Otto Dix, *Am Spiegel* (*At the Mirror*), 1922, etching. Galerie Nierendorf, Berlin.

Rewald, Sabine, ed. *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. 232.



Figure 53

Hans Baldung-Grien, *Die drei Lebensalter und der Tod* (*The Three Stages of Woman and Death*), 1510, oil on limewood, 48 x 32 ½ cm (18 9/10 x 12 4/5 in.). Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Russell, Francis. *The World of Dürer 1471 – 1528*. New York: Time Incorporated, 1967.



Figure 54

Hans Baldung Grien, *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (*Death and the Maiden*), 1517, oil on panel, 31 x 19 cm (12 1/5 x 7 1/2 in.). Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland.

Battistini, Matilde. *Symbols and Allegories in Art*. Trans. Stephen Sartarelli. Los Angeles:

The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005. 87.



Figure 55

Hans Baldung Grien, *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (*Death and the Maiden*), 1517, oil on panel, 30 x 15 cm (11 4/5 x 5 9/10 in.). Kunstsammlung Basel, Switzerland.

Koch, Robert A. *Hans Baldung Grien: Eve, the Serpent and Death*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1974. 15.





Figure 56

Otto Dix, *Vanitas (Jugend und Alter)* (*Vanitas [Youth and Old Age]*), 1932, tempera on panel, 101.5 x 70 cm (40 x 27 in.). Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.



Figure 57

Otto Dix, *Sitzender rothaariger Akt mit Strümpfen vor rosa Tuch* (*Seated Female Nude with Red Hair and Stockings in Front of a Pink Cloth*), 1930, mixed media on wood, 134 x 65 cm (52  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 25  $\frac{5}{8}$  in.). Serge Sabarsky Collection, New York.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.



Figure 58

Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis mit nacktem Modell* (*Self-Portrait with Nude Model*), 1923, oil on canvas, 105 x 90 cm (41 3/8 x 35 3/8 in.). Private Collection.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.

200.



Figure 59

Otto Dix, *Der Salon (The Salon I)*, 1921, oil on canvas, 86 x 120.5 cm (33 7/8 x 47 1/2 in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.

112.



Figure 60

Otto Dix, Detail of auburn-haired prostitute, from *Der Salon (The Salon I)*, 1921, oil on canvas, 86 x 120.5 cm (33 7/8 x 47 1/2 in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Photograph by Kaia L. Magnusen.





Figure 61

Otto Dix, Detail of auburn-haired prostitute's bracelet and pig charm, from *Der Salon* (*The Salon I*), 1921, oil on canvas, 86 x 120.5 cm (33 7/8 x 47 1/2 in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Photograph by Kaia L. Magnusen.



Figure 62

Albrecht Dürer, *Melancholia I*, 1515, engraving, 24.1 x 19.2 cm (9 3/8 x 6 3/8 in.).

British Museum, London.

Cuttler, Charles D. *Northern Painting From Pucelle to Brueghel: Fourteenth, Fifteen, and Sixteenth Centuries*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973. 337.

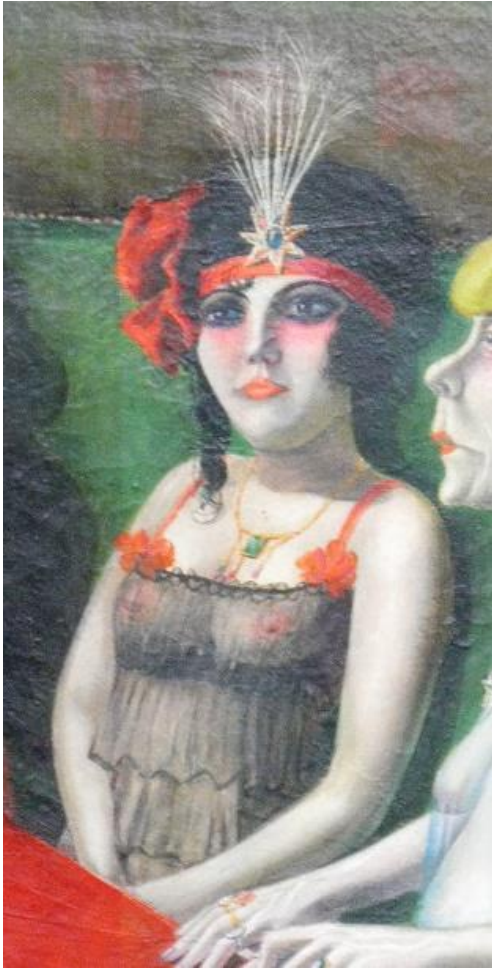


Figure 63

Otto Dix, Detail of black-haired prostitute, from *Der Salon (The Salon I)*, 1921, oil on canvas, 86 x 120.5 cm (33 7/8 x 47 1/2 in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Photograph by Kaia L. Magnusen.



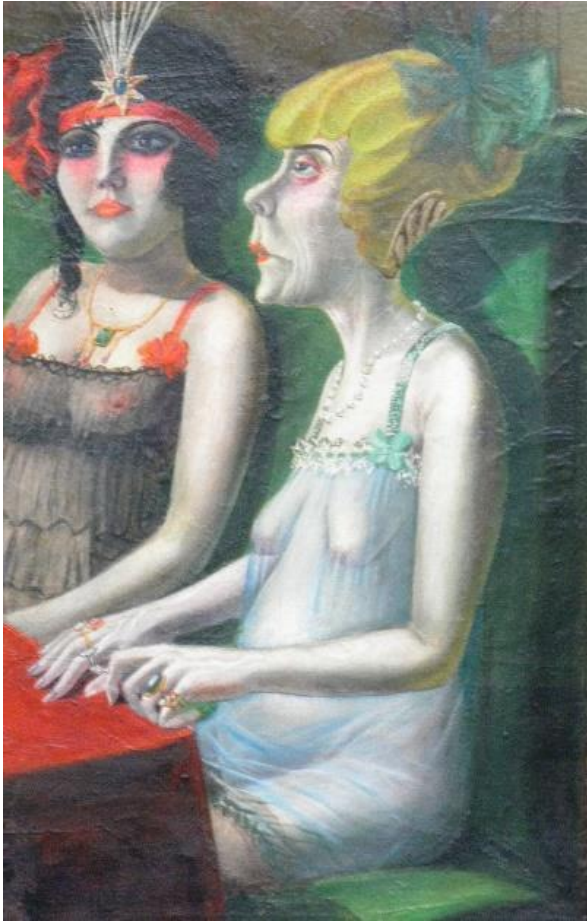


Figure 64

Otto Dix, Detail of blonde-haired prostitute, from *Der Salon (The Salon I)*, 1921, oil on canvas, 86 x 120.5 cm (33 7/8 x 47 1/2 in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Photograph by Kaia L. Magnusen.



Figure 65

Otto Dix, Detail of bare-breasted prostitute, from *Der Salon (The Salon I)*, 1921, oil on canvas, 86 x 120.5 cm (33 7/8 x 47 1/2 in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Photograph by Kaia L. Magnusen.



Figure 66

Otto Dix, *Gretel*, 1921, pencil on paper. Private collection.

Rewald, Sabine. "*The Salon I, 1921.*" *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits of the 1920s*.

Ed. Sabine Rewald. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 64.

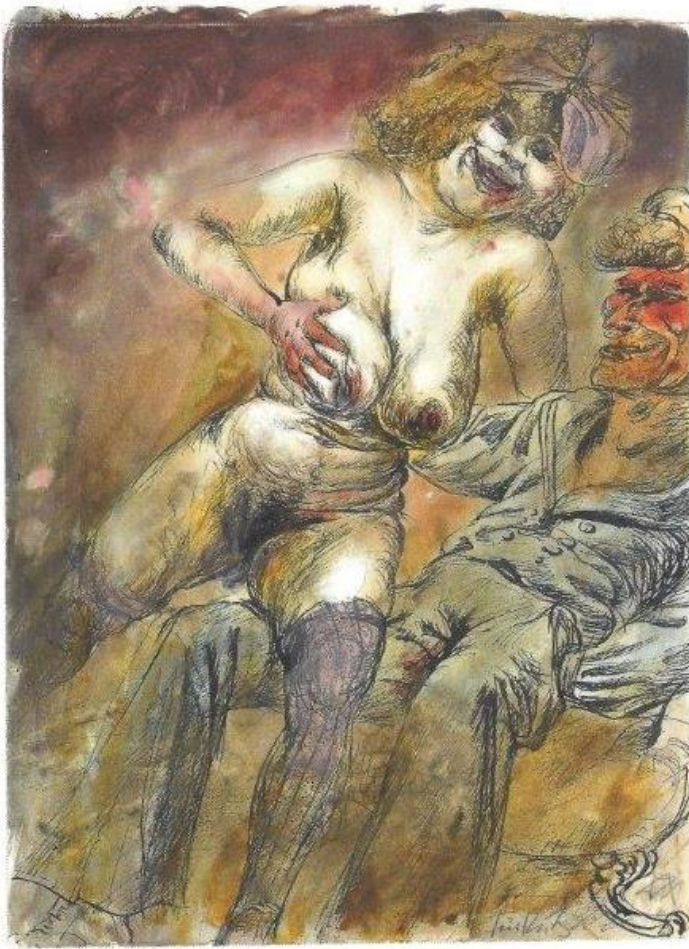


Figure 67

Otto Dix, *Matrose und Mädchen (für Mutz)* (*Sailor and Girl [For Mutz]*), 1925, watercolor and ink, white highlights, 49.9 x 36.9 cm (19 5/8 x 14 1/2 in.). Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Graphische Sammlung.

Peters, Olaf. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.



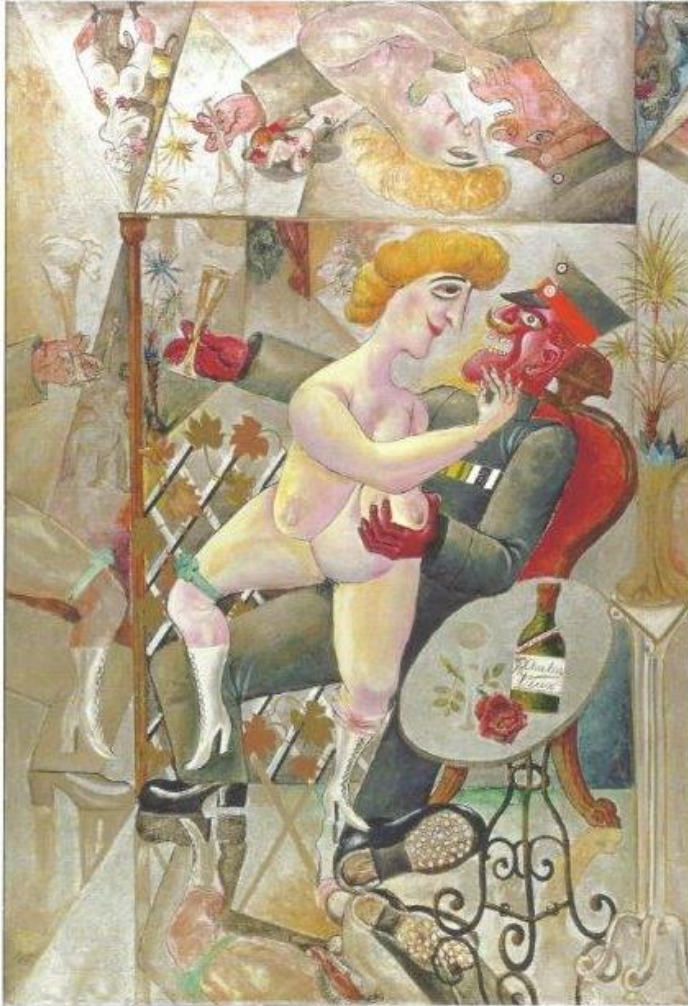


Figure 68

Otto Dix, *Memory of the Hall of Mirrors in Brussels* (*Erinnerungen an die Spiegelsäle in Brüssel*), 1920, oil and glaze on canvas, 124 x 80.4 cm (48 7/8 x 31 5/8 in.). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Peters, Olaf. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010. 63.



Figure 69

Otto Dix, Detail of bare-breasted prostitute's pendant, from *Der Salon (The Salon I)*, 1921, oil on canvas, 86 x 120.5 cm (33 7/8 x 47 1/2 in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Photograph by Kaia L. Magnusen.

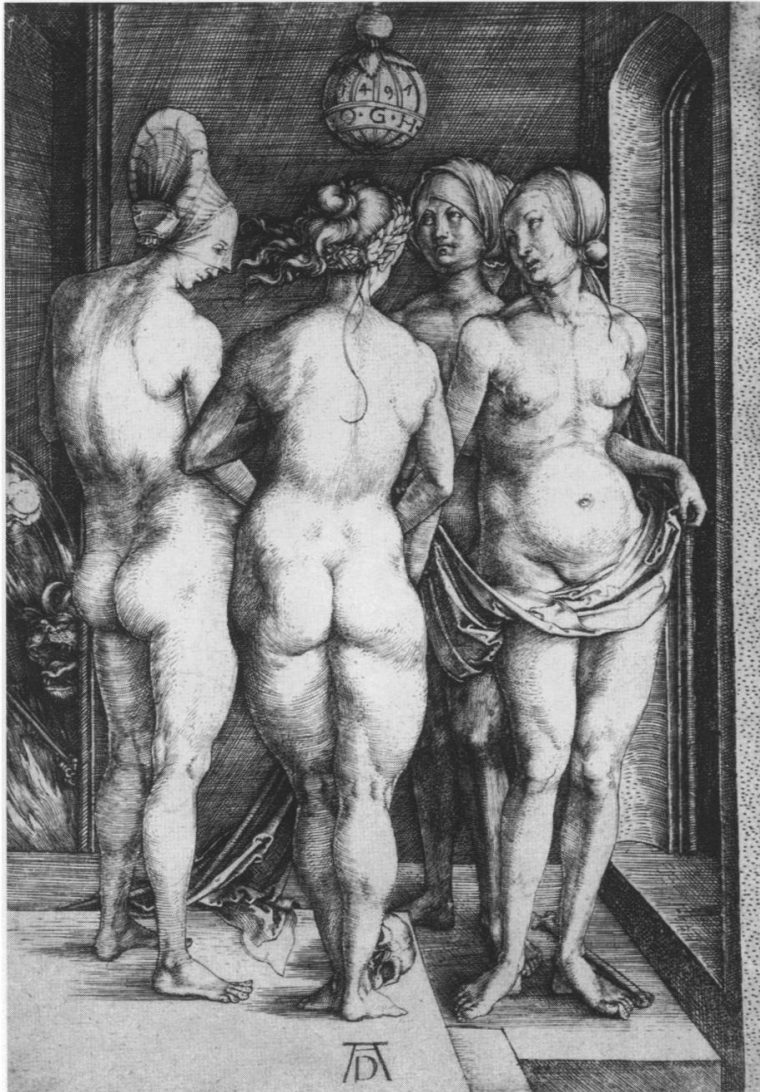


Figure 70

Albrecht Dürer, *Die Vier Hexen* (*Four Witches*), 1497, engraving, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Sullivan, Margaret. "The Witches of Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien." *Renaissance Quarterly*. Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer, 2000). 333.

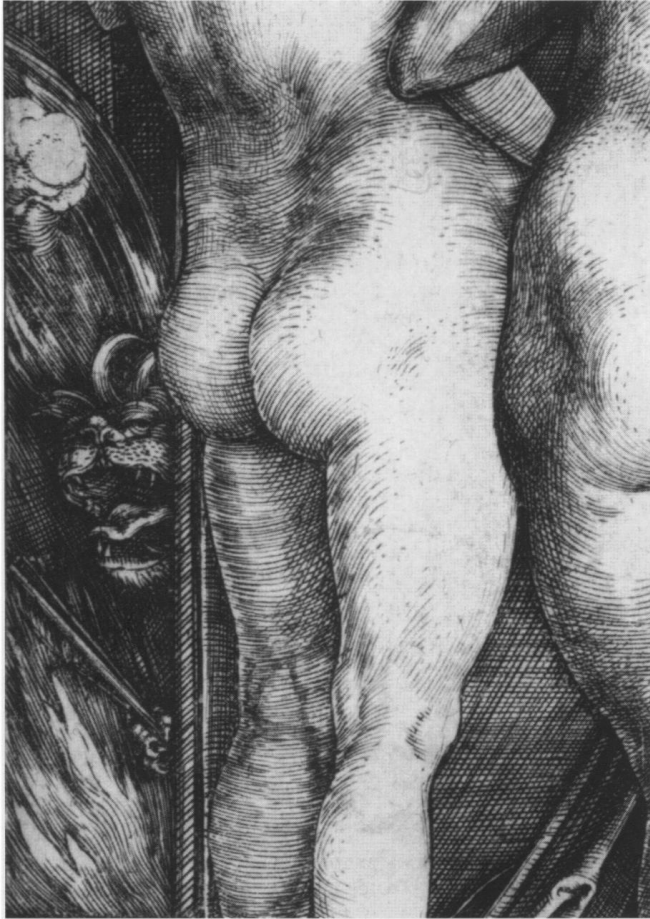


Figure 71

Albrecht Dürer, Detail of the creature in *Die Vier Hexen* (*Four Witches*), 1497, engraving, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Stumpel, Jeroen. "The Foul Fowler Found out: On a Key Motif in Dürer's "Four

Witches." *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, Vol. 30, No.

3/4 (2003), 163.



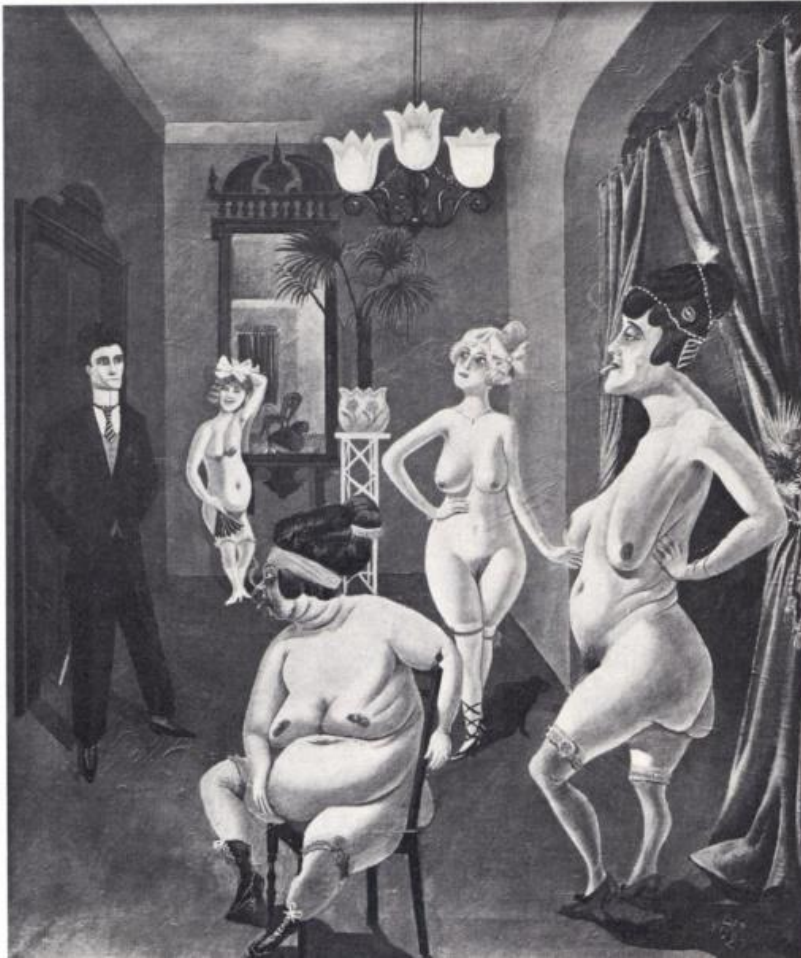


Figure 72

Otto Dix, *Der Salon II* (*The Salon II*), 1921, oil on canvas. Destroyed.

Rewald, Sabine. "The Salon I, 1921." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits of the 1920s*.

Ed. Sabine Rewald. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 64.



Figure 73

Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Das Urteil des Paris* (*The Judgment of Paris*), 1530, oil and tempera on wood, 50.8 x 36.4 cm (20 x 14 5/16 in.). St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri.

Russell, Francis. *The World of Dürer 1471 – 1528*. New York: Time Incorporated, 1967.



Figure 74

Otto Dix, *Frontsoldat in Brüssel* (*Frontline Soldier in Brussels*), from *Der Krieg* (*War*), etching, aquatint, and drypoint from a portfolio of fifty etching, aquatint and drypoints, 1924.

Peters, Olaf, ed. *Otto Dix*. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2010.





Figure 75

WEKA (Willi Pröger), *Prostituierte in der Friedrichstraße* (*Prostitutes on Friedrichstraße*), photograph, 1930. From *Stätten der Berliner Prostitution* by WEKA Berlin: Auffenberg Verlag, 1930.

WEKA, *Stätten der Berliner Prostitution von den Elends- Absteigequartieren am Schlesischen Bahnhof und Alexanderplatz zur Luxus-Prostitution der Friedrichstraße und des Kurfürstendamms*. Frankfurt: Buchdruckerei Wilhelm Bohn, 1930. No page.



Figure 76

WEKA (Willi Pröger), *Prostituierte in der Münzstraße (Prostitutes on Münzstraße)*, photograph, 1930. From *Stätten der Berliner Prostitution* by WEKA Berlin: Auffenberg Verlag, 1930.

WEKA, *Stätten der Berliner Prostitution von den Elends- Absteigequartieren am Schlesischen Bahnhof und Alexanderplatz zur Luxus-Prostitution der Friedrichstraße und des Kurfürstendamms*. Frankfurt: Buchdruckerei Wilhelm Bohn, 1930. No page.



Figure 77

Albrecht Dürer, *Nemesis (Das Große Glück)* [*Nemesis (The Great Fortune)*], c. 1501-1503, engraving, 35.6 x 26 cm (14 x 10 ¼ in.). Private Collection.

Cuttler, Charles D. *Northern Painting From Pucelle to Brueghel: Fourteenth, Fifteen, and Sixteenth Centuries*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973. 349.



Figure 78

Otto Dix, *Drei Weiber* (*Three Wenches*), 1926, oil and tempera on plywood, 181 x 105.5 cm (71 ¼ x 41 5/8 in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Rewald, Sabine. "Three Wenches, 1926." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits of the 1920s*. Ed. Sabine Rewald. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 73.



Figure 79

Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Venus*, 1553, oil and tempera on wood, 37.7 x 24.5 cm (14.8 x 9.6 in.). Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, Frankfurt am Main.

Rewald, Sabine. "Three Wenches, 1926." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits of the 1920s*. Ed. Sabine Rewald. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 72.



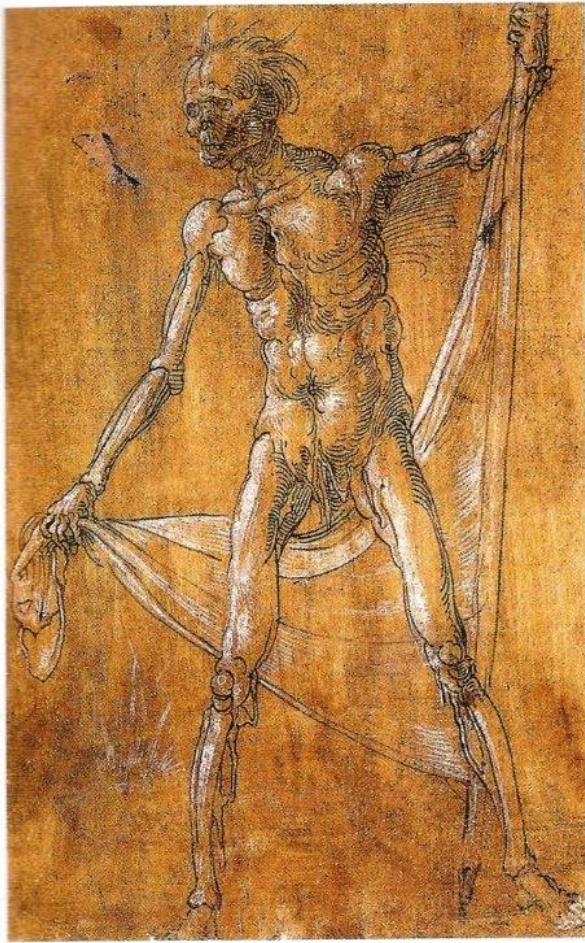


Figure 80

Hans Baldung Grien, *Tod mit einer invertierten Banner* (*Death with an Inverted Banner*), 1505-1507, drawing. Kuperstichkabinett, Basel.

Brinkmann, Bodo. *Hexenlust und Sündenfall: Die seltsamen Phantasien des Hans*

*Baldung Grien*. Frankfurt am Main: Stadel Museum and Michael Imhof Verlag,

2007. 177.



Figure 81

Albrecht Dürer, *Der Sündenfall* (Adam und Eva) (*The Fall of Man* [Adam and Eve]), engraving, 25.1 x 20 cm (9 7/8 x 7 7/8 in.) Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Koerner, Joseph Leo. "The Mortification of the Image: Death as a Hermeneutic in Hans Baldung Grien." *Representations*, No. 10 (Spring, 1985), 75.



Figure 82

Hans Baldung Grien, *Zwei Wetterhexen* (*Weather Witches*), oil on panel, 1523,  
Städelschen Kunstinstituts Frankfurt.

Brinkmann, Bodo. *Hexenlust und Sündenfall: Die seltsamen Phantasien des Hans*

*Baldung Grien*. Frankfurt am Main: Stadel Museum and Michael Imhof Verlag,

2007. 12.





Figure 83

Albrecht Dürer, *Die Hexe (The Witch)*, engraving, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, Graphische Sammlung.

Brinkmann, Bodo. *Hexenlust und Sündenfall: Die seltsamen Phantasien des Hans*

*Baldung Grien*. Frankfurt am Main: Stadel Museum and Michael Imhof Verlag,

2007. 35.

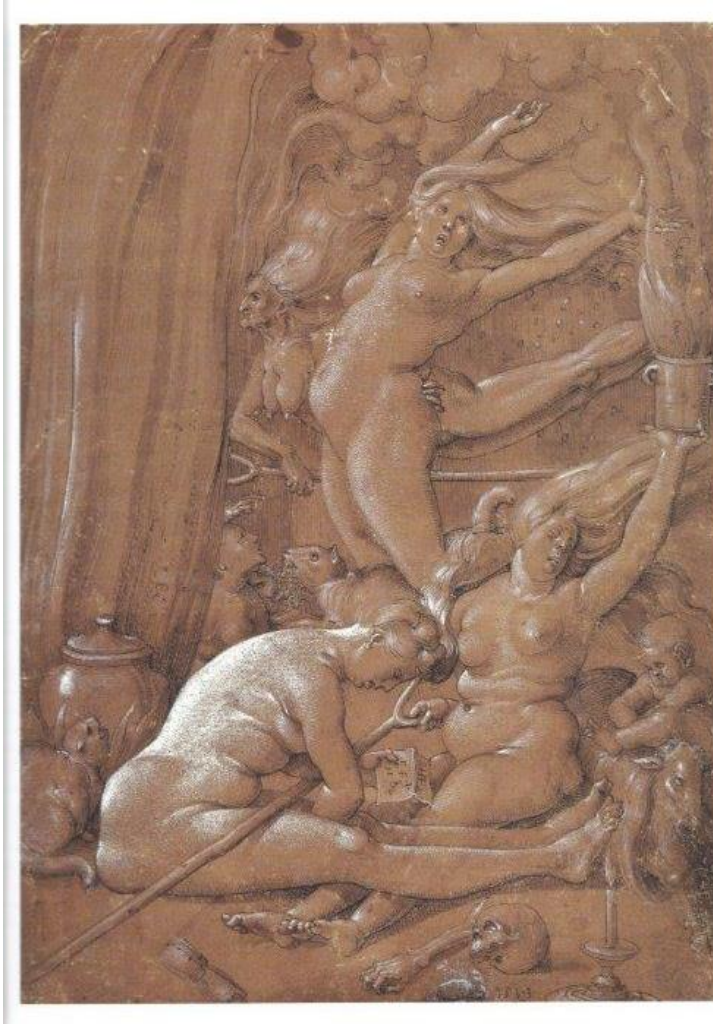


Figure 84

Hans Baldung Grien, *Hexensabbat (Witches' Sabbath)*, 1514, pen drawing heightened with white bodycolor on reddish brown prepared paper. 28.7 x 20.6 cm (11.3 x 8.1 in.).  
Albertina, Vienna.

Brinkmann, Bodo. *Hexenlust und Sündenfall: Die seltsamen Phantasien des Hans*

*Baldung Grien*. Frankfurt am Main: Stadel Museum and Michael Imhof Verlag,  
2007. 53.

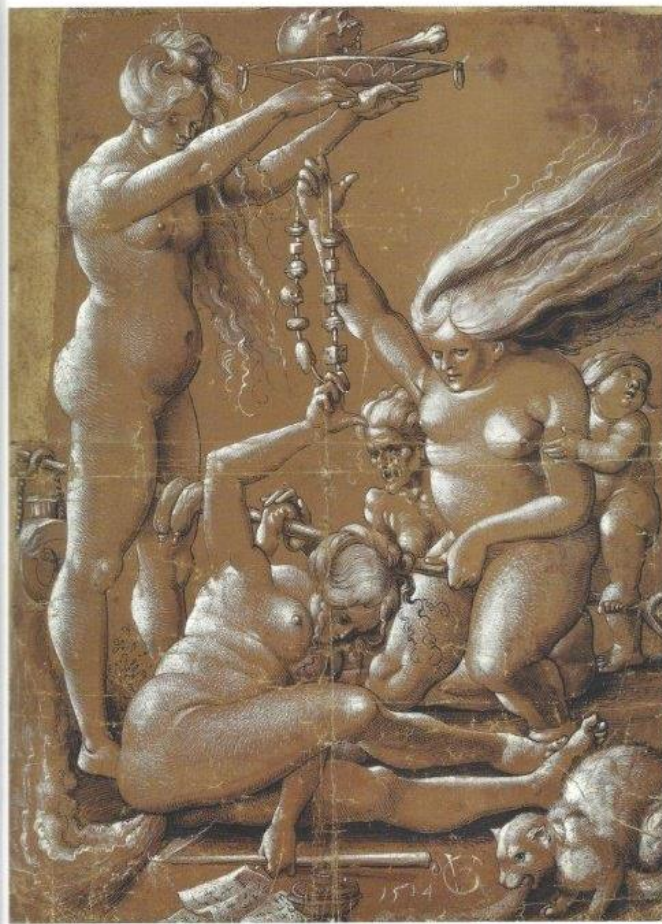


Figure 85

Hans Baldung Grien, *Hexensabbat (Witches' Sabbath)*, 1514, pen drawing heightened with white bodycolor on bluish-green prepared paper. 28.95 x 20 cm (11.4 x 7.9 in.).

Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques.

Brinkmann, Bodo. *Hexenlust und Sündenfall: Die seltsamen Phantasien des Hans*

*Baldung Grien*. Frankfurt am Main: Stadel Museum and Michael Imhof Verlag,

2007. 56.

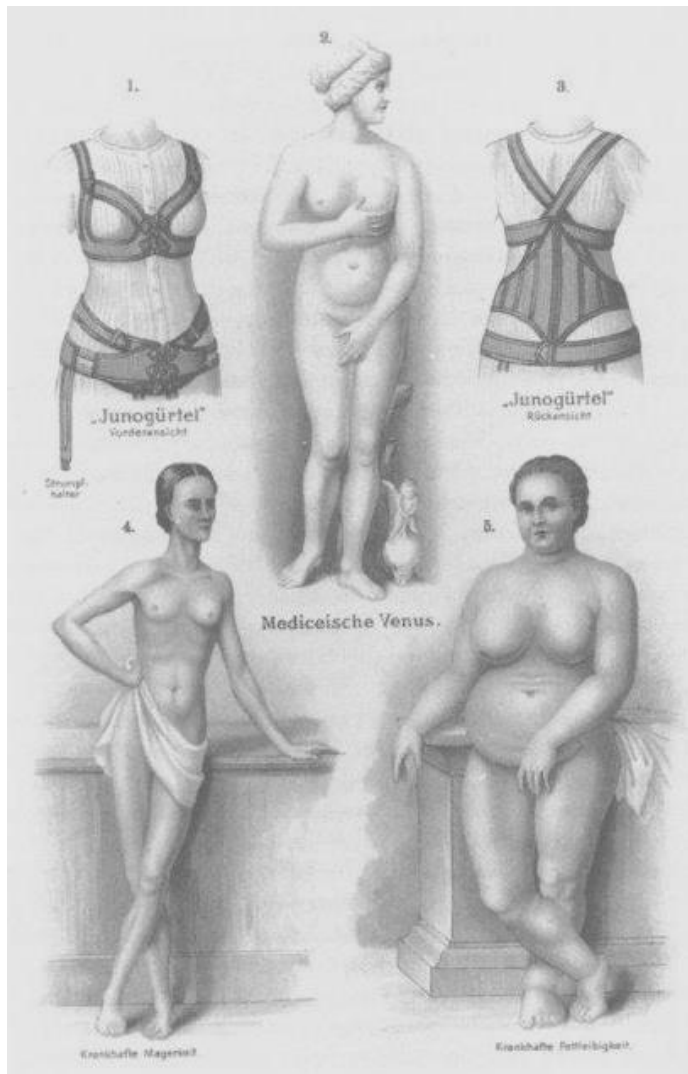


Figure 86

Perfect ideal, pathological thinness, and pathological fatness. From Fischer-Dückelmann, Anna. *Das Geschlechtsleben des Weibes: Eine physiologisch-soziale Studie mit ärztlichen Ratschlägen*. Berlin: Bermühler, 1908.

Hau, Michael. *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930*.

Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003. 74.





Figure 87

Otto Dix, detail of Dix's monogram and date, *Drei Weiber* (*Three Wenches*), 1926, oil and tempera on plywood, 181 x 105.5 cm (71 1/4 x 41 5/8 in.). Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Rewald, Sabine. "Three Wenches, 1926." *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits of the 1920s*. Ed. Sabine Rewald. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006. 73.





Figure 88

Otto Dix, *Selbstbildnis mit liegenden Akt* (Self-Portrait with Reclining Nude), 1944, oil on canvas, 80 x 120 cm (31 ½ x 47 ¼ in.). Kunstsammlung Gera.

Schmidt, Diether. *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*. Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1978. 280.



Figure 89

Christian Schad, *Selbstbildnis (Self-Portrait)*, 1927, oil on wood, 76 x 61.5 cm (29 15/16 x 24 3/16 in.). Private Collection.

Lloyd, Jill and Michael Peppiat, eds. *Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit*. New York: W. Norton & Company, 2003. 145.

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