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EARLY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WORK OF KAETHE KOLLWITZ

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis will concentrate upon the early works of Kollwitz, up to and including her Peasants' Revolt cycle of 1908, seeking to provide a comprehensive view of her early development and the external influences upon her: artistic influences such as Klinger and Munch, and literary sources such as Zola and Hauptmann. It will trace her early arrival at artistic independence, and her development away from naturalism to an art more based in the mind. It will also investigate the multiple purpose of Kollwitz's art, and the various conflicting traditions with which she saw herself a part.

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INTRODUCTION

The central theme of this thesis is to consider Kaethe Kollwitz's artistic growth, principally through her allegiance to various literary and artistic traditions. The breadth of these allegiances is one of the most fascinating aspects of her art, rarely appreciated. Many critics are predisposed to appraise her from one particular angle: 'Kollwitz and feminism', or 'Kollwitz and pacifism', or 'Kollwitz and socialism'. Works such as Germany's Children Starve (Ill.47) and Never Again War! (Ill.46) do lend themselves to such an approach for they are didactic and make unequivocally clear certain of Kollwitz's beliefs. Where it would be foolish for any art historian to ignore these aspects of her works, they do need to be regarded as interdependent aspects of a larger whole. If they are not, a blinkered view results, doing both the artist and her art a gross disservice.

The milieu in which Kollwitz grew up was a diverse one spiritually, politically, ideologically and, in the cultural world, artistically. Being sensitive to differing creeds and viewpoints, Kollwitz was receptive to the contrasting ideas discussed around her, and this is reflected in her work.

She was born into a household where very strong beliefs held sway. Her maternal grandfather was the founder and

leader of a non-denominational community, her father was a member of this community and a socialist sympathiser. Her brother, Konrad, was a socialist who so admired Marx that he set out to visit him in England. (Arriving just after his death, he met Engels instead.) Her future husband, a friend of Konrad, trained as a doctor and took up his practice in one of Berlin's poorest suburbs. Here Kaethe was to spend the majority of her life. Her family sought to alleviate social problems and injustices as best they could, whether through prayer, socialism or art. Her grandfather's stricture 'Eine Gabe ist eine Aufgabe'¹ demanded that the bearer of a talent use it for the common good in whatever way possible. Surrounded by such people, it would have been surprising had Kollwitz not developed the acute social awareness which remained with her throughout her life. A concern for the poor, coupled with a sympathetic attitude towards the levelling philosophies of socialism and communism, were not surprisingly to link her with a tradition of socialist art strong in Europe in the late nineteenth century, which concentrated upon the poor.

In nineteenth century Europe the peasant and worker had acquired new importance and had become a focus for political and literary thought, as Marx and Zola for example, illustrate. This was true of the visual arts as well, with Courbet and Millet, Liebermann and Israels, Meunier and Van Gogh often choosing peasants and workers as

subject matter. As in the political sphere, approaches varied: some such as Liebermann idealized the conditions of workers, seeing their lot as one of harmony with nature²; others like Meunier gloried in the untapped power of the workers. Across Europe, however, a growing number of artists concerned with the poor living and working conditions engendered by industrialization, saw their art as a tool with which to redress these evils.³ Artists of Kollwitz's generation such as Barlach and Baluschek (to a lesser extent along with artists such as Brandenburg and Zille) were committed to the plight of the lower-classes and eager to use their art as a means of bringing poverty and suffering to public awareness. To this end Kollwitz dedicated much of her work. That most quoted of all Kollwitz's phrases:

Ich will wirken auf dieser Zeit
[I want to have an effect upon these times]⁴

and indeed many of her diary entries and letters, suggest an attitude which created of Kollwitz's life and talent a vocation (not merely artistic, but political in the broadest sense of the word). Few artists - and here one thinks of Van Gogh as an exception - have felt this so powerfully; it is more akin to, for example, Karl Kollwitz's vocation as a doctor working amongst the needy.

Kollwitz's initial reaction to the lower-classes was inspired less by a concern for, or awareness of, their poverty, and more by a negative rejection of the bourgeois

class. It was only when experiencing the poverty of the Berlin inhabitants at first hand that she committed herself to using art for social change.

Das eigentlich Motiv aber, warum ich von jetzt an zur Darstellung fast nur das Arbeiterleben wählte, war, weil die aus dieser Sphaere gewählten Motive mir einfach und bedingungslos das gaben, was ich als schön empfand... Ohne jeden Reiz waren mir Menschen aus dem bürgerlichen Leben. Dagegen einen grossen Wurf hatte das Proletariat. Erst viel später, als ich... die Schwere und Tragik der proletarischen Lebenstiefe kennenlernte..., erfasste mich mit ganzer Schärfe das Schicksal des Proletariats und aller seiner Nebenerscheinungen.

[The real reason, however, for my choosing to represent virtually only workers' lives from now on was because this chosen motif seemed to offer, simply and unconditionally, what I found beautiful. Members of the bourgeoisie held no charm for me at all; in contrast to them, the proletariat had a great advantage. Only much later on, as I got to know the harshness and tragedy of the proletarian way of life, did the fate of the proletariat, and all its ramifications, strike me with acute intensity.]⁵

Once committed, however, the vocational purpose inspiring her art often took precedence over artistic demands. Good art was effective art, art which communicated and shaped people's thought. Hence the works which Kollwitz executed for Simplicissimus, for political and social posters and placards (Ill.44 & 45) convey their message simply and directly, but art here is used as a vehicle for social preaching, for 'having an effect upon this time', and Kollwitz's 'pure' artistic aims must be suppressed.

Such art was unlikely to win an artist official recognition - as with the Salon in France, the official art lauded in

Germany was conservative in nature. Radical art, as socially critical art was labelled, had the Kaiser as its most ardent opponent. Kollwitz's Weaver Uprising cycle, for instance, was nominated for the small gold medal but this was vetoed by Kaiser Wilhelm II himself who refused to acknowledge the artistic merits of what he termed 'Rinnsteinkunst' ['Gutter art']:

...but when art, as often happens today, shows us only misery, and shows it to us even uglier than misery is, anyway, then art commits a sin against the German people...Culture...must reach down to the lowest levels of the population. That can be done only if art holds out its hand to raise the people up, instead of descending into the gutter.⁶

Although the Kaiser's taste was extreme, he was representative of a large proportion of the German population. Kollwitz's plans for the monumental oil-painting Germinal are indicative of her conflicting desire to produce both social art, and a more mainstream art that would gain her a place in the established art world. Her artistic desires were as urgent as were her social aims. The two were not always in accord.

Her training produced other conflicts in the development of an artistic style. Trained in Koenigsberg and Berlin by Emil Neide and Karl Stauffer-Bern, she was schooled in the naturalistic tradition whose tenets never left her. Equally strong in Europe during the 1890s however, were the post-Impressionists whose aim was to abandon impressionistic reproductions from nature and seek instead

an eternal, underlying structure to man's existence. The French led the way, and German art publications and exhibition halls (particularly in Berlin which, along with Munich, became the focal point in Germany for international art) followed developments with great interest. In Germany itself, Boecklin and Hodler (the latter ^{two both} Swiss but well known in Germany) were creating their ideal, fanciful worlds which transcended reality. Klinger sought to overcome the transient by producing complex all-embracing works such as his Beethoven-Monument (seeking the supreme 'Gesamtwerk'), and by creating images obscurely symbolic and mysterious, even surreal.⁷ Munch, focusing upon primordial states and emotions, achieved his potent expression of the unchanging essence of nature. Kollwitz's own relation to Munch and Klinger will be the subject of the first chapter.

In Kollwitz's diaries and letters there are several passages which indicate unequivocally that she shares these artists' aims. One, for example, reads:

Ich finde, ich muss bei meinen Arbeiten darauf sehn, dass sie immer in abgekuerzterer Form das enthalten was sie jetzt etwas zu durchgefuehrt enthalten. Ich moechte die neue Radierung so machen, dass sie alles Wesentliche stark betoent enthaelt und das Unwesentliche fast negiert. [I find I must ensure that my work will always express in abbreviated form what it now expresses in too much detail. I want to make new etchings in such a manner that the essential is strongly emphasized and the unnecessary almost entirely omitted.]⁸

Her search for such a form was one of the preoccupations of

her artistic life: danger is that I distance myself too much from the average viewer. I lose the
Jetzt tiefer sehend geworden und umfassender sehend; komme immer mehr von der Vielheit auf die ganz einfachen menschlichen Triebe zurueck, auf das Urmenschlichste. Moechte das gestalten so einfach, wie Tolstoi seine Volkserzaehlungen gestaltete. Aber es sei fraglich ob sie diese Form finden werde.
[Now becoming deeper-seeing and more comprehensive in vision; moving away from the general, back to the very basic of human instincts, to the primordial. Wishing to capture this as simply as Tolstoy does in his folk-tales, but it remains questionable whether she ever will find such a form.]⁹

Those artists and writers whom Kollwitz most admired were those who achieved a sense of the all-embracing, ever relevant, but never abstracted themselves from reality; in particular, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Zola, Goethe, and Rubens. Works such as From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People (Ill.21) and Downtrodden (Ill.25) are examples of the self-consciously symbolic compositions created after Klinger and Boecklin; these will be more thoroughly considered in the fourth chapter. They betray a certain sense of unease and constraint for they stray so far from naturalism. An entry in her diary in the year 1916, when her figures were evolving more and more out of an inner imagination loosely connected with naturalism, records a sense of failure at losing touch with reality:

Es ist richtig, dass sie durchfaellt. Sie ist nicht populaer...Es ist ganz meine Meinung dass zwischen Kuenstler und Volk Verstaendnis sein muss...Es ist ein Gefahr fuer mich, dass ich mich zu sehr vom Durchschnittsbeschauer entferne. Ich verliere die Verbindung mit ihm.
[It is right that it should be a failure. It is not popular...I am very much of the opinion that an understanding should exist between the artist and

the people. My danger is that I distance myself too much from the average viewer. I lose the bond with him.]¹⁰

In fact, Kollwitz was to develop her own particular means of approaching the universal, more rooted in naturalism than these overtly symbolic or mystical creations. This development does depend more heavily upon imagination and less upon naturalism, but ultimately its roots can always be found in the real world.

Coupled with this growth of artistic independence is a marked move away from the naturalistic literature upon which Kollwitz based various of her early works. Zola, Halbe, and Hauptmann were necessary to inspire her first creations, the earliest of which are very naturalistic, but as artistic maturity developed, so she was able to reinterpret her sources according to her own aims, and finally create subjects without the need of outside impetus. The relation of Kollwitz's works to literary sources is one of the most interesting aspects of her artistic development. This will form the content of the second and third chapters.

The following pages seek to analyze the importance of all these factors in Kollwitz's development: her training, social environment, the artistic and literary traditions in which she matured, and how these shaped her images to make them what they are. Through this process, a fuller understanding of her oeuvre may be gained.

1. Kollwitz, K. Ich will wirken, p 9
2. 'Fuer jeden ist sofort zu erkennen, dass diese Menschen hart arbeiten und ihr Leben sicherlich nicht leicht ist. Doch erscheint ihr Schicksal deshalb nicht beklagenswert oder drueckend. Untereinander durch die Arbeit und mit der Natur, der Welt draussen durch das Licht verbunden, wirken sie wie die Keimzelle einer durch Arbeit verpflichteten Weltordnung.'
 ['It is apparent to everyone that these people work hard and that their life is certainly not easy. Despite this their fate does not seem to be lamentable or oppressive. At one with another and with Nature through their work, and bound to the outside world by light they, as a basic unit, recognise a world order prescribed by their work.'] quoted in M. Eberle. Max Liebermann, Berlin, 1972, p 34
3. In England such artists were Herkomer, Fildes and Small, the illustrators of the widely-distributed weeklies Graphic and Illustrated London News. Their works were often monogrammed, intended to develop a widespread awareness of unacceptable working conditions rather than stand as works of art. Similarly in France were artists such as Paul Renuouard of L'Illustration, and Steinlen (whom Kollwitz very much admired). These artists made a deep impression on Van Gogh who shared their concern for the plight of the poor, as his letters and drawings show.
4. Kollwitz, K. Tagebuecherblaetter und Briefe, p 95. Letter to Erna Krueger.
5. Ibid., p 34
6. Translated in P. Paret, The Berlin Secession, London 1980 pp 26-71
7. George de Chirico extolled him as the first Surrealist. Article reproduced in Zabern von, P. Max Klinger 1857-1920. Wege zum Gesamtkunstwerk, Mainz 1984 pp 132-142
8. Kollwitz, K. Die Tagebuecher, entry of 30.11.09, p 62
9. Kollwitz, K. Tagebuchblaetter und Briefe, entry for 20.3.20, p 25. Karl Kollwitz talking about Kaethe.
10. Ibid., p 226

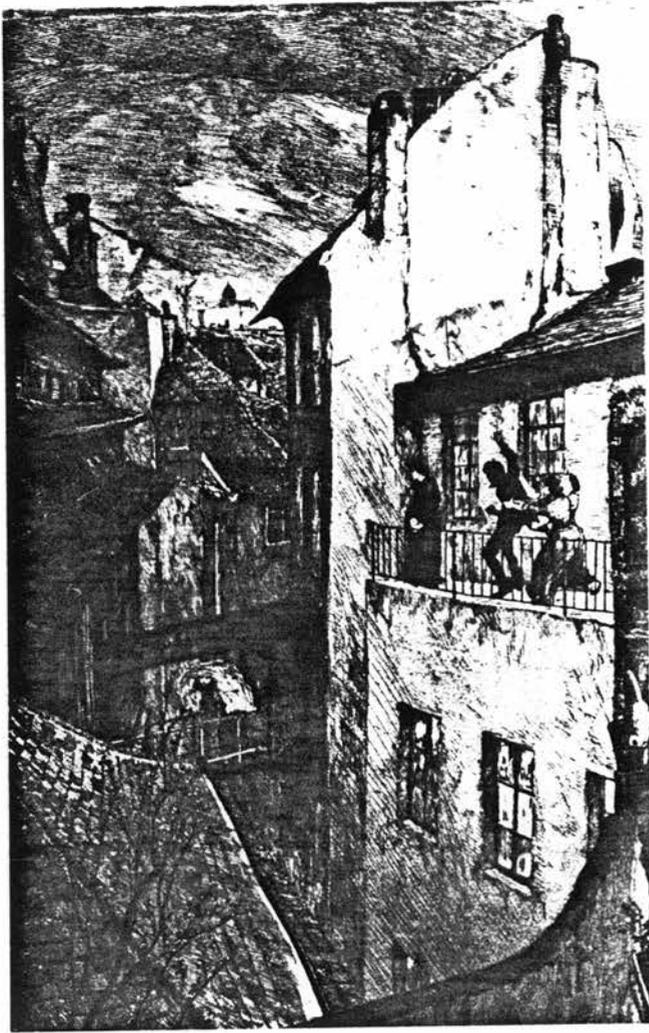
KOLLWITZ, KLINGER AND MUNCH

To illustrate more specifically the various influences at work upon Kollwitz it is instructive to look at two artists working in Germany who were of particular importance to her artistic development: Klinger and Munch. This is not to suggest that these artists alone were responsible for her development - that would be a foolish line of argument, but the effect of each upon her was profound. They were particularly important in contributing to her versatile motion between socially critical art, ideal art, and that seeking the 'essential'. Even in looking at only two artists and their influence upon her, the variety of aims and methods which Kollwitz seeks to emulate is evidence of the multiplicity of intention apparent in her art.

Kollwitz regarded her introduction to Klinger's graphic cycles as one of the most important occurrences in her artistic career, along with her reading of his Painting and Drawing. She openly acknowledged her debt to him:

Klinger war der staerkste Eindruck meiner Jugend.
[Klinger was the strongest influence of my youth.]¹

Klinger's A Mother images (Ill.1 & 2) from Dramas (Opus IX, 1883) are an example of his work.² They are rooted in contemporary social need, and are based upon events described in a local newspaper report. The story told is of a battered wife drowning her child and attempting to



Ill. 1

MAX KLINGER

A Mother I, Dramas Opus IX

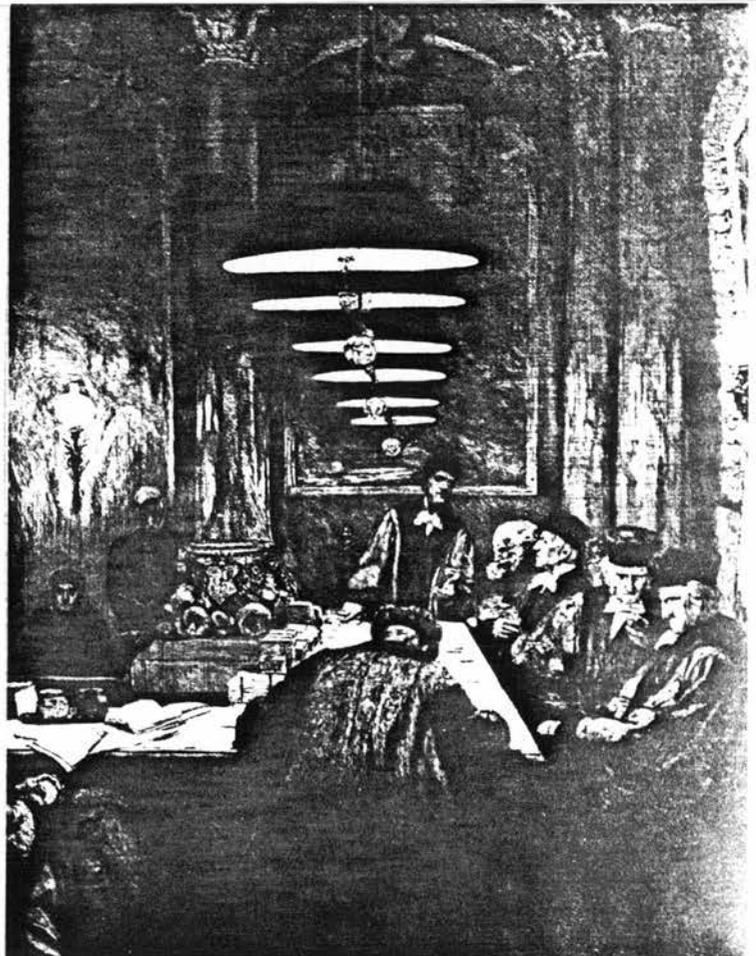
1883

Ill. 2

MAX KLINGER

A Mother III, Dramas Opus IX

1883



herself in order to escape a life of misery. A Mother I suggests that the unhappy family situation is the result of poor, cramped living conditions and is confirmation of Klinger's social belief that a poor environment gives rise to crime and delinquency. Through a dramatic use of light and dark, accentuated angles of vision and irrational perspective, he forces the viewer to consider a new approach to an oft-told story. Klinger's criticism of social injustice as the cause, not only of suffering but also of insurgence and crime, was shared by Kollwitz, and their methods of expressing that criticism were often similar. Deliberation (Ill.15), for example, follows many of the devices employed in A Mother III. By presenting the table from a different angle and making steep the lines of recession so that perspective is exaggeratedly presented, Kollwitz transforms an earlier naturalistic version of Deliberation (Ill.15a) into one endowed with a much stronger sense of drama. In Klinger's work there is no external, or natural, light source such as a window; in the final image of Deliberation Kollwitz has followed Klinger by including no external or naturalistic light source. Both interiors are thus endowed with a closed, confined atmosphere which adds to the dominant emotion in both works (tension in Klinger's, conspiracy in Kollwitz's). Kollwitz has adopted, furthermore, the particularly dramatic form of lighting which spotlights the area of 'action'. Furthermore, the mother figure in A Mother I, wearily accepting her lot, is a remarkably early forerunner

of Kollwitz's helpless, resigned figures, a 'representative of her kind'.³

The importance of Klinger for Kollwitz's development as a social artist is generally recognised. To regard his significance from this one angle alone, however, is seriously to misunderstand both artists. One of the most remarkable features of his work is his versatility, his easy intermingling of symbolism, fantasy and naturalism. This is particularly true of his graphics in which he produced cycles as disparate as A Life, Paraphrase on the Finding of a Glove and the Brahms Cycle. Even within one cycle his approach varies from sheet to sheet, moving from the earthbound to the realm of fantasy with the greatest of ease. For example in A Love, At the Gate and Happiness are relatively naturalistic; New Dreams of Happiness belongs to the realm of pure fantasy, whilst On Awakening (Ill.3) combines the earthly: the girl rising from her bed, and the visionary: the prophetic foetus glowing in detached Redon-like manner against the wall. Elements of fantasy and of naturalism are happily contained within the one image.

The ease with which Klinger moves between the worlds of fantasy and reality (often in that state between sleep and waking) indicates a fluidity of visual conception which Kollwitz seeks to emulate, although the world of Klingerish fantasy is not one to which she is instinctively drawn. A vivid example is her Gretchen (Ill.4) image which is



Ill. 3

MAX KLINGER

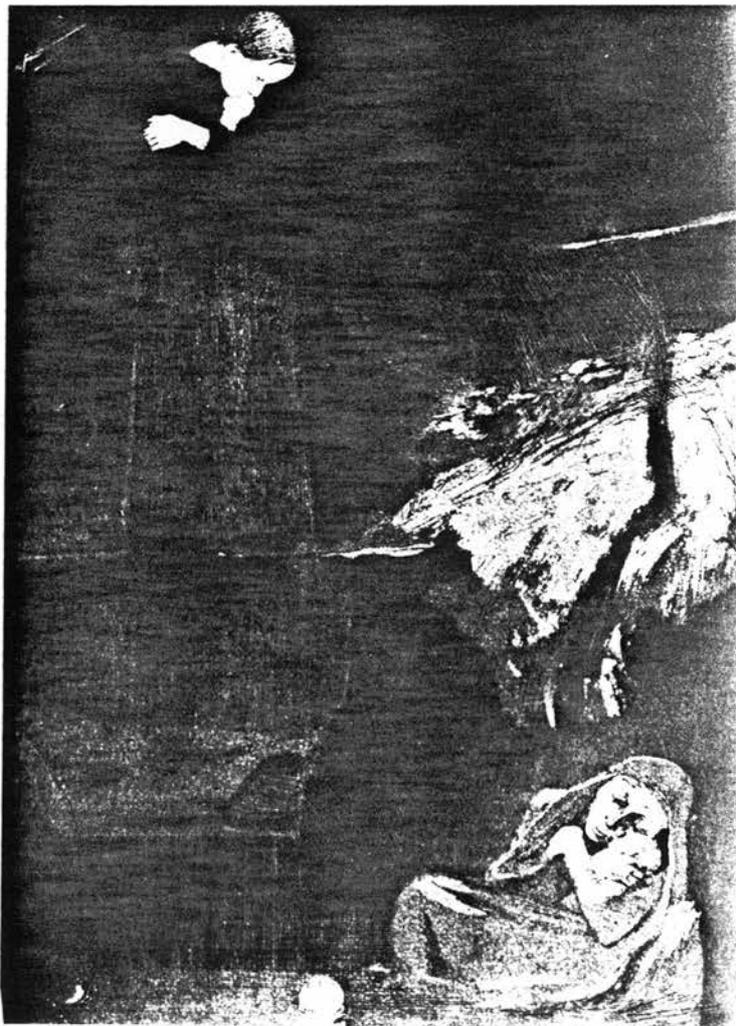
On Awakening, A Love Opus X

1887

Ill. 4

Gretchen (K43)

1889



unthinkable without Klinger's On Awakening. The theme is the same, the 'fallen' woman having to face being judged and shunned by a society lacking compassion. The figures are placed in a non-rational mixture of settings, with the real Gretchen and her spectre-like vision juxtaposed, just as the girl and her premonitory foetus co-exist in On Awakening. An earlier version of Gretchen (K42, 1899) emphasizes the contemplative mood which is responsible for conjuring up this portentous vision and is more naturalistic in execution. The later version attempts to introduce a weightier significance to the image's meaning: Gretchen's precarious state upon the narrow bridge is intended to signify her moral dilemma as she teeters on the brink of suicide. Both versions, in their inclusion of the spectral pair, introduce a fantastical element which fits uncomfortably into the world of reality. The idea of entering a world of non-reality appealed to Kollwitz in that it offered her a chance to express concepts freed from the restraints of naturalism. In attempting to follow this particular approach, however, she is at her most strained. Her conscious attempt to achieve what Klinger naturally conceived - a linking of the worlds of actuality and vision - is not matched by a certainty of execution and causes her compositional problems which ultimately she is unable to solve.¹

Kollwitz's most successful works are, as will be seen, those which combine a use of the imagination with a

disciplined dependence upon nature. The conflict between the two was one of which Kollwitz was fully aware, as evidenced by several diary entries and letters. On one occasion she offered the following counsel to a young student seeking artistic advice:

...Es muss eben beides Hand in Hand gehen, das getreue Naturstudium vor dem Objekt, das sich ganz Hineinversenken und Nachgehn bis in die kleinste Einzelheit - und das rasche Erfassen des Wesentlichen einer Erscheinung.

Als ich studierte, war das treue Naturstudium alles - als Sünde galt es geradezu, einen Strich zu machen, den man nicht vor der Natur kontrollieren konnte. Das war einseitig. Ueben Sie sich fleissig im Zeichnen aus der Erinnerung, schärfen Sie Ihr Gedächtnis!

[They must go hand in hand, the accurate study of Nature before the object - that complete absorption, that seeking after the smallest detail - and that swift capturing of the essence of the impression. When I was at college the copying from Nature was everything: it was considered a sin to make a single stroke that could not be accounted for in Nature itself. But that was one-sided. You must studiously practise drawing from memory and sharpen your powers of recall.]⁵

These injunctions bear a striking similarity to Munch's proclamation, 'I paint not what I see, but what I saw', and there are several indications that Kollwitz adopted Munch's methods in order to realize her aims.⁶ Munch's statement indicates an approach in which a real event is depicted, not in its actual form, but as it is remembered. In other words, it is painted as an event coloured by the memory of attendant (or subsequent) moods and emotions. Not only in his graphics (which first date from 1893) but very much so in his paintings as well, did he devise an elaborate code



Ill. 5

EDVARD MUNCH Separation 1894
Munch Museum, Oslo



Ill. 6

EDVARD MUNCH Ashes 1935
Munch Museum, Oslo

of line, colour and gesture through which his artistic desires might be communicated visually.

A work such as Separation (Ill.5), although not a print, will serve to illustrate Munch's methods. The idea he wishes to express here is the pain of separation through alienation, the inevitable process of two people growing apart from one another. One figure he depicts in profile, the other frontally, which in itself acts as a barrier. Although present in the same space each is bound in a different dimension, along different axes, and there is no point of communion. All naturalistic details are omitted and supposedly recessive areas are monotone, thus opposing any perspectival sense. The figures suggest no sense of individuality. Instead bold poses: the man clutching his heart, the woman staring out to sea, encapsulate emotional states such as pain, sorrow (he) and indifference (she). Visible lines which cross the canvas connect various elements of the composition, not in pictorial space but in a metaphysical sense. The woman's dress wends backwards to become the seashore, suggesting her absorption with nature and the earth; her hair floats behind her in tendrils which bind her and the man, and which must snap one by one as she drifts away.

The use of actual lines to make apparent the invisible (emotional or psychological) ties connecting people through time and space is a device used often by Munch, another

very clear example being Ashes. (Ill.6) This particular trait can be seen in Kollwitz's own work in End (Ill.20), the final image in her Weaver Uprising cycle. Exaggerated lines of gunpowder smoke waft in through the open door: they are a concrete visual reminder of oppression reasserting itself, rewinding its tentacles about the weavers. End generally shows most strongly the influence of Munch upon her. Its figures are staged embodiments of certain inner states, the bowed woman indicating grief and her standing counterpart, resigned suffering. The latter originally stood with her hands clenched in an expression of obvious personal grief (N133) but an additional sketch in the lower margin indicates Kollwitz's dissatisfaction with this stance. She makes the woman's hands drop to her side, thus transforming her into a Munch-like figure constantly grieving mankind's powerlessness before Fate. The woman's personal grief remains but is all the more potent now for having no means of catharsis. In the final etching this idea of woman grieving Fate is heightened by her stark white pallor, her less particularized features and the direction of her gaze: she does not even look now at the bodies brought in to her but stares ahead into the future, as does the boy in Death (Ill.28). It is interesting to note that she bears reference, not only to Munch's figures but also to the mother in Klinger's A Mother I.



Ill. 7

Young Couple (K73) 1904

Young Couple (first version 1893, later version 1904) is another work in which Kollwitz, appreciating the effectiveness of Munch's methods for portraying psychological states, adopts those methods to similar effect. Young Couple (Ill.7) derives from Max Halbe's play Youth (premiered in 1893, the same year as Hauptmann's Weavers) and treats the same theme as Gretchen: a young girl faced with pregnancy and shame after consummating her first love. Kollwitz's image shows the young couple immediately prior to confessing to the girl's guardian, and as the consequences of their act have recently dawned. It is, therefore, a moment of intangible sentiments, profound emotions, and of inaction. Kollwitz embarks upon the portrayal of psychological tension.

The similar moment depicted in Gretchen loses something of the psychological, internal torment Gretchen suffers, through the inclusion of the mother and child group; its very presence allows for a certain catharsis to occur, and makes actual what is unseen. In Young Couple, however, there is no such visionary element. As Munch did in Separation, so Kollwitz emphasizes the physical separation of the two figures, making its unnaturalness into an expressive statement of the spiritual alienation between them: the man has not turned his back upon the situation but he is divided from his lover, unable to share her helplessness; she sits in the foremost plane and stares at the lonely, joyless path she will tread alone. In the 1904

version, the pictorial methods of separation are emphasized, with the line of the sofa continued into that of the table-top, so forcing the figures into disparate compositional planes. Unlike Storm (Ill.17) where the barrier is a physical one - a gate -, this one is, like Munch's, composed of line and space. Its lack of physicality makes understood that an unbreachable psychological and spiritual gulf is the real cause of the alienation.

The play itself provides no great insight into the problems raised, nor into the psychological state of the two major protagonists, but Kollwitz succeeds in extracting fully the potential of the fundamental issue. The descriptions given by Halbe to set this scene are highly detailed and descriptive. It takes place in the unremarkable interior of a very respectable, if not rich, German living room:

Frueh Morgens nach 7 Uhr. Wohnzimmer wie vorher. Glaenzend blauer Fruehlingsmorgen. Breite Sonnenstreifen liegen ueber den altmodischen Moebeln. Die Fenster stehen weit auf. Im Garten Vogelgezwitcher. Annchen in leichter Morgenkleidung sitzt am Sofatisch, verbirgt den Kopf in den Haenden. Aufgeloeste Haltung. Schweigen. Hans (kommt von rechts her, verstoert, zurueckhaltend, geht langsam zum Tisch, steht nachdenklich da, betrachtet Annchen, nach einem Augenblick leise): Weine nicht, Annchen.

[Early morning around 7 o'clock. Living room as previously. Bright blue spring morning. Broad sunbeams fall across the old-fashioned furniture. The window is wide open. In the garden birds twitter. Annchen, wearing a light dress, sits at the table by the sofa, head in hands. Despairing stance. Silence. Hans (coming from the right, disturbed, hesitant, goes slowly to the table, stands there deep in thought, looking at Annchen. After a moment, softly): Don't cry, Annchen.]⁷



Ill. 7a

Self-Portrait (N87) 1893
Käthe-Kollwitz-Museum, Cologne



Ill. 7b

Young Couple (N84) 1893

All those elements which mark the particular, Kollwitz removes - the spring day, the bird-song, view of the garden, light pouring in through the windows. She sets the scene at night when darkness can reflect, or intimate, the gloom and wretchedness of human emotions. Halbe's indicators of emotions - tears, bowed head - Kollwitz rejects, feeling her way towards non-naturalistic gestures signifying despair, unhappiness, fear. She avoids transient emotions and seeks to distil her figures into silent, monumental introspective poses of regret and hopelessness. This she achieves far more successfully in the 1904 version, where the girl now slumps, hands hanging limply and eyes downcast, and the man's hands are apart, no longer wrung in a tense gesture of regret and worry. Spatially the image has become much flatter and more ambiguous. Early drawings for Young Couple (e.g. Ill.7a) show Kollwitz to be the model for the young girl, and N84 (Ill.7b) shows the highly specific setting in which the figures are placed. These preliminary tendencies to root the image in realism and three-dimensionality are submerged in the later etchings. In pictorial terms she has adopted Munch's techniques of compressing space and using isolated figures with mime-like poses, in order to penetrate the obfuscating layers of the physical and the external. Thus can the true human state be revealed. Like Munch and unlike Klinger, she has not turned to the world of dream and unreality to seek expression.

Such was Kollwitz's desire to emulate the artists she most admired, and such was the variety in their styles, that she could produce works as disparate in style and approach as End, Young Couple and Gretchen. Examples even more extreme will be discussed in later chapters. This experimentation with method and aim were to be a feature of her oeuvre throughout her life, most particularly so in her earlier years.

* * * * *

Klinger's tract Painting and Drawing was intended by him to promote the status of graphic art and seems, at first sight, to present graphic art only as an instrument of social criticism. However, a closer analysis reveals certain anomalies. In fact, Klinger's arguments suggest that the graphic art-form may be equally effective in presenting the essence of nature as in provoking social awareness; it is compatible with the aims both of the idealist and of the social critic. Painting and Drawing was, according to Kollwitz, the tract which persuaded her to abandon her thoughts of becoming a great artist in the conventional sense - by producing oil paintings on a grand scale. The purpose in considering the tract in some depth is to emphasize that it did not of itself force Kollwitz into pursuing one art-form rather than another. Although it persuaded her that graphic art was a recognized

art-form, it nevertheless did not exclude multiplicity of approach.

Firstly Klinger makes the assertion that graphic art, if it meets the expressive needs of the artist, is, like any other which does so, a valid artistic medium. This is the primary justification of graphic art as a recognised art-form. He then distinguishes between coloured and black-and-white art, outlining their divergent functions. Painted art belongs to the world of imposed order and harmony, the colour playing an important part in the creation of that stability. In approaching coloured art, the viewer must leave behind him his own confused thoughts and unrest in order to contemplate this ordered world:

Die farbige Koerperwelt in harmonischer Weise zum Ausdruck zu bringen, selbst der Ausdruck der Heftigkeit und Leidenschaft hat sich dieser Harmonie unterzuordnen.

[To depict the corporal world in an harmonious manner, this harmony has to make subordinate even expressions of violence and suffering.]⁸

The sheer beauty of the painted work extracts a response, from the viewer, to the joy and beauty in the world; coloured art is, by implication, an optimistic or at least positive, art-form.

On the other hand, the artist who is moved by the darker side of the world, and who wishes to express and publicize the injustice and suffering he sees in the world, will not find his means in coloured, but in graphic art. Although realism of subject matter will continue to link his work

with the human world, his abandoning of colour is a pronouncement of his subjectivity, of the personal (critical) nature of his artistic statement. He is freed from any attempt at verisimilitude and from any obligation to depict a perfect nature. Rather than an art to soothe and give pleasure, graphic art is an art of confrontation and challenge, above all to the status quo:

Aus ihren Werken bricht fast ueberall als Grundton hervor: so sollte die Welt nicht sein. [From their works bursts forth almost everywhere as the underlying tone: so ought the world not be!]⁹

Once the need to reproduce the physical properties of matter is foregone, those properties may be replaced with poetic and metaphysical qualities beyond matter's external appearance:

Mit der Luft verbindet sich eher der Begriff der Freiheit, mit dem Meer das Gewalt, und der Mensch ist nicht so die von ihren individuellen Formen eingeschlossene Person, als das Wesen, das zu allen jenen auesseren Kraeften in Beziehung und Abhaengigkeit steht; er ist vor allem Repraesentant seiner Gattung. [With the air is rather connected the idea of Freedom, Power with the sea, and a man himself is less an individual, self-contained person, and more the essence which is related to, and dependent upon, all these external forces. He is above all a representative of his kind.]¹⁰

The particular, in other words, becomes something beyond itself, whether embodying a quality, or a conception, or the general species of which it is a single specimen.

This is not so different, however, from certain of his statements referring to coloured art whose purpose he sees as the representation of a perfectly ordered world:

Die grossartige Wirkung beruht gerade darauf, dass alles, was nicht in allererster Linie zu dem Gedanken gehoert, nicht bloss weniger betont, sondern sogar prinzipiell umgemodelt wird, um jeden Nebengedanken abzuleiten, den Vergleich mit der lebendigen Natur auszuschliessen und den Geist des Beschauers ganz auf das Gesamtgewollte zu fuehren... Wir sehen nicht mehr die Zufaelligkeit der Welt, der Natur, die heut stuermt, morgen laechelt...

[The tremendous effect is based on the fact that everything which does not pertain directly to the main line of thought is not merely stressed less but actually re-modelled, in order to divert peripheral thoughts, to exclude a comparison with living Nature, and to lead the viewer's mind to focus upon that which is deigned to be of total importance... We no longer see the fickleness of the world, Nature which storms today and smiles tomorrow...]¹¹

According to Klinger's thesis, coloured art may be used to present intangible forces and ideals which go beyond the 'fickleness of the world', embodying the universal. So too may graphic art be used to suggest eternal, unchanging values: Freedom, Power and so on. To achieve the latter, all temporary elements such as 'storms' and 'smiles' must be eliminated. Employed thus, graphic art is no longer the art-form which concentrates upon the injustice of society or the poverty of a certain sector of society, but the artist's view of the essential nature of creation. The potential of graphic art allows it to pronounce both: 'So ought the world not be!' and also 'So we hope is the world!'

Moreover, if graphic art serves the purpose of challenging society with the intention of reform, then the artist's desire must be that his image will be only of temporary and not of permanent relevance to mankind. In other words, once the situation which he depicts has been brought to society's attention and rectified, his image will no longer serve an active purpose but will become an historical document recording a state that is no longer. On the other hand, if graphic art is used to transform physical properties into timeless poetic ones wherein the sea becomes Power and air becomes Freedom, then the image is seeking to be eternally relevant. The latter approach is that adopted by Munch and it is indicative of the indistinct division between coloured and black-and-white art that he adopts it as successfully in both.

The possibilities for graphic art are greater than Klinger perceives, or than he outlines in Painting and Drawing.¹² As much as graphic art may be used as a tool for social criticism, so too may it be used to suggest the eternal, unchanging facets of nature beneath nature's shifting aspects. Kollwitz discovers the versatility of graphic art and explores the various possibilities it offers. By choosing to become a graphic artist, she was not automatically destined to follow one particular artistic path.

1. Kollwitz, K. Tagebuchblaetter und Briefe, p 25. Letter to Herr Zimmermann of 1 September 1930
2. 'Willi Kurth ueberlieferte, sie habe die Blaetter Eine Mutter aus den Dramen oft als "ihre geistige und kuenstlerische Geburt" bezeichnet.' [According to Willi Kurth, she often described the prints A Mother from Dramas as "her spiritual and artistic birth".] Schmidt, W. 'Zur kuenstlerischen Herkunft von Kaethe Kollwitz' in Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden p 83
3. See endnote 12. of this chapter.
4. A quotation from Max Lehrs must put into perspective the admirable qualities of Kollwitz's Gretchen image which is a haunting image despite the elements of unease which it contains: 'Dass es weder Goethe's Gretchen ist, noch das traditionelle "deutsches Gretchen" mit Puffaermeln und semmelbloenden Zoepfen, wie es als Theaterfigur zu einer Art nationalen Heiligtumes geworden ist, versteht sich von selbst.' [She well understood that it is neither Goethe's Gretchen, nor the traditional "German Gretchen" with puffed sleeves and strawblond plaits, a sort of national cult-figure as she has come to be in the theatre.] Lehrs, M. Op.cit. p 37
5. Kollwitz, K. Tagebuchblaetter und Briefe, pp 30-31. Letter to Fraeulein Mendel of 29 July 1919
6. Although Kollwitz makes surprisingly little mention of Munch in her diaries and letters, and certainly never accords him the status of artistic mentor which she did Klinger, the numerous elements which she takes from the Norwegian artist suggest a strong affinity with his methods and aims. It would have been impossible for her to have ignored his art, for the role which Munch played in the development of a new art in Germany cannot be underestimated. From the banning of his first exhibition in 1892 until his return to Norway in the 1920s he was at the centre of art developments in Berlin and produced prolifically while he was there. He was a central figure in the alternative artistic milieu to which Kollwitz herself belonged.
7. Halbe, M. Op.cit., p 83
8. Klinger, M. Op.cit., pp 12-13
9. Ibid., p 44
10. Ibid., p 35

11. Ibid., p 29

12. In which ideas have quite probably been
simplified for clarity's sake.

KOLLWITZ AND LITERARY INSPIRATION

Kollwitz's use of literature and drama as a source of inspiration is a predominant feature of her oeuvre up until 1897, after which examples become more scarce. A chronological study of her works' relation to literary texts reveals a gradual but certain development of artistic independence. In very early examples her dependence upon the text is heavy; in effect she provides illustrations to the text. Such works are The Kaiser's Birthday and her scenes from Zola's Germinal. Later, however, her approach is far more interpretative: the text is a starting point from which she freely departs, creating works thereby which exploit the unique qualities of the visual medium. Such a one is Carmagnole of 1901.

The next chapter will look specifically at the Weaver Uprising cycle, one of the most important of her works. This chapter concentrates upon The Kaiser's Birthday, Germinal and Carmagnole. Comparable developments in Kollwitz's self-portraits and single figures will also be considered.

Although not based upon a known literary text, The Kaiser's Birthday (Ill.8) is one of the earliest extant drawings of Kollwitz, and is interesting in what it reveals of her early illustrative style. Although the source is uncertain, there is little difficulty involved in



*Dem Kaiser Ernst August 1. Geburtstag
19. Dezember 1887. Käthe Kollwitz*

III. 8

The Kaiser's Birthday undated

Kaethe-Kollwitz-Museum, West Berlin

interpreting the storyline. Kollwitz's niece described it so:

Ich verstehe die Szene so, dass die beiden Jungen Maenner, da Kaisers Geburtstag ist, einen freien Tag haben. Der eine hat den anderen abgeholt, er ist schon "stadtfein", der andere zieht sich gerade an. Jetzt wollen sie zur Parade Unter den Linden und dann ein bisschen bummeln.

[I understand the scene as such, that the two young men have a free day because it's the Kaiser's birthday. The one, already smartly dressed, has gone to pick up the other who is now engaged in getting dressed. They are wanting to go to see the parade in Unter den Linden, then wander around the town awhile.]¹

Words employed to describe it are simple, narrative, just as the picture itself is. Kollwitz has taken great pains to explain all parts of the picture, including particular background details and the figures' physiognomies.

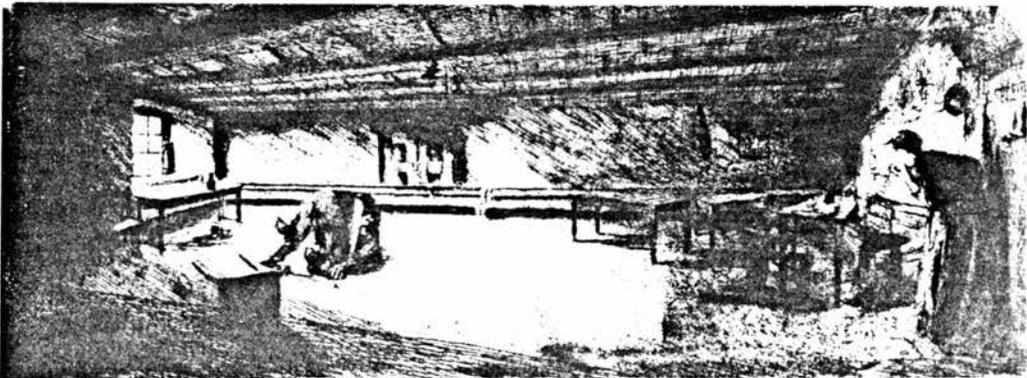
The Kaiser's Birthday, as with other of her early works, Kollwitz was later to reject, precisely for its 'anecdotal', story-like qualities. When it was chosen by Heinrich of Saxony in return for his harbouring Kollwitz in the last months of the war, she emphatically re-signed it 'Schmidt', thereby pronouncing it unacceptable to her mature self.

Another early work was Kollwitz's sketch for Zola's Germinal (Ill.9) the work which first convinced her of the certainty of her artistic success. It dates to her student days in Munich when a group of artist friends met each week to sketch according to an elected theme. The subject on this occasion was 'struggle' ('Kampf'). Kollwitz chose to



Ill. 9

Germinal (N9) 1888



Ill. 9a

Germinal (K21) 1893

depict a particular scene from Zola's novel Germinal of a brawl in the local inn. The account is descriptive, with minor details meticulously conveyed:

Catherine tried to rush between them, raising her arms in supplication, but they did not even have to bother to push her back for she realized that this fight had to be, and slowly stepped back of her own accord. She stood with her back against the wall, silent and so paralysed with anguish that she no longer trembled, but simply stared with her great eyes at these two men who were going to kill each other for her sake... A chair was knocked over and the sand on the stone floor crunched beneath their heavy boots... Rasseneur [the landlord] contented himself with standing in front of the fire for fear of their falling into it...²

Kollwitz has retained many of the incidental details in her drawing: the overturned chair, the two figures interlocked on the floor, Catherine pressed up in horror against the wall, and Rasseneur and his wife looking on. However, the sketch was spontaneously created, and the elements drawn partly from memory, partly from the imagination. It was an imaginative work in a way that the naturalistic studies demanded of her by the Academy were not, and in this lay her pride. The effects of her training are nevertheless very obvious and what she produces is a direct transcription of a written form into visual terms.

In subsequent versions this illustrative quality has been reduced. In a version of 1893 (Ill.9a) she has altered the format from a conventional upright rectangle to a low extended rectangle, thereby producing a long, narrow space in which perspectival lines radiate exaggeratedly from a



Ill. 9b

Bar in Königsberg (N52) 1890/91
Private Dealers, Bern

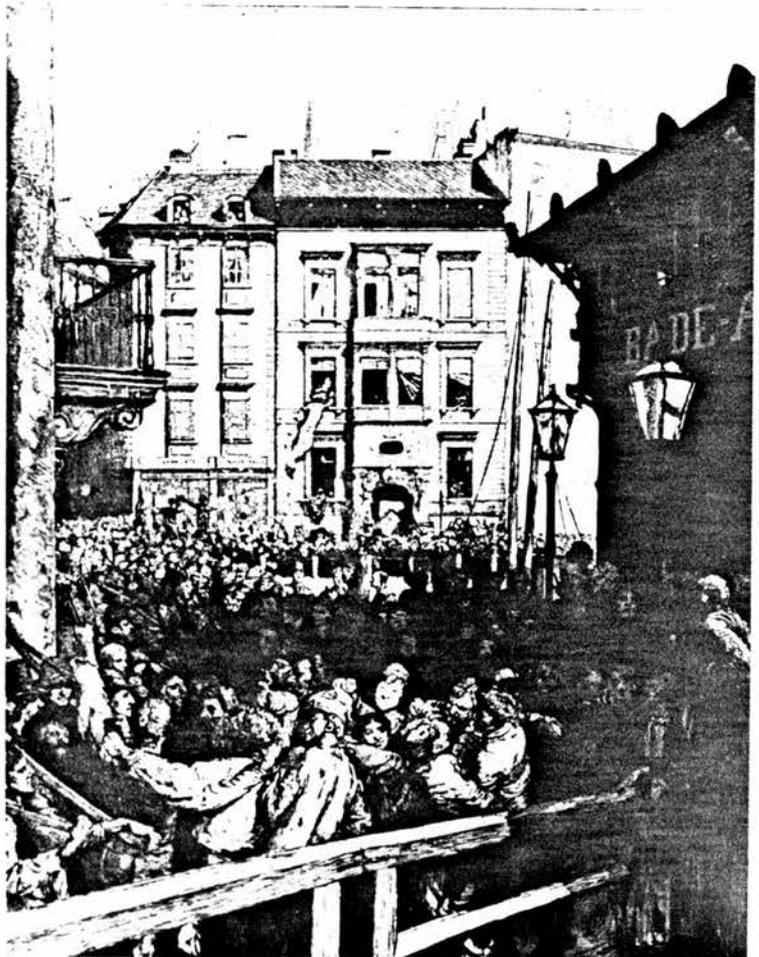
window in the side wall, creating a dramatic sense of movement. The overturned chair falls out of the picture, again, a dramatic touch. All extraneous elements such as the servant have been removed, and the eye is given a powerful sense of direction, following a terse line from left to right. As Kollwitz now uses perspective to heighten the sense of the dramatic, so too she uses light; a flood of light locates the two men as the major protagonists, whilst reflected light bouncing off the far wall reveals the figure of the girl as the passive onlooker. Kollwitz's initial depiction of the scene is of its actual, physical occurrence, between particular people at a particular time. The altered version concentrates far more on the psychological implications of the brawl and moves away from pure narrative.

Although pleased with her initial drawing, Kollwitz did not intend her final version to be a work of graphic art. Perhaps hoping that this breakthrough in drawing preceded one in painting, she determined to create a momentous oil painting of the Germinal scene and continued to make drawings for this scheme until as late as 1905. In contrast to the increasingly dramatic interpretation of the 1893 etched version, it is interesting to note that the preliminary drawings (e.g. Ill.9b) she made for the oil painting were rigidly rooted in naturalism, all accurately drawn in a rough sailors' bar which she had conscientiously sought out in Koenigsberg.³ Illustration is the equivalent



Ill. 10
Carmagnole (K49)
1901

Ill. 11
MAX KLINGER
March Days I,
Dramas Opus IX 1883



of painting from observed nature - the text provides the information and the artist translates it into visual images - and, as a graphic artist, Kollwitz begins to move away from this, realising that a visual artist must use different means to convey what, in written form, an author conveys. When thinking in painterly terms, however, she cannot escape the tenets of naturalism and observation upon which her training was based, and in planning her painting she returns to detailed and accurate settings which root the work in time and place.

Kollwitz planned to provide a set of illustrations to accompany Zola's texts, but abandoned this scheme after attending the premiere of Hauptmann's play, of The Weavers in February 1893. As she said,

Diese Aufführung bedeutete einen Markstein in meiner Arbeit. Die begonnen Folge zu Germinal liess ich liegen und machte mich an die Weber.
[This performance was a milestone in my work. I left the series for Germinal, which I had already begun, and turned instead to the Weavers.]⁴

Another work which is almost certainly literary based is Carmagnole (Ill.10), with J. Mueller suggesting Dickens's Tale of Two Cities as the source.⁵ The parallels are surprisingly close, but most interesting are the different methods of portraying similar ideas. By 1901 Kollwitz is creating images uniquely suitable to her own medium. Apparent as well is Kollwitz's movement away from drawing through observation, towards creations of the imagination.

This tendency becomes even more apparent in the second of her cycles, Peasants' Revolt.

Dickens's description of the Carmagnole being sung on the streets of Paris is such:

...A moment afterwards, and a throng of people came pouring round the corner by the prison wall, in the midst of whom was the wood-sawyer hand in hand with The Vengeance. There could not be fewer than five hundred people, and they were dancing like five thousand demons. There was no other music than their own singing. They danced to the popular Revolution song, keeping a ferocious time that was like a gnashing of teeth in unison...At first, they were a mere storm of coarse red caps and coarse woollen rags; but, as they filled the place...some ghastly apparition of a dance-figure gone raving mad arose among them...This was the Carmagnole.⁶

The element of frenzy and mindless mass participation in Dickens's description and the propensity for evil brought on by the singing of this storm-song, are so close to Kollwitz's own interpretation of the Carmagnole that a close study of the author's intentions certainly leads to a better understanding of the artist's. Dickens creates, from the events of the Revolution and its aftermath, an historical novel in which the anonymous figures of history are individualized; he enters into their psyche, gives them words, features, and human relationships which bring the events of the Terror to the realm of the reader. The reader is compelled to accept the unremarkable nature of the protagonists, particularly those perpetrating the merciless deeds, and thereby to recognise the cause of the Terror - the underlying presence of brutality in man's

nature - and its potential recurrence. The event, and the emotions and actions linked to that event, are removed from historical aridity and made pertinent to the here and now.

This is Kollwitz's intention as well, and she seeks to create an image of such proximity that the viewer is forced to identify himself with the events taking place, above all through the extraordinarily detailed passage of architecture which dominates the upper half of the image. It has been often noted that the architecture in Carmagnole is atypical of French architecture of the 1790s but was common to German towns at the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, it has been identified as a particular setting in Hamburg.⁷ Kollwitz is effectively removing a scene from history and changing the backdrop. As in Dickens, the glory of the French Revolution must be tempered by the horror of its excesses. Whereas Kollwitz tries to free the Weaver Uprising cycle from its particular roots in the Silesian weavers' uprising by generalizing figures and backgrounds, here she pins the scene within one unmistakable context, that of contemporary Germany. It is a declaration of belief in the communal conscience of history from which no person is exempt. This belief, already intimated in the Weaver Uprising cycle, is expounded by Kollwitz in a letter written in March 1918 referring to the First World War (in which her youngest son was killed whilst in voluntary service):

...vergessen duerfen wir den Krieg nie. An der ungeheueren Schuld hat jeder sein Teil. Und wir muessen abtragen unsere Schuld.

[We dare never forget the war. Each person has a share in the terrible guilt, and each must bear his guilt.]⁸

To distance oneself from the events of history, and to disassociate oneself from them, particularly from those in which the darker side of man is seen to be foremost, is a tendency Kollwitz attempts to dispel. The emotions revealed in Carmagnole are base, uncontrolled, terrible. There is no figure of Justice here, lauding the deeds of the people; the frenzy in which the participators are swept up leads to deeds which are the epitome of irrationality and injustice. And, as the populace dance in the German street, Carmagnole is transformed from being an historically based depiction of the French revolution into a statement of humanity's potential for uncontrolled lust, set in Kollwitz's own neighbourhood. (Albeit unwittingly, it is a remarkably prophetic image of Nazi Germany.)

It is a masterful portrayal of mindless, mass emotion, almost Bacchanalian in nature. The figures, hitherto in her oeuvre generalized, now acquire an unprecedented androgynous quality, making them more zombie than human. Eyes are closed or given an introspective, glazed aspect suggestive of a state of ecstasy, and certain figures such as the drummer boy and the foreground woman are so entirely oblivious of their surroundings that they are not even acting in unison with the group. All certainly seem unaware of their own actions, unconscious of the deeds they are committing or condoning.

Such figures, first evident in Weavers' March (Ill.18), become peculiarly Kollwitz's own. What she struggles to display are inner forces and emotions, the psychology of the inner mind, and to do this she needs to de-emphasize the physical. The preoccupied, inward-dwelling aspect of many of her figures, the use of faces and hands to reveal inner states, are visual methods through which this is achieved. Here in Carmagnole she reintroduces the repeated hand gesture (used effectively in Storm (Ill.17) to suggest numbers and the sense of unity of sentiment) to emphasize the concept of mass participation. It here acquires particular effectiveness as the raised hands evoke a sentiment of worship and adulation levelled at the inert guillotine.

In terms of pictorial inspiration, Klinger must again be mentioned, for the image bears very close comparison to the print of March Days I (Ill.11) from the series Dramas. The immediacy of Klinger's image is most striking, the barricade of buildings which force the image into the viewer's world, the railings and cut-off buildings which make it akin to a scene stumbled upon, adding a documentary note to the work (a technique mastered later by Dix in his Images of War). There is a similar sense of the unpremeditated, the spontaneous in Carmagnole, as if it were a scene not intended for witnesses. The high buildings of Klinger's image provide, as they do for Kollwitz, a

backdrop before which the central figural scene takes place. It might be thought that, in both Klinger's case and Kollwitz's, backgrounds so naturalistic would tend to re-root the images in the illustrative mode. However, other factors - the generalization of figures, the emphasis on the etching lines, the dramatic, unnaturalistic bands of black and white - ensure that the eye is not deceived into believing that it is perceiving the actual.⁹

A further comparison with Dickens serves to underline the complexity of ideas in Kollwitz's work: she combines in one image what Dickens expresses in several different passages. In Tale of Two Cities, the scene describing the dancing of the Carmagnole takes place in just such a residential suburb as Kollwitz depicts. An earlier description of the suburb is as follows:

Mr Lorry found a suitable one [lodging], high up in a removed by-street where the closed blinds in all the other windows of a high melancholy square of buildings marked deserted homes.¹⁰

The Carmagnole taking place in these back streets emphasizes the all-pervasive nature of the Terror, created by ordinary citizens in ordinary suburbs. A very early scene in the book foreshadows this sense of corporate responsibility when blood-red wine is spilled in the streets and is greedily scooped up by a celebrating populace. There are many passages in the novel describing the citizens' adulation of 'Saint Guillotine' but the machine remains firmly on its historical pedestal in the

Place de la Concorde and the dancing of the Carmagnole does not take place around it.¹¹

These three elements of Dickens's novel: the dance itself, the power of the guillotine and the adulation accorded it, and the early prophecy of the rivulets of blood which would stain the hands of the entire populace, are concisely combined within Kollwitz's image of Carmagnole: the guillotine itself has been removed to a quiet corner of an ordinary suburb, ordinary citizens dance around its physical presence and celebrate its deeds, stepping heedlessly through the rivulets of blood which they have created. There is a particular power in the moving of the guillotine off its national platform to a quiet street where the locals gather around it and exercise their own arbitrary and destructive power.¹²

* * * * *

Although Kollwitz's self-portraiture cannot be said to be literary-based or inspired, the development of this aspect of her oeuvre parallels her development away from the illustrative. Her change in approach is most strikingly evident in her self-portraiture (a comparison of images is facilitated by their common subject matter), as a chronological selection will show. What should also become apparent, furthermore, is that the fully-developed traits of her later works all find their roots in her early

images.

One of Kollwitz's first self-portraits (Ill.12), at the age of 22, is an ink drawing of 1888/9 in which only the bust length is given in any detail, and of that all but the face is merely blocked in. The drawing catches Kollwitz in a moment of laughter as she glances out towards the viewer. The briefest of glances at any of Kollwitz's later portraiture would serve to stress the temporal nature of this image with its fleeting moment of laughter. It would seem to be an archetypal Impressionist picture but there are signs even in this very early work of a greater permanence which Kollwitz seeks. Even though it is only a sketch, it is nevertheless worth noting that Kollwitz lays no emphasis on the background or environment; the surroundings bear no relation to her self-portrait and add nothing further to an understanding of the subject's character. The rendering of a likeness is not Kollwitz's sole interest: there are signs of interest in the function of the paper surface itself. She does not attempt to create an illusionistic impression of three-dimensionality through the use of smooth washes or concealed strokes but boldly hatches lines across the face and features in a manner which asserts the two-dimensional nature of the image. This she uses to great advantage in later works, but when coupled here with such an obvious degree of realism, an uncomfortable incongruity results.



Ill. 12

Self-Portrait (N7) 1888/89



Ill. 13

Self-Portrait (N31) 1891/92

The element of unease has disappeared from the self-portrait of 1891/2 (Ill.13). Fleeting expression has given way to a grave, unmoving gaze, replacing the ephemeral with the intrinsic. The three-dimensional quality of the drawing has been reduced; enough of a guide has been given through shading and reflected light for the eye to understand the work as a naturalistically modelled human form but the hatched strokes of the pen have become bolder, scratched without differentiation over various planes in space, and defiant of naturalistic modelling. The work does not lose its sense of naturalism, but by rooting the image with pen lines onto the paper, and by removing temporal qualities such as momentary gestures, smiles, wisps of hair, Kollwitz begins already to achieve a sense of the unchanging essence. In later portraits those elements such as the hand and arm which are suggestive of gesture and motion are no longer included. The need to arrive at the unaltered kernel of oneself, to follow oneself through age and physical degeneration, and at each stage to find the same essential, unchanged self, seems to have been as much a spiritual quest for Kollwitz as it was for Rembrandt.

Perhaps one of the most powerful self-portraits in art, in which one feels that this aim has been achieved, is Kollwitz's self-portrait of 1904, printed as a lithograph (Ill.14). Here the same techniques as in earlier works are apparent, but further developed. The most striking quality



Ill. 14

Self-Portrait (K75) 1904

of the work is its detached, unanchored appearance. Extraneous elements, even hands, have been removed, and the essence of the figure is revealed through the face. Even the shoulders and bust are so darkly suggested that the head and neck rise out of them as if from a void. The shape of the head and neck have been emphasized as pure forms, an upright rectangle ending where the dress starts, and the head within that rectangle forming an oval, subtly disguised so as to remove any suggestion of an imposition of perfection onto the imperfection of reality.¹³ The face is modelled with a directional light source - more rigidly adhered to than in many of Kollwitz's graphics - and three-dimensionality is thereby suggested (the shining tip of the nose indicating the extent of the picture-field's depth), whilst the technique of emphasizing the surface is employed here as earlier: the stone is scratched and marked, faults in it are not disguised, and the revealing, as it were, of 'behind the scenes' - that is, the layers of colour with which the image has been built up - reject any suggestion of illusionism.

In Kollwitz's self-portraiture, as in her other works, there is a notable move away from the anecdotal image towards one more distilled.

1. Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz. Hand-out from the Kaethe-Kollwitz-Museum, Fasanenstrasse, West Berlin. The information recorded here concerning this drawing was given me by Frau Gudrun Fritsch of the Kaethe-Kollwitz-Museum, West Berlin.
2. Zola, E. Op.cit., pp 385-6
3. 'Mein uebergang von der Malerei zur Graphik war noch nicht erfolgt, ich wollte im Gegenteil malen, und zwar wollte ich die Szene aus Germinal auf die Leinwand bringen. Zu diesem Zweck brauchte ich Studien. Koenigsberg hatte damals in den alten Pregelgegenden eine reihe von Matrosenkneipen, welche am Abend zu besuchen mit Lebensgefahr verbunden war. Es war mir nicht moeglich, anders als am Vormittagen dort Studien zu machen.' ['My transition from painting to the graphics was not yet accomplished, and it was because I wanted to reproduce the scene from Germinal onto canvas. In the Pregel suburb of Koenigsberg there used be a row of sailors' bars, which would have been life-endangering to visit of an evening. I had no alternative, therefore, but to make my sketches there during the afternoons.'] in Kollwitz, K. Ich Will Wirken, pp 32-3.
4. Op.cit., p 33
5. Mueller, J. Op.cit.. The author had had occasion to speak to Kaethe Kollwitz personally.
6. Dickens, C. Op.cit., pp 307-8. See related account pp 291-2.
7. Dreimal Deutschland: Lenbach. Liebermann, Kollwitz, Hamburg Kunsthalle 1982 catalogue, p 99
8. Kollwitz, K. Tagebuchblaetter und Briefe, p 94. Letter to Erna Krueger of 22 March 1918.
9. It must here be added that Klinger was incensed at the suggestion that his March Days series was, in fact, a depiction of the March Days in the 1848 revolution in Germany.
10. Dickens, C. Op. cit., p 294
11. Ibid., pp 59-61.
12. It is interesting that Kollwitz does not attempt to explain the people's actions, unless the state of Bacchanalian ecstasy in which they are swept up is intended to provide some sort of explanation. There is, in direct comparison to the Weaver Uprising cycle and the Peasants' War cycle, little sense of cause and effect. This is also in contrast to Dickens, who

dwells often upon the causes which led the oppressed to become the oppressors. For instance, 'Along the Paris streets, the death-carts rumble, hollow and harsh...All the devouring and insatiate Monsters imagined since imagination could record itself, are fused in the one realisation, Guillotine. And yet there is not in France, with its rich variety of soil and climate, a blade, a leaf, a root, a sprig, a peppercorn, which will grow to maturity under conditions more certain than those that have produced this horror. Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms. Sow the same seed of rapacious licence and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind.'

13. This tendency to concentrate upon the abstract power of line and shape becomes a feature of Kollwitz's later works and will be discussed in chapter five.

HAUPTMANN'S WEAVERS AND KOLLWITZ'S WEAVER UPRISING CYCLE

Hauptmann's Weavers was the strongest single source of inspiration for any of Kollwitz's works, prompting creation of the cycle which was to bring her overnight fame. Her interpretation of the text and the relation of her cycle to Weavers are particularly important and deserve close study. Although borrowing from other sources, both visual and literary, Kollwitz was always to use the image according to her own wide-seeing view. She was never imprisoned by her source of inspiration. What she was learning to develop was to create an image uniquely suitable to the visual, not seeking merely to reinterpret or offset another art form, as narrative art tended to do. Nor was she now mirroring what could be seen first-hand from nature. Julius Elias, contemporary art critic, elucidated it most clearly:

Ich sah (the Weaver Uprising cycle¹) und war ueberwältigt. Ich sah nicht die geistigen Abhaengigkeiten, sah ueberhaupt nicht Literatur noch Kunsttradition; ich sah nur die feste, starke, gesunde und schoene Hand, die - aus dem Spiel von Licht und Schatten - einer furchtbaren Wirklichkeit solche Visionen entrungen hatte. Der Sturm sozialisierter Zeit drang aus diesem ganz unfanatischen, menschlichklaren Blaettern. Der Naturalismus war, wie Paul Schlenzler von Hauptmann's scheinbar abstossender Wahrheitsform sagt, nur gebraucht: um in Naechsten das Hoechste, im Gemeinsten das Reinste, im Niedrigsten das Tiefste zu finden.

[I saw and was overwhelmed. I did not see the intellectual dependencies and certainly did not see the literary or artistic traditions: I saw only the sure, strong, healthy and beautiful hand which - with a play of light and shadow - had wrested such visions from a terrible reality. The storm of a socialist age rang forth from these totally unfanatical, humane images. Naturalism was, as Paul Schlenzler said of Hauptmann's seemingly repulsive form of truth,

used only in order to discover the greatest in the most humdrum, the purest in the most base, and the greatest profundity in the most lowly.]²

The importance of the play for Kollwitz lay not only in its dramatic interest but more significantly in its social message, for it was a political denunciation of poverty amongst the weaving communities. The controversy surrounding its first staging, and Hauptmann's struggle to bring it to the stage in face of staunch resistance from the authorities, only added to the effect of the play upon its first audiences.

Although the play is an account of the 1844 uprising of the Silesian weavers and Hauptmann adhered faithfully to historical accounts for his treatment of the uprising, its pertinence to his own time was the cause of the highly-wrought reaction to it by the official censors. A bad harvest in Silesia in 1890 had created renewed famine conditions, causing the area to become a focus of national news. Hauptmann had himself visited the area in 1891 to investigate the conditions of the weaver communities. His Weavers was not intended as a straight history play but as a public condemnation of the contemporary situation.³ Hauptmann's reminiscences of how he came to write the play have a very vocational ring to them:-

Das Wuchten des Webestuhles hoerte man durch die Wand dringen. Und einigen sonnigen Morgens, errinere ich mich, ueberfiel mich bei diesem Geraeus der Gedanke: du bist berufen, die Weber zu schreiben! Der Gedanke fuehrte sofort zum Entschluss.

[One could hear the noise of the looms penetrating the walls. And one sunny morning, I

remember, out of this noise came the thought :
"You are called to write The Weavers." The
thought led immediately to its execution.]⁷

Just as this vocational element moved Socialist sympathizers such as Kaethe Kollwitz, so too could the play's depiction of events do little other than cause great concern amongst the authorities. It was seen by them as highly inflammatory material inciting class hatred and rebellion, and was banned from the official German theatre. It was eventually staged, however, at a private theatre, Freie Buehne, in 1893, the performance attended by Kollwitz. The issues of the play, its criticism of the status quo, and its status as a cause celebre, had made it famous before ever the curtain rose.

In using the Weavers as her source, Kollwitz was choosing a highly provocative piece of drama. Although previous literary texts she had used as sources - Germinal and Young Couple - had been critical of society, none had been as powerfully, nor as openly, critical as Weavers, nor had allied itself quite so closely with 'the just war'. In adopting this stance herself, Kollwitz's problem was how to reconcile the need to express a social, perhaps even political, view and yet to create a work of art. Hauptmann reveals very honestly the same dichotomy he faced as, at a later date, he speaks of his play:

I will not deny that I have hoped that the well-to-do folks who see my Weavers may be moved by the appalling misery which is reflected in that work, a misery with which I have been brought into contact and which moved me strongly. But...only the most careful analysis can explain

the complex motives which dictate an artist's work. Deeply as I was stirred by the woes of my weavers, for instance, when I conceived the play, once I set to work I saw nothing but the marvellous material they gave me for creating a great, moving human drama. In the delight of building up my scenes for the time being, I forgot all else, yet indirectly The Weavers will teach something, I dare say. To the dramatist, however, it is of smaller importance what he teaches.⁸

Where Hauptmann acknowledges that purely artistic concerns swamped the initial social ardour which inspired the play, Kollwitz's danger was the reverse: that she would ignore artistic considerations for the sake of didacticism. It was a very fine balance she had to create between social document, propaganda, and art. She initially intended to include Heinrich Heine's poem Weavers, a poem which is bitter in its attack on God, the bourgeoisie, and the powers that be. Although Kollwitz never balked at producing 'impure' art -

Mag man tausend mal sagen, dass das nicht reine kunst ist, die einen Zweck in sich schleisst. Ich will mit meiner Kunst, solange ich arbeiten kann, wirken,
[One might say a thousand times over, that art which has a purpose is not 'pure' art. As long as I am able to work, I want to be effective with my art.]⁶

she retained in her earlier art a rigorous balance between propaganda and art. Perhaps feeling that the tone of Heine's poem was inappropriately bitter and cynical, she omitted it, allowing the Weaver Uprising to stand alone, without need of the written word to enforce its message. There is no doubt that the cycle disclaims the injustice of poverty, but the images' restrained nature, their

understated emotions, and their relation to naturalism, all prevent the work from becoming too strong a political statement to the detriment of the art. A comparison with a late poster of 1924 (Ill.46) underlines the controlled nature of the Weaver Uprising. The political poster with its non-naturalistic figures, its overtly didactic use of gesture, and its emotional cry Never Again War!, has lost the restraint of earlier years and strayed into the realms of propaganda. In contrast, it is the discipline binding emotion and inspiration in Weaver Uprising which makes the cycle one of Kollwitz's greatest works.

The pattern of events in Hauptmann's and Kollwitz's works is one: suffering becomes insupportable, rebellion occurs, killings take place, defeat proves inevitable and initial suffering reasserts itself, this time intensified through dashed hopes and losses within the community. Kollwitz adopts the cyclical nature of Weavers as the foundation of her own work, a subtle construction which allows momentous events to take place yet concludes with nothing changed: the paradox of Time moving but Time standing still. It raised, however, a complex problem which Kollwitz had to overcome. Where a series of events is depicted it automatically becomes necessary to work with the notion of time, a non-physical element without visual properties. In literature and drama, the author/dramatist has the advantage of allowing events to unfold over an extended period. Episodes can be acted out chronologically upon the

stage, but plot and dialogue will prevent the piece from becoming a narrative sequence. This is not so for the graphic artist for whom the danger is particularly strong that a sequence of events will appear as mere narrative. Klinger, for example, attempts to avoid this through radically varying adjacent images (for example In the Gutter and Going Under in A Life), but the result is a diverse medley of images which do not hold together as a series. In Paraphrase on the Finding of a Glove he succeeds because the strong storyline is offset by the bizarre nature of the story and the images. This latter solution would naturally have been unsuitable for the Weaver Uprising cycle which had to retain very close links with reality that it might fulfil its almost documentary purpose. Kollwitz's problem was, therefore, to portray a series of events in time, artistically to link the scenes, avoiding monotony, repetition and pure story.

Prevention of narrative was not the only problem linked with the depiction of Time. There was the further necessity of ensuring that the cycle did not become a limited account of a past event - an uprising which had subsided into the annals of History. Again, the problems facing Kollwitz were more complex than for a playwright. Hauptmann's play was ostensibly concerned with the 1844 uprising, an historically documented event. Through the use of certain dramatic techniques, however - no hero, no heroine, no individual characters who might tempt the

viewer into thinking that their particular plight was unique, no distracting, particularized sub-plots such as love stories - Hauptmann avoids creating a period piece and instead creates a drama piece relevant not only to 1844 Silesia, but to any society in which similar conditions are tolerated. Furthermore, Hauptmann's choice of a theme so pertinent to his own time draws particularly strongly upon the cyclical notion of History, as events (or certainly conditions) are seen to repeat themselves with little altered. This breadth of vision, this magnifying of the subject's relevance was also sought by Kollwitz, but her problem was to seek a visual equivalent. Too specific a reference to the 1844 weavers' revolt through, for example, the use of period costume, would confine the sequence to history (making it akin to works such as Menzel's historical illustrations on Frederick the Great), whilst too general a presentation would make it less effective a tool of criticism for her own day. Following in Hauptmann's wake in many ways solved this problem, for their very close association was indisputable, and the issues which surrounded Hauptmann's play, the social criticisms inherent in his Weavers, became indisputably associated with Kollwitz's Weaver Uprising as well. The latter is recognised, by association, as referring to an historical event whilst its treatment liberates it from being rooted in the past, and makes of it a timeless cycle.

This was indeed Kollwitz's aim, to emphasize the limitless



Ill. 15

Deliberation (K36) 1898



Ill. 15a

Drawing for Deliberation (N170) 1898

applicability of her cycle, to provide a beginning, a climax and a conclusion, but to go beyond narrative. The prolific number of sketches and experimental ideas bear witness to the fact that each final image was carefully selected to this end⁷, some more dependant on Hauptmann than others. The general move is one away from the particular, and away from narrative.

The development of Deliberation (Ill.15), the third image of the series, illustrates particularly clearly Kollwitz's intentions. An initial pen and ink sketch (Ill.15a) suggests that Kollwitz started with life-sketches as she did for the interior of Germinal (Ill.9b). The scene is an everyday one in the local inn: four men sitting around a table drinking and discussing, whilst the barmaid looks on from behind the counter. There is no element of intrigue: the barmaid leans leisurely against the window ledge, the distance of each man from another indicates that the conversation, although earnest, is not whispered, and the light flooding in through the two windows dispels any idea of midnight meetings; the whole is seen from a very conventional angle.

From this unremarkable setting develops the final image with its undertones of subversive plotting, already discussed in the first chapter with reference to Klinger. Her treatment of the human figures is exaggeratedly suggestive of conspiracy: she endows them with those mime-

like postures and gestures which are instantly indicative of the state the bearer is in and the action he is involved in. The four men are brought together into one huddle, two faces clear, two obscured, hunched backs indicate a need for secrecy, and fists on the table suggest a wary defiance. As she does in Need, and less subtly in Death, so here too she adds a naturalistic detail which carries with it a weight of significance: the noose on the wall.⁸

The exaggerated angles and gestures reduce the naturalistic quality of the image and heighten its conceptual quality. To this end, Kollwitz has minimalized illusionistic and perspectival aspects, scrawling upon the lithographic stone, and creating a foreground of thick, rocking lines from which the anonymous human figures emerge, or into which they sink.

In Hogarth's depictions of poverty in London he concentrates upon the visible physical manifestations of poverty: rags, slums, alcoholism. The prints provide a comprehensive overview of the poor's lifestyle. Hauptmann adopts a similar approach, focusing upon hunger and overwork, and referring to related problems such as alcoholism. A child faints from hunger on stage, a dog is even cooked and consumed before the audience. Kollwitz, however, isolates a specific aspect of poverty which she sees as encompassing all other aspects of poverty, with its attendant injustice and suffering. It is the bond which

compels a mother to nurture and protect her child, even if at cost to herself; the inhumanity of poverty is fully expressed by the mother's inability to fulfil the demands of that maternal bond. In Weavers there are numerous outbursts from desperate mothers unable to feed their children, but nothing comparable to the silent passivity of this mother watching her child die.⁹

The setting is a derivative of Hauptmann's very specific stage sets, in particular that of Wilhelm Ansorge's house: a low room with smoke-blackened ceiling, light falling...

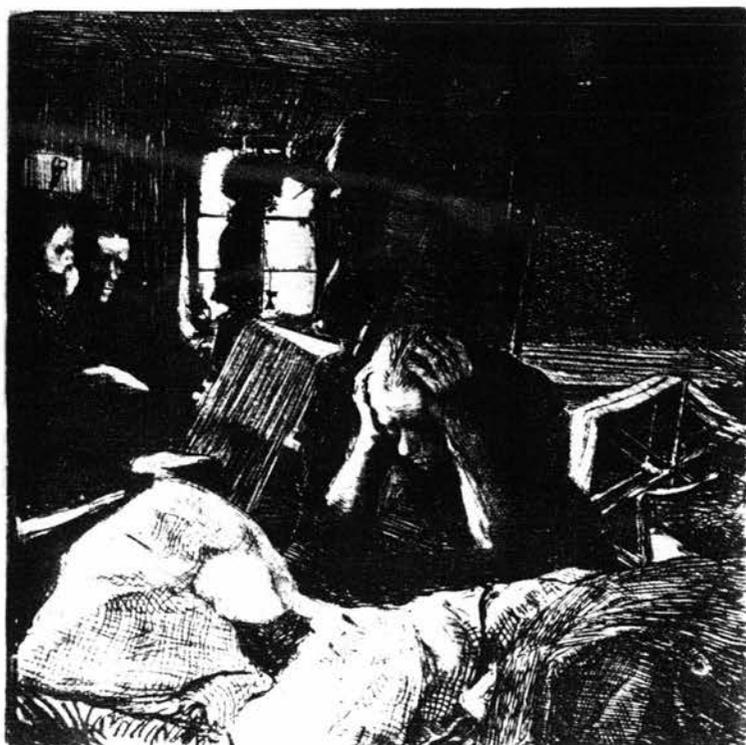
...durch zwei kleine, zum Teil mit Papier verklebte und mit Stroh verstopfte Fensterloecher...Auf der Ofenstange haengen Lumpen zum Trocknen, hinter dem Ofen ist altes, wertloses Geruempel angehaeuft. Auf der Ofenbank stehen einige alte Toepfe und Kochgeraete...Von den Balken herab haengen Garnstraehnen und Weifen. Koerbchen mit Spulen stehen neben den Webstuehlen...in der Hinterwand ist eine niedrige Tuer ohne Schloss. Ein Buendel Weidenruten ist daneben an die Wand gelehnt. Mehrere schadhafte Viertelkoerbe stehen dabei...

[...through two small windows, partly covered in paper and stuffed with straw...from the oven chimney rags hang out to dry; behind the oven is stacked a heap of worthless old junk. On the oven a few old pots and cooking implements stand. From the ceiling beams hang hanks and reels of yarn. Next to the looms are baskets with bobbins in...Set in the back wall is a low door without a lock. A bundle of willow switches is propped up against the wall nearby. More damaged baskets stand close by.]¹⁰

Kollwitz includes much of this very specific detail, thereby emphasizing the setting as a weaver's cottage. Such precision was not altogether necessary and is a reminder that this is an early work, still reflecting much of Kollwitz's naturalistic training. However, by

compressing space, stressing two-dimensionality and lack of perspective, the image is prevented from being seen as actual. Kollwitz extracts from the physical detail of clutter and confined quarters, a non-physical dimension. Her foreground figures are metaphorically pinned in a spaceless, airless, inescapable environment tyrannized by weaving and its attendant poverty.

Deliberation again provides a useful example of Kollwitz's solution to the problems confronting her. Marking as it does that unseen moment, psychological rather than active, when passive acceptance of a state of suffering turns to rebellion, this image was perhaps the most difficult to portray. Once more the question of Time arises: for both Hauptmann and Kollwitz a means must be found of cohering the grievances into a physical force. Hauptmann allows various discussions between the weavers to take place, creating a rising crescendo of discontent which finally spills into action. The anonymously written Weaver Song, sung off-stage by unidentified voices, is used by him as the necessary factor welding individual grievances and sufferings into one cohesive force. As a visual artist, Kollwitz was compelled to compress various incidents and a relatively long time-span, into one image. So she chooses this image of conspiracy - men crouched over a dimly-lit table, planning illicit action which carries with it very much stronger overtones of coercion and manipulation and explains fully the subsequent rising. Although more



Ill. 16

Need (K34) 1897



Ill. 17

Storm (K33) 1897

concrete and less emotive than the intangible force of a song, Kollwitz's final image is more of an image of drama and atmosphere than were her first naturalistic sketches for Deliberation.

Certain of the images issue entirely from Kollwitz's imagination, with no visual stimulus from Hauptmann's play. Storm (Ill.17) is one such - the point where Kollwitz and Hauptmann most clearly diverge. Where Hauptmann stages this scene from the drawing-room of the Dreissigers (the factory owners), with the latter reporting the weavers' action, Kollwitz presents it from the other side of the barred iron gate. Certain elements of reported speech in Weavers she makes visual, such as the throwing of paving stones, and the crowd at the gate.

Wo habens'n de Steene her?...-Vom Chauseebau.
-Nu regnet's Flastersteene.
[Where've the stones come from?...-From the
roadworks. -Now it's raining paving stones.]¹¹

In the play, the drawing room is a room of somewhat vulgar bourgeois splendour, with highly coloured silk drapes and rich furniture, and paintings and gilded mirrors hanging from the walls. Hauptmann's purpose in setting the scene such is twofold. Firstly, he uses it as a dramatic device to emphasize the gulf between the living conditions of the weavers and the employers. Secondly, aware that the factory owners too were prey to larger market forces, he allows Dreissiger the opportunity to provide some sort of defence for his actions by explaining the severe problems

arising from increased mechanization and overseas competition. Kollwitz's reasons for rejecting this setting are also twofold. Firstly because the ornamented and gaudily coloured room-setting would not lend itself to the graphic medium, and secondly because Kollwitz is not concerned with the 'middle-men' whom she attempts neither to blame nor to exonerate. She is concerned only with the essential evil, the 'enemy' which is the unseen forces of industrialization, economic competition, conservatism; locked iron gates, stone walls and a mighty mansion become symbols of steadfast power, defences of the status quo. The absence of a physical opposition emphasizes the pervasive theme of the fight's futility; the desire to wound or kill a non-substantial enemy is an intention incapable of being fulfilled.

In her journal she speaks of her childishly romantic ideas of fighting on the barricades:

Ich war revolutionaer. Mein Kindheits- und Jugendtraum war Revolution und Barrikade...
[I was revolutionary. The dream of my childhood and youth was of revolution and barricades.]¹²

Behind the barricades or iron gate is, for her, an oft envisaged angle of vision. Storm is, however, indicative of Kollwitz's disciplined refusal as an artist to dream: the pressing of this relatively small force of weavers against the gates does not for an instant bode success, and their fist-shaking and stone throwing are more gestures of protest than of serious threat. The impenetrable barrier



Ill. 18

Weavers' March (K32) 1897



COMMUNIST PRISONERS LED THROUGH THE DOOR OF LORENA, PARIS.

Ill. 19

Prisoners from the Commune, Illustrated London News 1871

remains intact and Kollwitz omits entirely the brief entry into the sanctuary of power which occurs in the play.

Weavers' March (Ill.18), too, is only tenuously linked with Hauptmann, for in Weavers, the marching mass of weavers is only ever reported and heard off-stage, never seen.¹³ Kollwitz's reason for choosing to depict the march (in effect, Deliberation followed by Storm would have sufficed as far as clarity of events was concerned) returns us to the question of the cyclical nature of the series. 'The wheel has come full circle' is the message of both Hauptmann's play and Weavers' March gives an intimation that this will be so. To an audience watching Hauptmann's play, the advantage of hindsight would have given them a knowledge from the start of the outcome of the 1844 weavers' rebellion. An attendant sense of futility and doom would have been theirs as events unfolded upon the stage. The manner in which Kollwitz achieved this visually is one of the great strengths of the cycle. Rather than relying on the last image alone to impart a sense of the unaltered state of the weavers, Weavers' March is the apex of the parabolic rise and fall of the weavers' fortunes. Although the image depicts the moment of the weavers' most concerted resistance, that point at which long years of oppression erupt in angry and jubilant rebellion, the total absence of jubilation and shouted defiance is the most striking feature of Weavers' March. Only two figures cry out but their cries are more akin to those of drowning men,

as they dip down beneath the horizon. The other figures are remarkable for their inward-looking, mute, almost obedient demeanour. They march along the road, listlessly carrying their weapons/tools. The visual tradition from which Kollwitz takes this image is not that of triumphant troops entering battle, rather that of the prison chain being led to imprisonment after defeat. Klinger, for instance, in March Days III (Dramas, Opus IX, 1883) ends his depiction of a failed revolution with weary prisoners being led home by a guard. An even closer precedent for Kollwitz's image is a print from Illustrated London News (Ill.19) showing prisoners from the Paris Commune being led through Place de l'Opera.¹⁴ The women depicted are rather more vociferous than those in the Weaver Uprising cycle, but others bear the haunted look of prisoners realising their fate, particularly the man on the far right who shares the stance and demeanour of the corresponding figure in Kollwitz's work. Weavers' March is a potent expression of a deterministic philosophy, that the oppressed, bound to rise against the injustice meted out to them, are equally bound to suffer defeat. At the height of their power, Kollwitz is already showing them as defeated prisoners.¹⁵ The idea of silence she actually takes from her sources, and it is historically recorded. Although Hauptmann allows some speech for drama's sake, his stage directions emphasize the silence of the weavers' actions:

Einige Sekunden bleibt der Raum leer. Im Salon zerklirren Fenster. Ein starker Krach durchschallt das Haus, hierauf brausendes Hurra, danach Stille. Einige Sekunden vergehen, dann

hoert man leises und vorsichtiges Trappen die Stufen zum ersten Stock empor, dazu nuechterne und schuetterne Ausrufe.

[The stage remains empty a few seconds. Sounds of breaking glass in the drawing-room. A crash echoes through the house, on which a roaring Hurra, then silence. A few seconds pass, then people are heard quietly and warily trooping up the stairs, calling out with sober, timid calls.]¹⁶

Zimmermann (Hauptmann's primary source) speaks of the extraordinary and total silence of the weavers:

Ohne jedes Schreien und Laermen, in tiefem Schweigen uebten sie das Rachewerk. Man hoerte nur das Krachen der zerbrechenden Moebel und Maschinen.

[Without a single cry or noise, they carried out their revenge in deep silence. One could hear only the crack of breaking furniture and machines.]¹⁷

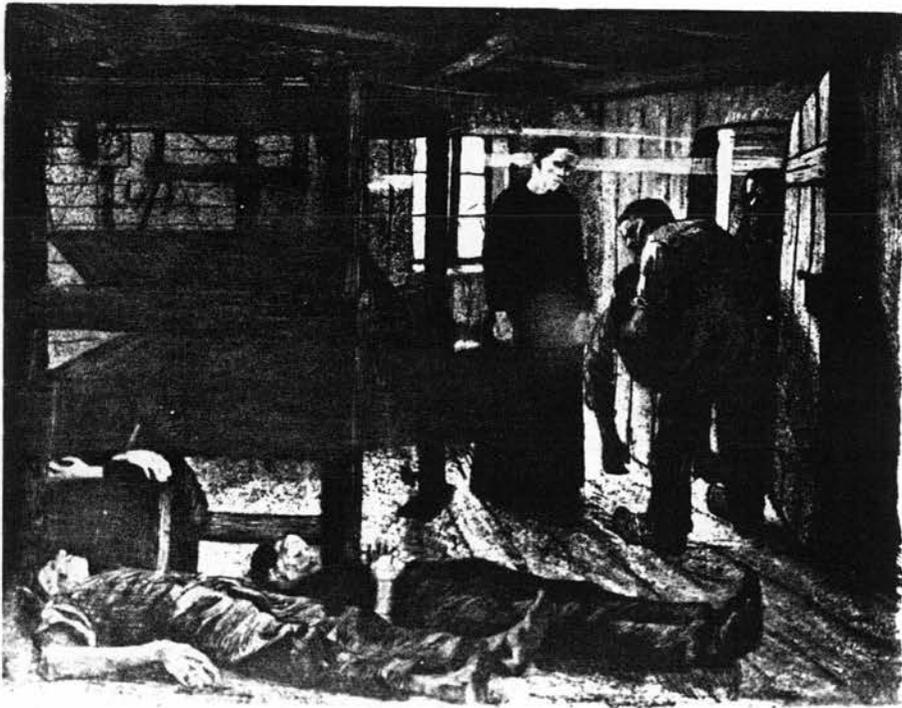
Where Zimmermann's account suggests the orderly, determined, almost business-like application of the weavers to their task, and their silence has a menacing efficiency, the silence of Kollwitz's weavers is due to their absolute foreknowledge of failure.

The idea of defeat even in the moment of greatest power conveys simultaneously a suggestion of the undefeated power of the victors. There is no named or identified 'enemy', no Dreissiger (as in Hauptmann); the oppressors remain an anonymous force - perhaps cotton-factory owners, perhaps governments, perhaps just 'authority'. Whatever its label, it is an undefeatable, victorious power synonymous with the status quo. By stressing the uprising's inevitable defeat and a return to the status quo, Kollwitz is presenting a picture of a repetitive cycle of History far removed from

the irrevocably progressive revolutions envisaged by Marx, and from Hegelian ideas of the positive development of History. A knowledge of Germany in the 1890s would make it clear to the viewer how little had altered between 1844 and the 1890s: living conditions for the poor continued to be appalling, as in the inner-city where Kollwitz's husband had his medical practice, and working conditions were no better, particularly so in the factories which were attracting a rural workforce into the towns. The grim faces of the weavers seem to have some knowledge of this, they know that they will continue to exist throughout history. Even at the height of revolt, as the peasants' heads break above the horizon, they sense with grim fatalism that they must sink below again, yet, like prisoners of Fate bound to act, they doggedly plod on.

The two ends of the series close together to form the cycle. The non-resisting despair of the mother in Need (Ill.16), helplessly mourning her dying child, becomes the sentiment of the wife in End (Ill.20), watching her dead brought in and laid before her. The loom is again the dominant feature (the machine is an irresistible reminder of the weavers' priority to exist rather than lose time and manpower in resisting); the clock is still there, suggesting time and continuity; the woman stands now before her dead menfolk as she sat before her dying child. The cycle is complete, the visual cycle and the time cycle, with the poverty, the suffering, death, and the tyranny of

the loom all present in the end as they were at the beginning. The haunting stance of the mother in End, no longer even looking at the bodies brought in to her but staring ahead into the future, is the embodiment of a pessimistic, determinist philosophy.



Ill. 20

End (K37) 1897

1. Comprising Need (Ill.16), Death (Ill.28), Deliberation (Ill.15), Weavers' March (Ill.18), Storm (Ill.17), End (Ill.20).
2. Elias, J. 'Kaethe Kollwitz' in Kunst und Kuenstler X, 1917, XI (August), p 48
3. Although Dr Grelling, Hauptmann's lawyer, declared that in following historical accounts Hauptmann was referring directly and solely to the uprising of 1844. Only by arguing thus did the play hold any chance of being staged.
4. Hauptmann, G. Das Abenteuer meiner Jugend Vol.2, p 386
5. Heuser, F.W.J. Op.cit., p 13
6. Kollwitz, K. Tagebuchblaetter und Briefe, p 95. Letter to Erna Krueger of 29 December 1922.
7. Of all the images, Storm alone comes close to depicting an incident; every other depicts a state of being - misery, death, subterfuge, or determined resistance.
8. This is also present in earlier, more naturalistic interpretations of the image, such as K16 and interestingly, in the study for the Koenigsberg bar.
9. For Hauptmann to have done so would, of course, have encouraged sympathy away from the general, to the particular suffering mother.
10. Hauptmann, G. Die Weber, Act II pp 105-6
11. Ibid., Act V p 185. Similarly in Weavers' March: 'Se haben Bohnenstange und Stichliche und Hagen.' ['They've got beanpoles and staves and hoes.'] (Act V p 172).
12. Kollwitz, K. Tagebuecher, p 483. Entry of October 1920.
13. The impression of numbers is conveyed largely through audible sounds from off-stage, for example: 'Man hoert das Weberlied vielhunderstimmig und in naechster Naehe gesungen; es klingt wie ein dumpfes, monotones Wehklagen' ['The Weaver Song can be heard right nearby: sung by many hundred voices, it sounds like a dull, monotone lament'] (Act V p 176), or through third-party reports: 'Das sind nun nicht bloss junge Leute, da laufen auch alte, gesetzte Weber in Masse mit. Menschen, die ich lange Jahre fuer hoechst ehrenwert und gottesfuerchtig gehalten habe, sie laufen mit...' ['It is not just young men but also old, dignified weavers who accompany the masses, men

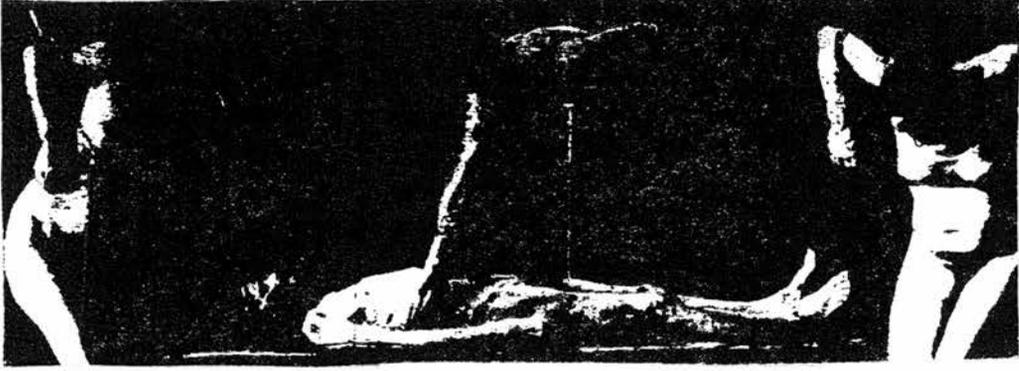
- whom I have taken for years to be the most honourable and God-fearing of men, who walk along with...'] (Act IV p 148). The only scene in which the rebelling weavers appear en masse is in the storming of the factory owner's (Dreissiger's) house and even then it is a token few who actually appear on the stage.
14. Illustrated London News was, along with Graphic, one of England's most important weeklies in which much of the foremost of England's graphic work was printed. Weavers' March bears a remarkable resemblance to this print and it is not unlikely that Kollwitz could have seen it, particularly if she searched out the 1871 copies to see how failed revolutions had been depicted.
 15. The Berliner Boersen-Courier, issue 28 February 1893, saw the conclusion of Hauptmann's play in similar terms. The fifth act, '...gipfelt in der Prachtfigur des alten Hilse und mit packenden Zuegen bald darstelly und bald ahnen laesst, wie der wuetend emporgeschwollene Storm sinken wird, und ebben, schon im Moment scheinbaren Siegen.' ['...climaxed in the grand figure of Old Hilse and with gripping strokes soon depicted, soon intimated, how the furious, incensed storm will sink and ebb even in the very moment of seeming victory.'] (qtd Kindermann, H. Op.cit., VII, p 52)
 16. Hauptmann, G. Op.cit., Act IV p 148
 17. Zimmermann, A. Bluete und Verfall des Leinen-Gewerbes in Schlesien. It is not unlikely that Kollwitz too referred to Zimmermann for her Weaver Uprising cycle, as she acknowledged she did for her second series, Peasants' War.

SYMBOLISM AND ALLEGORY IN KOLLWITZ'S WORKS

The following chapter will consider Kollwitz's move towards an art conceived in the imagination and realised through monumental, isolated figures abstracted from their backgrounds. To suggest, however, that Kollwitz's is a straightforward development away from the specific and realistic, towards the generic and universal is to provide a simplistic picture which ignores other dominant features of her work, in particular, her recurrent use of traditional symbol and allegory. Although such works are more concerned with the general than with the particular, and in this sense look to embody the universal, they are not fulfilling the same purpose as, for example, Kollwitz's late sculptures, nor are they confined to her later years. They represent a separate strain of her oeuvre, which must be considered in its own right.

It will be seen that the majority of these works are concerned with abstract ideas for which no naturalistic representation is possible; they are usually utopian ideals linked to the idea of the perfect state: Justice, Freedom, Mercy and so on. In choosing to depict these embodiments of perfection, and in the manner she chooses, Kollwitz shows that same tendency of many of her contemporaries to depict the ideal, often through allegory and symbolism.

The following few paragraphs should be seen as something



Ill. 21

From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People (K29) 1896

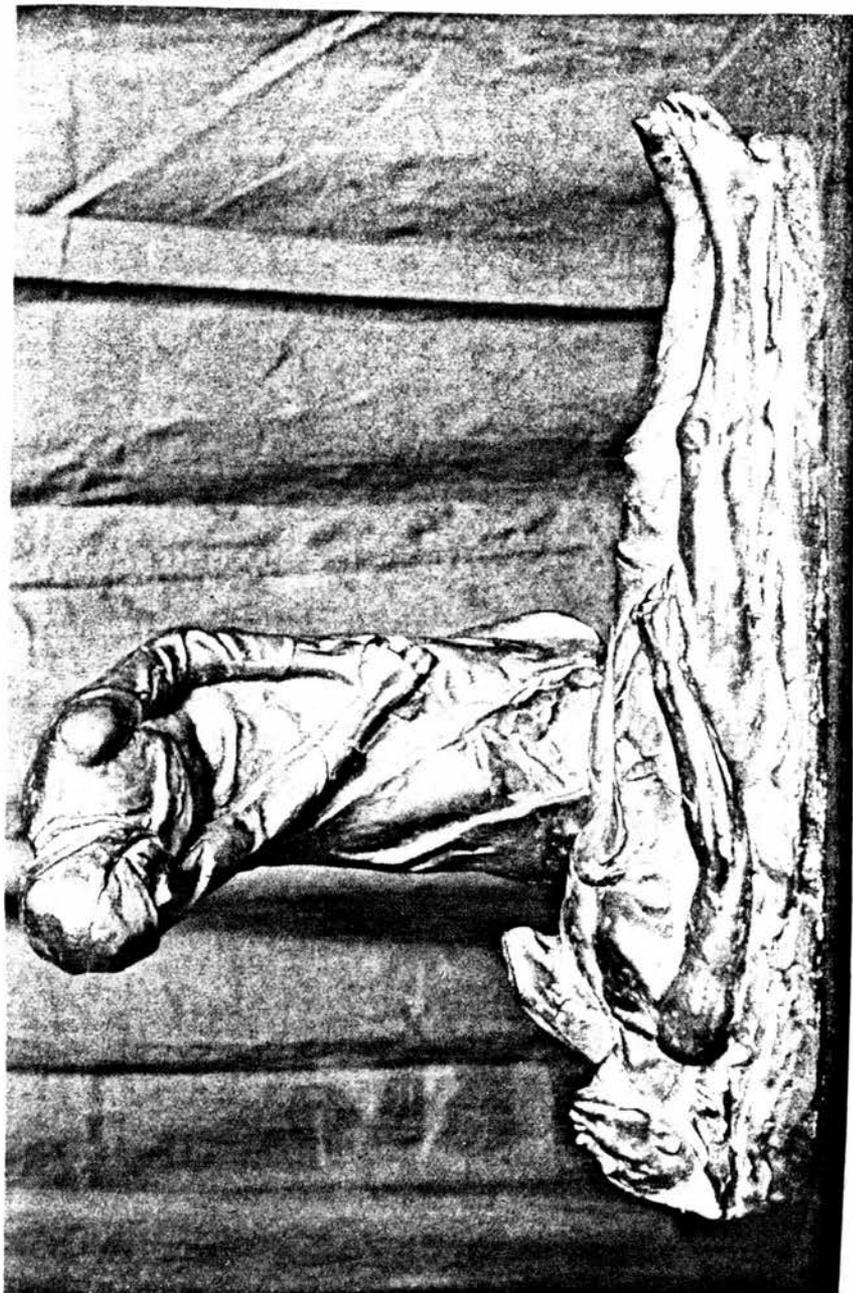


Ill. 22

MAX KLINGER Pieta with John 1890
National Gallery, Dresden

of a codicil to the last chapter for they concern the image From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People (Ill.21) which was intended by Kollwitz to be the seventh and concluding image to the Weaver Uprising cycle. In its radically different approach it stands apart from the remainder of this cycle and is more at home in a chapter concerned with Kollwitz's symbolic and allegoric images. It will naturally, however, be treated also within the context of the Weaver Uprising cycle.

From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People is conceived in a highly traditional triptych form with an equally traditional Lamentation configuration (albeit with fewer figures) forming the central image. The horizontal Christ figure in profile is ultimately derived from Holbein's painting of the dead Christ enclosed in a coffin-like predella. Probably more recent sources of inspiration for Kollwitz's conception are two images by artists she very much admired, Klinger and Meunier. Klinger's Pieta with John (Ill.22) depicts the traditional Mother of Christ mourning her crucified son. With forms kept simple and monumentalized against a low horizon and excess detail omitted, attention is directed upon the emotions of the figures and their relationship to one another. By giving John the features of Beethoven, Klinger is stating that the experience of the Passion - the suffering of an innocent victim and its resultant grief - is not uniquely Christ's but endured by mortals too. This is not only a further



III. 23

CONSTANTIN MEUNIER Victim of Firedamp, Meunier-Museum, Brussels

example of that desire already seen in Klinger's March Days (Ill.11) and in Kollwitz's Carmagnole (Ill.10), to make the historical of contemporary relevance, but is also a raising up of suffering to a holy and selfless state.

This intention is linked more specifically with 'the People' or proletariat in Meunier's Victim of Firedamp (Ill.23), a full-relief statue in bronze of 1893, in which he takes the Pieta grouping and endows it with social significance. Meunier concerned himself with workers and peasants and their conditions of living, and his art depicts many scenes from the lives of the poor. The terrible conditions of the mineworkers¹ are the background to this scene which is of a miner killed by an explosion in a mine with sub-standard safety measures. The dead miner is represented, significantly, as the crucified Christ, innocent sacrificial victim. This pictorial equation of the poor and oppressed with Christ is at the core of Kollwitz's own image.

From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People is a highly symbolic reinterpretation of the Pieta image, although the full power of the symbols Kollwitz has not harnessed. She calls upon theology and allegory without elucidating the intention of her references. For instance, the prostrate figure is actually Christ - identified by his thorns and wounds - and not, as in Meunier's sculpture, a figure comparable to Christ. Kollwitz's title (taken from

Jeremiah) would seem to proclaim that the downtrodden, suffering people are the crucified Christ, although in exactly what manner remains uncertain. She could be maintaining that the oppressed 'Volk' are innocent victims as Christ was, or suggesting more significantly that the 'Volk' attain, through their suffering, a state of purity and sinlessness akin to Christ's. She could even be suggesting that the Poor 'laying down' their lives for a system is a sacrifice no less significant than Christ's: a conception with weighty theological implications. The figure of Justice is similarly ambiguous. Although there is no question of her being Mary - her upright stance and didactic gesture are alien to the iconographic scheme in which Christ's mother supports and mourns her dead son - her actual purpose is unclear. Is her's a proclamation that Justice shall triumph and the Downtrodden will be avenged, or that Justice exists in the state of grace attained by the 'Volk' through their persecution?

Confusion of meaning extends to the flanking figures: although they are an obvious allusion to the two thieves crucified with Christ there is no suggestion of one being Good and one Bad, albeit one does twist around to look at Christ whilst the other is preoccupied with her own suffering. Although the purpose of Kollwitz's two figures might be to indicate the innocence even of those condemned as criminals by temporal systems of justice, she has not succeeded in making clear her meaning. It is one of the

great dangers of allegory that lofty sentiments can be suggested (often through reference to iconographic traditions in which certain schemes or figures have established significance), but unless the exact message of the work is thought through, the image is often no more than a confused collection of ideas, as is the case here.

Kollwitz's own understanding of, or belief in, the concepts she portrays does much to explain the print's hazy message. The sentiments are all ideal - unconditional love (Christ's), Justice, purposeful Sacrifice - but ones whose existence Kollwitz refers to in her diaries and letters with grave doubt. She cannot bring herself to believe in Utopia, although the desire to, gives rise to images such as these. To express these ideas at all, she is drawn into the realm of the overtly symbolic and allegoric, leaping from the earthbound to the metaphysical. Whereas she can express in basically naturalistic terms those states she has experience of and which she believes in (suffering, poverty, determinism), her doubts in the religious and humanistic absolutes she sometimes portrays are betrayed by a lack of conviction in the images themselves.

The various treatment of the three 'panels' and the discrepancies between them bear witness to Kollwitz's disbelief in the ideal world she is creating. The central forms are as if hewn from wood, with light revealing many-planed surfaces alien to the human body. The carved nature

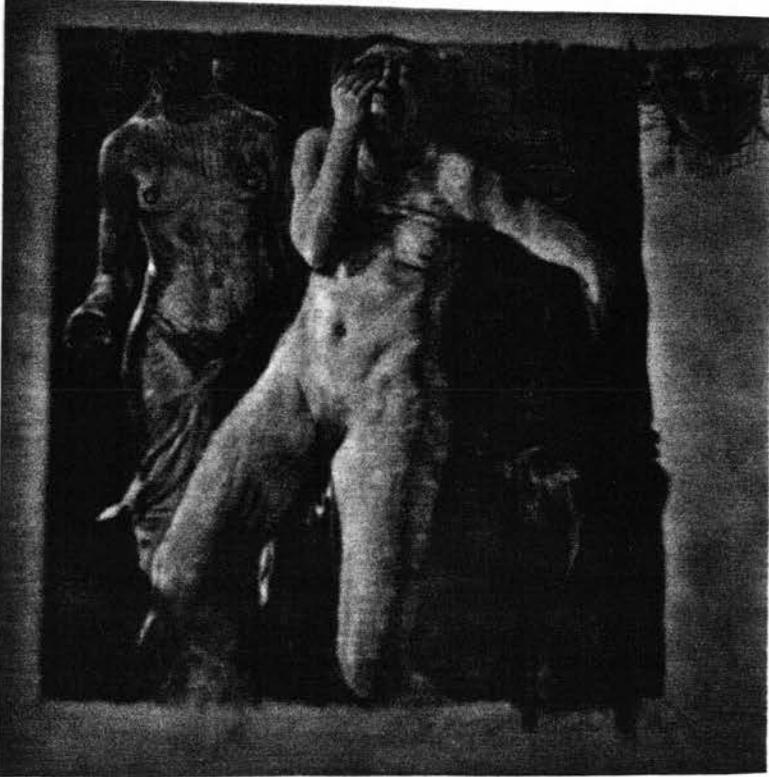
of the two central figures with their stiff poses, the flat wash background blocking recession, and the relatively sparse use of shadow, separate this panel from the two outer ones which bear a far closer reference to reality. In the latter, flesh is smooth, light is used to model form, and muscle and weight are suggested: the two bound figures are a part of the known world of reality, set apart from the central image. (One even turns, with the viewer, to view the central configuration, stressing the discrepancy in spatial situation.) Consciously or unconsciously Kollwitz is acknowledging her disbelief that those concepts expressed in the central panel have a place in the real world.

Accordingly, it is useful to refer back to Kollwitz's source of inspiration, Hauptmann's The Weavers, to gain an understanding of Kollwitz's introduction of this allegorical note into her earthbound Weaver Uprising cycle. The ending of Hauptmann's play is strangely puzzling for a religious note is introduced, the meaning of which is far from clear; Old Hilse alone is seen to die on-stage, he who has preached all along a faith in God and an acceptance of man's earthly lot for sake of his heavenly reward. Hauptmann's response to Old Hilse's attitude is ambiguous: that he is advocating this philosophy is not borne out by the remainder of the play in which the suffering of the weavers is portrayed not as inevitable, but as a result of the workings of man (both intentional

and indirect). Hauptmann does not endorse, any more than Zola would, a policy of laissez-faire on the part of the powerful, and meek acceptance on the part of the poor; both Zola's and Hauptmann's works are instructions against injustice. Whatever its purpose, the inclusion of Old Hilde introduces a more theological and philosophical note than is contained in the remainder of the play.

Its inclusion seems to have encouraged Kollwitz to believe she too needed to add a more obviously universal and philosophical conclusion to her cycle; that it was insufficient to present the injustice and suffering of Need and Death without confronting the problem of why such injustice and suffering be allowed. Kollwitz's diaries reveal her theological uncertainty, and her attempt to provide an answer in From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People is therefore a contrived optimism which lacks conviction. What she is offering is heavenly compensation for the innocent victims of earthly injustice. Spiritual belief is not, however, advocated as a source of consolation, for it is not compassion and comfort which are offered but an impartial, rigorous justice.

As Hauptmann's last scene adds an uncomfortable note to the naturalistic tenor of the play, so Kollwitz's image removes the unity which draws the Weaver Uprising cycle to its natural conclusion. Julius Elias, a well-esteemed art-critic to whom Kollwitz showed the cycle before exhibiting,



Ill. 24

Life: left-hand section (N158) 1900
Käthe-Kollwitz-Museum, Cologne

persuaded her that From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People belonged to a tradition out of keeping with the remainder of the images,

...es der Eigenart des Gesamtauffassung ein gelehrtes und schemenhaftes Klingerisches Schwanzlein anhaenge.

[The peculiar conception of the whole is an erudite and unreal Klingerish emulation.]²

The image, although rejected as a finale for the Weaver Uprising cycle, was resurrected as a drawing entitled Life (Ill.24) in 1900, and then as a lithograph entitled Downtrodden (Ill.25). The central figural group is very similar to From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People and exact meaning is again elusive. The iconography retains its references, but it is indicative of the subjective interpretation of this type of allegory that Schneede finds room to interpret it as such:

Liegend, das Volk, in die Wunde greifend das Leben; (links..Versuchung und Leid, rechts Arbeitslosigkeit).

[...lying prostrate is the People, reaching into the wound is Life (left is temptation and suffering, right is unemployment).]³

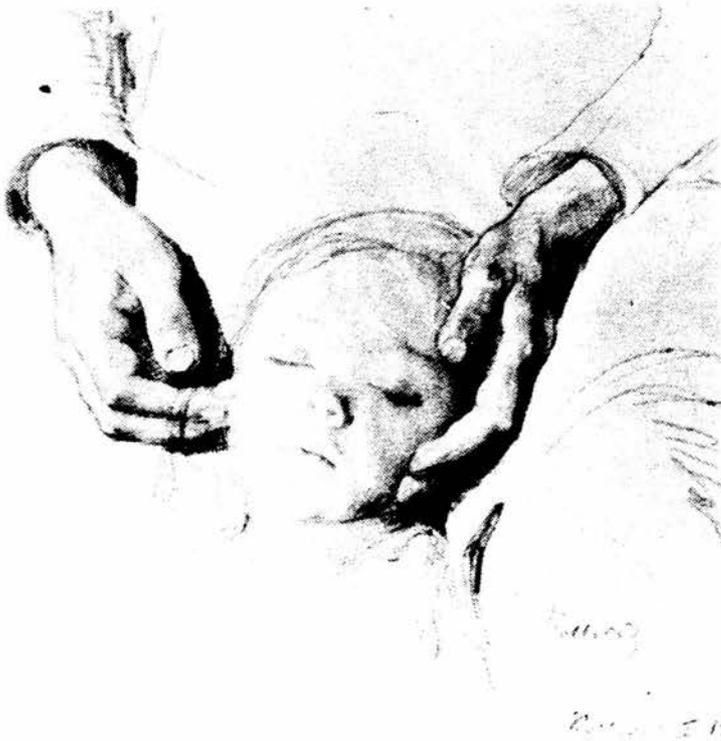
Downtrodden retains much in common with the original image although the thieves are now more particular examples of 'the Volk' and their manner of suffering is made more explicit. Although social problems such as poverty and unemployment are not specifically identified they are inferred, and the consequences are made manifest: self-imposed or self-inflicted death.

It is a notable feature of both From Many Wounds You Bleed,



Ill. 25

Downtrodden (K48) 1900



Ill. 25a

Drawing for Downtrodden (N162) 1900
Kaethe-Kollwitz-Museum, West Berlin

O My People and Downtrodden that preliminary drawings are more numerous for those areas of the composition rooted in the natural world - in both cases the 'wings' of the triptych. For these examples Kollwitz used life models, such as her son Peter in the sketch Child's Head in the Hands of a Mother (Ill.25a), particularly lovingly drawn, detail by detail, from life. Its convincing nature lies in the fact that, although the noose was not actually present in Kollwitz's studio its shadow, or death through poverty, entered her house daily in the shape of poor patients and models. The scene was constructed in her mind, but so near to reality that she could believe in the plight of the needy as she executed her preliminary drawings. For the central images, on the other hand, conceived in a different realm, preliminary sketches are rare, and cursorary in execution.

Downtrodden reveals even more markedly than From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People the varying degrees of success in Kollwitz's methods of presenting concepts of sacrifice and collective suffering. The idea of collective suffering she certainly believed in - it is the raison d'etre of From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People, Life and Downtrodden (as well as a large part of the remainder of Kollwitz's oeuvre), but she is not convincing when she depicts them as lofty scenes set apart from reality. In suggesting the higher nature of suffering, Kollwitz creates static two-figural images in which the horizontal and



Ill. 26

Uprising (K44) 1899



Ill. 27

MAX KLINGER Shame, A Love Opus X 1887

vertical axes are strongly emphasized. The artificial identity of the figures - Life and the People, or Justice and the People, or Justice and the Downtrodden - are as forced as are their means of construction. Her artistically convincing images are those which, without particularizing, express the individual applications of life and suicide, the hunted despair of a mother and father as they prepare to hang a child they cannot afford to keep.

Those of Kollwitz's images which do contain such elements of non-naturalism might not number amongst her greatest, but they certainly number amongst her most interesting. They often reveal much more of her thought processes and her life-philosophies than do many of her more naturalistic works. This is certainly true of Uprising, the print which sowed the seed for the creation of the Peasants' Revolt cycle.

Kollwitz's fundamental conception of Uprising (Ill.26) was as an allegoric image with the raised castle on the hill symbolizing the power, dominance and seeming invulnerability of the nobility; the blazing colours (of the first states) and the burning castle indicating the passion and fury of the rebellion; and the flying figure representing the figure of Victory, lighting her brand from the conquered citadel and spurring the peasants on.

The use of allegorical metaphors such as Victory are part

of an optimistic ideational tradition, for they suggest the linking of earthly struggles with eternal, uncompromised values such as Victory, Justice, Righteousness and so on. According to artistic tradition such symbols are permanent and uncompromising and therefore used only in instances of indisputable success. Had, for example, the French Revolution failed, Delacroix could not have allowed the figure of Liberty to fly above the revolutionaries. In Uprising as it stands, the flying figure of Victory is absolute, signifying success. She is not just a figment of the peasants' hopes⁴: presented in bold, decisive lines in full keeping with a traditional iconographic programme, there is no doubt that 'victory' does actually abound. Here Kollwitz shows herself tempted to partake in this tradition of ideals and absolutes, with Victory justly fighting on the side of the oppressed. The reality of history is less straightforward, however, and in the context of the Peasants' Revolt cycle it is defeat not victory which is the ultimate outcome of the rebellion. Had the false absolutes proffered in Uprising been retained in the cycle, they would have been exposed in the final image of defeat. The replacement of Uprising with Outbreak (Ill.37) removes the element of allegory and substitutes Black Anna for Victory. Thus is reinstated the idea of a temporary victory: force and conviction spur the peasants on heedless, but no burning citadel and no symbols of victory promise that the success will be enduring. With the change, Kollwitz succeeds in suppressing her desire to



Ill. 28

Death (K35) 1897



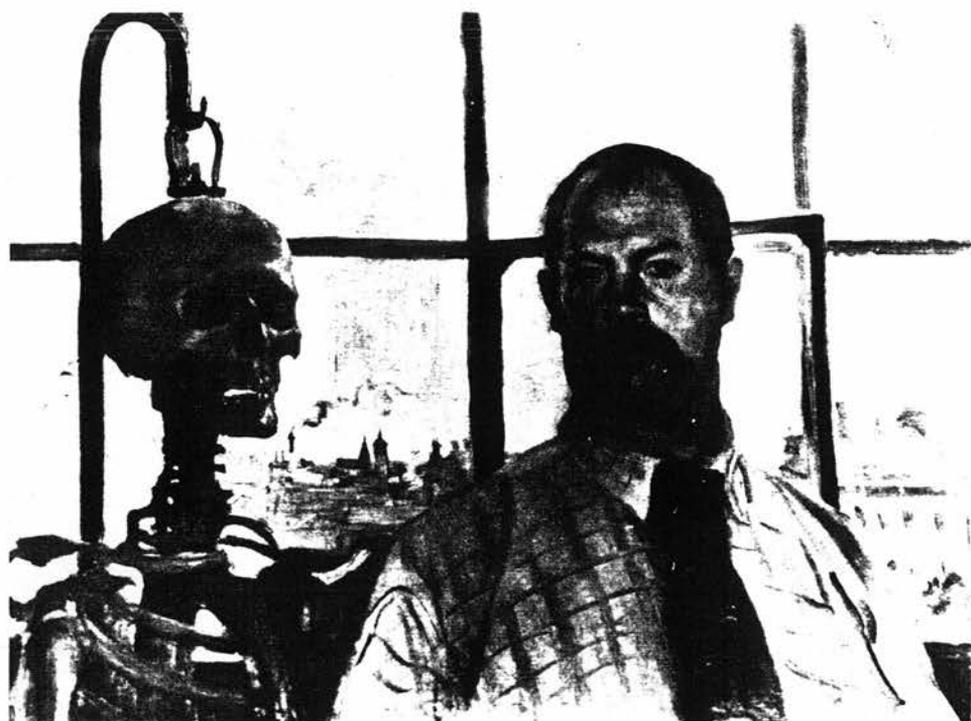
Ill. 28a

Hans with Candle (N115) 1897

present a happier prospect, a chimera at odds with historical fact.

Those of Kollwitz's works which employ allegory and symbolism are those which advocate a world governed by a righteous Law. Ultimately, however, it is not a belief which Kollwitz can fully adopt - her diary reveals no consoling belief in any philosophical, political, or religious system (although certain tenets of socialism and Christianity she does adhere to) and, in certain cases such as Uprising, she surrenders such an approach, replacing it with an image more rooted in reality.

Another non-naturalistic tradition with which Kollwitz allies herself is the age-old vanitas tradition in which invisible death assumes the unmistakable form of a skeleton.⁵ Death (Ill.28) is a notable work in her oeuvre, however, for its combination of blatant allegory with subtle naturalistic symbolism. Although an earlier study for Death (N137) indicates that Kollwitz has lessened the fanciful aspect of the image by reducing the figure of Death from an overpowering skeleton to a skull and hand in the final version, it is nevertheless the predominant element. Other elements of the print are far more subtle in their attempt to convey a deeper meaning. The child staring into the flame, for instance, belongs to another vanitas tradition, but Kollwitz's version is so naturalistically based (it is drawn from life with her son



Ill. 29

LOVIS CORINTH Self-Portrait with Skeleton 1896
Neue Pinakothek, Munich



Ill. 30

EDVARD MUNCH Death at the Rudder 1893
Munch-Museum, Oslo

Hans as model (N115)) that allegory is heavily disguised. Similarly, she introduces the confusion of the young boy's arm with that of the skeleton and thereby suggests his inextricable link with death, far less blatant than the pawing gesture with which Death beckons the boy's mother. Ahlers-Hesterman has written of this image,

Diese wundervoll gefuehlte und innerlich erschaute Bewegung der Sterbenden ist der erfuellende Inhalt des Bildes; es haette der Verdeutlichung von Totenkopf- und hand nicht bedurft.

[This wonderfully sensitive and inwardly conceived movement of the dying forms the entire message of the work; it did not need the clarification of the skull and skeletal hand.]⁶

This is true, but more notable is the fact that Kollwitz felt it a valid element to include, although it strays so far from realism. In her later works, the presence of a skeleton as the embodiment of Death becomes one of the standard images of her works.

In Kollwitz's portraiture and self-portraiture there is no trace of this symbolism and allegory. Despite her preoccupation with death, she does not partake of the tradition linking self-portraiture with death in the obvious vanitas tradition of self and skeleton. She certainly does not baulk from ageing and death - her last self-portraits are amongst the most courageous and honest in art - but they contain no elements foreign to reality. The very nature of self-portraiture as a direct confrontation between the artist and the artistic process, via the mirror, makes it more difficult in this genre to

Ill. 31

Woman with Orange (K56)
1901



Ill. 32

Pregnant Woman (K108)
1910



enter into the realms of fantasy and imagination, or to disguise the image in metaphors of symbolism and allegory.

In portraiture as well, the constraint of the subject's real presence was, literally, ever before Kollwitz's eyes, acting as a constant reminder of her training in drawing from the model, from life itself. Where all other genres allowed Kollwitz a certain flexibility in approach, in portraiture alone she could not escape from the dictates of naturalism. There is only one image, and that really too indistinct to be called a portrait, which seems to offer some hidden mystery. This image is the Woman with Orange of 1901 (Ill.31). It is a markedly upright format, filled by a young woman who holds a ripe orange glowing from the light cast on it by the background lamp. Both the fruit and the warm light seem to suggest profound meaning, some form of symbolism, but whatever those meanings might be, they remain obscure. The undeniable influence here of the Jugendstil (particularly apparent in the monogrammed signature and in the curling lines between the girl and the lamp), makes it very likely that elements such as the orange are incorporated for the sake of decoration. This is so rare a feature of Kollwitz's art, however, that one acquainted with her oeuvre seeks to discover in Woman with Orange something of the obscure symbolism apparent in Downtrodden, and From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People, approaching it on a serious level which its content does not accord.

In Kollwitz's work may be found a second kind of symbolism, very different to the overt form evident in From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People. This form of symbolism is often called natural symbolism wherein objects from life are endowed with a deeper significance than they naturally possess. There are numerous examples of this in the Weaver Uprising cycle, amongst them the unbreachable iron gate of Storm (Ill.17) which represents the status quo, the clock which is present in both Need (Ill.16) and End (Ill.20), suggesting non-change, and the double presence of mother and child in Need which asserts the repetitive nature of the cycle. To an artist such as Kollwitz, comfortable in naturalistic representation, the use of this form of symbolism is far less strained than the self-conscious images previously discussed. It was a common tool used by naturalistic writers and dramatists; Sprinchorn in his article on naturalistic theatre (concentrating upon Zola, Hauptmann and Ibsen) describes the importance of such symbols:

They function as symbols in so far as they represent something intangible or invisible, an idea or a state of mind. Zola's method consists in giving these symbols, these dominant images, an enormous suggestive power by endowing them with a life of their own, larger than the life of the characters in the novels. In Germinal the mine gathers to itself all those forces which are undermining capitalist society.⁷

Comparable symbols in Kollwitz's oeuvre are the loom in the Weaver Uprising cycle and the scythe in Whetting the Scythe (Ill.36) although the latter is presented so subtly as a

weapon rather than a tool that its symbolic quality becomes far less obvious than Zola's mine.

1. Subject, too, of Zola's Germinal.
2. Julias Elias, Op.cit. p 548
3. Schneede, U.W. Op.cit., p 40
4. As for instance Klinger's taunting figure in Shame (Ill.27) could rightly be interpreted as a fabrication of the pregnant girl's imagination, born through her humiliation and fear of mockery. In this case such an interpretation is made possible by the ambiguous form of the figure which inhabits a half-world between reality and non-reality.
5. In Germany the Dance of Death had recently been reinterpreted by Rethel; Boecklin's Self-Portrait with Skeleton (1872) and Corinth's Self-Portrait with Skeleton (Ill.29, 1916), Klinger's Death Peeing (c.1900) and From Death cycles (1889 and 1898) and Munch's Death at the Rudder (Ill.30, 1893) were all part of the same tradition.
6. F. Ahlers-Hestermann (introduction) in Der Weberaufstand, Stuttgart 1960
7. Sprinchorn, E. Op.cit., p 113

TOWARDS THE UNIVERSAL - KOLLWITZ'S PEASANTS' REVOLT CYCLE

The second of Kollwitz's major cycles, Peasants' Revolt¹, was conceived over a nine-year period, 1899 - 1908, being published in the latter year. In many ways less cohesive as a cycle than the Weaver Uprising, the Peasants' Revolt is an interesting record of Kollwitz's movement, already seen in Carmagnole, towards monumental figures conceived in the imagination. There is a similarity of thematic construction between Kollwitz's two cycles - both explore how injustices imposed upon the lower strata of society are initially tolerated rather than rebelled against, with re-suppression presenting itself as the inevitable conclusion. Events in the second series mirror almost exactly those of the first; this basic repetition of subject matter makes all the more interesting the differences in approach between the two series, particularly in compositional construction.

The Peasants' Revolt had a very different birth to Kollwitz's first cycle; this bears upon the nature of its construction and images. The passionate impetus which lay at the heart of Weaver Uprising was not repeated, almost certainly due to the fact that it was commissioned and not spontaneously conceived.² Kollwitz's initial enthusiasm was for Uprising (Ill.26) then, after reading about Black Anna, for Outbreak (Ill.37). When asked to create an entire cycle it seems likely that she consciously modelled

it on her successful Weaver Uprising cycle, realising that events in both instances were similar. The lack of burning vocation, coupled with the long time-span over which the cycle was composed, go far to explain the looser construction of the Peasants' Revolt cycle, and its greater concentration upon the potential of each image as a free-standing entity rather than one unit in a chain of events. An impression of continuum is less dominant in the Peasants' Revolt than in the Weaver Uprising cycle. The very chronology of the former's creation suggests that, in Kollwitz's mind, it was more a set of images loosely linked than a cycle of seven prints bound inexorably with each other.³

Furthermore, the relation of the 1522-25 Peasants' Rebellion - the subject of the Peasants' Revolt cycle - was not as keenly pertinent to her own time as was the Silesian weavers' revolt. Its significance to German history was certainly not negligible: it is regarded by many socialist historians as an early German bourgeois revolution such as Marx had longed to see in his own time.

Although celebration of this event in Germany's history was shared by Kollwitz, who would have regarded it as a blow against the ruling classes, this is of a more abstract political relevance to her own time than the concrete needs of the weavers whose forerunners were the rebels of 1844. On the contrary, the position of the peasants in the early

twentieth century was very different to what it had been at the time of the sixteenth century rebellions.⁴

Until the end of the eighteenth century, feudal demands upon the peasantry had been heavy. Those who had property usually gave 2 to 3 out of 7 days' labour on their lords' lands; those without often gave 4 to 5, sometimes even 6 or 7 days' labour. Included in the peasants' duties were the upkeep of draught animals, the upkeep of the animals' quarters, the lodging, board and pay of farmhands. Often payment in kind was expected as well. Means of subsistence varied but living was usually harsh, with peasants gaining little time from their feudal duties to tend to their own farming concerns. Resistance was not unknown, with peasants often refusing to comply when their lords stepped outside the feudal law, and courtcases were not uncommon, but the peasants' recourse to justice was limited.

Around 1794, discussion of agrarian reform became earnest, and in 1799 reforms were implemented. 1807 saw the emancipation of the serfs, with the latter being granted the right to buy their land. This gave rise to wealthier peasants buying up neighbours' plots, and acquiring greater wealth and status in the countryside. They became Germany's equivalent of the kulaks. With the disbanding of the feudal system and the growth in capitalism, waged labourers became the new rural commodity, many poorer peasants now being employed by their wealthier

counterparts. Itinerant workers were often drawn to the towns where the industrial revolution seemed to promise a greater chance of employment. Thus by the end of the nineteenth century, the term 'peasant' was somewhat anachronistic and the classification of 'the peasantry' as one body of people certainly more difficult. There were, doubtless still peasants oppressed and suffering injustices, as in the sixteenth century, but the causes of that suffering and injustice were now generally connected with new problems of industrialization, mechanisation, urban growth, and a dramatic population rise.

The subject's particular relevance to Kollwitz's own day might therefore be less obvious than the Weaver Uprising cycle's, but she is careful to make its relevance apparent. She includes no historical detail in any of these images which renders the cycle applicable only to the sixteenth century rebellion, and her figures are more generalised than are those in the Weaver Uprising cycle. What she wishes to express in her Peasants' Revolt cycle is the idea of universal suffering: for her, historical oppression of the serfs was merely one example of all forms of social oppression, and her cycle is an indictment of the larger evil.

The cycle's general mien is less pessimistic than that of the Weaver Uprising cycle; almost certainly due to the general belief that the Peasants' Rebellion had been a

turning point in the history of the lower classes, marking a small step along the road to the triumphing of socialist ideals. The possibility that History might, after all, be a progression, seemed to be borne out by the break up of the feudal system with its inherent inequalities. A comparison, for instance, of Uprising (Ill.26) with Weavers' March (Ill.18) - the corresponding image in the Weaver Uprising cycle - suggests a far more victorious element in the former. The promise of success offered in Uprising had, of necessity, to be abandoned, as we have seen, but its replacement, Outbreak (Ill.37), is not a pessimistic image. The earthy figure of Black Anna is nothing short of inspiring. The positive nature of the image is conveyed by the force of unleashed emotion following gross and prolonged injustice, and the potency of the peasants' sentiments, in stark contrast to the mechanical motions of the weavers in Weavers' March. The more overt actions of the figures in Uprising - aggressive gestures of militance, the brandishing of a flag - have become individually less apparent in Outbreak; they have been distilled into the pictorial formation of a spearhead of roaring, gnashing peasants intent upon vengeance. For the space of one image it appears that they might, indeed, prove to be conquerors. The final image, Prisoners (Ill.33), is certainly more optimistic than End, for the resolution of the revolution is not death but re-suppression. The density of the figures conveys a sense, not of annihilation, but of uncrushed forces unnaturally



III. 33

Prisoners (K98) 1908

restrained, ready to break loose from their flimsy bonds of rope when the moment is once again ripe. In a court case being fought between lord and peasants over feudal dues in eighteenth century Brandenburg-Prussia, the judge declared:

It does no good to try and hold these stormy people to their obligations by imprisoning them. They just sit in jail for a while, letting their farms go to ruin, and then they carry on with their insubordination as before. And there is no end of this in sight.⁵

Since those peasant wars, the feudal system had been abolished and the peasants had gained some degree of liberation; this might well account for the portents of future success intimated in Prisoners. The cycle certainly suggests a sense of the inevitable renewal of insurgence.

There is a significant break between the Peasants' Revolt cycle and Kollwitz's earliest work, signalled by her vehement denial of a literary basis for this cycle. She stresses that Zimmermann's text was important only in providing her with the figure of Black Anna in Outbreak:

Damals las ich den Zimmermannschen Bauernkrieg, und da wurde von der 'Schwarzen Anna' erzahlt, einer Baeuerin, die die Bauern angetrieben hat. Ich machte nun das grosse Blatt mit dem aufbrechenden Bauernhaufen. Auf diese hin bekam ich den Auftrag zum Zyklus. Alles schloss sich an dies schon fertige Blatt an.

[Then I read Zimmermann's Peasant Wars in which the story of Black Anna was told, a peasant woman who drove the peasants on. Now I created the big print of the rebelling masses and on the strength of this I won the commission for the cycle. Everything followed on from this one completed image.]⁶

This is a firm declaration of independence from literary-

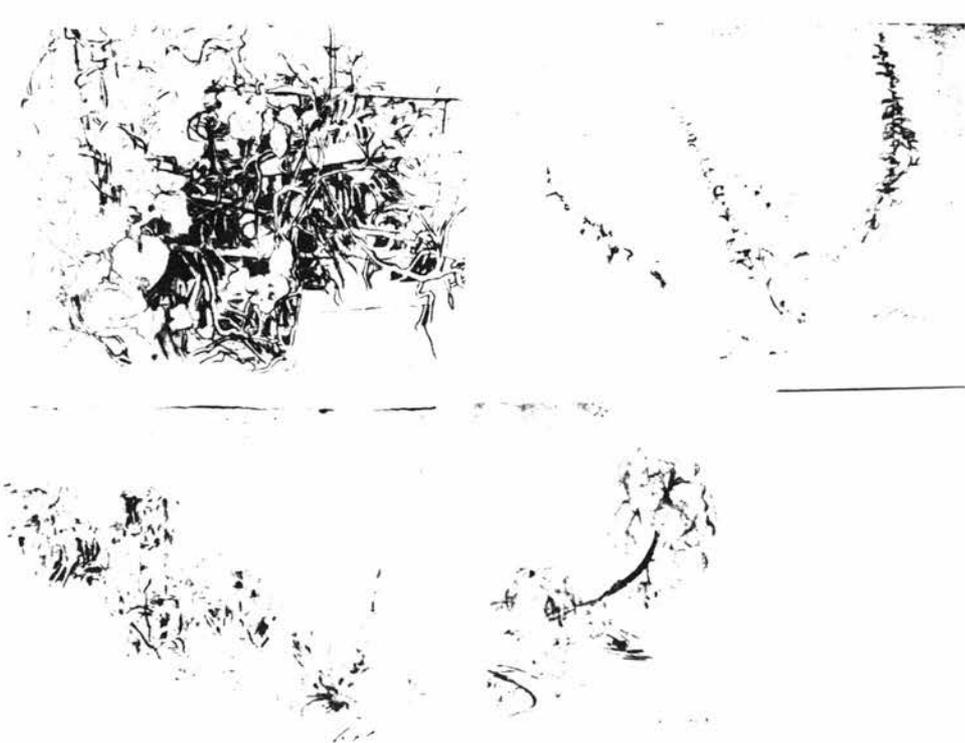
inspired sources. Implicit is a recognition of the dangerously fine line separating the use of literature as a source of inspiration for visual art, and the production of mere illustrations for that literature. Her statement is a rejection of her own earlier mode of narrative works of which she later wrote so disparagingly. (Although it should be clear by now that few of Kollwitz's works can justly be labelled 'narrative' or 'illustrative'.) And Kollwitz is partially justified in seeing her Peasants' Revolt cycle as heralding a new period in her art; tendencies such as a reduction of background to a bare minimum, and the move towards images of the single figure, or pairs of figures, each self-contained, becomes the dominant compositional arrangement of her later works. This is not, however, uniformly true of the images in the Peasants' Revolt cycle: Kollwitz constructs her image according to its function within the cycle, a flexibility which speaks of great artistic sensitivity. Even within a single image, stylistic extremes can be juxtaposed, as in Raped (Ill.34).

Raped uses the theme of sexual violation to build upon the sense of oppression and injustice initiated in the first print, Ploughmen (here the injustice is the power of the feudal lord to violate his serfs according to his own pleasure), and uses both naturalism and imagination to make fully effective the image. The passage of vegetation is the most naturalistic in the entire cycle: related drawings



Ill. 34

Raped (K97) 1907



Ill. 34a

Drawings for Raped (N240-3) 1907

(e.g. Ill.34a) indicate that particular plant specimens were chosen, and observed with an eye worthy of a botanist. With its detailed emphasis on background setting and environment, it looks back to Kollwitz's earlier works although it dates to 1907.

There is also present a tendency to manipulate forms and angles of vision, introducing a very non-naturalistic element. The girl's figure, for instance, is seen from such an angle that the eye appraises it initially as a series of disparate shapes before succeeding in reappraising it as a human figure; this initial tendency is encouraged by the abstract aspect of the heavy black triangular shadow on the left hand side. Even the drawing of flora with a section of fence (Ill.34a) reveals an interest in the abstract shapes formed by line.

Although these elements of abstraction and detailed naturalism are at opposite ends of the pictorial spectrum, they are both intended to serve the meaning and impact of the image: the dramatic angle of vision leads the eye to focus immediately upon the girl's unnaturally splayed legs, and thus upon her brutally ravished state; in the fourth state the triangular shadow is made even more emphatic, emphasizing the direction of focus; the meticulous depiction of the vegetation is intended to prevent the image from becoming too abstracted from reality.

It is interesting to note how Kollwitz uses the same artistic techniques in Carmagnole (Ill.10) to serve different ends. A passage comparable to the passage of rigorously observed vegetation is the architectural element in Carmagnole, where it is used, as has been said, to set an historical event within contemporary Germany. By contrast, the riotous vegetation in Raped is intended to emphasize the wild side of nature, in a sense an instance of Pathetic Fallacy wherein nature takes on the wild, unkempt, abandoned aspect which has proved the overriding component of man's nature in this instance, for it is brute lust and uncontrolled urges which have led to this act of human violation. It is a further example of Kollwitz's constant questioning of her artistic methods and their suitability to her particular aims. In Raped, there is not, however, so clear a unity between artistic intention and artistic method as is to be found in Carmagnole. The combination of distorted natural forms and keen observation from nature creates a somewhat uneasy juxtaposition of styles.

A growing preoccupation with the power of shapes in themselves - the effect visible lines may produce upon the human mind - is most notable in Ploughmen (Ill.35), as a close study of the image's process of construction will reveal. There is no rigorous theory such as Seurat's behind it; rather by trial and error Kollwitz builds up sets of lines which best conjure up a sense of fatigue,



Ill. 35

Ploughmen (K94) 1906



Ill. 35a

Oil sketch for Ploughmen (N196) c.1902
Akademie der Kuenste, West Germany

sorrow, despair. What is being evidenced here is a move away from expression through situation and environment, and a move towards expression through pure form, whether in single figures or in groups of figures. End (Ill.20), for example, from the Weaver Uprising cycle, displays elements of this new development, particularly in the female figure representing resignation and sorrow without despair; in this image there is, however, a far greater degree of emphasis on the surrounding settings. The ploughers, on the other hand, have been almost extracted from their setting, and it is through the use of contour instead that expression is now conveyed. Although not all of Kollwitz's subsequent images will reveal these traits, Ploughmen indicates that her visual images are turning more towards the imagination, the inner world, and drawing less upon the exact world of reality.

The first sketch, an oil sketch (Ill.35a), has a very high viewpoint which causes the figures of ploughmen and woman to be contained well below the horizon. Although some sense of physical effort and strain is conveyed, this is to a large degree swamped by the figures' and machine's relatively small size against an extensive field. Two lithographs of 1902 indicate certain readjustments: in K61 (Ill.35b) the woman breaks slightly above the horizon and the three figures are situated nearer the foreground plane, thereby occupying more of the picture space; K60 has the two figures facing in the opposite direction with the woman



Ill. 35b
Study for Ploughmen (K61) 1902



Ill. 35c
Study for Ploughmen (N197)

absent. In both K60 and K61 the ploughed furrows lead far more directly into the picture space, the workers are depicted slightly more in profile format and the line of their hunched backs has become more strongly accentuated. These alterations indicate a desire to monumentalize the workers and the intensity of their effort, a desire met in the later drawings of 1906 (N210-212) wherein the placement of the two ploughers in the foreground, against a low horizon and parallel to the picture plane, grants them just such a monumentality.

One preliminary drawing (Ill.35c) for Ploughmen shows Kollwitz's return to the use of allegory; here a helmeted figure symbolizing Oppressive Nobility physically compels the two ploughers into humble submission.⁷ The symbolic figure is seen to be the physical reason for the bowed backs and struggling efforts of the ploughers. The presence of such a figure was unnecessary as Kollwitz soon realized, for she abandoned the idea without occupying herself with it for any length of time. As she had appreciated in her Weaver Uprising cycle, the physical absence of the oppressors makes all the more potent their force. Here the pervasive power of the nobility is only emphasized by the absence of an overseer to enforce the peasants' efforts. Such is the subtlety of the final image that the peasants expend their life energies on behalf of some remote, impersonal and unseen force to which they are indisputably shackled by invisible chains.

The final powerful image of 1906 has been honed down to its simplest, boldest, most fluid lines, with the figures now completely in profile. The use of the double figure - as well as being accurate - is a simple yet highly effective means of signifying the physical effort involved: the might insinuated by two adds unlimited effect to the sense of physical strain, further engendered by the almost ridiculously small size of the wheel. Far removed from the peasants of Liebermann or Millet who flourish through their affinity with the land, Kollwitz's peasants are bowed under by a land which is not their own. Alienated from it, it opposes their heaving efforts to drag the resisting plough through the earth. The figures are reduced to the barest degree of naturalism - they become suggestive forms rather than human forms (the foreground plougher, for example, has his arms omitted for the sake of rhythm of outline). The horizon has been emphasized more heavily on either side of the figures, blocking them in in pictorial terms and thus creating a sense of stasis. The lines of the fields are made bolder, again preventing the labourers - in pictorial terms - from moving too easily forward. A layered sky is added, against which the monumental silhouette stands out more clearly. The entire image is now markedly parallel to the picture plane and rigorously balanced, with the lines of tension meeting at the sheet's central point. The function of Ploughmen, like Need, is to encapsulate a state of suffering and injustice, here the hardship of the peasants expending their valuable energies on feudal



Ill. 36

Arming in a Cellar (K59) 1902

duties. The idea has changed little, but the method of presentation is far more conceptual than it was in her earlier work.

There is a danger that a more extensive dependence upon the imagination rather than upon the known and the observed can become uncontrolled, as Arming in a Cellar (Ill.36) illustrates. In setting the scene in an underground vault, Kollwitz was attempting to suggest the rebellion's subterranean, grass-roots nature; the composition's sweeping lines mounting irrevocably upwards were to indicate the peasant movement's compulsive momentum and the immanence of eruption. Ultimately, however, it is not a successful image for it lacks any semblance of reality and is unconvincing. Such a scene is not only unlikely but also physically impossible, as the figures rise vertically out of the picture in defiance of gravity. The multitude of forms are so pressed against one another that in physical space there is insufficient room for all of them and they are presented as vague, non-human shapes with bestial features which draw only slightly upon the knowledge of the human form. Sucked up into darkness and as if the earth spits them out, they are discharged as the lunging mass of Outbreak (Ill.37). This is one of the most suggestive of Kollwitz's works so far, one most wholly conceived in the imagination and furthest away from a naturalistic basis; she has redressed too generously the over-rigorous naturalism of her earlier images.



Ill. 37

Outbreak (K66) 1903



Ill. 37a

Study of Black Anna for Outbreak (N191) 1903

Outbreak is a far more balanced composition, containing elements both of naturalism and of the imaginative invention evident in Arming in a Cellar. It centres around the figure of Black Anna, historically recorded as a fiery character who spurred the peasants on to action:

Als eine ganz eigentuemliche Gestalt im Bauernheere ragte die Boeckingerin hervor, die man unter dem Namen, 'die schwarze Hofmaennin' in der ganzen Gegend kannte...Schwarzes, unterdruecktes Weib aus der Huette am Neckar, mit der starken, verwilderten Seele voll Leidenschaft, gleich stark in Hass und Liebe, mit deinem "Gott will's!" im Munde und mit deinem Freiheits-, Schlacht- und Rachegeist - wie lebstest du in Sage und Geschichte, in Gesang und Rede, haette deine Sache gesiegt oder gehoerte sie wenigstens nur nicht der Bauernhuette an!
[From the ranks of the peasant army, a very unusual figure stood out. She was the peasant woman from Boeckling, known in the entire neighbourhood as Black Anna...Black, oppressed woman from the Neckar, with your strong, wild soul full of passion, equally strong in your capacity to love and to hate, with your "It is God's will!" in your mouth, and with your spirit seeking freedom, battle and revenge. How you would have lived in saga and history, in song and in tales, had you been victorious or had your deeds at least not been connected with peasant huts.]⁸

Black Anna transforms the allegorical image of Uprising into the far more earthbound approach of Outbreak. This having been said, the new tendencies in Kollwitz's art are also evident here to a new extreme: the rabid pack of peasants rush forward at an impossible angle, forming a triangular wedge exaggerated in its geometry. Certain of the preliminary drawings reveal in particular the degree to which Kollwitz was concentrating on the line and shape of the composition rather than on individual elements

within; the studies for Black Anna seek to maximize the expressive energies of a twisting form (e.g. Ill.37a). Although there are life drawings which indicate a desire for believability of form, the image as a whole ventures further towards the imagination and further away from reality.

It is a feature of Kollwitz's later works that her move away from naturalism, coincides with a significant - in many cases, total - reduction in background detail. Naturalism and the degree of detail included in a work are certainly linked, as evidenced in an early work such as The Kaiser's Birthday (Ill.8), but it would be false to think of them as being entirely interdependent. Need (Ill.16), for instance, includes a highly detailed passage of background detail but is never in danger of being 'read'. In the Naturalists' philosophy, however, they are very definitely connected, for it was one of the fundamental beliefs of both socialists and naturalist artists such as Hauptmann, Zola, and Ibsen, that man is a product of his environment, moulded and determined by his surroundings and by the society into which he is born. At a time when the 'inner cities' of the Industrial Revolution were being born, Naturalist writers and artists found no shortage of material for exploring this idea: it lies at the heart of books such as Zola's Germinal, plays such as Hauptmann's Weavers, and prints such as Klinger's A Life and Dramas. In Kollwitz's first cycle the backgrounds in Need and End



Ill. 38

Whetting the Scythe (K90) 1905



Ill. 39

Woman with Scythe (K89) 1905

provide the explanation for the desperation of the weavers and their subsequent action: it is the cramped conditions, the bareness of their houses, the dominance of the loom and other paraphernalia of the weaving industry which cause these people to rebel against the law of the land. It is their specific environment which provokes, indeed makes inevitable, their unlawful acts.

In later years, however, Kollwitz becomes less preoccupied with this belief in specific determinism, and comes to dwell more and more upon the belief that mankind as a whole struggles under the burden of a preordained existence determining men's actions, causing his sorrows and sufferings. In her art this leads her towards non-specific backgrounds which are universally applicable, away from the particular backgrounds of, for example, her Weaver Uprising cycle, which were specifically related to the situation of the poverty-stricken weavers. In metaphoric terms it is a move away from the specifics of Zola and Hauptmann towards the universal understanding of Goethe.⁹

Thus in the Peasants' Revolt cycle Kollwitz lays so much emphasis upon the primordial aspects of figures and sets them within timeless, non-specific backgrounds. This is particularly evident in Woman with Scythe (Ill.39) and Whetting the Scythe (Ill.38). Neither of these figures suggests a crafty sixteenth century peasant woman indulging in escapist dreams of revenge, nor one suddenly inspired



Ill. 40

Battlefield (K96) 1907



Ill. 40e

Drawing for Battlefield (N413) 1907
Kaethe-Kollwitz-Museum, West Berlin

with the idea of resistance. The women - androgynous figures as they are - seem endowed with a native knowledge unlearned and untaught; a timeless instinct tells them that rebellion will follow oppression. Stylistically, they are removed from their settings and allowed to stand upon their own to a degree hitherto unprecedented in Kollwitz's oeuvre.

The conception behind a work such as Battlefield (Ill.40) further illustrates this point. Its equivalent in the Weaver Uprising cycle is End (Ill.20), where death and rebellion meet. End, as does Need, contemplates death, wanton death, through its effect upon the familial bond. In Battlefield a greater monumentality and universality is sought and the specific, naturalistic details of the backgrounds in Need and End have been replaced here by a panoramic background of unlimited extension. End is depicted from a higher, more distant viewpoint, emphasizing the futility of the figures' attempts at striking down the status quo. The figures remain bound within their specific backgrounds. The use of a low horizon, the centralizing of the figure within the pictorial space, and the emphasis of the vertical axis are common devices designed to grant a figure monumentality. Kollwitz employs them here for adding to the mother's status. There are obvious precedents for this figure, most notably Goya's woman in the Cry of War and Daumier's Epouvantée sur l'Heritage (Ill.41). Erect women surveying the clearly visible scene



Ill. 41

HONORE DAUMIER Epouvantée sur l'Heritage,
Album du Siege 1871



Ill. 42

Pieta (K70) 1903

of slaughter, they are embodiments of the nation's sorrow. Kollwitz makes two minor amendments which increase the personal tenor of the image whilst not forfeiting its sense of universality: the female figure now stoops, and the scene is made night. Kollwitz's stooping figure becomes a mother experiencing the particular grief of her own personal loss. As Kollwitz envelopes the panoramic view in darkness, and gives the mother only a feeble lantern with which to light her way through the carnage in search of her dead son, the poignancy is intensified. As she identifies him, bending gently over him and casting the light upon his features to ascertain that it is indeed he, she becomes a mother experiencing the particular grief of her own personal loss.

The importance accorded the meeting of mother's hand and boy's face is emphasized by a preliminary drawing (Ill.40a) which centres upon this. Here the mother's hand grasps with savage love and grief her son's young face; in the amended image, this gesture has become a more hesitant, reverent touching of the boy's lips, a seeking, like Lear with Cordelia, for breath as a sign of life. It is the content of the dim background which fuses the personal and universal elements. All around the central figures is a jumbled heap of bodies and limbs stretching out of sight. Their presence is not so blatant that they detract from the central figure group but they are distinguishable, and it takes little imagination to see a mother standing over each

of them, feeling nothing and seeing nothing but her own unique loss. By multiplying the particular, Kollwitz arrives at the universal. The same notion, differently presented, is at the heart of Pieta (Ill.42) which, despite its obviously religious connotations, is concerned with a universal state of suffering and mourning. In content, therefore, it is similar to From Many Wounds You Bleed, O My People (Ill.21), but in presentation it is less didactic. The androgynous nature of the two forms indicates that they cannot be just Christ and Mary, not merely mother and son, not even a more general man and woman. They are human being and human being, consoling each other in the face of a cruel fate.

An entry in Kollwitz's diary concerning the death of Karl Liebknecht and her relation to him is a written confirmation of this development in her thinking.¹⁰

Ich schaeme mich, dass ich immer noch nicht Partei nehme, und vermute fast, wenn ich erkläre, keiner Partei anzugehören, dass der eigentliche Grund dazu Feigheit ist...aber ich bin in den fünfziger Jahren ich hab den Krieg durchlebt und Peter und die tausend andern Jungen hinsterven sehn, bin ich entsetzt und erschuettert von all dem Hass, das in der Welt ist, ich sehne mich nach dem Socialismus, der die Menschen leben laesst und finde vom Morden, Luegen, Verderben, Entstellen, kurzum allem Teuflischen hat die Erde jetzt genug gesehn...Ich hab als Kuenstler das Recht, aus allem den Gefuehlsgehalt herauszuziehen, auf mich wirken zu lassen und nach aussen zu stellen. So hab ich auch das Recht, [den Abschied der Arbeiterschaft von Liebknecht darzustellen, ja den Arbeitern zu dedizieren, ohne dabei politisch Liebknecht zu folgen. Oder nicht?

[I am ashamed that even now I do not belong to any party, and suppose that when I mention this to other people they assume cowardice to be the

real reason...but I am now in my fifties, have lived through the war, seen Peter and a thousand other youngsters die, and am now disturbed and afraid of all the hate which is in the world. I long for that Socialism which allows men to live, and find I have seen enough of murder, lies, destruction, deformation, in short, the Earth has seen enough of every kind of evil...I, as an artist, have the right to extract from all the feelings which play over me, a visual interpretation of those feelings. As such I have the right to depict the workers bidding farewell to Liebknecht, to dedicate this work to the workers, without having to follow Liebknecht politically. Or am I wrong?] ¹¹

This philosophy is particularly apparent in Kollwitz's later images of the worker models whom she used as life models in her studio. Although seeing these people as individuals, and interesting herself in their particular histories,¹² Kollwitz saw them also as generalized beings representative of the urban workers who existed in poverty and suffered stoically. One of her most impressive works is Pregnant Woman (Ill.32) of 1910 which presents the idea of the universal without forfeiting the individual. The woman stands frontally on, her facial features describing her as an individual, whilst her swelling form and passively hanging hands suggest her unresisting assumption that life must run its course. The woman's face gazing into space indicates a seer's knowledge of the unchanging nature of Time. The symmetry of the squares themselves on her shawl (unusual in Kollwitz's oeuvre for her to include any such sense of the particular) suggest something of the same.

With the expansion in Kollwitz's philosophy comes, too, a

greater interest in theme rather than in story, and this is a feature of her second cycle. Where the Weaver Uprising cycle cannot be said to be narrative, it is indisputable that it is more closely-woven as a series of events than is her Peasants' Revolt. In the latter this is most evident in her consideration of the woman's role within the cycle.

Kollwitz's first thought was for the female figure of Victory to be responsible for leading the peasants out of their state of oppression. In this instance the figure's gender is in accord with art-historical tradition but the sex of her successor, Black Anna, was certainly not incidental. She chose to depict the one folk heroine mentioned in the history of the wars. In Outbreak the ambiguity of Kollwitz's androgynous figures is absent here: Black Anna is as important for being a woman as she is for being a leader of the peasants. The driving force behind the peasants might no longer be the allegorical Victory but it remains a woman.

Kollwitz attempts to foreshadow the role of this woman liberator in Ploughmen; before the final image was perfected, she produced preliminary drawings in which the relationship of the woman to the men is significantly altered. They depict the germination of the seeds of rebellion, in the mind of a visionary woman. Schneede rightly suggests that:

Die Szene wird im Verlauf der Studien auf den Gegensatz Pflueger-Frau verknüpft. Dabei stehen die Frau als erkennende Zeugin um das Leid weiss und im Wissen Zukunftiges in sich aufbewahrt: die Moeglichkeit der Veraenderung, die Moeglichkeit des Sich-sur-Wahr-Setzens.

[The scene is cut short in the course of studies of opposing ploughmen/women. Here the ploughmen stand for suffering and hopelessness, whilst the woman is a knowing witness who understands suffering and holds to herself also a knowledge of the future: the possibility of change, the possibility of witnessing a confrontation with the truth.]¹³

It is the men who labour like animals under the manual restrictions of feudalism, whilst the woman conceives the possibility of opposition.

Where Schneede suggests that this female figure is the precursor of Black Anna in Outbreak she seems, in fact, far more akin to the women in Whetting the Scythe (Ill.38) and Woman with Scythe (Ill.39): both are women who lean on the tools of their subjugation and envisage the chance of revolt. It is in the year 1905 - the same year in which the various versions of Inspiration (Ill.43) and Whetting the Scythe date - that Kollwitz finally relinquishes in Ploughmen the woman and her visions in favour of an image concerned solely with the peasants' oppressive bondage, corporeal and non-corporeal. The seeds of rebellion form the basis for the subsequent image of Whetting the Scythe. In Inspiration it is a male figure who implants in the woman's mind the seeds of rebellion, but he is rejected in the final version. This reduces further the role of the male in the cycle, and plants irrevocably the power of the

leadership and inspiration into female hands. Where the woman is certainly important to the Weaver Uprising cycle as well, her integral role within the whole does not consume Kollwitz's interest to the same extent which it does here. In the Peasants' Revolt cycle, it is one of Kollwitz's prime considerations to assign to woman the role of leader and mentor in the physical and psychological struggle against oppression.

1. Comprises Ploughmen (Ill.35), Raped (Ill.34), Whetting the Scythe (Ill.38), Arming in a Cellar (Ill.36), Outbreak (Ill.37), Battlefield (Ill.41), Prisoners (Ill.33)
2. By the Association for Historical Art. Although the series was presented to the Association in 1908, certain of the individual prints were available before then.
3. Uprising was first conceived in 1902, with further versions dating to 1903, completed in the same year as Outbreak. Ploughmen was begun in 1902, continued in 1905 and completed in 1906. Raped appeared in 1907, Woman with Scythe and its related works all in 1905, Arming in a Cellar begun in 1902, returned to and completed in 1906, Battlefield in 1907 (Pieta in 1904), and Prisoners in 1908. During this time, Kollwitz spent many months in Paris, in 1904, and a year in Florence in 1907.
4. see Richard Evans and W.R.Lee (ed) Op.cit.
5. Hagen, W.H. 'The Junkers' Faithless Servants' in Richard Evans & W.R. Lee (ed) Op.cit., qtd p84
6. Kollwitz, K. Aus meinem Leben, Munich, 1958, p 170
7. Schneede, U. W. Op.cit., pp 62-3
8. Zimmermann, A. Der Grosse Deutsche Bauernkrieg pp 385-6
9. It should be stressed that even in her early works Kollwitz was concerned that the majority should be able to identify with her prints. Weaver Uprising cycle, although concentrating upon a specific community in Germany - the weavers, was conceived for the Poor and Oppressed as a generic group. Her later works embracing the whole of humanity are merely an extension of this philosophy.
10. Liebknecht was a Communist leader assassinated along with Rosa Luxembourg in 1914. Horrified by his death, Kollwitz commemorated him in her first woodcut, Karl Liebknecht Memorial, which depicts his Communist followers paying him their last respects. She encountered much criticism for expressing her allegiance to Liebknecht whilst not being a Communist.
11. Kollwitz, K. Op.cit., p 483. Entry of October 1920.

12. For example, references to Frau Pankopf and Frau Naujoks in Kollwitz. K. Tagebuchblaetter und Briefe, pp 41-2 (dated 19.9.1908) and p 88 (dated 29.9.1910) respectively.
13. Schneede, U. W. Op.cit., p 64

CONCLUSION

There are three major developments to be noted in Kollwitz's art. The first was her move away from naturalism, already extensively covered in the preceding chapters. That she was never wholly happy with abandoning direct observation from nature, is evidenced in her diaries and letters. One such excerpt from 1919 returns to the problem:

...Haette frueher die einzelnen Figuren durchzeichnet. Warum tue ich es jetzt nicht? Zum Teil aus der gefaehrlichen neuen Lehre heraus, dass alles ohne Naturstudium gemacht sein soll. Das ergibt leicht ein schematisches allgemeines Arbeiten, alle Besonderheiten der Natur fallen fort. Ich sollte wieder darauf zurueckkommen, Naturstudien meinen Arbeiten zugrunde zu legen. Denn die Natur regt an weil sie unschematisch ist.'

[...Used to make preliminary drawings of the single figures. Why do I no longer do it? Partly as a result of the dangerous new teaching which states that everything should be done without life-drawings. Through this one can easily achieve a schematic, general work in which the peculiarities of nature are lost. I should return to basing my work upon life-drawings. But then nature is annoying because it is so unschematic.]¹

Nevertheless Kollwitz continued to follow her tendency to draw from the imagination rather than from nature.

Secondly, her life-philosophy changed subtly, leading to a greater personal involvement in her own art. In her early years her major concern was to use her art to serve others. She wished to help eradicate the poverty which she witnessed, and the suffering brought about through material

deprivation. Thus she created works such as the Weaver Uprising cycle. Kaethe and Karl, although not well-off, did not themselves live at subsistence level; this enabled her to empathize without losing that essential element of detachment (however small). This concern for the poor, Kollwitz never lost - she speaks, for instance, of the delight that her work for Simplicissimus (1913-15) gave her:

Diese Arbeit freut mich ganz ausserordentlich ...Das Rasch-fertig-sein-muessen, die Notwendigkeit, eine Sache populaer ausdruecken zu muessen, und doch die Moeglichkeit ...kuenstlerisch bleiben zu koennen, vor allem aber die Tatsache, vor einem grossen Publikum des oeffteren aussprechen zu koennen, was mich immer wieder reizt und was noch lange nicht genug gesagt worden ist: die vielen stillen und lauten Tragoedien des Grossstadtlebens - das alles zusammen macht, dass mir diese Arbeit ausserordentlich lieb ist.

[This work is extraordinarily pleasing to me. The it-must-be-ready-quick, the necessity of expressing a thing in a popular fashion and yet the possibility of being able to do it artistically, above all the fact that one can speak out to a large public about something which provokes me time and time again and which has not been sufficiently broadcast for a long time: namely, the many silent and loud tragedies of the large cities. All these factors combine to form a task which I particularly love.]²

The change in approach was a growing awareness of human needs other than material ones:

Over the decades, I kept extending the range of my work. I learned that, in addition to physical privation and misery, there was also a privation³ of the human soul, imposed by the laws of life.

This philosophy was less concerned with social and physical deprivation and more with the general human condition. Thus, as we have seen, her images attain a universal

quality and focus less upon particular instances of oppression and material poverty.⁴ As Kollwitz became ever more preoccupied with the general suffering of mankind, so did she become more personally involved with her own art, often using it to express excesses of emotion.

This leads on to the third facet of Kollwitz's development: her increased use of art for personal consolation. Such a tendency became pronounced after the death of her son, Peter, in the first few years of World War I. Burdened with her belief in a cruel Fate, she used her work as a cathartic agent for her own sentiments of pessimism and despair.

Eine Zeichnung gemacht: die Mutter, die ihren toten Sohn in ihre Arme gleiten laesst. Ich koennte 100 solchen Blaetter machen und doch komme ich ihm so nicht naeher. Ich suche ihn. Als ob ich ihn in der Arbeit finden muesste.
[Made a drawing: the mother who holds her dead son in her arms. I could make 100 such, and would come absolutely no nearer to him. I seek him. As if I could find him in my art.]⁵

Or again, Kaethe and Karl supervising the erection of her monument to the Fallen in Belgium (Ill. 44), where their son was buried:

Ich stand vor der Frau, sah ihr - mein eigenes - Gesicht, weinte und streichelte ihr die Backen.
[I stood in front of the Mother, saw her - my own - face, cried and stroked her cheeks.]⁶

Intended as a universal embodiment of Bereavement, its importance lay as much in the solace it provided for Kaethe herself.



Ill. 44

The Parents 1932

Roggevelde Cemetary, Belgium



Ill. 45

Mother and Dead Son (K71) 1903

For her own sake, and for the sake of humanity in general, Kollwitz felt the ever increasing need to communicate her grief at man's lamentable condition. Where such sentiments had once been focused on man's unjust treatment of his fellows (poor wages, exploitation of workers, oppression of labourers by employers), they later became directed against a cruel universe. Kollwitz wished to portray the essence of her feelings rather than worldly specifics. Thus, Ploughmen and Raped develop from Need and Death. Ultimately, Kollwitz's yearning was to capture direct emotion on paper, and she was not prepared to subordinate this desire to the limitations of her art-form:

Trotz der intensiven Arbeit, die der Musiker leistet, hat man doch nur von den zwei Kuensten, der Poesie und der Musik den Eindruck direkter goettlicher Eingebung und Offenbarung. Hat auf mich je ein Bild oder eine Plastik so gewirkt wie Faust oder die Neunte?

[Despite the intensive work which the musician must suffer, there are only two art forms - poetry and music - which give the impression of direct divine inspiration and revelation. Has any picture moved me as much as Faust or the Ninth?]⁷

In attempting to emulate the direct response which music and poetry inspire, to capture 'das rasche Erfassen des Wesentlichen einer Erscheinung'⁸, the result was often wild. In fact, a combination of these three aspects of the later Kollwitz: an impassioned heart seeking an outlet, a burning desire to aid mankind in its misery, and an art from which rigorous naturalistic discipline was absent, produced uncontrolled images such as Never Again War! (Ill.46), Germany's Children Starve (Ill.47), and Mother



with Dead Son (Ill. 45)

Kollwitz's imagination was certainly the making of her: had she stuck to illustrative images such as The Kaiser's Birthday or her early versions of Germinal, she would have been a limited artist indeed. But where her original creativity became too entangled with emotion, it proved also to be her undoing. Her greatest images, be they as disparate as Need, Carmagnole and Battlefield, are undoubtedly those which maintain a balance between imagination, emotion and artistic discipline.

1. Kollwitz, K. Op.cit., p 412. Entry of 15 March 1919.
2. Quoted in Kleberger, I. Op.cit., p 67
3. Hinz, R. Op.cit., p 86
4. This is not to suggest that she ever lost her concern for the poor. Her later images are even more impassioned in her lament for the complete deprivation of their existence, physically, mentally, spiritually and materially.
5. Kollwitz, K. Die Tagebuecher, p 268. Entry of 22 August 1916.
6. Kollwitz, K. Tagebuecher, p 669. Entry of 14 August 1932.
7. Kollwitz, Kollwitz. Ich Will Wirken, p 65. Diary entry of 15 October 1916.
8. 'and that swift capturing of the essence of the impression.' Kollwitz, K. Tagebuchblaetter und Briefe, pp 30-31. Letter to Fraeulein Mendel of 29 July 1919

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