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Death, Sacrifice and Mourning in German Women's Art of the First World War

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PhD Thesis

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Summary

The war and its consequences were the dominant themes in German women's art between 1914 and 1919. In the early stages of the conflict, women's art was employed to rally support for the war effort, to appeal to women's patriotism and to offer practical guidelines for living under wartime conditions. As the war continued, however, much of the work produced by women artists began to reflect a growing awareness of the carnage occurring on the fighting fronts. Many of the images they created reflected the pain of women's bereavement and the different stages of their mourning process. Art also provided a medium through which different interpretations of the conflict were explored and the search for a meaning of the war could progress. This study will argue that women's art of the First World War reflects a unique contemporary perspective on the conflict which was grounded in women's actual wartime experiences. This led to the development of new iconographical patterns in women's art.

Among the forty German female artists included in this study are well known figures such as Käthe Kollwitz and Hannah Höch, as well as artists who are largely unknown today such as Sella Hasse, Katharina Heise, Martha Schrag and Lina von Schauroth. By the time of the First World War, the vast majority of these artists had established careers, exhibited locally as well as nationally, and had produced work that was discussed in newspapers and artistic magazines. The personal papers and archival evidence analysed in this study reveal that the artists unanimously shared a bourgeois upbringing, were well educated, and often well-travelled. Their considerably privileged circumstances did not mean, however, that the artists' lives remained unaffected by the war; a number of the women lost a son, fiancé, relative or friend in the conflict. Letters, diary entries, and wartime essays written by the artists provide crucial background information for the images they produced. The visual accounts of the artists' wartime experiences and observations nevertheless represent the main and most important body of sources for this thesis.

This study is structured into three largely chronological sections, beginning with the 'The Art of 1914', followed by 'The Experience of Long War' and finally 'The Legacy of Wartime Sacrifice'. Within these three sections, women's wartime art is analysed in thematic chapters. Chapter one explores female artists and their mobilisation for war. Women's 'ideas of 1914' provide important clues for women's understanding of the conflict at the time. German bourgeois women, many of whom were highly engaged with the arts and culture, envisaged a vital role for themselves as preservers of cultural ideals in wartime society. Many female artists took part in volunteer work for the National Women's Service, some worked as nurses, and a number designed wartime posters that offered guidelines for women's wartime conduct. Chapter two looks at civilian representations of

the male body, whose physical strength was seen as the guarantor of women's security. The figure of the nurse, tending to the male body and sharing the dangers at the front, was seen as the female heroine of the time.

After the initial phase of the conflict, the confrontation with mass death and the experience of loss which lasted for years came to prevail thematically in women's wartime art. Artistically, this is evident in both symbolic and realistic attempts to understand and explore the phenomenon of wartime death, a theme which is analysed in chapter three. Realistic depictions of fallen soldiers were an attempt to face the true cost of the war and reflected a more rational imagination of death, although they lacked the detail and authenticity which was evident in the art of male combatant artists.

In chapter four it will be seen that art played a key role in the female mourning process during the war. For bereaved women depictions of funerals of fallen soldiers, or their coffins, served as substitutes for the war graves of their loved ones on distant battlefields. The female mourning process was artistically interpreted from various angles and depictions of mourning mothers in wartime scenarios were very common in women's wartime art. Artistic expression became a coping mechanism that helped women endure wartime tragedies. The artistic adaptation of religious symbolism to the circumstances of war between 1914 and 1918 served not only to put forward an understanding of the conflict as a crusade, but also to accentuate women's share of the suffering and mourning caused by the war. The adapted form of the *Pietà*, or the *Sorrowful Mother*, thereby emphasised the contribution of mothers to their sons' sacrifices in the conflict and elevated their status by comparing their fate with that of Mary, which is the theme of chapter five.

The suffering and sacrifice of soldiers themselves, on the other hand, was visually modelled on the *Passion of Christ*. Chapter six analyses the comparisons and analogies that female artists drew between the fate of the soldier and that of Christ. This represented a new development in the iconography of wartime art. Biblical parallels were also drawn by male artists. The familiar traditional religious symbols used in art also offered comfort and attached a meaning to the conflict that rendered the sacrifice worthwhile. Chapter seven argues that the children of German soldiers, the next generation, were presented as beneficiaries of their fathers' wartime sacrifices. Images of pregnant widows symbolised their life-giving power which, ultimately, prevailed over the carnage of war. The hope that at least the children would profit from their fathers' sacrifice allowed contemporaries to interpret the war as a meaningful and worthwhile conflict.

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Introduction

Female artists in Germany produced an extensive body of art during the First World War, reflecting the range of their wartime experiences, observations and interpretations. Both the thematic choices and the iconographical emphases in the images they produced illustrate an evolution in their responses to, and perception of, the war. After initially engaging in the national mobilisation for war, female artists, increasingly addressed the consequences of total war: towering casualty figures and mass female bereavement on the home front. The fundamental impact the war had on the lives of contemporaries led to the development of novel artistic compositions which combined traditional Christian iconography with wartime scenarios and thus enabled contemporaries to see the war as a worthwhile endeavour.

Women's visual images represent valuable and unique sources in that they represent contemporary perceptions of war from angles that are rarely found in written documents; they therefore provide significant new information about women's attitudes to, for example, the themes of death and the mourning process. Women's artistic output between 1914 and 1918 has, so far, remained an unexplored field in the historiography of the First World War. This study will demonstrate the richness of female art as a source for gaining new insights into the mentalities of contemporaries and their understanding of the conflict. The chapters that follow will attempt to answer a number of key questions in relation to women's wartime art: what sort of war did women present in their art and to what extent does it reflect or differ from the conventional 'image' of the First World War in particular and warfare more generally? What were the different functions of women's wartime art? What conclusions can be drawn from the iconographical choices made by artists about their understanding and interpretation of the war? Lastly, and importantly, how do women's visual accounts of the war compare to those produced by male artists?

This study covers the period of the First World War and its immediate aftermath. It is divided into three roughly chronological sections: 'The Art of 1914', 'The Experience of the Long War' and 'The Legacy of Wartime Sacrifice'. These provide the framework in which women's wartime art is thematically grouped and analysed. The three sections of the thesis, while following the overall evolution of the war, overlap

and should be understood as representing stages of wartime experiences instead of presenting a rigid course of events. Naturally, the experiences of individuals during the war differed and their artistic testimony does not necessarily mirror the chronological or political sequence of the conflict. Some artists, for example, still engaged in producing didactic poster art to mobilise people for the war effort in 1916, a time when other artists had experienced personal losses and expressed their mourning in their art. The nature of the conflict, the consequences of warfare, and the social and political circumstances of wartime society nonetheless provided the framework and impetus for women's artistic expression between 1914 and 1919 and thus provide constant reference points for the analysis of women's wartime art in this study.

Chapter one examines prevalent attitudes to the war among bourgeois women in Germany. Female artists, writers, and intellectuals believed that the war was a necessity, and viewed it as an event that could potentially even benefit German society. These women envisaged a role for themselves as preservers of cultural ideas whereby they would represent the moral backbone of the nation. Consequently, many female artists engaged in practical support for the war and worked as nurses for the National Women's Service. Others employed their artistic skills for the war effort and produced posters that were designed to instruct women about wartime home-economics or to publicly proclaim women's loyalty to the soldiers at the front. In chapter two, the perception that women and children were worth fighting for is explored by analysing images of the strong German soldier who would be able to defend the homeland. The importance attached to the male body can, moreover, be seen in romanticised depictions of nurses, caring for wounded men.

Under the impact of the long war and the rising number of casualties at the front, death and dying became more frequent themes in women's art. As will be shown in chapter three, the perception that death was a taboo subject for contemporaries cannot be upheld.[1] Female artists produced symbolic as well as realistic depictions of wartime death and thus confronted the realities of warfare in their art. The glorification of the soldier's death, therefore, was not the only civilian response to violent mass death.[2] Chapter four will show that art gained an essential function in the female mourning

[1] Werner Fuchs, *Todesbilder in der modernen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 8-13.
[2] Bernd Hüppauf, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg,' in *Ansichten vom Krieg. Vergleichende Studien zum Ersten Weltkrieg in Literatur und Gesellschaft*, ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Königstein: Forum Academicum, 1984), pp. 55-91.

process already during the war and not only in its aftermath.[3] Images of bereaved women on church grounds illustrate a search for the consolation and comfort associated with the Christian burial tradition. Actual depictions of funerals and burial sites of fallen soldiers served as substitutes by allowing women to – fictionally – attend a burial or tend to a soldier's grave, which, sited on distant battlefields, were mostly out of reach for grieving relations.

One of the most frequently depicted themes in women's wartime art is that of maternal sacrifice. This theme will be examined in detail in chapter five. Numerous images by female artists suggest that many mothers understood their son's sacrifice in the war as a sacrifice on their own part as well. Thematically, women depicted themselves as the mourning mother Mary, grieving for her dead son. Women's depictions of the *Pietà* or the *Mater Dolorosa* in the wartime scenario of 1914-1918 represented an iconographical departure in that the religious context was no longer understood as the primary point of reference.

Similarly, the soldier's sacrifice was interpreted with images adapted from the Passion of Christ, a theme that will be examined in chapter six. The depictions reproduced in this chapter suggest that contemporaries understood the conflict as being fought in the name of God and on behalf of the nation. This allowed a meaningful reading of the conflict and the analogies drawn between the sacrifice of ordinary soldiers and the sacrifice of Christ elevated and ennobled the struggle of the soldiers. Again, the adaptation of the iconography of the Passion to martial circumstances represented an artistic innovation in which many male artists were also engaged.

In the final part of this study, the legacy of the soldiers' sacrifice will be looked at in detail. Images of pregnant widows and widows with small children served to present the next generation as beneficiaries of the soldier's sacrifice. The soldiers' children embody hope for the future and the ardent wish that the immense wartime sacrifices would eventually be rendered worthwhile.

Historiography

Whereas a large body of secondary literature exists that focuses on male artists and their responses to the conflict, female artists of the First World War and their artistic output have not yet been made the subject of historical analysis. Only Käthe

[3] Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 78-116.

Kollwitz's work is sometimes referred to as the sole example of a woman's artistic interpretation of the war and it has wrongly been assumed that the conflict was not a subject of women's art at the time. [4]

In her study *Painters and Politics*, Theda Shapiro provides a pioneering account of most of the well-known European male artists between 1900 and 1925, following their fate during the First World War and assessing their political outlook. Only a few visual testimonies by the artists are, however, included in this study.[5] Shapiro argues that the desire for social and aesthetic change, as supported by the male avant-garde in Germany, contributed to an initial degree of war enthusiasm among male artists. The duration of the conflict and the rising death toll led to a subsequent disillusionment and the majority of the volunteering painters were either physically or mentally traumatised by the war.[6] The avant-garde, Shapiro argues, failed to realise its hopes. It was the war and not art itself that caused social change and artistic re-orientation in early 20th century Europe.

In-depth studies of German cultural elites and the visual arts during the Great War have been carried out by Wolfgang Mommsen. Mommsen argues that the ambition to make German culture globally influential as a result of war was supported by intellectuals, professors, scientists, writers and artists in Germany at the time of the outbreak of the First World War. Their mobilisation for war was fed by a wave of emotional national solidarity.[7] The opportunity to experience war as a form of human existence which would stimulate their creativity attracted many painters who compared the outbreak of war to a great unleashing of the forces of nature, something they were keen to witness.[8] Like Shapiro, Mommsen comes to the conclusion that the mobilisation of artists was changed by the actual experience of war at the front. Despite viewing the artists' actual wartime depictions with subsidiary attention only, Mommsen writes that their artistic responses were diverse and reflected traumatic experiences of combat and

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[4] Richard Cork, 'Das Elend des Krieges. Die Kunst der Avantgarde und der Erste Weltkrieg,' in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit. Bilder des Ersten Weltkrieges*, ed. Rainer Rother (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum, 1994), pp. 384-85, Annegret Jürgens-Kirchhoff, *Schreckensbilder. Krieg und Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Reimer, 1993), pp. 279-93, Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'German artists, writers and intellectuals and the meaning of war, 1914-1918,' in *State, society and mobilisation in Europe during the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 37.

[5] Theda Shapiro, *Painters and politics. The European avant-garde and society, 1900-1925* (New York, Oxford, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1976).

[6] See chapter 6 in ibid., pp. 132-72. See also Annette Becker, 'The avant-garde, madness and the Great War,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 1 (2000), pp. 71-84.

[7] Mommsen, 'German artists,' p. 24.

[8] Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'Die deutschen kulturellen Eliten im Ersten Weltkrieg,' in *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), pp. 1-3, 6-7.

death instead of the new grand German art which the avant-garde aspired to. Nevertheless, Mommsen argues, only a small number of artists turned into outright opponents of the conflict, while it lasted. It was not until the mid 1920s that pacifist convictions were visible in the works of many male artists.[9] This important argument by Mommsen is equally relevant for the women's art analysed in this study. Images graphically depicting dead bodies on battlefields or the physical pain of mourning are not necessarily produced with pacifist intentions.

The actual artistic output of male combatant and non-combatant painters during and after the war is the subject of art-historians Richard Cork and Annette Jürgens-Kirchhoff. In his studies, Cork presents an impressive collection of German and international wartime art. He generally interprets the artistic accounts by male artists of all combatant nations as being inspired by anti-war sentiment.[10] This view neglects the complexities of the artists' understanding of war between 1914 and 1918. In her study *Schreckensbilder*, Jürgens-Kirchhoff also includes visual responses to the Second World War and other armed conflicts of the 20th century. Her primary area of focus, however, is the First World War. Jürgens-Kirchhoff argues that the experience of a new kind of very bloody and very technological warfare resulted in the creation of a particularly intense artistic testimony. The artistic portrayal of horror and shock, and of death and violence in the art of the First World War is, maintains Jürgens-Kirchhoff, unmatched in the art of other 20th-century conflicts.[11] In her study, Jürgens-Kirchhoff explicitly focuses on art which, from her perspective, expresses a critical or accusatorial view of the war.[12] Her analysis of the artistic responses is, therefore, channelled into a pacifist reading of the images that is often inadequate. It would be inaccurate, however, to understand art that portrays the death and trauma of warfare as automatically critical of the war effort, or as pacifist statements. The artists, as Wolfgang Mommsen has argued, were simply resigned to what they understood as the inevitable.[13] Instead of restricting the analysis of this study to the question of whether female artists at the time were *for* or *against* the war, the emphasis is placed on finding out what women's experiences and observations during the war were, how these were expressed in art and

[9] Mommsen, 'German artists,' p. 37.
[10] Richard Cork, *A bitter truth. Avant-garde art and the Great War* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1994), Richard Cork, '"A Murderous Carnival". German Artists in the First World War,' in *War, violence and the modern condition*, ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), pp. 241-76.
[11] Jürgens-Kirchhoff, *Schreckensbilder*, pp. 18-20.
[12] Ibid., p. 20.
[13] Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und künstlerische Avantgarde, 1870-1918. Kultur und Politik im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt M., Berlin: Ullstein, 1994), p. 146.

what the images tell us about the mentalities at the time. The existing literature on the wartime art of men provides interesting angles for comparisons between the art of male and female artists during the war. Where relevant, these will be explored in the following chapters.

Within the growing field of visual history, a number of studies have recently been published that examine visual accounts of warfare and eye-witnesses reports of wartime experiences.[14] These studies tend, however, to focus either on more contemporary conflicts or on the images produced by more modern media such as photography, film and the internet. Both 'standing' and 'moving' images (photography and film) are viewed as crucial influences on people's understanding of war. Images, it is argued, not only reproduce reality – or what is perceived as reality – images also create their own reality. Images, if examined in depth, can therefore provide access to 'historical truth' and a contemporary understanding which was itself the result of a historical process. The chapters that follow represent a contribution to the visual history of warfare and emphasise the relevance of art, and women's art in particular, in exploring the fluid space between reality and fiction, experience and narrative, image and event.

Female Artists in German Society

With the exception of a handful of articles on Käthe Kollwitz, studies on German female artists during the First World War are literally non-existent. Regina Schulte, while not focusing on Kollwitz's actual art, provides a fascinating study of the artist's personal reaction to the war, and the loss of her son in September 1914, which resulted in an assertion of Kollwitz's own sacrifice for the war.[15] Yet, it is Kollwitz's post-war work on which most of the secondary literature has focused.[16] Monographs and dictionary entries on German female artists who lived during the time of the First World War provide important supplementary information for some individual artists.

[14] Ute Daniel, *Augenzeugen. Kriegsberichterstattung vom 18. zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2006), Gerhard Paul, *Bilder des Krieges - Krieg der Bilder. Die Visualisierung des modernen Krieges* (Paderborn: Schönigh, 2004), Gerhard Paul, ed., *Visual History. Ein Studienbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

[15] Regina Schulte, 'Käthe Kollwitz. Das Opfer,' in *Die verkehrte Welt des Krieges. Studien zu Geschlecht, Religion und Tod* (Frankfurt M., New York: Campus, 1998), pp. 117-51.

[16] For example, Hannelore Fischer, ed., *Käthe Kollwitz, die trauernden Eltern. Ein Mahnmal für den Frieden* (Cologne: Käthe Kollwitz Museum, 1993), Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 108-16.

Their lives during the time of the war, however, are largely ignored and often left blank in biographical sketches, despite the vivid testimony of wartime experiences displayed in women's art.[17]

The number of female artists in early 20th-century Germany was considerable. In 1905, an estimate of no fewer than 2000 professional female artists was given in the handbook of the women's movement.[18] This number included women active in both the visual and the applied arts. Around 300 of these women held teaching posts in the art-educational sector. Most artists were members of the regional women's artists associations. These were professional organisations, seeking to advance women's artistic careers, professional reputation and educational opportunities. The year of 1913 saw a crucial development with the formation of the *Frauenkunstverband* (Female Artists' Association) in Berlin, a new national organisation that represented less conventional streams in women's art and set out to open up the art market for women.[19] Overall, around 30 regional female artists associations existed throughout Germany in 1914.[20] These formed a separate entity within the women's movement, although the local branches of the artists' association in Berlin and Hamburg held membership of the *Bund deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF)*, the umbrella organisation of the German women's movement.[21] Many of the patrons of female artists associations in Berlin and elsewhere were active in the women's movement. In parts, then, their individual paths are interwoven and women's artists' associations are also part of the history of the German women's movement.

As a group, female artists played a pioneering role in the development of career opportunities and paid employment for middle-class women in Germany. In 1867, the *Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen und Kunstfreundinnen* (Association of Female Artists and Patrons of Berlin) was founded in Berlin. It was the first professional pressure

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[17] Ingrid von der Dollen, *Malerinnen im 20.Jahrhundert. Bildkunst der 'verschollenen' Generation. Geburtsjahrgänge 1890-1910* (Munich: Hirmer, 2000), Penny Dunford, *A biographical dictionary of women artists in Europe and America since 1850* (New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), Delia Gaze, ed., *Dictionary of women artists*, 2 vols. (London, Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997), Britta Jürgs, ed., *Wie eine Nilbraut, die man in die Wellen wirft. Portraits expressionistischer Künstlerinnen und Schriftstellerinnen* (Grambin: Aviva, 1998), Carola Muysers, *Käthe, Paula und der ganze Rest. Ein Nachschlagewerk*, ed. Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen e.V./Berlinische Galerie (Berlin: Kupfergraben, 1992).

[18] Helene Lange and Gertrud Bäumer, *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung*, vol. IV (Berlin: Moeser, 1905), p. 353.

[19] Cornelia Matz, *Die Organisationsgeschichte der Künstlerinnen in Deutschland von 1867 bis 1993* (Tübingen: 2001), pp. 182ff.

[20] Ibid., pp. 369-76.

[21] *Verzeichnis der in Deutschland erscheinenden Frauenzeitschriften und der außerhalb des Bundes deutscher Frauenvereine organisierten Frauenvereine*, (Munich: A. Heindl & Co., 1917).

group for women, founded by women, and it aimed to enable women to earn their own living by professionalising women's art.[22] The Association not only created an important social network, it also organised exhibitions, acquired commissions, negotiated with buyers, raised funds and issued petitions regarding women's admission to the state art academies. Most importantly, the Association also provided unemployment support (up to 12 months) and health insurance arrangements for its members. In contrast, the first *Verein deutscher Lehrerinnen und Erzieherinnen* (Association of German Female Teachers and Governesses) was not founded until two years later in 1869. In the same year, seventeen regional women's associations founded the *Verband deutscher Frauenbildungs- und Erwerbsvereine* (League of German Women's Educational and Professional Associations).[23]

The foundation of the Association of Female Artists and Patrons of Berlin was groundbreaking in its combination of a professional network with an educational institution; in 1868, the year after the foundation of the Association, the School for Drawing and Painting of the Association of Female Artists and Patrons of Berlin was set up. With the provision of classes for women, the association followed the example of the *Lette-Verein*, which started to offer training in painting, graphic illustration and pattern drawing to unmarried women in 1865. Wilhelm Adolph Lette, a bourgeois social reformer had published a pamphlet in 1865 that outlined the need to create employment opportunities for middle-class women. He founded the *Lette-Verein* in the same year in order to put his ideas into practice.[24] Further artistic training classes for women were offered by the Higher Institute for Women's Drawing and the School for Women's Embroidery at the *Gewerbemuseum* (Museum for Craft and Industry) in Berlin.[25] The training given in these institutions derived from what were understood to be acceptable activities for the young ladies from upper-class backgrounds and placed an emphasis on the applied arts. These classes nevertheless opened up professional opportunities for women who would otherwise have become governesses or amateur

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[22] Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GSPK) I. HA Rep. 89 Geh. Zivilkabinett, jüngere Periode Nr. 19935, Verein der Künstlerinnen und Kunstfreundinnen, 1867-1918.

[23] Ute Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte. Zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 155.

[24] *100 Jahre Lette-Verein; 100 Jahre Entwicklung von Frauenberufen*, (Berlin: Lette-Verein, 1966), Herrad-Ulrike Bussemer, *Frauenemanzipation und Bildungsbürgertum. Sozialgeschichte der Frauenbewegung in der Reichsgründungszeit* (Weinheim: Beltz, 1985), pp. 101ff, Doris Obschernitzki, *'Der Frau ihre Arbeit!' Lette Verein - zur Geschichte einer Berliner Institution, 1866-1986* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1987).

[25] Renate Berger, 'German female artists. Training and professionalism,' in *Dictionary of women artists*, ed. Delia Gaze (London, Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997), p. 100.

artists.[26] The range of professional training that became available for women turned Berlin into a centre for women's paid employment. The establishment of similar initiatives and associations in other cities took place much later: The *Künstlerinnenverein München* (The Munich Artists' Association), including a painting school for women, was founded in 1882, the *Malerinnenverein Karlsruhe* (Female Painters' Association of Karlsruhe) in 1893, and the Association of Female Artists and Patrons of Leipzig in 1897.[27]

Whereas the work of individual female artists during the 18th and early 19th century was recognised – the portraitist Angelika Kauffmann (1741-1807) being the prime example[28] – their appearance as a distinct group raised severe anti-feminist publicity amongst the conservative male cultural establishment. This was fuelled by the considerably high public profile female artists had in society. By the 1890s exhibitions by female artists were frequent. Besides the regular exhibitions at the Association of Berlin female artists, their work was featured at galleries in Berlin as well as in cities like Munich and Düsseldorf.[29] The small, independent galleries of artistic magazines such as *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion* were centres in which modern progressive art by men and women alike was displayed regularly after the turn of the century. These artistic magazines, as well as the Munich based *Die Jugend*, were important for publicising and distributing women's art.

The existing gender bias in the art world and cultural administration of Wilhelmine Germany certainly contributed to the establishment of organisational structures by female artists. The hierarchical structure of the cultural community was led by the Kaiser, whose aesthetic taste dominated collections in museums and

[26] Herrad-Ulrike Bussemer, *Frauenfrage, Frauenorganisation und Frauenberufstätigkeit in Deutschland, 1865-1875* (Berlin (Diss): Beltz, 1985), pp. 48-53, Carola Muysers, "In der Hand der Künstlerinnen fast allein liegt es fortan...' Zur Geschichte und Rezeption des Berufsbildes bildender Künstlerinnen von der Gründerzeit bis zur Weimarer Republik.,' *Feministische Studien* 1 (1996), pp. 50-65.
[27] Matz, *Die Organisationsgeschichte der Künstlerinnen in Deutschland von 1867 bis 1993*, p. 370.
[28] Edith Krull, *Kunst von Frauen. Das Berufsbild der bildenden Künstlerinnen in vier Jarhunderten* (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1984), p. 15, 116. Angelika Kauffmann was also the only female founding member of the Royal Academy in London in 1768.
[29] Jahresbericht des Vereins der Künstlerinnen und Kunstfreundinnen zu Berlin vom 1. Oktober 1913 bis 30. September 1914, Archive of the Association of artists and patrons in Berlin, BG-VdBK 1247-1249. See also invitation to exhibition in Berlin, *Werkstatt der Kunst* 2 (October 1914), BG-VdBK 1248-16/17 and request for paintings by a Leipzig Museum for an exhibition, *Werkstatt der Kunst* 9 (November 1914), BG-VdBK 1248-18/19.

determined appointments of professors in the renowned Prussian academy of the arts.[30] The aesthetically conservative tastes of the Kaiser, and his admiration of 'history painting' as ennobling art, created a climate in which more modernist styles and new aesthetic approaches were denounced as *Rinnsteinkunst* ('art of the gutter').[31] The depiction of the working classes and poverty, and more abstract styles were rejected by the Kaiser and his officials, but nevertheless thrived in smaller galleries, the Cassirer Gallery in Berlin being just one example. Modern German art was collected by brave curators such as Hugo von Tschudi in the National Gallery in Berlin, who was eventually dismissed for his buying decisions against the Kaiser's advice but who continued to provide the Munich *Pinakothek* with a fine collection of the European avant-garde.[32] Women had been traditionally excluded from the established male artists' organisations, such as the *Verein der Berliner Künstler* (Association of Berlin Artists), founded in 1841, and were admitted with mere guest status to some of the more prestigious German art academies.[33] Even then, they were excluded from a range of courses including the life drawing classes which were understood as developing the artist's highest skill and seen as being beyond women's capacities. Women's art was belittled by critics, and ridiculed in humorous journals.[34] If their work was sold, it was far below prices that paintings by their male colleagues commanded.[35]

The anti-feminist critique of women's art was usually published in response to exhibitions. Alfred Lichtwark's review of the 8th exhibition of the Association of Female Artists in 1883 is an early example of an attempt to belittle women's art. While the director of the *Kunsthalle* in Hamburg acknowledged a few 'pretty' and 'outstanding' art works by women, the praise is passed on to the male professors teaching their classes, accusing the women of copying their teacher's style.[36] The 1891 'Exhibition of Famous Female Artists' in the Gurlitt Gallery in Berlin, caused the

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[30] Robin Lenman, *Artists and society in Germany, 1850-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), Peter Paret, *Art as history. Episodes in the culture and politics of nineteenth century Germany* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[31] Peter Paret, *The Berlin Secession. Modernism and its enemies in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, Mass., London: Belknap, 1980; reprint, German Translation: Die Berliner Secession, Vienna 1983).

[32] Peter Paret, 'The Tschudi affair,' *Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 4 (1981), pp. 589-618.

[33] See statistics on the number of students in art institutions and art academies for 1913 – 1914, *Statistisches Jahrbuch des Deutschen Reiches*, (Berlin: 1914), p. 321. Almost 500 female students took classes in state art schools throughout Germany in 1913 and 1914.

[34] See cartoon *Malweiber* by Bruno Paul in *Simplicissimus* (1989) and 'Women artists' ball'by Eduard Thöny, portraying female artists as lesbians, *Simplicissimus* 46 (1902/3).

[35] Compare, *Der Kunstmarkt* VII (Leipzig: 1914/15).

[36] Alfred Lichtwark: Die VIII: Ausstellung des Vereins der Künstlerinnen, 1882, in *National-Zeitung*, Morgen-Ausgabe, 9, 26.2.1882, printed in Carola Muysers, ed., *Die Bildende Künstlerin. Wertung und Wandel in deutschen Quellentexten, 1855-1945* (Amsterdam, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1999), pp. 55-58.

owner, Cornelius Gurlitt, to demand that women should not aspire to male excellence in painting which is characterised by its creation of something new, which, because of their sex, women were unable to accomplish and would merely end up making their art less appealing. Instead, they were condescendingly advised to concentrate on the specifically female capacity 'to capture human nature with one glance'.[37]

In 1908, the publication of Karl Scheffler's booklet *Die Frau und die Kunst* (Women in the Visual Arts) marked the peak of the anti-feminist debate in the art world.[38] Karl Scheffler, a renowned art critic at the time and editor of the modernist monthly art journal *Kunst und Künstler*, denied women the capability for creativity on the grounds of their biological and intellectual nature. Because of female passivity and single-mindedness, argued Scheffler, women would find the fulfilment of their cultural vocation in motherhood alone, an experience to which their instincts and qualifications were naturally adapted. Women lacked the mental ability to reach a synthesis through analysis, Scheffler continued, and consequently only a man could be genuinely creative. Scheffler belittled women's contribution to art and literature by ignoring much of it, and by depicting it as being un-original and of inferior quality. Scheffler's and his colleagues'[39] arguments were not left unchallenged. His remarks were answered not only by female artists, including Hermione von Preusschen, but also by the female art critic Lu Märten and the leader of the German's women movement, Gertrud Bäumer.[40] Their objective was to set the record straight, and their responses started off by remarking how outdated anti-feminist opinions as displayed by the male critics were. Preusschen, Märten and Bäumer rebutted their arguments by highlighting contributions by female artists and writers to the nation's cultural heritage and the international art world, including Angelika Kauffmann, Elisabeth Baumann-Jericho, Rosa Bonheur and Anna Peters.

The disregard of women's art has to be seen within the wider context of a strong antifeminist movement countering ideas of women's emancipation in Wilhelmine Germany.[41] Women's success in painting, which traditionally had been a highly

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[37] Cornelius Gurlitt, Ausstellung von Werken berühmter Malerinnen (1891), printed in ibid., pp. 59-61.
[38] Karl Scheffler, *Die Frau und die Kunst* (Berlin: Bard 1908).
[39] Ludwig Pietsch, 1879 in Muysers, ed., *Die Bildende Künstlerin*, pp. 51-54. Cornelius Gurlitt, 1891 ibid., pp. 59-61. Alfred Lichtwark, 1882 ibid., pp. 55-58. Franz Servaes, 1894 ibid., pp. 61-65. Georg Malkowsky, 1894/95 ibid., pp. 65-67. Johannes Rodberg, 1895 ibid., pp. 68-71. Jaro Springer, 1896/96 ibid., pp. 71-72.
[40] Gertrud Bäumer, *Die Frau und das geistige Leben* (Leipzig: C.F. Amelangs, 1911), Lu Märten, *Die Künstlerin. Eine Monographie* (Munich: 1914).
[41] Ute Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich. Diskurs, soziale Formation und politische Mentalität* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

regarded and prestigious male profession, endangered a world view that saw women's place only as mothers in the home. Yet, artistic talent and the advance of women in the art-world was not stopped. In comparison to their male counterparts, the representation of women artists in juries and large exhibitions such as the Great Berliner Art Exhibition or the Secession exhibitions was still considerably lower than the number of male artists, but had begun to grow. Their involvement in modernist groups in the first decade of the 20th century, such as Gabriele Münter in the Munich based group *Der blaue Reiter*,[42] or Martha Schrag in the Chemnitz Artists' Group contributed to raising the profile of female artists.[43] Further examples for the time of the First World War are Hannah Höch's and Emmi Henning's links to the DADA movement.[44] The revolution in November 1918 and the period after the First World War were marked by a range of newly founded artists' groups including the *Novembergruppe* (1918),[45] *Junges Rheinland* (1918)[46] or the *Hamburg Secession* (1919),[47] all of which had a considerable number of female members, and which illustrates a phase of further recognition for and activism of female artists.[48]

In 1919, Käthe Kollwitz was appointed the first female professor of the Prussian academy of the arts, and by then, the academies had been opened for women but experienced a general decline in importance which was linked to their conservative understanding and teaching of art. The Bauhaus, however, which was founded in 1919 with a liberal understanding of art and a new ethos in teaching, displayed an institutional bias against women artists. Whereas the statutes were committed to accepting female students, the more prestigious faculties such as architecture and design continued to be male only.[49] Thus, the established support structures and networks of the female artists associations continued to have an essential role as women's agencies. Despite the exclusion from prestigious art academies, since the latter half of the 19th century, female artists were a distinctive and visible part of the art world in Germany,

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[42] Helmut Friedel and Annegret Hoberg, eds., *Der Blaue Reiter im Lehnbachhaus München* (Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2000).
[43] Gerhard Hahn, *Leben und Werk der Malerin und Grafikerin Martha Schrag, 1870-1957* (Chemnitz (Karl-Marx Stadt): Bezirkskunstzentrum, 1982).
[44] Hannah Höch, *Eine Lebenscollage*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1989), Karl Riha and Franz J. Weber, eds., *Betrunken taumeln alle Litfaßsäulen* (Lüneburg: Klampen, 1999).
[45] *Anklage und Aufruf. Deutsche Kunst zwischen den Kriegen*, (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, National-Galerie, 1964).
[46] Stadtmuseum Düsseldorf, ed., *Das Junge Rheinland. Eine Friedensidee* (Düsseldorf: Claasen, 1988).
[47] Maike Bruhns, *Anita Rée. Leben und Werk einer Hamburger Malerin, 1885-1933* (Hamburg: Verlag für Hamburgische Geschichte, 1986).
[48] On women in the avant-garde movements see also chapter five in Klaus von Beyme, *Das Zeitalter der Avantgarden, 1905-1955* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005), pp. 125-65.
[49] Berger, 'German female artists,' p. 104.

and many established successful careers.[50] Pioneering women succeeded in setting up their own educational institutions and effectively opened artistic career paths for future generations of female artists. The Association of Female Artists and Patrons of Berlin had a crucial role in representing and supporting women artists as a professional group. Their success is visible in the increased publicity and recognition women received in Weimar Germany for their art.[51]

Notwithstanding the existing opposition in families and society, it would be misleading to describe the history of female artists as one of constant suppression and marginalisation. In comparison to many other groups of women in Wilhelmine Germany, female artists were able to lead extremely privileged lives. Most of them had been able to complete their school education before they joined art classes. Many of them were also able, through family support or scholarships, to finance a comprehensive artistic education. Most of the women were able to spend time in Venice, Florence or Paris to complete their artistic training and a good number of them were able to establish careers. Furthermore, the independence and liberty these women were able to enjoy as artists underlines their privileged status. These women were passionate about their art, many were very talented and mostly able to earn a living with their art. Thus they were able to exercise a profession of their choice long before other career paths were open to women.

Methodology and Sources

Based on existing written and artistic responses to the First World War, I have selected forty artists for my thesis. The group includes a number of artists who are well known today, such as Käthe Kollwitz, Charlotte Berend and Hannah Höch. Most of the forty artists, however, have been absent from public memory, exhibitions, and research, and remain largely unknown in Germany today. Among these are artists such as Sella Hasse, Martha Schrag, Katharina Heise, Lina von Schauroth, Magdalena Koll, and Eva Schmidt, some of whom are highly regarded locally even though they may be unknown

[50] Carola Muysers, 'Warum gab es berühmte Künstlerinnen? Erfolge bildender Künstlerinnen der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts,' in *Profession ohne Tradition*, ed. Berlinische Galerie (Berlin: Kupfergraben, 1992), pp. 21-34.

[51] Marsha Meskimmon and Shearer West, eds., *Visions of the 'Neue Frau'. Women and the visual arts in Weimar Germany* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995).

at a national level. The forty artists were chosen with respect to the existence and availability of sufficient artistic and written source material.

In order to prove the artists' cohesion as a group, biographical information on individual artists is provided in the appendix. The biographies focus specifically on information that relates to the artists' social background. This is followed by details regarding their education and their artistic careers and, where possible, participation in group exhibitions and solo-exhibitions is mentioned. This background information helps to assess the artists' artistic or other responses during the war, which was the focus-point for the collection of biographical details. It was possible to obtain comprehensive biographical information for 24 out of the 40 artists referred to in my thesis. Examples of art produced during the war were found for 38 artists. Three of the 24 came from aristocratic families. All of the remaining 21 artists were from socially privileged backgrounds - the educated middle and upper classes. Their families owned factories or estates, their fathers were industrialists and professionals, they worked as civil servants, doctors, priests and lawyers. These were also often the professions of the artist's husbands, apart from those who were married to colleagues or former art teachers. All of these women completed their secondary education and all of the artists received some kind of formal training. Art education for women was mostly private and had to be paid for, which many families did, often despite an initial reluctance. Four-fifths of the artists had an established career before 1914, and when war broke out their art was publicly accessible in exhibitions and reprinted in artistic magazines.

My research started with a broad search on female artists who were building up or had an established artistic career around the time of the Great War. Information about the individual artists was gathered in the archive of the *Stiftung Akademie der Künste* (Foundation of the Academy of the Arts) in Berlin, the *Zentralarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz* (Central Archive of the Prussian Cultural Heritage) in Berlin, the archive of the *Künstlerinnenverein Berlin* (Berlin Female Artists' Association), the archive of the *Germanisches Nationalmusuem* (National Germanic Museum) in Nuremberg and the archive of the *Württembergischer Malerinnenverein* (Female Painters' Association of Wuerttemberg). Several small local archives and museums proved valuable for the personal papers and artistic heritage of individual artists such as the *Stadtmuseum Schönebeck* (City Museum of Schoenebeck) for Katharina Heise and the *Schabbelhaus* in Wismar for Sella Hasse.

At the same time, collections in state and other archives were searched for artistic testimony by women artists and a number of posters and images was collected from the war collection of the *Staatsbibliothek* (State Library) in Berlin, the *Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv* (Bavarian Main State Archive) in Munich, the Stadtarchiv (City Archive) and the *Kriegsarchiv* (War Archive) in Munich, the archive of the *Kunsthalle* (Art Gallery) in Hamburg, the Stadtarchiv (City Archive) in Bremen, the *Archiv des Deutschen Historischen Museums* (Archive of the German Historical Museum) in Berlin, the *Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte* (Library for Contemporary History) in Stuttgart, the Kriegsarchiv (War Archive) in Vienna and the Imperial War Museum in London. Material in the *Bundesarchiv* (National Archives), *Auswärtige Amt* (Archive of the Foreign Service) and the *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz* (Prussian State Archive) in Berlin provided background information for the cultural policies at the time. In order to place the experiences of women artists within a wider framework of women's experiences during the war, the material in the *Archiv der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Archive of the German Women's Movement) in Kassel and the *Helene Lange Archiv im Landesarchiv Berlin* (Helene Lange Collection in the State Archive of Berlin) provided crucial insight.

While it was possible to collect valuable personal information for most of the artists, sources for a number of individual artists remained fragmented. This means that I was able to collect visual material, but this could not always be complemented with biographical information. In other cases, written sources exist, but the artistic oeuvre of the artists could not be found. Overall, however, diary entries, letters, pamphlets, literary publications, poetry, novels, articles in women's magazines and notes on images provide sufficient information to contextualise, analyse and evaluate women's art of the First World War.

It should be emphasised that the actual wartime art by women represents the most important body of sources for this thesis. Images are understood as a visual language of the war that expresses wartime experiences from the female perspective. Reflected in women's art are the artist's own as well as more general observations of the time and art is understood as a medium that reflects contemporary female mentalities.[52] As Peter Paret has argued in his symbiosis of historical and art-historical approach, historical understanding has to be fed from both the typical more general elements of the time and the special, the personal experience that influenced the

[52] On the usage of images as historical sources see, Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Die Historiker und die Bilder. Überlegungen zu Francis Haskell,' *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 24 (1998), pp. 305-22.

individual artists with different results.[53] Far from providing mere supplementary information, an analysis of artistic expression offers the historian fresh and meaningful insights into women's contemporary mentalities regarding themes that were rarely made the subject of written testimonies. Such themes include, for example, the experience of death and trauma and the associated feelings of fear and anxiety. In his study of art as a witness to the period from the Renaissance to the French Revolution, Bernd Roeck asserts that works of art often provide insights that cannot be gained from written documents. Roeck understands art works as cultural products of a historical process which therefore contain valuable primary information.[54] The images examined in this study provide access to emotional reactions and personal feelings that are usually hard to trace for a historian, and thus allow for a unique and invaluable understanding of how women understood the war between 1914 and 1919.

[53] Peter Paret, 'Betrachtungen über deutsche Kunst und Künstler im Ersten Weltkrieg,' in *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), p. 158.
[54] Bernd Roeck, *Das historische Auge. Kunstwerke als Zeugen ihrer Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), pp. 10-13.

Part I The Art of 1914

Chapter 1 *Women's Cultural Mobilisation for War*

> I apologise that the joy of victory, work load and pains in my feet caused the delay in my reply. Now that I am about to sit down, I hardly know what to say: anything personal seems so insignificant at the moment.[1]

This is the beginning of a letter by the writer Martha Zobeltitz to the handicraft artist and women's activist Ida Dehmel in September 1914, only four weeks after the outbreak of the First World War. It illustrated an attitude which was shared by many of her contemporaries: personal concerns had to be suspended for a 'national mission' which had to be accomplished. Especially the educated women of the middle classes had specific ideas about the meaning of war and the roles women were to fulfil. An ideological dimension was not only vital for women to identify with the war, but also essential to secure practical support for the war effort. Both aspects are illustrated by the quotation above. Besides claiming that personal matters were too trivial to write about, by highlighting the fact that workload and pains in the feet (caused by work for the war effort as highlighted further on in the letter) kept her from replying earlier, the author underlined her individual zeal to contribute to the war effort. Identification with the national cause replaced personal concerns. For many bourgeois women, the outbreak of war provided – if temporarily— a new, exciting and even glamorous purpose to their lives; consequently the war was supported and promoted with various means.

Leading members of the German women's movement invested much thought and effort in defining the relationship between women and war and explaining its historical dimension, generally concluding that women were indispensable to the war effort. War was perceived as an opportunity to re-invent women's identities, or shift the focus within them. Countless wartime publications, magazine articles, public lectures and pamphlets – written by women – provide evidence for how those ideas were

[1] Letter from Martha Zobeltitz to Ida Dehmel, 4 September 1914, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, Dehmel-Archiv (DA), Br.: 14, 326.

spread.[2] Although these activities were continued throughout the war, an accumulation of publications discussing women's 'inner attitude' to the war emerged during the first months of the conflict, which highlights the importance attached to the outbreak of the war by many women at the time. An influential section of the German women's movement as well as female artists and writers gave the war effort their full support. Their mobilisation was based on the belief in a beneficial war that was fought with the support of God and the prospect of establishing an influential role for women as cultural missionaries in wartime and post-war society.

Instead of being included into the broader analysis of First World War history, gender aspects, and more specifically, the role of women in Germany has traditionally been treated as a separate field. This narrow view has been generated by publications studying the role of bourgeois women in the confined space of their associational life and organisational structures.[3] Those works, while revealing much about the nature and scope of women's wartime activities in the *Nationaler Frauendienst* (NFD) (National Women's Service) or the Red Cross, tell us little about the 'inner' process of national mobilisation of women for the war effort. The term mobilisation here is used in line with the concept of cultural mobilisation as developed by John Horne in *State, society and mobilisation during the First World War.*[4] This understanding widens the usage of the term to describe not only the process of military and economic mobilisation, but also refer to less tangible areas relevant for national mobilisation, such as contemporary mentalities, ideas and ideologies. It also allows us to include the cultural forms which expressed and interpreted those ideas – through language, day to day conduct, writing, and art – in the attempt to decipher contemporary understandings of war.

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[2] For example: Gertrud Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, ed. Ernst Jäckh, *Der deutsche Krieg. Politische Flugschriften,* vol. 15, (Stuttgart, Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1914), Dr Agnes von Harnack, *Der Krieg und die Frauen* (Berlin: Springer, 1915), Helene Lange, *Die Dienstpflicht der Frau. Vortrag gehalten auf der Kriegstagung des Allgemeinen Deutschen Lehrerinnenvereins Pfingsten 1915* (Leipzig, Berlin: Teubner, 1915), Elisabeth Metzdorf-Teschner, *Die allgemeine Wehrpflicht der Frau während des Krieges* (Leipzig: Neueste Frauen-Korrespondenz, 1914), Alma Seitz, *Wiener Frauen im Krieg* (Mönchen-Gladbach: Sekretariat Sozialer Studentenarbeit, 1917).

[3] Ursula von Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1969), Barbara Greven-Aschoff, *Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung in Deutschland, 1884-1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), Renate Wurms, 'Krieg dem Kriege - Dienst am Vaterland. Frauenbewegung im Ersten Weltkrieg,' in *Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, ed. Florence Hervé (Cologne: PapyRossa, 1998), pp. 84-114.

[4] John Horne, ed., *State, society and mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1-17.

Women's 'Ideas of 1914'

Throughout the war, the overwhelming *Augusterlebnis* (experience of August 1914) was reminisced upon as a moment of great force, when the prevailing wish was to serve the fatherland and enthusiasm for war was displayed by women irrespective of their political orientation. For example SPD member Lily Braun, and National-Liberal Gertrud Bäumer, head of the *Bund deutscher Frauenvereine* (BDF), the umbrella organisation of the German women's movement, both warmly welcomed the outbreak of war. August 1914 was remembered as a period 'no one could forget', the experience of which alone would 'would have been worth living for'.[5] In the following years, the crucial events of August 1914 were often recalled in order to revive women's feelings of patriotic solidarity. There was simply no room for an alternative reading of those experiences, and women were frequently assured that by fulfilling their national duty, they were taking the only acceptable course of action. 'In August 1914 under looming danger, women experienced a new feverish love' – that of the fatherland, reminisced an author of the calendar of the *Vaterländischer Frauenverein* (VF) (Patriotic Women's Association) in 1916. She continued: 'To serve this country, to serve the greater whole of the nation, means honour and great satisfaction for every daughter of Germany.'[6]

The perceived unity of the nation, through the inclusion of women into the *'Volkskörper'* ('body of the nation') relieved them from an existence that now was described as having been dull and meaningless.[7] The novelty of the prospect of fighting for an aim that was acknowledged by the whole society, instead of engaging in the minority struggle that constituted the 'women's question', secured the support of many, hitherto politically inactive, women. As the following excerpt from a wartime pamphlet written by Gertrud Bäumer suggests, the war was also understood as a rite of passage for the women's movement, putting to the test its ambitious goal of educating 'citizens':

> The war rouses us and asks us [the women's movement], as it asks every other great German cultural movement: what is your significance, now at this moment? Encircled by enemies, our fatherland summons the forces for its defence. [...] Now we are faced with the question: do the education and work of the women's movement make women more prepared for this trial of strength that our nation has to accomplish at the

[5] Although general enthusiasm for war in German society has been re-assessed by Jeffrey Verhey, *The spirit of 1914. Militarism, myth and mobilisation in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000),it has to be emphasised that among bourgeois women were some of the staunchest supporters of the war. For example Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, p. 7, Lily Braun, *Die Frauen und der Krieg* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915), p. 9.

[6] *Notizkalender Vaterländischer Frauenverein*, (Berlin: Carl Henmanns, 1916), p. 16.

[7] Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, p. 5.

> moment? If the answer to this question is not an unequivocal 'yes', then our work so far stands condemned and is finished.[8]

Anna Pappritz saw the successful mobilisation of women as a direct result of the efforts of the BDF to educate its members to feel like 'responsible citizens of the state', with the duty to dedicate their working power not just to the narrow circle of the family, but to the fatherland and the nation.[9] During the war, therefore, it was believed that women's own exemplary behaviour lent them citizen status. Women imagined themselves as belonging to the German nation, in full awareness that this included rights and duties.[10] The war was held up as standing for the need of the nation, to whose aid women had the right and duty to come.

Moreover, many women at the time believed that the war would have a beneficial effect not only for the 'lethargic' nation as a whole, but specifically for women's character. The war was thought to bring about the true nature of the individual woman, and it was believed that the necessity of the time would lead to a natural selection among women and exclude those, 'who had not been touched by the great time'.[11] The war was thought to bring out the best in everyone: it was believed to be an educator, eliminating all weakness of character, and emphasizing personal strength.[12] Thus war was seen as a cleanser, a chastener that would improve the inner qualities of the nation.[13] The writer Helene Christaller asserts that to her, 'the war was the most gigantic means to bring about a catharsis and generate personal improvement'.[14] Women stressed this aspect especially, as they believed that the war would provide them with experiences that would be comparable to men's military education, and its presumed positive influence on character.[15] The universal experience of war was

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[8] Gertrud Bäumer, 'Die Frauen und der Krieg,' in *Kriegsjahrbuch des Bundes Deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF)* (Berlin, Leipzig, Mannheim: Bensheimer, 1915), p. 3.
[9] Anna Pappritz, 'Nationaler Frauendienst,' ibid., p. 33.
[10] On the concept of imagined belonging to national communities see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
[11] Charlotte Riese, 'Dem Mann zur Seite,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg. Ein Rat-, Tat-, und Trostbuch. Gesammelte Blätter aus Frauenhand*, ed. Karl Jünger (Stuttgart: Lutz, 1916), pp. 78-88.
[12] Margarete Pochhammer, 'Helft erziehen!,' ibid., pp. 182-83.
[13] Dr Hanna Hellmann, 'Die innere Stellungnahme der Frauen zum Krieg,' *Die Frau* 24, no. 10 (1917), p. 578, Pauline Herber, 'Herzensbildung,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg*, ed. Karl Jünger, pp. 126-30, Margarete Pochhammer, 'Helft erziehen!,' ibid., pp. 182-83.
[14] Helene Christaller, 'Die große Hoffnung,' ibid., p. 167.
[15] Lange, *Die Dienstpflicht der Frau,* Anna Pappritz, 'Nationaler Frauendienst,' in *Kriegsjahrbuch des BDF*, 1915, pp. 27-33.

stressed: it was not something women could be excluded from. The experience of war, it was thought, would naturally equalize women and men.[16]

The war was commonly understood to have been caused by the jealousy and resentment of Germany's neighbours, which justified the 'defensive war' strategy. Even from the viewpoint of the alleged victim, war was not perceived as something terrible and devastating. On the contrary, it was accepted as a necessity, as fate, or as a trial sent by God.[17] This could only be successfully overcome with women's assistance:

> Asserting that women determine the moral and religious state of their nation is not saying too much. If it is truly God's intention to award our nation with a leading position among the world-powers after the war; if He is planning to entrust us with the reformation of this world [...] this can only be accomplished when we, the women of Germany, feed the flames of sacred belief, when we become more Christian, more inward-looking, and more feminine.[18]

If God wanted the world to go through war, then it could only be with the purpose of bringing about a purer and stronger Germany. Her victory would then be the proof for the superiority of German culture.[19]

Women as Cultural Missionaries

The centrality of the concept of culture for women's reading of the war was illustrated by opinions which associated the status of German culture with previous victorious wars, and envisaged a powerful future influence for German culture:

> Culture as an ethical force in wartime is important for warfare. Misery could not be endured without lively intellectual and spiritual influences. Culture provides strength for war. The flourishing of German culture has always been associated with war: the Wars of Liberation and 1870/71, which provided the basis for a new intellectual development.[20]

This key statement by Helen Lange emphasises the imagined interdependence of war and culture. Not only was the war fought to defend German culture, but culture itself

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[16] Dr. Josephine Levy-Rathenau, 'Die Lehren des Krieges für die Frauenberufsbildung,' ibid., p. 68, Riese, 'Dem Mann zur Seite,' ' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg*, ed. Karl Jünger, pp. 87-88, Gräfin von Schwerin-Löwitz, 'Mithelfen!,' ibid., p. 150.

[17] Anna Freiin von Krane, 'Die Feuerprobe,' ibid., pp. 154-56, Frieda Ufer-Held, *Stark in Gott. Ein Wort an Deutschlands Frauen in schwerer Zeit* (Barmen: Müller, 1915).

[18] Clara Heitefuß, *Deutsche Frauen - deutsche Treue. Ein Wort an Deutschlands Frauen.* (Elberfeld: Licht und Leben, 1915), p. 13.

[19] Dr. Margarete Bieber, *Krieg und Kultur* (Kassel: Scheel, 1915), pp. 5-20.

[20] Helene Lange, 'Der Krieg und die deutsche Kultur,' in *Kriegsjahrbuch des BDF*, 1915, p. 16.

was vital for strengthening the moral force needed to continue fighting. The war was presented as being in the tradition of the Wars of Liberation (1813-15), and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), which were understood as times when German culture flourished. Both previous wars had provided the basis for a new intellectual development, consequently similar expectations were held of the current struggle.[21]

Most importantly; the 'cultural war' was a war that could be fought by means other than weapons, consequently it provided an opportunity for women to actively engage in the war effort. In tune with their 'ideas of 1914', women outlined wartime tasks for themselves. The proclamation that women were destined to fulfil a special mission in this present war, namely 'to serve the fatherland as keepers and guardians of its material and cultural goods' was the core of their wartime ideology and presented as women's new national responsibility.[22] Women presented themselves as the moral backbone of the nation and the embodiment of great German qualities such as loyalty, bravery, diligence and a sense of duty.[23] The women's mission encompassed 'sustaining the national character' and creating 'durable peacetime values'.[24] By outlining a role for women as *Kulturträgerinnen* (preservers of German cultural values) in wartime, women had found a niche for themselves in the national war effort.

More generally, women understood culture to represent Germany's standing in the world. The war was held to endanger German culture in general, and so was seen as a threat to the position of women in their role as guardians of German cultural ideals. This explains the cultural imperialist attitudes which were displayed, and the attempts to unite the forces of German culture. As Gertrud Bäumer wrote, women were engaged in what could be called the 'German cultural mission', the special influence Germans were destined to exert on the intellectual property of the world.[25] The depiction of German women as *Kulturträgerinnen* stressed their contribution to the interests of the state and needs of the nation. Specifically outlined to strengthen the morale of home- and fighting-front by ennobling the traits and characteristics of Germans, the encouraging

[21] Bieber, *Krieg und Kultur*, pp. 14-16, Lange, 'Der Krieg und die deutsche Kultur,' pp. 16-18.
[22] Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, p. 11, Sophie Hoechstetter, 'Die neue vaterländische Verantwortung der Frau,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg*, ed. Karl Jünger, pp. 170-75, Helene Lange, 'Die große Zeit und die Frauen,' *Die Frau*, no. September (1914), pp. 712-14, Pappritz, 'Nationaler Frauendienst,' p. 33.
[23] Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, pp. 6-7, Margarete Böhme, 'Begeisterte Hingabe,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg*, ed. Karl Jünger, p. 55, Thea von Harbou, *Die deutsche Frau im Weltkrieg. Einblicke und Ausblicke* (Leipzig: Hesse und Becker, 1916).
[24] Levy-Rathenau, 'Die Lehren des Krieges für die Frauenberufsbildung,' p. 68.
[25] Bäumer, 'Die Frauen und der Krieg,' p. 2.

role taken on by these women even appeased the anti-feminists who modified their outspoken criticism somewhat in response.[26]

The vigorous activities women engaged in on behalf of the war effort suggest that their concern to establish a vital position for themselves in wartime society was motivated by true national interest and irrefutable patriotism. In September 1914, under the auspices of the BDF, an *Appeal to Women Abroad* was composed to defend the righteousness of the German cause in the war, justify the military actions and counter accusations of atrocities being committed by German soldiers.[27] The latter were described as 'inventions of the foreign press', which were to be corrected by selected propaganda material that was disseminated along with the open letter. The signatories included amongst others Gertrud Bäumer, Hedwig Dohm and Marianne Weber, as representatives of the bourgeois women's movement, yet support for the venture was far more widespread. Well-known writers such as Clara Viebig, Ida Boy-Ed, Ricarda Huch, and Isolde Kurz signed the appeal. A number of artists including Käthe Kollwitz, the sculptor Sabine Lepsius and Cornelia Pazcka-Wagner and also Ida Dehmel were signatories of the 'Appeal' which was sent to over 4, 000 addresses abroad.[28] This initiative emphasises loyalty to the national cause and is evidence of the self-mobilisation of bourgeois, especially feminist and culturally active women and abundant support for the waging of war.

Although the intention to establish a 'news-agency' never materialised, this engagement in wartime propaganda highlights the sincerity with which women waged their own cultural war, and the efforts made to justify their wartime role as preservers of German culture. This role, which was founded upon what they saw as the virtues of the German people, was endangered by depictions of the 'German brutes' in French and British newspapers, which women therefore rejected. The notion of German soldiers committing atrocities challenged the professed superiority of German characteristics and of German culture, which in turn contested women's roles as its representatives. The atrocities were consequently denied, although violence against civilians had

[26] Ute Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich. Diskurs, soziale Formation und politische Mentalität* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), p. 178.

[27] *An die Frauen des Auslandes*, LA Berlin, Helene Lange Archiv (HLA), 187/1: 2741. The document is reprinted in the appendix, pp. 291-192. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time it has been published since the war.

[28] 'Die Kriegsarbeit des BDF,' in *Heimatdienst im ersten Kriegsjahr. Jahrbuch des BDF für 1916* (Berlin, Leipzig, Mannheim: Bensheimer, 1916), p. 7.

characterised the advance of the German army in Belgium and France.[29] The distribution of the 'Appeal' signified the denial of the accusations which would endanger the idealised picture of 'true Germanness'. If women were to act as preservers of cultural ideas, and genuinely believe in this concept, it was necessary to present German culture as pure, clean, and worthy.

The connection of the women's 'Appeal' to the well known 'Appeal to the World of Culture', a manifesto signed by 93 leading male intellectuals, writers and artists in October 1914 in defence of Germany's war aims and denying the charge of German atrocities, is obvious.[30] The women's 'Appeal' dates from September 1914 and may even have been distributed before the 'Appeal to the World of Culture'. While both documents express support for the war effort, there were differences in emphasis between the two appeals that appeared to arise from the difference in gender roles. The male cultural elites emphasised the rejuvenating and liberating effect of war.[31] Male artists especially welcomed the personal dimension of the experience of war, who saw it as an opportunity to live through all dimensions of people's emotions and expand their understanding of human nature.[32] The idea that the fighting itself, the direct physical engagement in war and battle, would bring about cultural salvation and personal fulfilment, attracted many men, but was absent from women's ideas of the war. They could neither share the practical side of defending German culture, nor could they physically protect the fatherland from its surrounding enemies, hence their wartime roles prioritised more spiritual tasks in the 'cultural war' that was being fought.

Both men and women believed that enduring the war would finally make them worthy of the intellectual heritage left to them and enable them to match the great minds of the past.[33] War was understood by both sexes as a chance to grow personally and to prove individual worthiness, which shifted the war from the political to a very private

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[29] On German atrocities see John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German atrocities 1914. A history of denial* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2001).

[30] Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg and Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg, *Der Aufruf 'An die Kulturwelt!' Das Manifest der 93 und die Anfänge der Kriegspropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996).

[31] Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'Die deutschen kulturellen Eliten im Ersten Weltkrieg,' in *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), pp. 1-15, Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'German artists, writers and intellectuals and the meaning of war, 1914-1918,' in *State, society and mobilisation in Europe during the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 21-38, Joes Segal, 'Krieg als erlösende Perspektive für die Kunst,' in *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), pp. 165-70.

[32] Theda Shapiro, *Painters and politics. The European avant-garde and society, 1900-1925* (New York, Oxford, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1976), pp. 132-66.

[33] 'Den Geistern der Ahnen,' *Der Kunstwart* Erstes Septemberheft (1914), pp. 338-39.

and personal level. The improved 'self' would be able to serve the nation even better. Common ground was also found in visions of an influential post-war German culture, guaranteeing the long term continuity of German cultural ideals. The idea that these efforts would outlast their own mortal existence was a major motivation and justification to support the war.

To secure their position as 'cultural missionaries', women went beyond the preservation of German culture by formulating cultural imperialist ideas.[34] These envisaged German culture obtaining a worldwide influence. As Helene Lange wrote in 1915 'German culture is guided with an iron hand on a path which will transform it into a force to shape the world.'[35] The phrasing suggests that German culture was not simply led by human influence but had divine guidance. This indicates that culture in contemporary minds had gained a sacred character. Accordingly, those who engaged in the war were seen as mediators, acting on behalf of stronger forces. This understanding of war ruled out the possibility of questioning the rights and wrongs of one's own activities, let alone those of war. Women had created a potent framework to justify why the war had to be fought. The path of German culture was understood to be pre-determined, and the war guided its direction as declared by artist Claire Dur:

> Can a – finally unified – nation whose soul victoriously arches across the countries of this world be crushed or halted in its development? We artistically working women who are lucky to be able to still exert their influence in Germany know for sure: never![36]

German women, moreover, believed they could serve to homogenise national culture by 'planting the seeds of true German values' which had been envisaged before the war for the colonies and which was now planned for *Oberost,* the occupied territory on the Eastern Front.[37] There, political and economic dominance were to be secured by cultural hegemony.[38] Many of the wartime tasks were understood to be a preparation for the time after the war, when – after the expected German military success – vast

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[34] On cultural imperialism see: Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'Wandlungen der liberalen Idee im Zeitalter des Imperialismus,' in *Liberalismus und imperialistischer Staat*, ed. Karl Holl and Günther List (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), pp. 262-415.

[35] Lange, 'Der Krieg und die deutsche Kultur,' p. 11.

[36] Claire Dur, 'Niemals!,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg*, ed. Karl Jünger, p. 28.

[37] Margarethe von Eckenbrecher quoted in, *Südwestbote*, Windhoek (15.10.1913). I thank Daniel Steinbach for the reference on women in the colonies. On Oberost see Else Frobenius, 'Eine Frauenfahrt an die Ostfront,' *Die Frau*, no. 9 (June 1917), pp. 530-41.

[38] Roger Chickering, 'Casting their gaze more broadly. Women's patriotic activism in Imperial Germany,' *Past and Present* 118 (1988), pp. 156-85, Lora Wildenthal, 'She is the victor. Bourgeois women, nationalist identities, and the ideal of the independent women farmer in German Southwest Africa,' in *Society, culture and the state in Germany*, ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 371-195.

amounts of 'cultural work' awaited German women.[39] In effect, in the eyes of many German bourgeois women the war was fought in the name of cultural ideals, and their own position in the war and their standing in society was inextricably bound up with the fate of German culture. This can be seen as an attempt to create roles for women in which they would be identified, first and foremost, through 'German culture', an emancipatory vision that would relegate to secondary status any identities for women that were primarily defined through marriage or housework.

The necessity and importance of the women's mission was facilitated by a general interpretation within German society of the war as a cultural war.[40] And, given the important status of culture in Wilhelmine Germany, in taking responsibility for the preservation of culture, women were claiming to be in charge of a vital element of national identity. The understanding of the German nation as a 'cultural nation' is a prerequisite to understanding the importance placed on culture by bourgeois women. Culture was felt to have represented the German nation and its tradition long before the actual political manifestation of the German nation state in 1871.[41] Women's roles as preservers of German culture were flexible, and completed the triangle with the state as the general protector of culture, and men as its direct physical defenders.[42] It was not only in Germany, however, that culture played a vital role for the national mobilisation. Cultural elites in Britain and France understood the German onslaught as an expression of her militaristic nature and expansionist culture, whereas England and France were defending the basics of human civilisation.[43] Consequently, the very reasons to go to war for these three belligerent nations were – in contemporary minds – ultimately connected to each nation's understanding of culture.

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[39] Charlotte Engels-Reimers, 'Wir Frauen und der Krieg,' *Die Welt der Frau* 34 (1915), p. 531, Lange, 'Der Krieg und die deutsche Kultur,' p. 18, Hermine Möbius, 'Neue Grundlagen,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg*, ed. Karl Jünger, pp. 176-81.

[40] Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der erste Weltkrieg. Ein Versuch* (Berlin: Fest, 2000), Wolfgang J. Mommsen, ed., *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996).

[41] Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte. 1866-1918. Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist*, 3 ed., vol. 1 (Munich: Beck, 1994), pp. 533-47, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Von der deutschen Doppelrevolution bis zum Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges, 1849-1914*, vol. 3 (Munich: Beck, 1995), p. 952.

[42] Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und künstlerische Avantgarde, 1870-1918. Kultur und Politik im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt M., Berlin: Ullstein, 1994), pp. 129-31, Peter Paret, 'The artist as Staatsbürger. Aspects of the fine arts and the Prussian state before and during the First World War,' *German Studies Review* 6 (1983), pp. 421-37.

[43] Barbara Beßlich, *Wege in den "Kulturkrieg". Zivilisationskritik in Deutschland, 1890-1914* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), Martha Hanna, *The mobilisation of intellect. French scholars and writers during the Great War* (Cambridge (Mass.), London: Harvard University Press, 1996), Samuel Hynes, *A war imagined. The First World War and English Culture* (London: Bodley Head, 1990).

The concept of women as bearers of German cultural values was not an invention of women's war time propaganda in 1914. A cultural mission for women had previously been envisaged at the time of the Wars of Liberation and the Franco-Prussian War. During the time of the French occupation after 1806, women's roles as preservers of a specific 'German' culture had been an essential part of national defence because the foreign – French – influence in language, customs and morals was understood to be responsible for the German malaise.[44] The women's task of preserving 'German' national customs and 'German' culture was considered to be a major national duty. Women were also responsible for passing on the understanding of culture and values to the next generations to guarantee the continuation of these 'German' characteristics. At the time, the importance of this task had been formulated by female and male authors alike.[45] The qualifications women needed to teach the coming generation provided the grounds for arguing for an improvement in women's education and participation in national events. In women's perception, this had led to a revaluation of women's roles as educators not only for children, but for the nation as a whole.[46]

Women's written and visual wartime productions illustrate, moreover, women's own involvement in shaping their wartime identities. Their practical and intellectual efforts in support of the national war effort emphasise the prominence of women's activism in society. This also suggests that the still dominating theory of the 'double helix' by the historian Margret Randolph Higonnet in relation to gender and war, which argues that during and after the war, women were caught in a system of constant subordination to men and failed to achieve permanent changes of their situation, should be adapted to women's contemporary perspectives who did not perceive themselves as oppressed victims of manhood.[47]

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[44] Ute Planert, ed., *Nation, Politik und Geschlecht. Frauenbewegung und Nationalismus in der Moderne* (Frankfurt M.: Campus, 2000), p. 29.

[45] During the 18th century, the responsibility for the education of the offspring had been a male duty. The visible shift of the education of children to women's duties during the Napoleonic Wars attached new national importance to the role of women, see: Ann-Taylor Allen, *Feminismus und Mütterlichkeit in Deutschland 1800-1914* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 2000), pp. 37-44.

[46] I thank Matthew Stibbe for drawing my attention to the article by Doris Kaufmann, 'Die Ehre des Vaterlandes und die Ehre der Frauen oder der Kampf an der äußeren und inneren Front. Der Deutsch-Evangelische Frauenbund im Übergang vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik,' *Evangelische Theologie* 46 (1986), pp. 277-92.

[47] Margaret Randolph Higonnet and Patrice Higonnet, 'The double helix,' in *Behind the lines. Gender and the two world wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, et al. (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 31-47.

Women's 'Art of 1914'

Besides their intellectual mobilisation for war, many artists were engaged in supporting the war effort practically or with artistic means. The practical war work that was taken up by female artists illustrates how many women adapted their real lives in the attempt to be of use for the war effort. It is not well known, for example, that artist Hannah Höch interrupted her studies in Berlin to work as a Red Cross nurse in her home town Gotha in 1915.[48] After one year, she resumed her studies in Berlin and from 1917 on, was associated with the Dada circle in Berlin.[49] Ridiculing Prussian militarism and its exponents became a central element of Höch's photo-montages from 1917/18 on. It is likely that her experiences as a nurse, caused by her initial mobilisation, contributed to her artistic radicalisation; a process that can similarly be witnessed when examining artists such as George Grosz or John Heartfield, whose experiences during the war were reflected in their ensuing art.

Käthe Kollwitz's initial reaction to the war could almost be described as a fascination with the effect it had upon the young generation in Germany and specifically upon her own sons.[50] She saw the potential for a cultural renewal of German society, and understood her sons' wish to participate. While her later relationship to the war was marked by ambiguities, Kollwitz herself displayed an initial readiness to engage in the national war effort and was active in the National Women's Service.[51] In her position as head of the *Frauenkunstverband* in Berlin, she shared responsibilities for the association's wartime initiatives, such as design competitions for war posters or postcards, and donations to impoverished members.[52] The initial excitement of August 1914, as expressed in Kollwitz's diary, was an attitude that grew more distant and difficult with the duration of the war, and was altered after her son was killed at the front in October 1914.[53]

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[48] BG-VdBK 147 Höch, Hannah, Archiv des Vereins der Berliner Künstlerinnen.

[49] The Dada movement developed from opposition to the First World War and spread from Zurich from 1916. It embraced a variety of forms of cultural expression ranging from abstract poetry, dance, and cabaret to collage and photomontage. Höch's invention of a new artistic technique, the 'photo-montage', fitted well into the Dada philosophy that rejected all existing art styles as symptoms of the same 'disease' that had caused the war.

[50] See the entries from August 1914 in, Käthe Kollwitz, 'Die Tagebücher, 1908-1943,' ed. Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz (Berlin: Siedler, 1999), pp. 152-55.

[51] For example diary entry from Sunday 23 August 1914, ibid., p. 156.

[52] See, 'Frauenkunstverband,' *Der Deutsche Künstler* (October 1915), p. 55.

[53] For example, see: Regina Schulte, 'Käthe Kollwitz. Das Opfer,' in *Die verkehrte Welt des Krieges. Studien zu Geschlecht, Religion und Tod* (Frankfurt M., New York: Campus, 1998), pp. 117-51.

Ida Dehmel, handicraft artist and active in various women's organisations, directed her efforts to organise circles for women whose husbands were at front. She was married to the poet Richard Dehmel who volunteered for active service in August 1914. Those women crafted so called *Tapetenbücher* (wall-paper booklets), which were an invention of Ida Dehmel.[54] Wallpapers were used, cut into book-like format, and pasted over with newspaper-articles, poems, pictures, and were decorated by hand. They were meant as a 'greeting from the home front', and intended to inform soldiers in the trenches, as well as divert their attention and pass their time. Ida Dehmel, as committee member of the organisation *Deutscher Frauendank*, was also in charge of the distribution of state money to soldiers' wives, and she decided who benefited from the money.[55]

These details just serve as example to sketch the scope of the artists' wartime activities. The monthly newsletter of the Womens' Artists' Association published in *Der Deutsche Künstler* frequently thanked members for their selfless support of national mobilisation and illustrates widespread engagement in the war effort.[56] The newsletter furthermore details the involvement of artists in the NFD, care for the wounded and charity work. Those artists who experienced severe financial cutbacks due to the wartime stagnation in the art market also profited from these initiatives.[57] Many of the local branches of the artists' associations agreed to dedicate the usage of their studios for the national cause. Some housed refugees from East Prussia and set up nurseries, others started women's knitting circles. Some of their Austrian colleagues in Vienna worked in hospitals to assist in the care for the wounded by completing medical drawings.[58]

In 1915, the artist Lina von Schauroth produced a visual account of her own engagement in the war effort. Her painting for the Frankfurt War Charity, reproduced below, stages the artist herself on a horse wagon in the process of collecting *Liebesgaben* (charity donations) for soldiers at the front. The woman sits on the wagon in a very upright position, seemingly proud to be practically involved in supporting the soldiers.

[54] Nachlass Ida Dehmel, Varia, Dehmel-Archiv, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg.
[55] Ida Dehmel - Gertrud Bäumer, 4.07.1916, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, DA, Br. 16, 37.
[56] For example 'Frauenkunstverband,' *Der Deutsche Künstler* (June 1915), p. 23.
[57] For example 'Frauenkunstverband,' *Der Deutsche Künstler* (November 1914), p. 78.
[58] For example 'Frauenkunstverband,' *Der Deutsche Künstler* (February 1915), p. 105



1 Lina von Schauroth, *Collection of Liebesgaben*, 1915[59]

The artist Lina von Schauroth not only portrayed herself in the process of collecting *Liebesgaben*, she was also practically involved in a number of charity initiatives in Frankfurt. As will be shown further on, she produced numerous posters calling for donations for soldiers and moreover delivered *Liebesgaben* personally to soldiers at the front. Her late husband had been a high official in the army and von Schauroth personally arranged a transport to a Frankfurt regiment by using contacts of her husband.[60]

The social pressure to be engaged any wartime activity in order to be accepted and respected by other women was immense. For many women, engagement in the war effort moreover represented a requirement that would allow them to feel part of the national community. The following example of artist Hermione von Preuschen serves to illustrate the social prestige that was attached to engagement in the war effort.[61] In 1916, von Preuschen wrote an account of her attempts to become involved in wartime

[59] Lina von Schauroth, *Einholung der Liebesgaben* (1915) printed in, Helene von Schauroth, ed., *Lina von Schauroth. Eine Frankfurter Künstlerin* (Frankfurt M.: Kramer, 1984), p. 37.
[60] Ibid., p. 26.
[61] Hermione von Preuschen, 'Stille Helden', in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg*, ed. Karl Jünger, pp. 144-47.

activities. Having been too late to work for ordinary war relief work, and having been rejected as a translator for the military authorities, a sense of exclusion felt by the artist becomes obvious. Preuschen was suffering from financial difficulties – as many artists at the time – , and the only contribution towards the war effort she could present to inquiring friends was that she 'almost starved for the fatherland'. All that had been left to her was to 'watch those humble women, who were allowed to direct all their efforts to the war relief work, with jealousy and admiration'. In wartime, she concluded, the artist walked on thorns. But even if those pierced her more than her soles, she would bear and hold out. And even if she was to die, it would be for the fatherland, sweet and honourable. Even by not fulfilling a worthy wartime task, Preuschen tried to colour her suffering with a patriotic touch. If she could not be part of the acknowledged 'women's army', she was nonetheless determined to belong to the 'silent heroes' and, if necessary, die for the fatherland. Preuschen felt the need to explain why she was not engaged in war relief work, and to publicise her 'silent' sacrifice which illustrates the public pressure on women to be visibly involved in national mobilisation. Despite true patriotism, the obligation felt by many women should also be considered as a factor in the production of wartime poster art.

Because support for the war effort was the overwhelming reaction of most female artists to the outbreak of war, the pacifist protest by the artist Annot (Anna Ottonie Jacobi) who was the great-niece of Adolf Menzel in August 1914 represents a remarkable exception. In contrast to her colleagues, Annot's mobilisation was *against* and not *for* the war, but her activism was of the same fervour as that of her colleagues in support of the war effort. Annot distributed pacifist leaflets for which she was imprisoned in Berlin. She subsequently emigrated to Norway. [62]

Ten of the forty artists in this study employed their artistic skill to create wartime posters. The over fifty posters designed by these artists reflect a variety of themes; some were produced to ask for donations of wartime charities, others to influence women's wartime conduct. Generally women's posters were a medium to present and interpret women's 'ideas of 1914' to a larger audience, as all of the posters promoted public initiatives. The sheer quantity of posters designed by women and their wide distribution all over Germany calls into question the thesis often advanced in secondary literature of 'private' spheres of action for women as opposed to 'public'

[62] Stiftung Akademie der Künste (SAdK), Annot-Archiv.

spheres of action for men.[63] The public nature of women's art was essential to constructing women's wartime identities and the didactic nature of poster art contribute towards our understanding of how a wide audience was made acquainted with these visions.

Posters were an important visual medium in wartime. Whereas not all of them can be classified as propaganda, most did bear a clear political message. Not only government institutions used posters for information politics, a host of public institutions and semi private initiatives also made use of visual forms of communication.[64] Designers of posters were commonly understood as commercial artists and the widest field in which their art was used was advertising. Many graphic artists who had previously produced designs to improve the sales of cigarettes or tyres turned, after the outbreak of war in August 1914, to advertising war. For female artists, more importantly, the war worked as a promoter of careers. It shifted the focus in the work of Frankfurt artist Lina von Schauroth from glass and animal painting to the successful design of war posters.[65] The career of artist Magdalena Koll in Bremen was launched through designs for the Red Cross and philanthropic initiatives, which brought her to public attention.[66]

A fairly strict codex existed among the community of graphic artists in Germany. Their forum was the journal *Das Plakat* which, by regularly reviewing the latest graphic art, defined aesthetic criteria and evaluated artistic talent. *Das Plakat* had been founded by the 'Association of Poster Enthusiasts', and was a cooperation of artists, journalists, and art- historians. According to the mission of the association, their intention was to ennoble mass culture and improve general aesthetic taste. Accordingly, war posters were viewed with the same aesthetically critical eyes. Although general political support for the German national war effort was frequently expressed, overt patriotic designs were not necessarily appreciated. *Das Plakat* argued outspokenly

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[63] Joan Kelly has demanded a new theoretical approach in feminist history that, while accepting different social realities for men and women, includes further aspects, such as class and race in the separate spheres analysis of women's roles in society. Women's suppression in the patriarchal Western societies remains, however, the basic assumption of her call for a theoretical revision. Joan Kelly, 'The doubled vision of feminist theory,' *Feminist Studies* 5, no. 1 (1979), pp. 216-27. For a review of how the separate spheres approach has dominated the writing of women's history and its continued relevance, see Linda Kerber, 'Separate spheres, female worlds, women's place. The rhetoric of women's history,' *Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988), pp. 9-39.

[64] Michael Jeismann, 'Propaganda,' in *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, et al. (Munich, Vienna, Zurich: Schöningh, 2003), pp. 198-209.

[65] Schauroth, ed., *Lina von Schauroth. Eine Frankfurter Künstlerin.*

[66] Sophie Dorothea Gallwitz, 'Magdalena Kolls Plakatkunst, ' in: *Das Plakat. Mitteilungen des Vereins der Plakatfreunde* (November 1917), pp. 273-277.

against the production of *Kriegskitsch*, inferior designs, which would offend every true patriot.[67] The editors of the *Plakat* understood themselves, their journal and their art genre as part of the German culture that had to be protected and preserved in wartime. Consequently they took their mission to exercise a positive influence on the general aesthetics of war graphic very seriously. It was believed that their aesthetic criteria would improve the poster's appeal to the audience which was understood as a worthy contribution to the war effort.[68] Many wartime posters came into existence through competitions, which usually had a very broad theme, and were only required to reflect the 'present events'. The individual designers, therefore, were often given scope and opportunity to present drafts influenced by their personal views of the conflict.

Thematically, the posters designed by female graphic artists can be divided into three main groups, all of which address issues of wartime conduct and public morale on the home front. Women's posters often specifically address women and serve as a reminder of wartime duties and wartime sacrifices. Those posters also contain rules for the daily conduct of life according to wartime demands, and thus combine practical advice with national interest. An important theme is, moreover, women's loyalty to the fighting soldier.

The Economic Warfare of the German Housewife

The 'economic trench' was considered to represent the critical battlefield in which the German housewives could prove their worth and virtue. One area in which educated women claimed to have expertise and authority to regulate was the adjustment of households to the wartime requirements. During the war, women believed that the way in which individual households were conducted exerted a direct influence on Germany's macro-economic situation.[69] Germany's reliance on the import of goods and the naval blockade rendered food supply immediately into a crucial question for authorities.[70] In negotiations with the war ministry, members of the women's movement compiled directives about household economics and common nutritional habits. Soon,

[67] A. Halbert, 'Plakat und Patriotismus, ' in: *Das Plakat* (January 1915), pp. 20-21.
[68] Address from the committee, in: *Das Plakat* (November 1914).
[69] Dr Elisabeth Altmann-Gottheiner, 'Hausfrauenpflichten in der Kriegszeit,' in *Kriegsjahrbuch des BDF*, 1915, pp. 19-26.
[70] Belinda Davis, *Home fires burning. Food, politics and everyday life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: 2000), p. 2, 21-23.

women started public campaigns to offer advice about food rationing and the economic usage of food; these were accompanied with wartime recipes, circulated in daily newspapers.[71] Daily cooking and shopping were seen as areas in which housewives and servants especially could contribute their share to 'win the war'. Posters in support of this mission represented only a fraction of food and consumer-related educational work from activists within the NFD, whose main pillar was lecturing. After the first weeks of the war, when urban women were considered to be well enough informed, the lecture activity was shifted in the attempt to change the eating habits of the rural population to prevent food shortages from the start.[72]

The popular poster *War and the Kitchen* by Käthe Spanier was commissioned by the NFD in September 1914. It was issued with newspapers and distributed to over 33, 000 households, where it was meant to be put up in the kitchen.[73] It is a text-based design and represents a very early consideration of possible problems related to food supply. To ensure that women could easily follow the given advice, the NFD had compiled a *Kriegsküchenbox* (wartime kitchen kit) which is advertised on the poster. The contents of this box provided all the required equipment to lead a household according to the wartime necessities. The kit included a cookery book, food-substitutes and patriotic pamphlets.

[71] 'Kochvorführungen, Kochschriftenpropaganda', in *Kriegsjahrbuch des BDF*, 1915, pp. 140ff.
[72] Helene Kamrodt, *Welche Kriegspflichten der Hausfrau ergeben sich aus der wirtschaftlichen Lage Deutschlands? Vortrag gehalten im Wuppertaler Hausfrauenbund* (Barmen: Wilhelm Wandt, 1915).
[73] 'Die Kriegsarbeit des BDF,' p. 143.



2 Käte Spanier, *War and the Kitchen*, 1914[74]

The short mnemonic phrases on the poster give simple directions: 'eat war-bread, boil potatoes in their skin, do not buy cake, be reasonable and save fat, cook with the cookery box and according to the wartime cookery book'. The cookery box, a heat-preserving container, was in common use during the First World War. In this container, prepared meals could be cooked while precious coal could be saved. The poster concludes with the appeal to 'Help to win the war'. The children in the bottom of the poster have already realised the given advice and, for example, eat war-bread and carry potatoes boiled in their skin (for additional nutritional value). Thus, right from the start, children's eating habits were also meant to be adapted to wartime requirements. The poster served as a constant reminder that the war demanded sacrifices and the adaptation of cookery practises was a contribution that could quite easily be delivered by many women. The poster does not dismiss daily tasks in the house as irrelevant, instead household practices were directly related to the national war effort. Women took

[74] Käte Spanier, *Krieg und Küche* (1914), Staatsarchiv München Plakat Slg. 3459.

their public role in food economics very seriously. When, in 1915, new developments had to be communicated to the population, a new competition for a poster was scheduled immediately. It was required to display advice on resources, food substitutes and food shopping policies.[75]

A different poster by the same artist, Käte Spanier, advertised one of the NFD food advisory points in Berlin in 1914. There, as specified in the caption of the poster, housewives and servants would be informed about the 'wartime service' to be delivered by the German households. This poster underlines, again, the authority claimed by leading women of the NFD in home-economic matters. The success of the counselling activities was described in the yearbook of the BDF.[76] The image itself presents a woman, instructing servants and housemaids as well as better-off women, on how to fill their shopping baskets with the 'right' goods. The woman has a prominent position in the group, her raised index finger underlines the given advice. The surrounding women look up to her and listen attentively. What people were eating, how they were eating it, and how much of it they should be eating, was not left to chance. The NFD thus exercised an early form of rationing by appealing to the morale of the home front, and demanding food-related sacrifice. Thereby, they secured their own position in public administration, because food supply, as became increasingly obvious, was directly related to the mood in the population.[77] Moreover, by demanding economic sacrifices on the home front, women themselves shared the burden of the time, thus reinforcing the perception of a nation unified in wartime sacrifice.

[75] *Das Plakat* (May 1915), p. 132.
[76] *Kriegsjahrbuch des BDF,* 1915, p. 147.
[77] Ute Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen in der Kriegsgesellschaft. Beruf, Familie und Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), p. 195, 203, Davis, *Home fires burning*, p. 30.



3 Käte Spanier, *Advisory Point of the National Women's Service*, 1914[78]

These efforts were supported by wartime poems, directly linking eating habits to patriotic attitudes. The following stanza of the poem *Bread* by Ilse Franke is only one example of several similar literary efforts to combat any waste of food which was claimed to hinder the war effort. The stanza appeals to women's conscience by drawing attention to the hungry soldiers in the trenches who sacrificed their lives. Whereas this appears to be a quite dramatic comparison, it underlines the sincerity of the food question for contemporaries. The economic usage of resources and gratefulness for every 'crumb', the author seems to suggest, is little to ask of women in comparison to what is asked of the soldiers.

> Bread
> Every crumb is valuable!
> Watch the fire in the stove.
> In the ice-cold trenches
> Noble life is sacrificed
> Consumed by hunger and frost,
> Every crumb is valuable![79]

[78] Käte Spanier, *Nationaler Frauendienst Beratungsstelle* (1914), *Kriegsjahrbuch des BDF,* 1915, p. 147.
[79] Ilse Franke, *Das Brot*/ Jede Krume ist wert!/ Schirmt das Feuer im Herd./ In eisigen Schützengräben/ opfert sich edelstes Leben/ von Frost und Hunger verzehrt./ Jede Krume ist wert!, in *Heimatdienst im ersten Kriegsjahr. Jahrbuch des BDF für 1916*, (Berlin, Leipzig, Mannheim: Bensheimer, 1916), p. 141.

The poem was printed in the 1916 yearbook of the BDF as a reminder that the war in the 'economic trench' still had to be fought. The accompanying text reveals in addition, that the practical advice was meant to instruct those at the home front in order to resist the British starvation plans for Germany through the naval blockade.[80] The whole poem by Ilse Franke implies that if women failed to meet the requirements of a correct wartime behaviour, a greater power would avenge this failure. Also, the idea that women had to live up to the sacrifice delivered by men is an important element in the poem.

Another opportunity to instil adequate wartime conduct in the German population arose with the advertisement of war loans. The poster *The Basics of the German Saver* by Gerda Luise Schmidt attempted to spur the selling of the 9th war bond in 1918.[81] This poster serves as an interesting example in that it gives evidence for existing lasting support for the war effort and the continued necessity for adequate wartime conduct as late as 1918. Here, the praised austerity of the German housewife was set in a direct relation to the ability of the single household to invest in war bonds, which would provide necessary funds to continue the war. The text on the back of the advertisement appeals to women's honesty and blames those who waste money: 'What the husband brings home with his hay wagon, the woman spends behind his back'. Instead of being spent unwisely, the poster suggests, money should be saved and invested in war bonds. The daily conduct of life, the daily expenditure for food and other goods was the target of this poster. It appealed to the self-understanding of the German housewife; thriftiness has always been viewed as one of her prime desirable qualities.[82]

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[80] Ibid., p. 142.
[81] Stadtarchiv München Z-Slg. 220/2.
[82] Henriette Davidis, *Die Hausfrau. Eine Mitgabe für angehende Hausfrauen. Praktische Anleitung zur selbständigen und sparsamen Führung von Stadt- und Landhaushaltungen*, 16 ed. (Leipzig: Twietmeyer, 1895).



4 Gerda Luise Schmidt, *The Basics of the German Saver*,1918[83]

Further moral advice is printed in the middle of the poster 'Save in time and you will have enough in time of in need' which, again, appeals to considerate home-economics. The image itself is a depiction of idyllic family life. This 'ideal' family obviously had followed the advice, and is now – in harder times – able to enjoy some leisure hours, and in a position to present their children with gifts. Thus money which had been saved could, the poster informs, not only finance family life, but also the war.

In Vienna, the 'War Committee for the Interests of Consumers' saw women as an important group who could combat both the forcing up of prices and fraud. A poster by Grete Wolf, designed in 1915, directly addressed women, and provided information about the legal situation which had been changed in order to protect consumers. The poster asks women to reporting shopkeepers who disregarded these rights to the police and this is presented as a patriotic act. If all housewives knew their rights, and were made aware of the regulated highest prices, the text continues, shopkeepers could be guided to correct management.

[83] Gerda Luise Schmidt, *Das Einmaleins des deutschen Sparers* (1918), Stadtarchiv München Z-Slg. 220/2.



5 Grete Wolf, *Consumers! Housewives!*, 1914[84]

The poster reveals that officials had not considered the fact that the food distribution had developed its own mechanism and had developed its own rules. As Ute Daniel has shown for Germany, the competence of authorities to regulate food supply had been called into question. Their advice and regulations were evaded, which expressed the undermining of government authority.[85] Food supply was a similarly complicated affair in Austria-Hungary; the poster signifies the attempt to restore official authority, and raised the impression that the government was able to solve the situation. The poster is mainly textual, but is headed by an unbalanced scale. On the one hand, this illustrated the advice given to buy food only according to weight and not price; on the other hand it can also be understood as symbolising the injustice experienced and felt by the population in regard to their supply of food.

[84] Grete Wolf, *Konsumenten! Hausfrauen!* (1914), Hauptstaatsarchiv München, Plakat Slg. 17733.
[85] Ute Daniel, 'Der Krieg der Frauen 1914-1918. Zur Innenansicht des Ersten Weltkrieges in Deutschland,' in *Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch... Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkriegs*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, et al. (Essen: Klartext, 1993), pp. 131-49.

Home front Sacrifice

Besides the specific appeals to an economic usage of food, a number of posters were designed to demand more general sacrifice of those on the home front, and with between six and seven million men at the front, women were the prime target.[86] The following poster by the designer Anny Meyer has the title *Day of Sacrifice in Bavaria* and therefore has an obvious regional focus which strengthens the force of the appeal. The heading was a reminder that 'sacrifice' was a wartime duty. The world stood in flames, men were fighting but women also had to sacrifice. The poster by Meyer serves as a representative example for many similar designs.



6 Anny Meyer, *Day of Sacrifice in Bavaria* (1916)[87]

In Meyer's poster, a sword cuts the world in half, possibly into enemies and allies. The sword itself is an ancient symbol of battle and linked the present war to previous battles fought and won thanks to its usage. The sword was decorated with oak leaves which in Germany had a particular relevance and appear to justify the use of

[86] Richard Bessel, 'Mobilisation and demobilisation in Germany, 1916-1919,' in *State, society and mobilisation in Europe during the First World War*, ed. John Horne, p. 218.
[87] Anny Meyer, *Opfertag in Bayern* (1916) DHM, P 64/447.

force. Since Germanic times, the oak had always been viewed as a holy tree due to its height and vitality.[88]

In 1916, the year the poster was designed, the war had already presented all its shades – from a positively perceived national upsurge in certain circles, to the devastating death toll at the Western Front. The nature of the conflict is symbolised by the image of the *Weltenbrand* (world in flames) which was how the war was often referred to by contemporaries. In Germany, the flame was a highly symbolic design. Since the first anniversary of the *Völkerschlacht* near Leipzig in 1813, flames were lit on public squares to celebrate this victory over Napoleon and the revival of Germany. At the same time, they were lit in honour of God who had been on Germany's side.[89] From a contemporary viewpoint, this can be read as an attempt to put a spell on history and call for its repetition: to free Germany from the aggressors with the help of God. The flame depicted in the poster above thus symbolises the future victory of light against darkness.

The following poster by Bremen artist Magdalena Koll was designed as a request to subscribe to the sixth war bond in 1917. It suggests that there was a contemporary awareness that the sacrifice of the soldier had to be matched and paid for by a sacrifice (here financial) on the home front.

[88] George L. Mosse, *Die Nationalisierung der Massen. Politische Symbolik und Massenbewegungen von den Befreiungskämpfen bis zum Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt M., New York: 1993), p. 57.
[89] Ibid., p. 56.



7 Magdalena Koll, *Did you subscribe to the sixth war loan?*, 1917[90]

Immediately, this poster reminds us of its well known predecessor featuring Lord Kitchener on a British recruiting poster, designed by Alfred Leete in 1914. With the pointing finger and the 'imagined' fixation of the eyes of its viewer, both posters operate with an open appeal. The viewer in Koll's design is directly addressed with the phrase 'I am going to the front! Did you subscribe to the sixth war bond?' which built up a moral inclination and feeling of guilt on side of the viewer. How could one not wish to support this young handsome soldier, who is the type who could be anyone's son or fiancé? The poster demands an equality of sacrifice on the home- and fighting-front. It compares male conscription with the financial sacrifice of civilians and sees both as crucial contributions to the war effort.

[90] Magdalena Koll, *Ich gehe hinaus an die Front! Hast du die 6. Kriegsanleihe schon gezeichnet?*, *Das Plakat* (November 1917), p. 274.

Women's Loyalty to the Soldier

The following poster by the Frankfurt artist Lina von Schauroth asks for *Liebesgaben*, literally 'donations of love', for the soldiers at the front. The word *Liebesgaben* is a very graphic description of the function of these gifts in themselves: a confirmation for the soldiers that the home, their families, wives and children 'loved' them. *Liebesgaben* had become the proof of that love. The sending of gifts to soldiers at the front provided an easy option for women to engage in the war effort, and created a communal activity for all women. The poster below, *Gifts of Love to the Front,* depicts a scene out of soldiers' daily lives.



8 Lina von Schauroth, *Gifts of Love to the Front*, 1916[91]

The two soldiers are walking through mud, dragging four unwilling horses along. The poster conveys the impression that despite the weariness, soldiers and beasts persevere. The fact that the horses outnumber the soldiers possibly suggests that their previous owners have died and that the artist depicted a retreat. The bright red sky adds a certain drama to the scene. The muddy ground symbolises the hard circumstances soldiers live in, the trenches at the front, which leads to the conclusion that they were in

[91] Lina von Schauroth, *Liebesgaben an die Front* (1916), DHM P 64/442.

need of *Liebesgaben* for their moral and physical upkeep. Again, the design by Schauroth is one representative example of numerous others by the artist herself and others.

How the reception or non-reception of *Liebesgaben* affected the mood of soldiers in reality can be followed in the wartime correspondence of Richard and Ida Dehmel.[92] Every parcel had been anticipated by Dehmel and was evaluated according to its contents. In case of delay or non-receipt of expected *Liebesgaben* – often food, clothing items and cigars – accusations were made and the relationship of the couple almost called into question. If a parcel full of unexpected surprises arrived, on the other hand, an elevated mood could be traced in the correspondence for days. [93]

An area in which women's loyalty could really be put to its test was the treatment of war cripples. Numerous charities were set up to alleviate the fate of the permanently disabled and many women understood their engagement for these initiatives as part of their wartime duty. A number of posters requesting financial support for institutions for the war cripples were designed by women. The visual representation of crippled soldiers in posters was a novel and sensitive issue. Especially these soldiers who had been permanently damaged by the war depended upon help to organise and adjust their lives after the war had ended for them. The artists found different solutions for illustrations for social initiatives of their behalf, none of them being as graphic as the post-war art by many male artists art which presented crippled men with several missing limbs who had been abandoned by women and society and were forced to beg on the streets.[94] The majority of women's posters show soldiers whose wounds would heal, and who still possessed all their limbs. In the case of more severe injuries, the soldier was not represented at all. The following poster by Ilse Hoeltz illustrates one such philanthropic initiative on behalf of crippled soldiers.

[92] See the wartime correspondence of Richard and Ida Dehmel, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, DA.
[93] For example, Postcard Richard Dehmel - Ida Dehmel, 15.11.1914, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, DA, 916.
[94] For example Otto Dix, *Streichholzhändler (Match-Seller)*, etching (1920), printed in Matthias Eberle, *Der Weltkrieg und die Künstler der Weimarer Republik. Dix, Grosz, Beckmann, Schlemmer* (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989), p. 25.



9 Ilse Hoeltz, *Exhibition for a War Charity*, 1916[95]

The poster advertises a fundraising exhibition to finance professional training- and re-training for veterans who could neither continue their careers as soldiers, nor work in their pre-war professions. The two soldiers depicted in the poster still wear their uniforms, emphasising their status as soldiers. The arm sling of one soldier is prominently placed in the middle of the poster. The second soldier uses a crutch. Both have an earnest, sincere, but not hopeless expression. Charity exhibitions were often initiated by women's groups, the Red Cross, and other social initiatives throughout the war. Paintings, booklets, and other handicrafts were sold at these events on behalf of the soldiers. Interestingly, the poster specifies the future use of the money. Not only was the collection of funds in itself advertised here, but the hope and future those funds could mean to the soldier such as a new career, the opportunity to earn his own living and to maintain his independence.

The poster by artist Lina von Schauroth below advertised tickets for an afternoon tea, arranged by members of the Frankfurt opera and theatre company. The

[95] Ilse Hoeltz, *Ausstellung für Kriegsfürsorge* (1916), DHM P 57/1371.

income was to be donated to the home for the war blind in Frankfurt. Towards the end of the war, soldiers who were permanently damaged from the war became increasingly visible in everyday life. It is remarkable that this poster is dominated by the equipment of a soldier: a shiny helmet and a weapon. Although a blinded soldier would not use these items anymore, they represent why he has lost his eyesight. They symbolise his honour and stand for his former strength. The image of the soldier himself, now weak and disabled, however, was not depicted in the poster.



10 Lina von Schauroth, *Home for the War Blind*, 1918[96]

From 1914 on, German soldiers were kept as prisoners of war in enemy hands.[97] Often and for a long time, soldiers' families were in the dark about the soldiers' fate when the correspondence had been interrupted. The posters illustrate how difficult it was to deal with both uncertainty and hope. The news that a soldier was in captivity was a relief in that the other alternative mostly meant the news of death. Initiatives founded

[96] Lina von Schauroth, *Kriegsblindenheim* (1918), DHM P 57/1338.
[97] See Uta Hinz on prisoners of war in Gerhard Hirschfeld et al., eds., *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg* (Munich, Vienna, Zurich: Schönigh, 2004), pp. 641-646.

to support German prisoners of war bundled these emotions and sought to transform worry into practical care. Reports –whether true or not – about how badly German prisoners were treated contributed towards the need felt to relieve the soldiers. Numerous posters stand for the popularity of these initiatives. The following design by artists Ida Carola Stroever was created for the initiative 'Help for Prisoners of War', with the caption: 'Help our prisoners of war in the land of the enemy'. Stroever drew two soldiers, whose facial expression show hard lines and bitterness.



11 Ida Carola Stroever, *Help our Prisoners of War in Enemy Territory*, 1916[98]

The younger soldier, eyes directed into the distance, supports an older soldier who rests his bandaged head on the younger one's shoulder. The two soldiers stand arm in arm, an ideal image of comradeship in hard times. The design expresses the immobility of the captured soldier. They reminded women and the home front what soldiers had to endure on their behalf. To alleviate their fate in the hands of the enemy was, the poster suggests, a duty for women.

[98] Ida Carola Stroever, *Helft unseren Kriegsgefangenen in Feindesland* (1916), DHM P 74/3734.

Frauendank, Kaiser- and Volksdank, (Women's Gratefulness, The Kaiser's and the nation's gratefulness) were the headings of many wartime charities, clarifying for giver and receiver that with the donation, the soldiers' were efforts acknowledged, and publicly 'thanked for'. Lina von Schauroth's poster is a modern desgin, thanking the army and the navy on behalf of the Kaiser and the nation. The alleged receivers of the Christmas donation 1917, the soldiers, fulfil their duty in the trenches. The three soldiers on the poster are not sheltered from snow or storm, but are attentively on the look out.



12 Lina von Schauroth, *Donations for Army and Navy*, 1917[99]

This poster fulfilled several functions. It reassured soldiers on home leave of the loyal support from home. It also appealed to women and the home front, who would be able to celebrate Christmas at home with a proper ceremony, to think of the soldiers who could not. The intention of the poster might have been to boost the soldiers' moral. The poster also was a public display of the existing support within the German nation, who rewarded sacrifice with honour and – through gifts. Of course, for some, the poster

[99] Lina von Schauroth, *Kaiser- und Volksspende für Heer und Flotte* (1917), DHM P 64/449.

surely expressed deeply felt patriotism and loyalty with the soldiers, whose efforts called for immediate reward.

Conclusion

In their wartime posters, women were, even in those posters that did not feature them directly, omnipresent as the home front. There, initiatives were organised to guide women's wartime conduct, demand wartime sacrifice on the home front and display loyalty to the fighting soldiers. In the posters, women presented visual proof of their support for the national cause. Their actions are presented as a crucial and important contribution to the war effort in its own right. Thus in Germany, women's wartime tasks were not understood as a substitute for combat action,[100] since quite clearly this would have diminished their efforts to emphasise women's specific role in wartime society as preservers of cultural goods, as well decreased their role as moral backbone of the nation so vividly displayed in their poster-art. The wide audience women were able to reach through public lecturing, posters or postcards, also illustrates the interlocking of home front and fighting-front and suggests that the still common division of private spheres for women and public spheres for men as such is not applicable in wartime.

Women's 'ideas and art of 1914' represent a generally supportive attitude to the war that initially was shared by many. Moreover, it is evident that some women remained committed to the 'ideas of 1914' until the very end. Whereas this certainly reveals an element of denial, women's publications and poster art illustrate that many women understood it as their duty to express outspoken emphatic support for the war. The fact that to begin with most women did not perceive the war as something terrible and devastating is a crucial point. In order to match the soldiers' efforts, women's sacrifice was also forcefully demanded. This attitude reveals a general acceptance of war. The following chapter will analyse further contemporary justifications for the war. As will be shown later in this study, the reality of the war unfolded for women in wartime Germany in an unexpected manner.

[100] In France, on the other hand, the attempt to imitate the deeds of the national heroes – the front line soldiers – formed the main motivation of women's wartime engagement, and thus can be understood as a replacement of the opportunity to fight, see: John Horne, 'Social identity in war. France 1914-1918,' in *Men, women and war. Historical Studies xviii*, ed. T.G. Fraser and Keith Jeffrey (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993), pp. 119-35.

Chapter 2 *The Body of the Soldier and the Defence of the Heimat*

The depiction of soldiers' bodies was a recurring theme in German women's art during the First World War, illustrating above all the physical strength needed for a successful defence of the *Heimat* (home). Depictions of soldiers' daily lives in base camps, or in the trenches, also featured in women's art, and revealed a romanticised image of life in the army, and at the front, that had little in common with soldiers' actual experiences of warfare.[1] An emphasis on the protection of the home as well as women and children was also present in the poster art produced by civilian men during the war. Posters advertising war-loans, and reinforcing the emphasis placed on military success, were the most common format in which these images were presented to the public. These designs also revealed the underlying civilian dread of war, and of the possible military occupation that, it was feared, might ensue if physical strength and material support were not sufficient for the defence of the *Heimat*.

The majority of the German people – just like people of other belligerent countries – believed they were under threat and encircled by enemies. [2] Hence, the defence of the family, home, and the fatherland was a central theme in the poster art of the First World War. In the following chapter, key aspects of the manner in which people on the home front viewed the war will be addressed. Which particular image of war persisted on the home front and how was this image interpreted artistically? Why were soldiers' bodies a central theme of both male and female poster art? And, importantly, what were the implications of these artistic interpretations for gender roles in wartime society?

It was in the interest of those on the home front to support the soldiers, equip them with *Liebesgaben*, provide shelter, and, above all, to care for wounded heroes. As long as the war continued, every saved life was an additional potential defender of the country, because the recovered soldier could re-join the armed forces. Care for the wounded was also important for the maintenance of troop morale. The figure of the

[1] The art of Dora Nauth, for example, represents idyllic versions of soldiers' lives during the war. See portfolio *An der Grenze* (1914) by Dora Nauth, Kriegssammlung Staatsbibliothek Berlin.
[2] Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18 Understanding the Great War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), p. 113, Volker Berghahn, *Der Erste Weltkrieg* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2003), pp. 64-67, Roger Chickering, *Das deutsche Reich und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002), p. 26.

nurse was frequently depicted in women's wartime art, but often in a much romanticised manner that was just as remote from the realities of warfare as many depictions of heroic soldiers. The figure of the nurse, therefore, represents an interesting counterpart to the figure of the soldier as the embodiment of female heroism in wartime.[3] The yearbook of the German women's movement from 1915 opens with a series of photographs of nurses. The example of nurse Elfriede Scherhans, the first woman to receive the Iron Cross of 1914, receives particular attention.[4] The thousands of women who volunteered to be trained as nurses in the early phase of the war were presented as hard evidence of women's essential contribution to the war effort.[5] The significant number of women artists who volunteered as nurses was proudly emphasised in the monthly review of the *Frauenkunstverband* (Women Artists' Association), which was published in the art journal *Der deutsche Künstler*.[6] The idealised vision of strong heroic soldiers and nurses who revived the soldier's health complemented the romanticised interpretation of the conflict that was promoted in women's wartime publications. The visual representation of nurses in women's wartime art will also be analysed in an attempt to determine precisely what their portraits reveal about contemporary understandings of war and the nurses role therein.

Defence of the *Heimat*

The wartime art and writing of German women suggests that many women constructed their own ideal of the heroic soldier. This ideal was usually personified as a strong, courageous and handsome young man who took on the role of personal bodyguard, warding off any harm and danger that threatened the fatherland and its womenfolk. This 'German man' feared nothing but God and was loyal unto death. Significantly, his devotion and faithfulness to wife and mother were rated as highly as his commitment to the fatherland.[7]

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[3] Regina Schulte, 'Die Schwester des kranken Kriegers. Verwundetenpflege im Ersten Weltkrieg,' in *Die verkehrte Welt des Krieges. Studien zu Geschlecht, Religion und Tod* (Frankfurt M., New York: Campus, 1998), pp. 95-116.

[4] *Kriegsjahrbuch des Bundes Deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF) 1915*, (Berlin, Leipzig, Mannheim: Bensheimer, 1915), p. 3.

[5] Dr Käthe Goebel, *Die Beteiligung der Frauen an der Kriegskrankenpflege*, *Kriegsjahrbuch des BDF*, 1915 p. 46.

[6] For example, *Der deutsche Künstler* (December 1915), p. 87.

[7] Marie von Bellhorn in *Bismarck-Jahrbuch für Deutsche Frauen*, (Dresden: Streit, 1915), p. 7.

Becoming a soldier was seen as an initiation rite that turned boys into men and men into heroes. After brothers, sons, or husbands became soldiers, a clear physical change was often perceived. The wartime letters that Emmi Marianne Gärtner wrote to her aunt Ida Dehmel show that observations of the soldiers' appearances were exchanged in personal correspondence between women. The physical strength and good looks of male relations were both commented on, re-affirming the belief in the positive effect of warfare that was widespread among educated women of the middle classes.[8]

> [...] there he was, high on horse, my little brother. I will never forget this scene. He has become a giant. A natural on the horseback, wide shoulders, the image of beaming health. [...] Not a single wrinkle tells of his five months in the war.[...][9]

Gärtner worked as a nurse at the front, and was therefore confronted daily with soldiers' wounds and illnesses. This may be one reason why she felt the health of her cousin Heinz-Lux (Ida Dehmel's son) was as noteworthy as that of her brother. Her repeated comments on the health and physique of the soldiers seem to deny that warfare could have a potentially lethal or disfiguring effect on her own male relations. The following quotation also uncovers a fascination with the world of the military, a world that women were only superficially familiar with.

> I was indeed very happy that one could not see anything in his [Heinz-Lux] face about the year out there [at the Western Front]. I am critical, for I see hundreds of them. As I saw him, I thought what I thought when I saw Ludwig [her brother]. These boys become rejuvenated out there and stay in fine form, while we ourselves become old and ugly.[...][10]

A visual representation of the strong, valiant soldier can be found in the design by Lina von Schauroth reprinted below. The poster features a man wearing an oversized classical Greek soldier's helmet. He holds a large crest in his left hand and his right hand points to the text, an appeal for subscriptions to a war loan at a special office in Frankfurt. The soldier himself is nude, and his lean, athletic body is accentuated by the artistic style employed by the artist, a combination of delicate shaping and bold shadow line. The pose is triumphant and the big black helmet adds to the impression of a parading soldier.

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[8] See chapter one, *Women's mobilisation for war*, pp. 17-48.

[9] Letter 15.01.1915 Emmi Marianne Gärtner - Ida Dehmel, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, Dehmel-Archiv (DA) NL Ida Dehmel, Br. 15, 181/1.

[10] Letter 09.10.1915 Emmi Marianne Gärtner – Ida Dehmel, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, DA NL Ida Dehmel, Br. 15, 181/2.



13 Lina von Schauroth, *Subscribe to the War Loan*, (1914-18)[11]

The use of Greek motifs in the poster suggests an attempt to recreate the timeless physical beauty which was then associated with classic Greek and Roman sculpture. This results in a highly aestheticised illustration of a soldier that reinforces the illusion of the rejuvenating effect of war. The figure in the poster is the embodiment of a young athlete, whose classic form and physique, George Mosse has argued, came to symbolise the 'German hero'.[12]

The concern about the physical health of the soldiers, as expressed in the above quotations, stemmed on the one hand from the genuine care and anxiety of women for their male friends and relations. Yet on the other hand, physical strength and fitness were considered important to guarantee a reliable defence of the country. This trust in the soldier's strength is expressed by the nurse Emmi Marianne Gärtner: 'One has the

[11] Lina von Schauroth, *Zeichnet Kriegsanleihe* (1914/18), Imperial War Museum (IWM) PST 7580.
[12] George L. Mosse, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe und nationale Wiedergeburt. Der Gefallenenkult in Deutschland,' in *Kriegserlebnis. Der erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nation*, ed. Klaus Vondung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), p. 249.

true feeling of being sheltered – when Germany has men as strong as these, then nothing can happen to us.'[13] The strong, healthy and unscathed male body became the safeguard for women.

The charcoal drawing *Frontier Guard* by Dora Nauth, reproduced below, emphasises the protective function of soldiers. Safeguarding German borders prevented the enemy forces from advancing into national territory, thereby threatening the security of the *Heimat*. The sense of menace and encirclement that featured prominently in propaganda around the outbreak of the war is here re-evoked and exploited. With the exception of East Prussia in 1914, no part of Germany was invaded during the conflict. Invasion fear existed, however, especially in the parts of Germany that bordered France.[14] The pose of the soldier expresses pride and confidence. The manner in which he is occupying the space in front of the rock is firm, almost possessive; leaving no doubt that the soldier is protecting his *Heimat* and his fatherland. He fears no enemy and his youth and physical strength underline his ability to defend.

[13] Letter 15.01.1915 Emmi Marianne Gärtner - Ida Dehmel, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, DA NL Ida Dehmel, Br. 15, 181/1.

[14] Christian Geinitz and Uta Hinz, 'Das Augusterlebnis in Südbaden. Ambivalente Reaktionen der deutschen Öffentlichkeit auf den Kriegsbeginn 1914,' in *Kriegserfahrungen. Studien zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, et al. (Essen: Klartext, 1997), pp. 20-35.



14 Dora Nauth, *Frontier Guard*, 1914[15]

The guard is depicted holding a pair of binoculars in order to ensure the early discovery of advancing enemy patrols or troops, while he himself watches out from a sheltered position, hidden by a massive rock. The soldier's right hand firmly grips a rifle with bayonet attached. The rifle is the same size as the soldier and, along with the binoculars, represents the equipment employed to defend the homeland. The rock in the background symbolises a piece of the *Heimat* and is itself a symbol of strength and steadfastness. The rock will not be moved from its position by force and, as the image suggests, nor will the soldier. Physical strength was popularly viewed as a prerequisite for the male role of protector and defender. This notion is clearly posited in the poster by Lotte Nicklass reproduced below.

[15] Dora Nauth, *Grenzsoldat*, 1914, in *An der Grenze* (1914).



15 Lotte Nicklass, *How Germany is Being Defended*, 1916 [16]

This poster from 1916 is a literal illustration, almost a diagram, of how Germany was being defended by the armed forces. It features miniature silhouettes that respectively represent the infantry, cavalry, artillery, navy and air-force. The illustrated soldiers are busy keeping guard, preparing weapons, or, in the case of the navy, in the middle of a victorious encounter with the enemy.[17] German soldiers, sailors and air-men are thus represented as worthy of the trust and expectation laid upon them by the home front. This is emphasised by the inscription in the centre of the poster: *'Dear fatherland, be calm, we shall let no enemy advance'*. These words frame a circular image of an idyllic family scene in which a mother rocks her infant, her daughter plays with a doll and the son playfully imitates soldiers. The first part of the inscription 'Lieb Vaterland,

[16] Lotte Nicklass, *Wie Deutschland verteidigt wird* (1916), Hauptstaatsarchiv München, Plakat SLG 5760.

[17] In June 1916, the Battle of Jutland – the only great naval battle of the war – was fought between the Imperial German Navy and the Royal Navy. The battle resulted in a strategic victory for the British fleet in the North Sea but technically, and *tactically*, the German navy won, as more damage had been inflicted on British warships. Both sides claimed to have been victorious. Although u-boats were not employed in the battle, the political context may well provide a background for the design of the poster. The section of the poster that features the navy could be viewed as a statement in support of the continuation of unlimited u-boat warfare, which, by 1916, had begun to attract severe criticism from the US. See Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Die Urkatastrophe Deutschlands. Der Erste Weltkrieg, 1914-1918* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2002), pp. 66-72.

magst ruhig sein' (Dear fatherland be calm) is a quotation from one of the most popular patriotic songs of 1914-18 'Die Wacht am Rhein' (Watch at the Rhine) written in 1840 by Max Schneckenburger. The second half of the inscription 'Wir lassen keinen Feind herein' (We shall let no enemy advance), however, is not part of the song and may reflect an existing fear of encirclement and occupation among the population during the First World War. The open curtains allow a glance on an intimate, yet generic, family scene representing every soldier's home, and re-iterating the 'defensive' nature of the conflict.

The poster was designed as part of a women's initiative to express gratitude to combatants *(Frauendank)* and call for donations. The effect of the poster was twofold. It signalled women's appreciation of the soldiers' efforts and was also designed to appeal to a male impulse to act as protector. The poster is able to unfold this message by simplifying wartime society into two categories, women and children on the one side and soldiers (and sailors and air-men) on the other. Yet the poster also illustrates the interdependence of front and home front. The soldier's fight was worthwhile because he was protecting women and children at home; likewise the woman could look after her children because the country was being defended by men.

As if to reaffirm German military strength, each of the different sections of the German military machine is represented. In addition, the manner in which the combatants are represented presents warfare as a manly adventure. Although the poster claims to show how Germany was being defended, mostly preparatory tasks are carried out by the soldiers. With the exception of the enemy battleship, which is at a safe distance from the German u-boat, no enemy forces are depicted. Long- and short distance shells have been fired by German soldiers on the poster, but their impact is not visible. Likewise, the soldiers do not engage in actual physical fighting, and the war consequently appears quite harmless. Defending the *Heimat* is not understood, therefore, as a dangerous and potentially lethal task, but as a demanding but nonetheless realisable undertaking.

Much in their wartime writing and poetry suggests that German women genuinely viewed themselves, and the values of the home they represented, as the primary reason why the war was being fought.[18] The enthusiasm with which the troops allegedly waged war was linked to the worthiness of women and the *Heimat*. Gertrud

[18] This is, for example, a recurring theme in the poetry collection compiled by Amalie Deck, ed., *Aus großer Zeit* (Tübingen: Weil, 1915).

Bäumer, leader of the German women's movement emphasises this connection in an attempt to influence women's daily conduct:

> We should not forget how much the mood of our departing soldiers was influenced by what the *Heimat* means to them. They fight for 'home and hearth' and the more women's accomplishments mean to them, the more intense is the love of the home that feeds the soldier's duty to the fatherland.[19]

Women were thus literally encouraged to display their worthiness to the soldiers in order to guarantee a maximum of combat motivation.

> What a delightful treasure it is for the soldier out in the field to know: "My wife faithfully looks after the home and our children" – how safe must he feel with this knowledge. How sad would it be if he had to suspect otherwise. Would such sorrow not paralyse his strength? Women now have more responsibilities than ever, so they have to feel the responsibility for dutiful behaviour more than ever.[20]

Corresponding with the emphasis on women's qualities, soldiers' ambitions in the conflict were also characterised as purely noble and selfless. The writer Anna Blanck leaves no doubt about the heroic mission accomplished by German men in the conflict:

> It is not only courage and bravery that is needed to bleed or even die for the fatherland, but also love. You [the soldiers] fight for thousands of defenceless women and children, for home and hearth and for all that was precious to you from the moment you first fought for the fatherland. And even if you are not aware of this love, it has its well at a deep and sacred site.[21]

Although it was perhaps presumptuous to emphasise the noble and heroic qualities of both men and women, doing so helped shape the public understanding of the conflict as a worthy cause. This was especially the case in the early stages of the war.

The significance of the *Heimat* for the combat motivation of German soldiers was not only acknowledged in women's wartime artistic and literary work. The *Heimat* also featured prominently in the outlook of German soldiers themselves. Annette Becker and Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau have argued that German troops thought of their trench positions in France in traditional, defensive ways and frequently referred to the

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[19] Gertrud Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, ed. Ernst Jäckh *Der deutsche Krieg. Politische Flugschriften*, vol. 15, (Stuttgart, Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1914), p. 11.
[20] Anna Blanck, *Frauentrost und Frauenpflicht zur Kriegszeit* (Mannheim: Mannheimer Stadtmission, 1917), p. 15.
[21] Lili von Hackewitz, *Öl und Wein für Verwundete* (Kaiserswerth: Diakonissen-Anstalt, 1915), p. 2.

geographical characteristics of the *Heimat*.[22] The well known song *Die Wacht am Rhein Watch on the Rhine)* thus easily became the *Watch on the Somme* and advancing soldiers invading foreign territory were still viewed as defending their fatherland, a phenomenon that Becker and Audoin-Rouzeau call 'defensive patriotism'. Nikolaus Buschmann has asserted that the individual association that German soldiers had with their homeland not only influenced their interpretation of the war, but also impacted on soldiers' morale and their outlook on the future.[23]

The *Heimat* symbolised the meaningful existence to which the soldiers longed to return. Celia Applegate has argued that the war transformed a passive patriotic spirit and attachment to the home into an explicit *Heimat* ideology.[24] Thus, *Heimat* came to represent the very cause for which the war was being fought. The success of book titles praising the beauty of different regions in Germany and featuring poetry, short stories and images with local significance, indicates a widespread public consideration of the nation's roots. These publications, writes Applegate, were not only intended to alleviate soldiers' homesickness, but were also aimed at combating civilian disaffection and low morale.[25] Although the peaceful world of the *Heimat* marked a stark contrast to the violent world of the trenches, images of the former could be evoked to encourage the military mobilisation of men. For Alan Confino, the importance of the concept of the *Heimat* in Imperial Germany was its encapsulation of all the positive elements of the nation. History, nature and folklore created an 'imagined society' of which all Germans were part.[26] This strengthened perceptions of national identity for German troops and fed into the patriotic sentiments expressed in soldiers' songs and wartime poetry.

Images of men as defenders of the fatherland and protectors of women and children were also employed by male artists in posters, and war loans posters in particular. Note that the artists referred to below were non-combatants and thus part of the 'home front'. This makes their status within wartime society comparable, in some ways, to that of female artists. The distinctive graphic design of the war loans posters and their common demand for a successful defence possibly also reveals a material

[22] Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *14-18 Understanding the Great War*, p. 107.
[23] Nikolaus Buschmann, 'Der verschwiegene Krieg. Kommunikation zwischen Front und Heimatfront,' in *Kriegserfahrungen*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, et al., pp. 217-18.
[24] Celia Applegate, *A nation of provincials. The German idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), p. 109.
[25] Ibid., p. 111.
[26] Alon Confino, 'Die Nation als lokale Metapher. Heimat, nationale Zugehörigkeit und das Deutsche Reich, 1871-1918,' *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 5 (1996), pp. 426-27.

interest. War loans would only pay off to the subscribers in the event of a victory and a victorious peace. The emphases in these posters, which were designed by civilians on the home front, therefore, give us an insight into the psychological outlook of the non-combatant population in wartime.

The following poster by Erwin Puchinger was designed as an appeal for subscriptions to the third war loan in 1916. In the centre of the image is a knight clad in medieval armour. He is in the middle of a fight and holds a sword in his right hand and a large shield in his left. His position is alert, yet his sword is not in motion – there is no need for aggressive moves on his part as the enemies' crested lances are unable to pierce his formidable shield. A woman, wearing the same colours as those emblazoned on the shield, sits behind the knight with an infant in her arms. She is unrealistically close to the battle-scene, representing not such much an actual woman as a mental image to be kept in mind by the knight, who safeguards wife and child and wards intruders off with skill and determination.



16 Erwin Puchinger, *Subscribe to the Third War Loan*, 1916[27]

The background of the poster is partially grey, indicating the walls of a castle, possible of the home of knight and family, whereas the red sky in the background either stands for the danger, threatening the security of the stone walls. The red sky possibly romanticises the fight by setting it at dusk or dawn. By placing the battle scene in a medieval setting, the tradition of heroic medieval battle tales is employed to glorify the act of fighting as well as to emphasise the invulnerability of German soldiers.[28] Fighting to defend the home, to protect wives and children is portrayed as an honourable and, again, as a realisable task.

While Puchinger's poster celebrated the masculine strength of a medieval knight, the following poster by Walter Georgi employed another Germanic ideal. In this instance, physical beauty and muscular strength evoke either the wish to be like the man in the poster, to be protected by such a man, or to at least support such men, i.e. German soldiers, financially. The poster dates from 1918. This adds a sense of desperation to both the design of the poster and its text. After four years of warfare, Georgi continues

[27] Erwin Puchinger, *Zeichnet dritte Kriegsanleihe* (1916), DHM P 73/1600.
[28] Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and medieval memory. War remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), forthcoming.

to offer an interpretation of the war as a defensive one. The poster is designed as a personal appeal by suggesting that the reason for fighting is to secure individual happiness and protect families. The text: *War Loan - Support the Guardians of Your Happiness*, personalises the war by not asking for support in defending the fatherland. The appeal was designed to work on a private, almost ego-centric level. If nationalism could not stir the last financial resources of the population, concerns about individual happiness might serve as a useful substitute.



17 Walter Georgi, *War Loan, Support the Guardians of Your Happiness*, 1918[29]

Like the medieval knight, the Germanic swordsman bore no resemblance to the German soldier of the time. He is portrayed as a family man, wearing civilian clothes that leave his arms bare. The only thing that identifies him as a warrior is the sword

[29] Walter Georgi, *Kriegsanleihe. Helft den Hütern Eures Glückes* (1918) DHM P 62/167.2.

which is barely visible in his left hand. Only a fraction of the sword can be seen. Thus the emphasis is shifted from the equipment to the man himself and his physique. In addition, the yellow shadow line drawn around his body adds a halo-like effect to his head. He is tall, of strong athletic build, and well able to protect the woman and infant in his arms. Images in which both men and women are depicted emphasise differences in wartime gender roles even more explicitly than those illustrating only men or women. In Georgi's design, the manly physique of the stylised soldier is suited to his role as the defender of the woman who is tenderly holding her baby and whose task is the care for the children.

A shift in emphasis from the protector to the protected is presented in the following poster by Lucian Bernhard. Again, this appeal to subscribe to the ninth war loan is from 1918 and, as with Georgi's poster above, Bernhard attempts to personalise the war with the inscription: *'This is about everything we love!'*. The protector in the top left corner is, in this poster, a modern German soldier, in full combat gear with his rifle pointing in the distance. The centre of the drawing is filled by a woman with a small child in her arms, both of whom have calm expressions on their faces and appear untroubled by the ongoing conflict. In this version, the identification of 'what was loved' and therefore had to be defended, not only includes woman and child, but also a village on a hillside with a church tower rising from the middle. Thus, not only soldiers' families but also their homes, the places to which they will return after the war, formed part of the appeal.



18 Lucian Bernhard, *Subscribe to the Ninth!* 1918[30]

The women in the above posters are represented as very passive, caring mothers. They are put forward as a justification for the continuation of the war. Naturally, innocent women and children and their homes were considered worth defending. One striking similarity shared by the posters of the male artist reproduced above is their celebration of upright and honourable masculinity, whether disguised in medieval or more modern settings. Admiration of physical strength, and its perceived necessity for the defence of the *Heimat*, features in all three posters. Their recruitment-like appeal seems to address other men on the home front who while they were not actually fighting at the front themselves might have funds to finance those who were. Interestingly, however, the men in the posters are never presented as home front civilians. Only women and children are chosen to represent the civilian population that must be defended. In a world largely divided into heroes, both male and female, and mothers, there was little space for non-combatant men. A poster that featured a factory owner or

[30] Lucian Bernhard, *Zeichnet die Neunte! Es geht um alles was wir lieben!* (1918), DHM P 62/1427.

an elderly civilian as symbols of the *Heimat* would presumably be less likely to evoke emotional responses and raise finances for national defence with the same urgency.

A comparison of the posters designed by both female and male artists on the home front ultimately reveals more resemblances than differences. Both aestheticise the soldier's appearance, both praise physical strength and fighting skill, and both present an image of war that was wholly divorced from reality. On the one hand, this might be related to the lack of front-line experience of both women and male non-combatants. On the other hand, the posters very much illustrate the kind of war that people on home front wanted to be fought – a heroic and victorious conflict, waged in defence of mothers and children, home and the fatherland. [31] Protection and defence was in the interest of both men and women on the home front. Civilian self-consideration should therefore be taken into account when considering these posters. A highly idealised perception of the German soldier was present not only in women's interpretations of the conflict but it also featured quite markedly in those of male non-combatants.

Tending the soldier's body

Caring for the wounded or suffering soldier who defended the *Heimat* was popularly viewed as an honourable task. The hero-soldier had to be supported using all available means, and many women's wartime tasks were created according to the needs of the front-line soldier.[32] It is important to emphasise the construction of the hero-status of the front-line soldier in society during the war, which in return influenced how women's work was viewed.[33] Serving the soldiers and caring for the wounded formed part of these tasks and artistic depictions reflect, for example, women nursing soldiers back to health in idyllic settings. After the conflict ended, however, no similar images exist to suggest that soldiers who had returned crippled from the war were equally tenderly cared for. Relations between the sexes were influenced through wartime experiences, and whereas they seemingly followed traditional patterns, the framework

[31] On how the war was staged in the rear, see Buschmann, 'Der verschwiegene Krieg,' p. 210.
[32] Angelika Tramitz, 'Vom Umgang mit Helden. Kriegs(vor)schriften und Benimmregeln für deutsche Frauen im Ersten Weltkrieg,' in *Kriegsalltag. Die Rekonstruktion des Kriegsalltags als Aufgabe der historischen Forschung und Friedenerziehung*, ed. Peter Knoch (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1989), pp. 92-96.
[33] The casualties at the battle of Langemarck contributed to the heroisation of the front-line soldier. See Bernd Hüppauf, 'Schlachtenmythen und die Konstruktion des "Neuen Menschen",' in *Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch... Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkrieges*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, et al. (Essen: Klartext, 1993), pp. 43-79.

from which men and women's roles were evaluated had been modified. This has been clearly demonstrated by Elke Koch in her case study of women's work for the Red Cross in Heilbronn. Koch argues that the war fundamentally changed the perspective from which women's work was viewed. The increased attention and importance suddenly attached to nursing, in particular, resulted from its value to the war effort.[34]

The figure of the nurse, just like that of the heroic front-line soldier, was placed within the imaginative framework of the necessary, defensive war. It was believed that women's noble characteristics could find their full expression in nursing. The selfless act of caring for the wounded was thought to be particularly suited to women as it naturally corresponded to their motherly instincts.[35] The prestigious task of nursing the 'citizen soldier' was carried out with pride, and the authorities were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm with which women responded to the calling up of medical volunteers. After the outbreak of war, prominent members of the women's movement and the regional female nobility competed for posts in the administration of the Red Cross.[36] Caring for the war wounded, moreover, was especially relevant to the self-perception of the women's movement, the origins of which can be traced to organised care for injured soldiers during the Napoleonic Wars.[37] The selfless duty to country and compatriot that nursing women carried out underlined their humanitarian sacrifice helped to idealise the image of the nurse.[38]

The status of the nursing profession had been much enhanced in the pre-war period especially after the education of nurses was professionalised and legally protected in 1907.[39] Efforts to improve the reputation of the nursing profession had intensified under Empress Auguste Victoria who revived the role of the *Vaterländischer Frauenverein (VF)* as the central organisation for the education of nurses in 1893. From this point on, efforts were made to attract young bourgeois women, with a neat appearances and chaste characters, to the profession.[40] The VF was affiliated with the Red Cross and both organisations shared an ideology and certain principles that

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[34] Elke Koch, "Jeder tut, was er kann fürs Vaterland'. Frauen und Männer an der Heilbronner 'Heimatfront'," in *Kriegserfahrungen,* ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, et al., pp. 36-52.
[35] Schulte, 'Die Schwester des kranken Kriegers,' pp. 101-02.
[36] Jean H. Quataert, 'Women's wartime service under the cross. Patriotic communities in Germany, 1912-1918,' in *Great War, total war. Combat and mobilisation on the Western Front, 1914-1918*, ed. Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 453-55.
[37] Ute Planert, ed., *Nation, Politik und Geschlecht. Frauenbewegung und Nationalismus in der Moderne* (Frankfurt M.: Campus, 2000), p. 34.
[38] Quataert, 'Women's wartime service,' p. 458.
[39] Dieter Riesenberger, 'Zur Professionalisierung der Schwestern vom Roten Kreuz vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg,' *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 53 (1994), p. 67.
[40] Ibid., p. 66.

attempted to anticipate wartime scenarios. Besides the practical training they received, nurses were also familiarised with religious and patriotic ideals, and, much like the soldiers' duty was conceived of in the army, their work was presented as an honourable service to God, the Kaiser, and the Fatherland.[41]

Wartime visual representations of nurses tending soldiers' bodies did not, however, convey the full extent of the wounds that soldiers suffered from, nor did they give a true impression of the violent nature of the conflict. Soldiers had to be depicted as wounded heroes in order to keep up the myth that Germany was fighting a defensive war. Nurses were portrayed by women as delegates of the female population, who provided a practical proof of women's worthiness, and their ability to make sacrifices and apply admirably feminine qualities in the national interest.

The following painting by Hedwig Frankenberger depicts a nurse, but, interestingly, she stands alone without a patient. Hence, the focus is completely on the figure of the nurse herself, a pretty young woman who is looking coquettishly at the viewer. The black-white-red flag in the back symbolises the national cause for which the young woman is working. Hosted in the background the German flag increases the air of pride and adds national significance to the nurse's task.

[41] Ibid., p. 72.



19 Hedwig Frankenberger, untitled ,1915[42]

The following painting by Johanna Klemm introduces a very different type of nurse. In this instance, we do not see the young bold woman for whom being a nurse also perhaps represented the opportunity of fleeing from a repressive bourgeois background.[43] Warnings were given to selection boards to ignore those female volunteers who lacked a genuine 'vocation' and the desired modest characteristics for the nursing profession.[44] The preferred asexual type of nurse is represented in the image below. She is a nun, or nursing sister, whose life has already been devoted to a higher ideal, and who represents the chaste ideal of feminine care which was so important for underlining the sincerity and reliability of women's involvement in the care of the war wounded. The image below is part of a series that was published as a portfolio in support of a soldier's home that had been established by a group of women in 1915. The title of the portfolio is 'women's gratefulness' *(Frauendank)* and four of the six images depict women and nurses caring for wounded soldiers. Nursing was clearly viewed as

[42] Hedwig Frankenberger, untitled, printed in *Die Jugend* 12 (1915).
[43] Quataert, 'Women's wartime service,' p. 461.
[44] Goebel, *Die Beteiligung der Frauen an der Kriegskrankenpflege*, p. 46.

the female endeavour that could express women's gratitude for the soldier's sacrifice most clearly. The accompanying text gives detailed information about the women's plans to found 'a living memorial by women for soldiers'. The home was described as a comfortable, beautifully situated and well equipped residence. It was designed to allow permanently wounded and crippled soldiers to live as heroes for the rest of their lives.[45]



20 Johanna Klemm, *Tending to the Wounded*, 1917 [46]

The painting by Johanna Klemm shows a nurse who is attentively leading a wounded soldier on a walk. The soldier's wounds do not appear to be particularly severe and he seems to be recovering well, requiring only a walking stick for support. Women's success in the role of a carer naturally appears more complete when a recovery is depicted. The soldier barely needs the assistance of the nurse, a possible indication of his returning physical strength. The soldier is young and in uniform and prominently wears an Iron Cross on his chest. He is thus characterised as a war-hero who sacrificed his health on behalf of others. In attentively caring for the young warrior,

[45] Johanna Klemm, *Heldendank* (Barmen: 1917).
[46] Johanna Klemm, *Die Kranken pflegen* (1917), in *Heldendank* (Barmen: 1917).

the nurse who can be seen as representing all German nurses, repays the debt society owes to the soldiers.

Klemm's image, which places a recovering soldier and a young nurse in beautiful surroundings, is clearly a romanticised one. The experience of being wounded is depicted as neither tragic nor traumatic. The lithograph reproduced below by artist Martha Schrag, on the other hand, differs greatly in both style and approach. The Chemnitz based artist was engaged in war relief work in her home town throughout the conflict. One of her initiatives was the production of a series of four wartime lithographs about women's experiences in the conflict. *The Consoler* was part of a series which was sold to support wartime charity projects.

Martha Schrag's lithograph creates an atmosphere that is not comfortable or idyllic, but full of strain and effort, evoking a sense of distress as well as empathy. Schrag emphasises the frailty and physical wounds of the man, whose right arm is injured and who is leaning on a crutch. He is slightly bending forward, concentrating on his movements and making a very tentative attempt to walk. In contrast to the soldier in the image above, he is no longer wearing a uniform or any military decorations. Hence, it is not his hero-status that is emphasised in the image, but, as the title reveals, the role of the nurse.



21 Martha Schrag, *The Consoler*, 1915[47]

In this image, the nurse has the role of a consoler, supporting and encouraging a soldier who is now dependent on her assistance. Although frail, the man is not fatally wounded and still able to move. The nurse, however, is not depicted as a heroine; instead she appears exhausted. Neither pride nor patriotic commitment are suggested as motives for the woman's assistance. The artist reduces the relationship between the 'wounded hero' and the 'heroic nurse' to its essence, presenting humanity, or compassion, as a general motivation for women to work as nurses.

Martha Schrag produced a range of images of wounded soldiers and their nurses. Yet instead of portraying heroic soldiers or nurses, she conveyed the severity of the injuries caused by the war. Her lithograph *The Nurse* depicts nurses caring for soldiers who are lying on hospital beds. They are suffering from serious injuries and need intensive care. Unlike in the previous images, the nurses here are shown working in a

[47] Martha Schrag, *Die Trösterin*, lithograph (1915), printed in Gerhard Hahn, *Leben und Werk der Malerin und Grafikerin Martha Schrag, 1870-1957* (Chemnitz (Karl-Marx Stadt): Bezirkskunstzentrum, 1982), plate 18.

field hospital, where the soldiers have not yet recovered and are suffering from fresh wounds.



22 Martha Schrag, *The Nurse*, 1915[48]

The nurses appear angelic; they are not rushing form patient to patient, but carrying out their work with dedication. This is especially true of the nurse in the foreground who is embracing a soldier and holding his hand, a gesture that indicates warmth and motherly love. Schrag reminds the viewer that many soldiers fight for their lives after a battle. To assist and tend to someone in need is represented as a human responsibility, perhaps a Christian duty, but not as a heroic act worth celebrating. While Schrag's portrait of the situation in a field hospital is perhaps more realistic than the stylised representations of nurses work produced by other artists, the scene is nonetheless rather idyllic and tender and very removed from and horror and human tragedy described by the medical staff who worked in such places.[49] Although this is something that Schrag consciously addresses, in the artist's view the wounded soldiers

[48] Martha Schrag, *Die Pflegerin*, lithograph (1915), printed in ibid., plate 17.
[49] Correspondence Emmi Marianne Gärtner - Ida Dehmel, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, DA NL Ida Dehmel.

were not heroes, but men suffering from traumatic experiences. Schrag did not glorify the figure of the soldier, instead she made him fragile, vulnerable and dependent.

The Morose Soldier

Schrag's lithographs of wounded soldiers provide evidence that women and women artists realised that the war did not leave men unaffected. This awareness of the cost of the war was something that increased as the conflict wore on. Highly idealised images of soldiers and warfare certainly existed, but they represented just one dimension of the emerging artistic spectrum of the war.

The following two images of pensive, sad looking soldiers suggest a transition not only in the figure of the soldier himself, but also in the way he was perceived. The painting, *The Soldier,* by Lina von Schauroth, which dates from 1915, is a particularly interesting example. Schauroth was ardently committed to the national cause and was renowned for her numerous war posters, which were generally filled with strong, severe German soldiers. The painting below is, however, of a different nature and in its aura of sadness and melancholy, it marks a departure from some of her more well-known work. The image below is a much more emotional portrait of the human side of a soldier and depicts an individual with experiences rather than an anonymous warrior. In contrast to the didactic messages transmitted in wartime posters, a painting perhaps offered more scope for artistic expression and allowed a more complex depiction of the war and its protagonists. On the other hand, *The Soldier* might reflect a true moment of doubt or recognition of the fact that warfare does not only produce heroic soldiers. Schauroth herself had visited the front and this painting may have been a reflection of personal encounters experienced while delivering charity goods to the troops.[50]

[50] Helene von Schauroth, ed., *Lina von Schauroth. Eine Frankfurter Künstlerin* (Frankfurt M.: Kramer, 1984), p. 26.



23 Lina von Schauroth, *The Soldier*, 1915 [51]

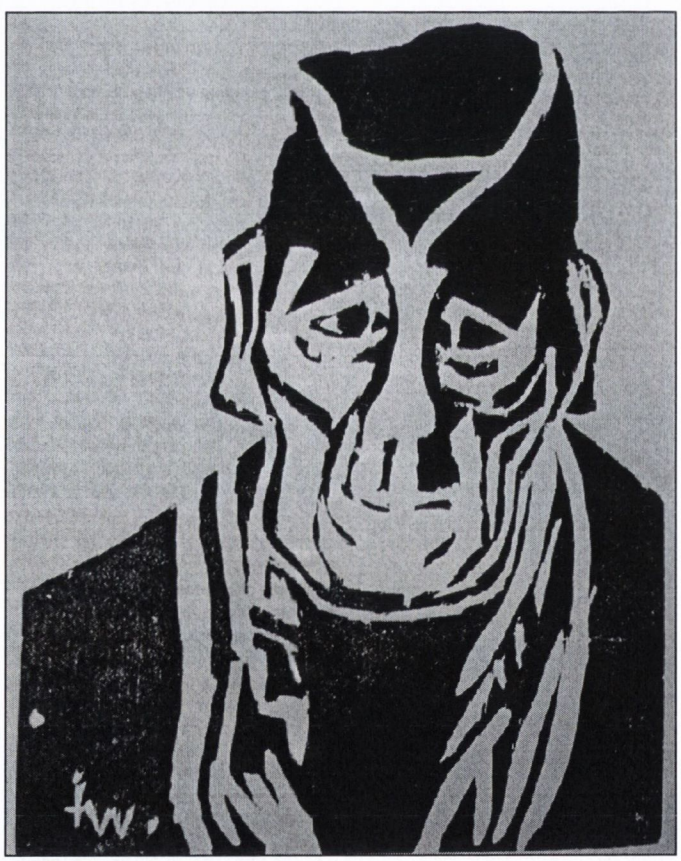
Schauroth's painting depicts a German soldier on a white horse. The soldier's helmet is lopsided and his facial expression earnest, an impression intensified by the dark hanging moustache which was popular among German soldiers. Such moustaches were commonly well looked after and stiffly waxed at the ends, following the example of the Kaiser. The soldier is carrying the black and white Prussian flag, which is as equally lopsided as the helmet. The rifle is carried on the back, so no immediate combat scene is to be expected. On the contrary, the soldier is riding away from a destroyed building in the background.

The mood of the painting is difficult to determine. An aura of destruction is manifested by the shelled buildings in the background. The dark greyness of the evening sky adds to the alarming atmosphere. The soldier himself, while appearing sad

[51] Lina von Schauroth, *Der Soldat* (1915) printed in ibid.

and pensive, maintains an impression of dignity, of being changed and ennobled through the experience of war. The lopsided helmet, the flag and the moustache appear to be at odds with the orderly image of the German army and the proud manner in which soldiers were expected to carry themselves. This soldier has little in common with the image of the idealised, victorious soldier as evoked by previously described depictions of male and female artists on the home front.

A similar aura of sadness is captured in the portrait of a soldier by Ines Wetzel below. This woodcut was reprinted in the magazine *Die Aktion* in 1918, and was also exhibited at the gallery of *Die Aktion* in 1918. It is a portrait of a man in uniform whose hat, jacket collar and stripes are that of an unspecified regiment. Most striking however is his facial expression and melancholy spreading from the piece of art. The coarse lines are sparingly yet effectively used to capture the soul behind the forced smile, the wrinkled face and the sad looking baggy eyes.



24 Ines Wetzel, *untitled*, 1918[52]

[52] Ines Wetzel, *untitled*, 1918, printed in *Die Aktion*, 14/15 (1918).

The viewer is confronted with the person behind the portrait, the soldier who seems to be looking into one's eyes. In common with the painting by Lina von Shauroth, the figure depicted is not a stalwart fighter. The portrayed soldier neither poses, nor fights. Instead, he appears morose, without energy, deeply affected by what he has seen and experienced while engaged in warfare. As with the paintings referred to above, the mood of the woodcut is hard to pin down, yet the portrait of the 'morose soldier' increasingly became a feature of women's wartime art.[53] These portraits acknowledge the very real impact warfare had on soldiers. They hint at experiences that possibly cause the sadness in the eyes, the pensive mood and the broken appearance. These war and front-line experiences were not shared by the female artists depicting them, but obviously they were aware of an effect caused by war and they were able to capture a suggestion of these in their art.

Conclusion

The images in the chapter illustrate the importance that was attached to the figure of the soldier as defender of women and children and the home. Heroic portraits of soldiers and the display of their physical strength re-assured people on the home front that they were being ably protected. Women and children understood themselves, and their defence, as the key reasons for the military activities and soldiers' motivation largely depended on their identification with the *Heimat*. Society was therefore deeply indebted to the soldiers and their sacrifice and the devoted care of nurses repaid part of this debt. The physical health of the soldier was vital for the defence of the country and had to be restored swiftly, a task that immensely raised the prestige attached to the nursing profession. Depictions of the heroic- active or heroic-wounded, soldier amounted, however, to a much romanticised vision of the war.

Yet gradually women's artistic responses to the conflict began to illustrate soldiers whose experiences of the war led to sadness and thoughtfulness instead of pride and glory. The perception of the front line soldier became more complex. The depiction of heroic victors did not match the experiences and observations of soldiers at the front. In light of the devastating and disfiguring effects of warfare, the idea of a romantic war

[53] A further example are the soldier's portraits by artists Ottilie Roederstein, see Barbara Rök, *Ottilie W. Roederstein, 1859-1937. Eine Künstlerin zwischen Tradition und Moderne. Monographie und Werkverzeichnis* (Marburg: Jonas, 1999).

was difficult to sustain, as will be seen in the following chapters. Accordingly, the majority of women's artistic responses turned to depicting the impact the war made through its duration and dealt with sacrifice, death, mourning and bereavement.

Part II The Experience of the long War

Chapter 3 *Death and Dying in Wartime*

The long duration of the war, and the ongoing confrontation with its lethal character that this entailed, gave rise to the production of many artistic representations of death and dying in wartime. Numerous artists dealt intensely with the subject, approaching wartime death from a range of angles. Paintings which mirrored the 'serious' side of the war, including depictions of dead and wounded soldiers and heavy fighting scenes, were explicitly allowed by the censorship authorities.[1] Although regulations for photography were stricter, the concessions towards artistic depictions suggest that wartime death and wounded soldiers had become a characteristic of modern warfare that was neither hidden from the public, nor denied by the military authorities.

It is conventionally argued that death had become a taboo subject in modern Western society and was avoided as a topic of conversation, as in works of art and literature.[2] If this is true, the period of the First World War presents a remarkable exception and a turning point in attitudes to death in Western society. David Cannadine has argued that the stance of the British population toward death was profoundly changed by the impact of the First World War.[3] Throughout the 19th century, romanticised perceptions of death existed and a heroic view of death on the battlefield persisted. The mass dying on the front during the First World War, however, brought about a general fear of death in wartime that was mirrored in British foreign policy throughout the 1920s.[4]

With a total of over two million soldiers killed in action or dead of wounds, Germany suffered the most casualties in the conflict. In relation to the population of the country, however, France, Austria-Hungary, Romania and Serbia suffered greater losses. The great battles on the Western Front, Flanders in 1914 and 1915, Verdun and the Somme in 1916, and Ypres (for the third time) in 1917, contributed substantially to

[1] Oberzensurstelle des Kriegspresseamts ed., *Zensurbuch für die deutsche Presse* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, March 1917), p. 49, Kriegsarchiv Munich, Stv. Genkdo I. AK 1709.
[2] Werner Fuchs, *Todesbilder in der modernen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 8-13.
[3] David Cannadine, 'War and death, grief and mourning in modern Britain,' in *Mirrors of mortality. Studies in the social history of death*, ed. Joachim Whaley (London: Europe, 1981), pp. 196-202.
[4] Ibid., p. 202.

the fact that Germany and France were the two states which had to mourn the highest numbers of war dead. The main reason for the enormous death toll of the First World War when compared to previous conflicts was the technological progress of the weaponry used by the belligerent powers on the Western Front and elsewhere. The high-explosive artillery shells used by all armies were particularly destructive, causing deadly wounds and mutilating soldiers' bodies. The following tables contextualise German casualties: [5]

Total numbers of the population and men in fighting age

Population (Mil.)	Men in fighting age*
67.8	16.300.000

* estimated no of men under 50, who were 18 at the start of the war or reached this age during the war

Total number of active soldiers and their percentage of men in fighting age

Army (no of fighting soldiers)	Percentage of men in fighting age
13.200.000	81%

Soldiers killed in action or died of wounds

total	in relation to fighting soldiers	in relation to men in fighting age
2.037.000	15%	12%

For the people of all the belligerent countries, battlefield death came to be a daily occurrence. The actual figures of the war dead between 1914 and 1918 illustrate the scale of casualties contemporaries had to come to terms with. As many as 15 per cent of the German soldiers who fought in the war died. But, as Robert Whalen asserts, death as an objectively measurable event represented only one perspective.[6] The intimate, private experience of death was less tangible but more traumatic. Whalen describes how the experience of mass death was reflected in soldiers' diaries and correspondence, and in war fiction and poetry. It was a need contemporaries had, he argues, to describe death not through statistics, but through images and concrete metaphors.[7] It is therefore unsurprising that wartime death became a frequently depicted theme in visual art. As a medium, it allowed the concrete depiction of death, and fear of

[5] The following figures are taken from Rüdiger Overmans, 'Kriegsverluste,' in *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, et al. (Munich, Vienna, Zurich: Schöningh, 2004), pp. 663-66.
[6] Robert Weldon Whalen, *Bitter wounds. German victims of the Great War, 1914-1939* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 37.
[7] Ibid., pp. 37-38.

death. Yet how exactly did the art of contemporaries reflect the death toll of the war? What does the art of the First World War reveal about the contemporary understanding of death? What was the function of these visual representations of death? And, importantly, how realistic were the depictions?

In much of the secondary literature on thematic representations of death in art and literature, death on the battlefield in general has largely been left out of the analysis.[8] Wartime death during the First World War has not been treated as a distinct thematic complex by art historians.[9] Instead it is only discussed in the context and as part of the devastating living conditions in the trenches.[10] Florian Matzner, wrongly, argues that no depictions of death and dying exist in the art and sculpture of the First World War and describes this as an 'iconographical gap'. Visual representations, Matzner asserts, may show a last action of a soldier who is to die in the battle, or a 'peacefully sleeping' soldier, but never depict the deadly wound or the act of dying on the battlefield.[11] The images analysed in this chapter will go some way towards revising this assumption.

The evolution of people's attitudes to death in wartime has been examined by Klaus Latzel and Bernd Hüppauf respectively.[12] Their work reveals how important understanding, and dealing with, death was for contemporaries who had to come to terms with the virtually unknown phenomenon of violent mass death. Neither study, however, includes visual representations. Bernd Hüppauf argues that a general mythical attitude towards wartime death was predominant on the home front between 1914 and 1918. Hüppauf suggests that the social need for a comforting image of death existed in society and helped to make the horrors of the war bearable.[13] George Mosse demonstrates that, although the reality of soldiers' experiences on the battlefield was of

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[8] Hans Helmut Jansen, ed., *Der Tod in Dichtung, Philosophie und Kunst* (Darmstadt: Dietrich Steinkopf, 1978), Klaus Wolbert, ed., *Memento mori. Der Tod als Thema der Kunst vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart. Ausstellung im Hessischen Landesmuseum Darmstadt* (Darmstadt: Hess. Landesmuseum Darmstadt, 1984).

[9] Richard Cork, *A bitter truth. Avant-garde art and the Great War* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1994).

[10] Annegret Jürgens-Kirchhoff, *Schreckensbilder. Krieg und Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Reimer, 1993), pp. 78-88.

[11] Florian Matzner, 'Der 'schlafende' Krieger. Ikonographische Aspekte zum ideologischen Stellenwert von Leben und Tod,' in *Unglücklich das Land, das Helden nötig hat. Leiden und Sterben in den Kriegsdenkmälern des Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieges*, ed. Michael Hütt, et al. (Marburg: Jonas, 1990), p. 57.

[12] Bernd Hüppauf, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg,' in *Ansichten vom Krieg. Vergleichende Studien zum Ersten Weltkrieg in Literatur und Gesellschaft*, ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Königstein: Forum Academicum, 1984), pp. 55-91, Klaus Latzel, *Vom Sterben im Krieg. Wandlungen in der Einstellung zum Soldatentod vom Siebenjährigen Krieg bis zum 2. Weltkrieg* (Warendorf: Fahlbusch, 1988).

[13] Hüppauf, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg,' pp. 64-68.

quite a different nature, a 'cult of the fallen soldier' developed in Germany society in the first months of the war and persisted until long after the armistice. This cult also had pious elements, but Mosse argues that viewing the soldier's death as heroic was at its core and acted as means of overcoming the fear of death and dying that distressed contemporaries.[14] The images presented in this chapter on the other hand suggest that some women on the home front did not shy away from confronting themselves and the public with more 'realistic' visions of death on the battlefield.

In his 1915 essay on war and death, the psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) discusses the difficulties contemporaries had in dealing with the experience of mass death.[15] His advice was simple and demanded that death should be given its place in life and viewed with a more realistic attitude. It seems that the artists presented in this chapter were already engaged in such a process of confronting and accepting death as part of life and of warfare. It is not the heroic soldier's death on the battlefield that is mirrored in the following depictions; instead the death of fallen soldiers is represented in a plain form and without mythical embellishment.

Depictions of wartime death were even more frequently rendered by male artists at the front whose actual experience of combat influenced their artistic reactions. In contrast to women's images, these works are much more detailed, often more authentic, and clearly reflected the nature of the ongoing conflict. Women's art, in most cases, portrayed the war as a generic conflict in which neither the weapons and uniforms depicted, nor the type of warfare necessarily matched that of the war that was fought between 1914 and 1918. Moreover, the graphic display of violence and visual expression of fear, in contrast to the male war art, reflects their different experience and perception of the conflict. An imaginative element, however, remains common to the war art of both men and women, as representations of death and wartime dying can never reflect direct personal experience. The artistic depictions of death reveal how contemporaries envisaged dying in wartime and suggest the existence of an unsentimental understanding of the war which candidly displayed wartime death not as the result of brave fighting but as the inevitably harsh and final consequence of war.

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[14] George L. Mosse, *Fallen soldiers. Reshaping the memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 78, George L. Mosse, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe und nationale Wiedergeburt. Der Gefallenenkult in Deutschland,' in *Kriegserlebnis. Der erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nation*, ed. Klaus Vondung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), pp. 241-61.

[15] Sigmund Freud, 'Zeitgemäßes über Krieg und Tod,' in *Sigmund Freud. Studienausgabe*, vol.9, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, et al. (Frankfurt M.: Fischer, 1974), p. 59-60.

The existing visual material from the First World War can be grouped into either symbolic or realistic representations of death. Each form serves as an avenue to understand and explore the phenomenon of death during the conflict. The more symbolic representations attempt to grasp the phenomenon of wartime death, to face its unpredictability and looming threat. In these designs, the gruesome details of wartime death are often hidden behind figurative forms. Some of the symbolic images also visualise more general reflections about death which had a long tradition in art history,[16] yet their production during the war was likely to have been triggered by the death toll of the ongoing armed conflict.

The 'realistic' depictions of death, on the other hand, can be understood as a more immediate confrontation with the act of dying itself. It should be clarified that these 'realistic' depictions of death by female artists were not based on their eyewitness accounts of the battlefield. Instead this term characterises the artistic style in which their ideas of death and dying were depicted. These 'realistic' depictions reflect a more rational perception of death that had existed in Europe since the Enlightenment. Then, mystical, archaic and religious explanations of death were partially replaced by an understanding of death as a gradual expiry of the biological functions.[17] As will be seen in Chapter six, the religious and more metaphysical meanings of death remained important and were widely applied in the art produced during the First World War. Their main function, however, was to justify the conflict and provide an ideology that rendered wartime sacrifice noble and worthwhile. The images in this chapter, on the other hand, seem to represent an attempt on the part of the artists who created them to come to terms with mass death and a form of dying that was violent and painful, instead of a peaceful passing away.

Symbolic Representations of Death

The visual response of artist Katharina Heise to wartime death provides a fascinating case study. Her fiancé Oskar Hesse was killed at the front in 1916.[18] As a result, her depictions of wartime death were linked to a tragic personal loss. Heise approached death from several artistic avenues. This suggests that the production of the

[16] For an overview see Wolbert, ed., *Memento mori. Der Tod als Thema der Kunst vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart. Ausstellung im Hessischen Landesmuseum Darmstadt.*
[17] Fuchs, *Todesbilder*, p. 76, Hüppauf, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg,' p. 57.
[18] NL Katharina Heise, Stadtmuseum Schönebeck.

images perhaps reflected a gradual process of coming to terms with death. The variety of images she created on this subject, and her own experience of losing someone in the war, turn her artistic accounts into exceptional examples and provide a unique perspective on contemporary understandings of death.

Heise produced the following lithograph, *Death to the Russian Bear* in 1916. It has a distinctly sinister element in that the theme of wartime death is realised in form of a death wish to the enemy. This is a unique design, as it is the only visual example in my collection of women's wartime art that, albeit symbolically, represents and names the enemy.



25 Katharina Heise, *Death to the Russian Bear*, 1916[19]

The enemy appears in the form of a black bear, an animal that was commonly used to represent Russia during the war, marching through a bleak snowy landscape. A skeleton with a shouldered scythe, a depiction of death in its most obvious symbolic

[19] Katharina Heise, *Tod dem Russischen Bären*, coloured lithograph (1916), NL Katharina Heise, Stadtmuseum Schönebeck.

form, rides on the bear's back. Yet it is not only death himself who seems to be in joyous expectation of possible victims, the crows above the bear and death also appear to be circulating in anticipation. Yet the image is already overshadowed by death: a rabbit has been hung on one of the trees which themselves look as if they are past all bloom. Death moreover is present in the two graves on the left hand side of the image. The two lopsided black crosses suggest that two bodies are buried underneath. The black ovals resemble helmets which possible suggests that two soldiers were buried underneath.

The depiction of the 'Russian Bear' as the enemy is significant, as it was Russian mobilisation, in response to the ultimatum put to Serbia by the government of Austria-Hungary, that the government authorities used to justify mobilisation in Germany on 1 August 1914. A fabricated Russian violation of the German borders served as a pretext to present the outbreak of the hostilities to the German population as an attack on Germany. This was widely believed, proving that Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg's strategy of mobilising for a 'defensive' war was domestically very successful.[20] The notion that Germany had been attacked and was fighting a defensive war consistently served as an argument to justify the righteousness of the conflict in women's publications between 1914 and 1918.[21]

The Russian occupation of parts of East Prussia in 1914, moreover, had a long-lasting effect on how Germans viewed the war and kept the view of the threat posed by the 'Russian Bear' alive.[22] The image of the bear was used in the illustrated press and in numerous wartime posters. It was viewed as a fitting reference to the size and force of Russia and emphasised her role as the 'aggressor'. Thus, the skeletal rider and the bear in Heise's lithograph can be understood either as the death-bringing 'Russian Bear', who had to be eliminated before his advance, or the rider alone could symbolise the death and defeat awaiting the Russian army after a confrontation with the German forces. The German army is not illustrated directly in the image, but the black-white-red colours of the *Kaiserreich* fill the entire design and suggest its overwhelming presence

[20] Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Die Urkatastrophe Deutschlands. Der Erste Weltkrieg, 1914-1918* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2002), pp. 32-33.

[21] See chapter one on the 'Appeal to women of neutral countries' published under the auspices of the BDF and signed by members of the women's movement, artists and writers, pp. 22-23, and Thea von Harbou, *Die deutsche Frau im Weltkrieg. Einblicke und Ausblicke* (Leipzig: Hesse und Becker, 1916), p. 21.

[22] For example, Franziska Mann, 'Mut und Tat,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg. Ein Rat-, Tat- und Trostbuch. Gesammelte Blätter aus Frauenhand*, ed. Karl Jünger (Stuttgart: Lutz, 1916), pp. 138-43.

in the background. [23] No actual fighting scene is depicted by the artist, but combat is clearly expected, and death is represented as part of the collision between the 'Russian Bear' and the 'defending' forces.

Death is not only foreseen in the image, as the title indicates, the extinction of the enemy forces is also openly demanded. The aggression conveyed in the clear announcement of the death wish for the enemy is rare in women's wartime art. In its artistic style, the lithograph resembles the graphic art and cartoons printed during the war in illustrated magazines such as *Kladderadatsch* and *Simplicissimus*. Yet in contrast to the threatening message in the title of the lithograph by Katharina Heise, depictions in the illustrated magazines were usually humorous. The character of the artist's design and aggression in the tone, therefore, suggest that the extinction of the enemy was part of a revenge plan, rather than the noble defence of the *Heimat*. In this image, death is not the tragic end of a loved one; it is presented as a just punishment for the enemy.

A further angle from which Heise explored death can be seen in her 1916 lithograph, *Fortress of Death*. In this image, death is understood as an entity that, whether in metaphysical or corporeal form, resides in a fortified building: the orange castle that features in the image. The surrounding trees situate the castle in a worldly environment, giving death its place among mankind. As in the previous image, crows are depicted as the ever-present companions of death. They are circling above the castle, and their presence and activity suggests carrion lies nearby. The surrounding wall of the fortress which is either built of or decorated with skulls, adds a threatening and disquieting element to the image. The windows of the castle also resemble skulls, creating the impression that death is looking out from every window.

[23] For details on the significance of the colours of the German flag, see Hans Hattenhauer, *Deutsche Nationalsymbole. Zeichen und Bedeutung* (Munich: Olzog, 1984), pp. 20-24.



26 Katharina Heise, *Fortress of Death*, 1916[24]

If death's domicile is a castle, then this is the place where he retreats to conspire and from where he sets out for his next victims. Death is imagined as a 'being' whose behavioural patterns resemble those of humans. A castle is usually a stronghold to protect those inside, but what is there for death to fear? Or is the castle simply the place where the dead arrive and are arranged like trophies? This image dates from 1916 and was created by an artist grieving a recent personal loss and aware of the death toll of the ongoing war. Yet unlike the previous example, this image does not contain an explicit reference to the current wartime scenario. Possibly, it represents a more general dealing with death and may have been an attempt to rationalise the phenomenon of death by employing concrete iconography and a clear, modern artistic style.

Although the lithograph conveys a dark, cold and mystical atmosphere, death is not depicted as atrocious or evil. The existence of death is not denied by the artist, but artistically turned into a more familiar force. The thick walls of the castle, perhaps, suggest that death cannot be explored closer and never be understood intimately. The fortress represents a tangible, rational symbol, whereas the atmosphere in the image conveys an impression of threat and fear. Thus, two elements associated with death are

[24] Katharina Heise, *Burg des Todes*, coloured lithograph (1916), NL Katharina Heise Stadtmuseum Schönebeck.

combined in this image, and while death as a phenomenon is made more real and accessible, its more abstract elements are also incorporated. These coloured lithographs by Katharina Heise represent different functions of death: as a threatening force and as an inevitable dark presence in people's lives. As we will see further on, the artist explored wartime death from yet further angles and through different artistic media.

Death on the Battlefield

During the First World War, male and female artists created a range of images portraying corpses on the battlefield. These artistic accounts were not only created by male combatant artists who had witnessed casualties at the front, female artists in the rear were also well aware of the mass dying on the battlefields. Daily published lists of losses, announcements in newspapers, and families in mourning all acted as publicly visible signs that illustrated the human cost of the war. Between 1914 and 1918, battlefield death became a distinctive artistic theme in its own right. Both bearing the sight of and enduring the thought of wartime death seemed to have had a place in people's lives, just as the search for meaning had one at a later stage.

Artistic portrayals of the war dead of previous conflicts, such as the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), were often merely one feature within compositions of more general battle scenes, in which the artists aimed to reproduce decisive moments in the military campaign.[25] Stylistically, artists placed minute attention to detail, in order to achieve realistic impressions of the event. Scenic surroundings, colours of the uniforms and details of the weapons were all accurately reproduced in the genre of 'battle painting'. The excitement of battle, as well skill and courage of the soldiers were reflected artistically. The wartime death of the artist's soldier compatriots, on the other hand, was neither a thematic focus in this genre, nor was it made the subject of whole images. If dead bodies on a battlefield were represented, they usually belonged to the enemy forces. The agony of a dying horse featured far more regularly in these earlier battle paintings, and has been understood to represent a formula for 'heroic death'.[26] In the secondary literature on the genre painting of war, the manner in which wartime death has been depicted has not consequently been studied as a separate theme.

[25] Sybille Bock, *Bildliche Darstellungen zum Krieg von 1870/71* (Freiburg (Diss.): 1982), pp. 88-92.
[26] See note 72 in Jürgens-Kirchhoff, *Schreckensbilder*, p. 380.

The demise of 'battle-painting', 'history-painting', or genre painting of war between 1914 and 1918, serves as evidence of the difficulty in maintaining idealised and stylised versions of the events that unfolded from August 1914 on. The expectations of art and artists that were raised in the course of 1914, i.e. the production of a worthy, truly German and classical art that adequately reflected the magnitude of the times and greatness of the war,[27] proved impossible to fulfil when faced with the reality of war. To avoid the production of *'Kriegskitsch'*, inferior cultural representations of the war, it was considered a necessity that artists were, if not combatants, at least eyewitnesses of the event.

Traditional 'battle-painting' was considered a refined talent in the conservative art-circles of the *Kaiserreich*, and since the Wars of Unification, had been extremely popular. Depictions, such as the *Crowning ceremony of Wilhelm II at Versailles* from 1878 by Anton von Werner were the acknowledged masterpieces of the time. Triumphalist hindsight and the historic importance attached to 1870/71 led to further productions of glorious battle-scenes and heroic fighting in the ensuing decades. After the outbreak of the First World War, clear attempts to produce 'great' paintings of a similar style could be seen in the works of war artists which were reprinted in the early issues of *Die Leipziger Illustrierte*, *Die Kriegszeit* and other illustrated journals and art magazines. It was soon recognised, however, that the demand to report realistically from the front could not be reconciled with the existing ideas of warfare. The reality of the war had its own force, and experiences at the front impacted on those who intended to sketch its reality. Even the well known volume *Kriegsfahrten Deutscher Maler* (War Journeys of German Painters), an account of a front-line trip by the elite of German battle-painters including Theodor Rocholl and Robert Sterl, fell short in depicting the imagined greatness of the conflict and its perceived world historic importance.[28] Ekkehard Mai argues that it was impossible for contemporary artists to capture 'the modern battle in its full extension and spiritual importance'.[29] Traditional battle-painting and its representative function simply did not provide a suitable format to represent the ongoing conflict.

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[27] Konrad Escher, *Kunst, Krieg und Krieger. Zur Geschichte der Kriegsdarstellungen* (Zürich, Leipzig: Rascher, 1917), Hans Hildebrandt, *Krieg und Kunst* (München: Piper, 1916), Gustav Pauli, *Der Krieg und die deutsche Kunst. Vortrag gehalten am 20. Nov. 1914 in der Reihe der "Deutschen Vorträge Hamburgischer Professoren"* (Hamburg: Friederichsen, 1915).

[28] *Kriegsfahrten deutscher Maler. Selbsterlebtes im Weltkrieg 1914-1915*, (Bielefeld, Leipzig: Velhagen&Klasing, 1915).

[29] Ekkehard Mai, "Ja, das ist der Krieg!'. Zur Militär- und Schlachtenmalerei im Kaiserreich,' in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit. Bilder des Ersten Weltkrieges*, ed. Rainer Rother (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum, 1994), pp. 241-58.

The actual depiction of dead bodies is of particular relevance for women on the home front who would generally neither have witnessed soldiers dying on the battlefields, nor actually touched the corpse of their dead loved ones – husband, brother, son or other male relative. Hüppauf suggests that the missing physical proof of their death fed, in women's consciousness, the hope for a return of the dead.[30] Arguably, however, the depictions of dead bodies by female artists served the exact opposite purpose and represented an attempt to banish the dead to the realm of the dead.

The following coloured lithograph, simply entitled *War*, was produced by Katharine Heise in 1916. The image depicts the hillside advance of a cavalry regiment. The shape of the soldiers' helmets resemble those worn by cavalry soldiers, the Dragoons or the Hussars, which identifies the regiment as one of the German army. The leading officer in the front is turned towards his regiment as if cheering them on for an attack and giving last instructions. The soldiers follow, yet their body language is not one of stalwart courage. Their bowed heads suggest an attitude of fatal submission in view of the large field gun awaiting them on top of the hill. It is the black crow on top of the cannon that determines the fate of the soldiers: he is biding his time in anticipation of fresh carrion.



27 Katharina Heise, *War*, 1916[31]

[30] Hüppauf, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg,' pp.18-19.
[31] Katharina Heise, *Der Krieg*, coloured lithograph (1916), NL Katharina Heise, Stadtmuseum Schönebeck.

The anticipated death of the soldiers dominates the image and shows an understanding of war that is not consistent with heroic adventure or courageous fighting. What is evoked instead is a dutiful ride into a battle that means inevitable death. There is nothing glorious about the soldiers' attitude in the image, but neither is death represented as particularly evil. This image does not show actual dead bodies and the crow is a comparatively harmless embodiment of death. The presence of the bird also classifies death as part of the natural order whereby death becomes a more natural event. This impression is reinforced by the absence of enemy forces. War, then, is presented not as a means of defeating the enemy but as an endeavour whose continuation is driven by a sense of duty. Death is part of the nature of war, and this awareness is written into the composure of the soldiers and the last hesitating rearing of their horses. Again, death is represented symbolically, but framed into a battle-scene. Hence, fighting and death become intertwined and presented as more common, or more likely, than fighting and victory.

The soldiers in the image are unarmed, suggesting that they are unable to defend themselves and do not stand a chance of surviving the uphill advance. There is no impression of resistance or defence on the part of the soldiers, their obedience to their officer, and their willingness to ride into battle unarmed, illustrate a contemporary attitude towards war that believed that the individual was powerless to alter his destiny. Many contemporaries and many women in particular understood the war as a necessity and an irrevocable situation that people had to simply get on with.[32] The sinister depiction of the soldiers as cannon-fodder illustrates the vulnerability of every single soldier who was engaged in fighting.

The theme of this image is a tragic one, yet the colourful style of the lithograph with the brown horses, yellow soldiers, green hills and bright blue sky, in correlation with the simple clear forms, add a lighter note and alleviate the fatalism of the design. Colour is a very important element of this image as only the cannon and the crow as representatives of battle and death are depicted in black. This adds to their threatening nature and builds a strong contrast to the rest of the image. The viewer is left in indecision: how can a war that is depicted in such a colourful manner be so tragic? Yet the image contains several tropes about the war. None of the soldiers have a face, they are all part of an anonymous mass army and many of them will soon be part of the

[32] A detailed explanation is provided by the writer Thea von Harbou, Harbou, *Die deutsche Frau im Weltkrieg*, pp. 17-21.

anonymous masses of the dead. Also, the depiction of soldiers as helpless cannon-fodder has a parallel with the way in which combatants perceived themselves after heavy fighting.[33] The association of war with anticipated death leads to an understanding of the conflict that could be called contemporary 'wartime realism'.

The lithograph reproduced below by the artist Maria Caspar-Filser is an excellent example of a realistic style applied to the theme of wartime death. The title of the image is *Dead Body on Battlefield*, and the lithograph is clearly a depiction of a recent battle. Dead or dying men and horses are scattered around a battlefield and show visible bloody wounds. A broken supply wagon in the background underlines the violence and aggression that raged in the scene. The outlook is bleak, survival is suggested to have been impossible as all life in the image had been extinguished and everything that was once whole has been left broken and destroyed.



28 Maria Caspar-Filser, *Dead Body on Battlefield*, 1914/15[34]

[33] See for example letter by Martin Drescher 3 November 1914 in, Philipp Witkop, ed., *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1928), p. 13, Benjamin Ziemann, *Front und Heimat. Ländliche Kriegserfahrungen im südlichen Bayern 1914-1923* (Essen: Klartext, 1997), pp. 165-67.
[34] Maria Caspar-Filser, *Toter auf Schlachtfeld*, printed in *Zeit-Echo* 1 (1914/15).

Dead Body on Battlefield is a representation of violent death that is neither heroic nor glorifying. The battlefield is deserted after the fighting and no comrades tend to the dying or bury the fallen. The image therefore addresses what arises from women's contemporary accounts as an imagined terrifying scenario – that their 'loved one' died alone; that his corpse was not cared for but left to waste without a proper burial. Women who suffered wartime loss often wrote to the comrades of their fallen family members in search of details of the dead soldier's last hours.[35] The priority for these women was to receive a confirmation that the death of their relative had been quick and painless, that he had not been deserted, and that his body had been cared for and buried. This idealised vision of death on the battlefield naturalised a violent death as much as possible which, perhaps, offered some consolation to the bereaved. The lithograph by Maria Caspar-Filser, on the other hand, forces the viewer to visualise a different and much more disturbing vision of death on the battlefield. Whether this account is truer to the reality on the battlefield is a different question. Caspar-Filser was not personally affected by a loss in the war. This may have enabled her to picture a version of battlefield death that was dominated by destruction and desolation instead of producing a more comforting portrayal.

Death on the battlefield was even more commonly depicted by male artists serving in the army, very few of whom actually fought as combatants. A brief comparison with selected examples reveals how the artistic approaches by female and male artists differed and highlights gender-specific peculiarities. Unlike male combatant artists, female artists were not eyewitnesses of fighting and dying at the front. Women were not admitted as official 'war artists' by the German Army,[36] so their depictions of death and death on the battlefield were entirely fictional. They may have been fed by eyewitness accounts, but women's art neither mirrors the same horror obvious in the work produced by combatant artists nor reflects the heroic fighting and dying as displayed in paintings by official war artists.

The following etching, entitled *The Shell*, was produced by artist Max Beckmann in 1915. He had volunteered as a medical orderly in September 1914 and

[35] Both Ida Dehmel and Käthe Kollwitz corresponded with their fallen sons' comrades about the details of their sons' death. A comrade of Heinz-Lux Auerbach described the circumstances of his death to Ida Dehmel in a letter, 22.1.1917, Br.: Ida Dehmel – Heinz-Lux Auerbach, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, DA NL Ida Dehmel. Also see the diary entry 10. November 1914 in, Käthe Kollwitz, 'Die Tagebücher, 1908-1943,' ed. Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz (Berlin: Siedler, 1999), p. 174.

[36] Stellv. General-Kommando I. Armee Korps 1767: Kriegsmaler, Kriegsarchiv München.

served on both the Eastern and the Western Fronts.[37] This chaotic image does not seem to have enough room to mirror the impact of the exploding shell, which dominates the foreground. In terms of composition, Beckmann has abandoned the conventional rules of perspective in order to convey the speed and immediacy of the moment. In the front left corner, we can see the casualties of the attack: a dying soldier, who is tended to by another wounded soldier. Both have facial wounds and missing eyes. On their right a dead soldier is sliding down lifelessly to his side and he is also marked with visible wounds. A fourth soldier, his face torn in terror, stumbles towards the group. The soldier in black on the right hand corner of the image forms an extreme contrast to the dying and wounded. He is standing upright, pointing his arm and finger as if shouting orders and expecting the wounded to join the group of soldiers on the left who point their guns toward the invisible enemy in the background.



29 Max Beckmann, *The Shell*, 1915[38]

[37] Sebastian Giesen, ed., *Max Beckmann - Krieg. Zeichnungen und Druckgraphik 1913-1919* (Bonn: Bild-Kunst, 2000), pp. 4-6.
[38] Max Beckmann, *Die Granate*, etching (1915) Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich.

Beckmann himself had witnessed shell fire and, as a medical orderly, was constantly forced to confront the sight of badly wounded men. Instead of portraying their heroic death or brave endurance of serious injury, he chose to depict gruesome wounds and terrified faces. The pressure put on soldiers to engage in a hopeless attack is symbolised by the figure of the officer in the right corner. He represents a soldier's duty to face shell fire and continue fighting. He is looking at the wounded and dying as if accusing them with his gesture. The hopelessness of escaping or surviving the situation is demonstrated by the four wounded and dying soldiers who do not stand a chance against the weaponry used in the engagement. Beckmann himself wrote about his front-line experiences to his wife and described the nightmare visions which were triggered by every shot he heard. An account of a bombardment during the battles of Ypres from 4 May 1915 illustrates the horrors he and the other soldiers saw:

> It was a hellish noise. The air was filled with the piercing whistles of the shells and the roaring gunfire. Wounded soldiers were brought in constantly. Some of the gassed tossed about wildly and breathed heavily. [...]. I saw things that are beyond this world...Two corpses from this morning were lying outside, they were to be buried later. I lifted the cloth covering their faces. One of them had an ashen face with a weird supernatural expression. The other one had a violent face, covered in dirty blood, and a large gaping wound in his lower face and neck, like a deep bloody chasm. [...]In the middle of these destructive human remains there was I, conscious every moment of being part of them.[39]

Beckmann, unable to sustain the physical and psychological strain brought on by his work, suffered a breakdown in 1915 and, exempted from front-line service, continued to work in hospitals in Frankfurt until his final dismissal from the army in 1917. His experiences at the front were to remain the dominating theme of his artistic work for years to come.

The quotation from the above letter exemplifies a familiarity with the nature of wartime dying that distinguishes experiences at the front from those in the rear. The intensity of Beckmann's experiences speaks through his etching and turns *The Shell* into a compelling image, captivating the viewer with overwhelming detail. Shell bombardments and combat scenes with casualties, themes which occupied male artists for years, were not depicted in women's art. A number of artists produced images of the

[39] Letter from Max Beckmann to his wife Minna Tube, 4 May 1915, Max Beckmann, *Briefe im Kriege* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1916), pp. 55-56.

bursting of a shell and its lethal impact during the First World War, revealing this to be a particular formative experience of warfare.[40]

It should emphasised, however, that images featuring shellfire and combat were also created by male artists who had no personal front-line experience. The artist Ludwig Meidner, for example, produced an image in 1914 with the title *In the Trench* that illustrates an exploding shell in a trench. Meidner was not called up for military service until 1916 and even then, he was spared front-line experience. After a training period in the infantry, he worked as a translator for French prisoners of war near Cottbus.[41] His depiction of an exploding shell blowing away and disfiguring a number of German soldiers, however, is impossible to differentiate from images based on the personal experience of a comparable event. The chaos caused by the impact closely resembles Beckmann's version. The attempt to capture the deadly effect of the shell is also characterised by minute attention to detail: blood gushing out of wounds, limbs flying in the air, and contorted bodies produce an image of absolute destruction of human life.



30 Ludwig Meidner, *In the Trench*, 1914[42]

[40] Further examples are, Willy Jaeckel, *Volltreffer*, aus 'Memento'(1914/15), Otto Dix, *Leuchtkugel* (1917), Otto Dix, *Volltreffer auf Soldat* (1917), Max Pechstein, Blatt 4 der Folge ‚Somme 1916' (1917).
[41] Christian Lenz, 'Kirchner - Meidner - Beckmann. Drei deutsche Künstler im Ersten Weltkrieg,' in *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), p. 172.
[42] Ludwig Meidner, *Im Schützengraben*, lithograph (1914), printed in Jürgens-Kirchhoff, *Schreckensbilder*, plate 35.

Meidner's lithograph serves as a reminder of the fictional character of art, despite its seemingly realistic nature. His vision of death on the battlefield, produced from a non-combatant perspective, resembles the images by male combatant artists and not those produced by female non-combatant artists. This suggests that perhaps male channels of communication functioned in a different way to those across gender borders, as Meidner may have been told vivid accounts of experiences from the battlefield by male friends. On the other hand, the relevance of these images may not lie in their depiction of exploding shells but in the imagined death through shellfire. Even in the case of an artist who regularly witnessed death, representations of the act of dying could never reflect the artist's own experience. Meidner, aged twenty in 1914, was presumably expecting to be called up for military service after the outbreak of war. Like Beckmann, he may have envisaged and feared sharing the fate of so many soldiers who were mutilated by shell fragments. Confronting the possibility of their own death presumably influenced artistic depictions produced by male artists and emphasised the horror and panic in their work.

The Act of Dying

Artistic representations of individual soldiers in the process of dying are extremely rare in the wartime art of both German men and women. To portray the actual act of dying in close up possibly required an artistic skill or psychological strength which may have hindered many artists from addressing this particular theme. The following sculpture by Katharina Heise is the portrayal of a dying man, so the artist does not offer another abstract representation of death, but rather an intimate portrayal of the act of dying itself. The title of the sculpture is *Dying* and it was produced, in memory of her fiancé, between 1917 and 1918.[43]

[43] NL Katharina Heise, Stadtmuseum Schönebeck.



31 Katharina Heise, *Dying* 1917/18[44]

The face of the dying man is distorted in agony, his eyes are closed and his mouth is open as if he is still breathing, or gasping for breath. The man is not dead yet, but the gesture of his arms expresses humbleness and an acceptance of the fate which he is too weak to resist. The sculpture is a very personal and emotive one and clearly differs from Heise's previous lithographic art in that death is not disguised behind symbols. Instead, the act of dying is directly depicted. For Heise, using the medium of sculpture represented a new approach. Physically producing and shaping a dying torso with her own hands was not only a big step artistically, it also denotes a further development in her personal engagement with death and bereavement. In this sculpture, Heise seems to be trying to imagine how her fiancé died, and to capture the agony and loneliness of his last hours.

[44] Katharina Heise, *Das Sterben* 1917/18 NL Katharina Heise, Stadtmuseum Schönebeck. (Further versions of *Das Sterben* were produced by artist until the mid-1920s.)

The mental strength needed to sculpt the death of a loved one indicates the importance of this piece not only for the artist as part of coming to terms with the loss, but also as a testimony for the contemporary understanding of wartime death. Death here is accepted as a painful truth; a fate beyond human influence. The artist herself had never been near the front-line, so physically re-creating the dying of her fiancé might have been an attempt to give shape to the unknown death on the battlefield. The dying man is stripped of all insignia that might have identified him as a soldier. The war as the cause for his death thereby steps in the background. The focus is placed on the dying of an individual, a lover and not a soldier.

While Katharina Heise did not present death as a peaceful one, it nevertheless appeared as a natural event. There are no visible weapons or fatal wounds, yet the face of the dying man exposes his pain. His visible agony turns death into a release, easing the worldly pain of the irrecoverable. Whereas obviously an imagined account, Heise's understanding of death appears to be lot closer to reality than many depictions of dead, but peacefully sleeping soldiers. Especially memorials of the post-war time feature the 'sleeping' dead soldier, maintaining a pretence that their death had been a peaceful, non-violent death.[45] The realism of Katharina Heise's sculpture brings the rational understanding of death into a contemporary framework. Here, death also represents an end of the biological functions of the human body. This end, however, took place before its time and had to be endured in pain.

In 1917, Otto Dix produced another rare example of a soldier in the process of dying. He depicted the full body of a man with a bleeding wound in his chest. His head is thrown backwards and a delirious gaze foretells his near end. Yet the body is still full of suspense and the right arm is stretched out, still holding on to what could be a weapon. It is mainly the title that identifies the dying man as soldier. Like the sculpture by Katharina Heise, the wartime scenario does not form an explicit part of the image. The ground on which the soldier fell appears to be stony and hard. The outlined hills in the background place the scene outdoors, possibly on a battlefield.

[45] Fuchs, *Todesbilder*, p. 76, Matzner, 'Der 'schlafende' Krieger,' pp. 57-74.



32 Otto Dix, *Dying Warrior*, 1917[46]

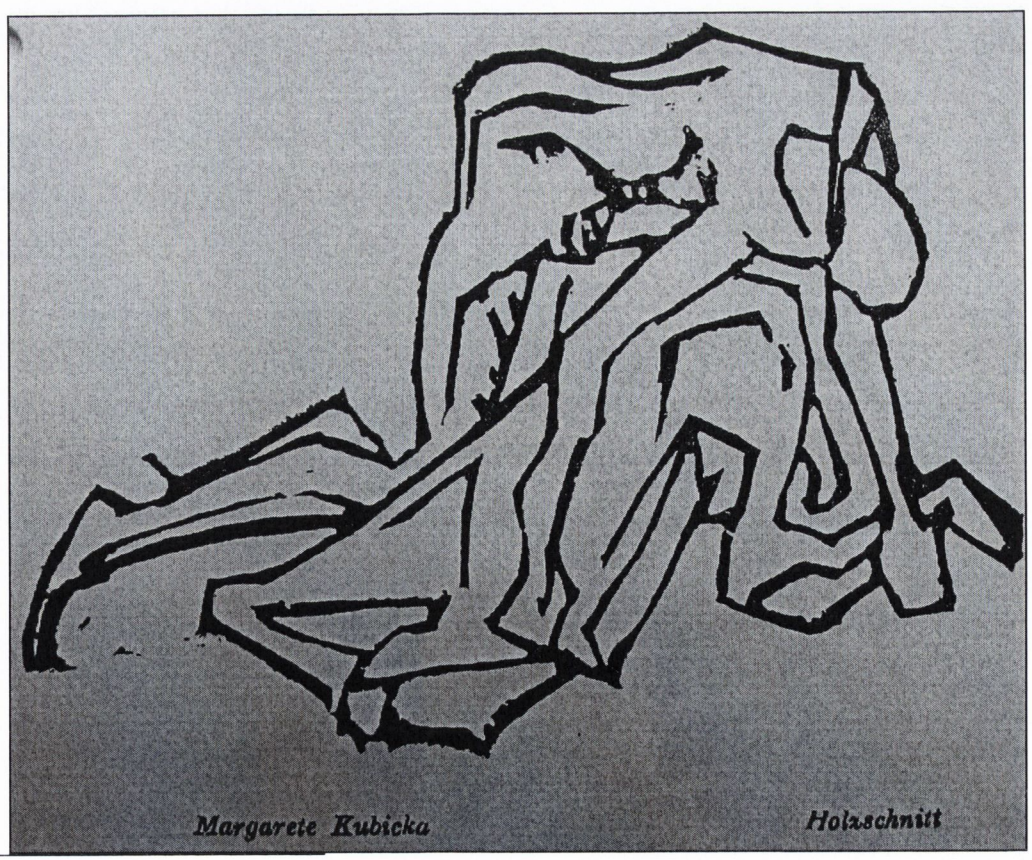
The bleeding wound defines the death as a violent one, no attempt is made to naturalise or glorify wartime death. This image is evidence for an existing 'realistic' depiction of death in the wartime art of Dix. Otto Dix is a particularly interesting case, as he was one of the few artists who gained full front line experience at the Somme, in Ypres, and at the Eastern Front as a machine gunner from 1915 till 1918, and who was decorated for his service.[47] His wartime sketches were largely produced in breaks from the battle, on home leave and in hospitals as an immediate response to the event. Images reflecting his wartime experiences from a later phase between 1922 to 1924 were produced from memory and were stylistically and thematically very different to the wartime sketches.[48] Neither of those however represent a glorification of the war or an

[46] Otto Dix, *Sterbender Krieger* (1917), reprinted in Matthias Eberle, *Der Weltkrieg und die Künstler der Weimarer Republik. Dix, Grosz, Beckmann, Schlemmer* (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989), p. 43.
[47] Dietrich Schubert, 'Otto Dix zeichnet im Ersten Weltkrieg,' in *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), pp. 180-81.
[48] Otto Conzelmann, *Der andere Dix - sein Bild vom Menschen und vom Krieg* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983), Schubert, 'Otto Dix zeichnet im Ersten Weltkrieg,' pp. 185-86.

aestheticisation of the war, as put forward by Jürgens-Kirchhoff.[49] His black and white wartime sketches mirror a violence and destruction that Dix experienced at the front, stylistically they remain abstract and plain. His work from the 1920s in contrast surpasses any existing artistic depiction of the war in macabre and repulsive details of death in the trenches. Rats, cerebral tissue, intestines and different stages of decay were integral characteristics of this phase and represent an extremism far beyond the 'wartime realism' of the above image. This, however, should not lead to a hindsight evaluation of the wartime work as aestheticising.

Dead Bodies

The question of what happened to the dead bodies of the soldiers after the battle was a further question raised in the depictions of wartime death. A dismaying scenario was visualised by artist Margarete Kubicka below. Hers is a pile of corpses, carelessly stacked on top of each other with entangled lifeless limbs. The contours of a single body are hard to make out at a first glance. More and more limbs and body parts appear at closer inspection. The corpses seem to merge into a lifeless entity.



[49] Jürgens-Kirchhoff, *Schreckensbilder*, pp. 243-61.

33 Margarete Kubicka, *untitled*, 1918[50]

The anonymity of the 'body pile' mirrors the attrition at the fighting-front, where the living or dead body of an individual soldier appeared equally worthless. This impression is enforced in the image by the nakedness of the bodies which highlights a disrespectful attitude towards the corpses. The contrast to civilian burials, where bodies were either put on the bier or laid out in state, usually in their best Sunday clothes, is clear. Moreover, the nakedness was a sign for the vulnerability of the human body which was helpless against the technical perfection and lethal force of the weaponry used by the armed forces.

The corpses, as before, are stripped of all insignia that could identify them as soldiers or as individuals. No weapons or visible wounds point at the cause of the mass death depicted in the image. The arrangement of the corpses in a pile destroys the idea of a peaceful passing away. The corpses are not lined up next to each other, put on top of each other, like a pile of rubbish. This is an unnerving visualisation of mass dying that above all illustrated a wartime decline in the value of human life.

The following image by Adolf Schinnerer resembles Margarete Kubicka's woodcut in that it pictures a trench covered in dead bodies, some of them on top of each other. Below, only a section of a trench is displayed, yet the quantity of corpses is disturbing. It is a trench that turned into a mass grave. Again, the men wear neither uniforms nor helmets; it is the caption that identifies them as soldiers of the war. Similar to the image by Kubicka, neither wounds nor weapons are displayed. It is primarily the quantity of corpses and their unnatural position in both images that hint at a violent death. None of the violence or pain of the previous images was depicted; the images here seem to primarily reflect on the scale and not nature of the dying at the front. Like Kubicka's, Schinnerer's soldiers have no faces and represent the anonymous mass dead of the war.

[50] Margarete Kubicka, *no title*, woodcut (1918) printed in *Die Aktion* 21/22 (1918).



34 Adolf Schinnerer, *Trench*, 1914[51]

There is, however, an important difference to Kubicka's design. Schinnerer depicted two men, who look after the corpses and carry them away, presumably for a later burial. The fact that the corpses are tended to is an important message, confirming that the fallen will receive a proper burial and were not simply left to waste in a trench. Therefore this image is, despite the amount of dead corpses depicted, not a hopeless one. The suggested comradeship between the soldiers who pay each other the last respects presumably had a consoling function for both soldiers themselves and their relations. The fear of dying was alleviated by knowing that someone will look after the dead body. As opposed to the image by Kubicka, the service rendered by the soldiers was respected and their bodies will be buried as opposed to simply quickly disposed of. Other artists also depicted scenes in which soldiers tend to and bury their fallen comrades.[52] Schinnerer himself served in the German army and his art was influenced by his experiences at the front. His repeated applications to be accepted as a war-

[51] Adolf Schinnerer, *Schützengraben* (1914), printed in: *Zeit-Echo* 1 (1914/15), p. 5.
[52] For example, Max Beckmann, *Gefallene Soldaten* (1914).

painter in the army were rejected. According to the regulations for the admittance of war-painters, those considered fully fit for military service were not exempted.[53]

Comforting Representations of Death

The following drawing by Margarethe Goetz is a complex composition. She combined not only a symbolic form of death with corpses, but also included bereaved women in her drawing. The dead bodies lie quite peacefully on a battlefield. They are not buried yet and the moonlight lights their stiff faces. On the left corner of the image death, represented as a skeleton with a pirate's head and a scythe, is watching over the dead bodies. With his right arm, he is placing a small cross on top of the bodies. Some flowers had already been put down on the corpses. With his left arm, he touches the shoulder of an approaching woman. She is covered in a black shawl and is crying which identifies her as a bereaved relation. In the back corner, a group of women is turning away from the scene on the battlefield.



35 Margarethe Goetz, *untitled*, 1917[54]

[53] Letter from the Stellv. Genkdo. 13 October 1916, Stellv. Genkdo. I. Armee Korps 1767: Kriegsmaler, Kriegsarchiv Munich.
[54] Margarethe Goetz, *untitled,* drawing (1917) printed in *Die Aktion* 33/34 (1917).

Margarethe Goetz's drawing stands for an unusual understanding of death in wartime art. Although death is represented in a 'scary' appearance, his actions reveal comforting intentions. Death in the above image is not responsible for the corpses or claiming his latest loot. Instead, he seems to represent a link between the living and the dead, by touching both, the corpses and the woman. It is remarkable that death is placing a cross on top of the bodies, a gesture associated with funerals and the comfort of a Christian burial tradition. Yet, this gesture is not carried out by a priest, a comrade or a relation of the fallen, but by death himself. The physical contact between death and the mourning woman is also important, since it suggests that death was understood as something real and approachable, while not denying the sadness it caused. Instead of representing the horrific and gruesome wartime death as seen in the previous images, Goetz gave death a much more peaceful and natural meaning.

The artist's own experiences during the war remain unknown, but her design suggests at the least an attempt to present a less fearful understanding of death, thereby unfolding a comforting effect. At the same time, Goetz does neither aestheticise wartime death – her image is not conventional beautiful – but nor are gruesome details revealed. This again supports the existence of a major difference of the representation of death in the art of men and women at the time. Goetz's work shies not away from representing death and revealing it's scale. She furthermore included the devastating effect for those left behind; a theme which will be examined in the following chapter.

Another also more comforting representation of death was produced by the artist Sella Hasse in 1916. The following lino-cut with title *The Wings of Death* depicts an angel looking down on two dead soldiers' bodies. Like the drawing by Goetz, this scene is depicted at night-time and the cosmic elements in the futuristic looking sky serve as a counterpart to the dark angel as a traditional symbolic representation of death.



36 Sella Hasse, *The Wings of Death*, 1914-1916[55]

The corpse in the front of the image is facing downward to the earth; his right arm is stretched forward and he is still wearing his helmet. Hence, the bodies are clearly identified as fallen soldiers on a battlefield, who are not yet buried. The other body is facing the sky, his hand rests on his chest, and he resembles a 'peacefully' sleeping but nevertheless dead body. Similar to the image by Goetz, wartime death is depicted but the violent nature of a soldier's death is not. On the contrary, death appears in its most comforting representation, a dark angel. It seems that while he is not responsible for their deaths, he will tend to the bodies and look after the dead soldiers.

Whereas the previous images in the chapter are secular representations of death and dying, the design by Hasse adds a biblical symbolism to the images of wartime death. The dark angel with his halo appears in a Christian form and appears to be sadly looking down on the fallen before he embarks on whatever he came to do. His mere presence suggests that something will follow the soldier's death, and some kind of

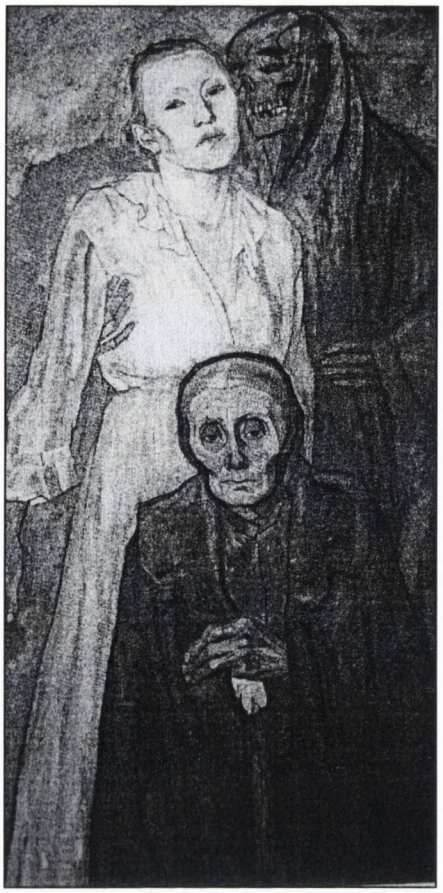
[55] Sella Hasse, *Die Fittiche des Todes,* lino-cut, leaf no. 5 of her war cycle, (1914-1916), Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

afterlife is hinted at. This image does not yet draw clear analogies between the Christian doctrine and the nature of the ongoing conflict, but it represents a timid start in the search for a comforting meaning of the mass dying in the war. Perhaps, the wartime realism of the images in this chapter for contemporaries only served to realise and accept wartime death. The woodcut by Sella Hasse represents a step towards the artistic search for a wider meaning of wartime death, which heavily employs Christian symbolism, which will be analysed in chapter six: *The Passion of the Soldier*. The woodcut *The Wings of Death* does not represent a heroic death, but nor does it depict a meaningless one.

Death and Woman

The painting *Death and Maiden* by Käte Lassen, reprinted below, represents a departure from the depictions of wartime death as seen in this chapter. It uses a widely explored theme in art history, that of Death picking a young woman instead of the old one who is expecting him.[56] This is one of the images the artist Käte Lassen produced in reflection of her wartime experiences and was produced under a constant confrontation with the news of death.[57] The young woman in the image is wearing a white dress, clearly setting her off against the dark robe worn by death who appears in his conventional form as a skeleton. He is gripping the young woman under her arm and seems to be whispering into her ear, as if convincing her to follow him. She appears motionless, neither protesting, nor resisting. The old woman sitting in front of both, is wearing black and is presumably a widow. Her hands rest on her walking stick, underlining her age and frailty. She is unaware of the approach of death behind her and does not seem to realise that he is about to take the young woman.

[56] Wolbert, ed., *Memento mori. Der Tod als Thema der Kunst vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart. Ausstellung im Hessischen Landesmuseum Darmstadt*, pp. 59-60.
[57] Ludwig Rohling, *Käte Lassen. Das Werk der Malerin* (Flensburg: Christian Wolff, 1956), plate 34.



37 Käte Lassen, *Death and Young Maiden*, 1914-1918[58]

Instead of depicting a battlefield scene or dead soldiers, the artist projected death on a young woman who, at that time, would not have been death's most obvious choice. To portray a healthy young woman as the object of death's desire seems to create an artistic balance between the suffering of men and women at the time. It could be an attempt to complement the dying of the men at the front with a representation of death on the home front. It might also reveal suicidal tendencies, which frequently appeared in women's reactions after the experience of a death notification. If the image is understood as a more general reflection on the nature of death between 1914 and 1918, his arbitrary choices and unexpected moves portray him as an unpredictable, yet existing presence in people's lives at the time – not only in that of soldiers.

[58] Käte Lassen, *Tod und Mädchen* (1914-1918), printed in *Käte Lassen, 1880-1956*, (Flensburg: Städtisches Museum Flensburg, 1980), p. 21.

A post-War Perspective

Depictions of wartime death continued to be produced after the armistice in November 1918. With the end of the hostilities, both the framework for the artistic production and personal outlook of the artists changed. The point of reference was no longer the ongoing conflict, but memories or other secondary documents. One post-war example by Käthe Kollwitz from 1919-20 will be included in the analysis, as it illustrates a change in the representation of wartime death. Käthe Kollwitz produced the wood-cut *Two Dead Men* as an illustration for the play by the French novelist Romain Rolland *Le temps viendra* (The time will come). It was first published in France in 1903 and is a drama about the war in the Transvaal. The depicted scene blends the existence of friend and foe by depicting a French soldier and a captive Italian who die in each other's arms, after a futile attempt to escape by the latter.



38 Käthe Kollwitz, *Two Dead Men*, 1919-20[59]

The scene depicted here is a peaceful one. Kollwitz neither captured the moment of escape, nor the tragic killing of both, but chooses the moment after both men die brotherly in each other's arms. Her caption on the back of the image underlines the

[59] Käthe Kollwitz, *Zwei Tote*, woodcut (1919-20), printed in, Martin Fritsch, ed., *Käthe Kollwitz. Zeichnung, Grafik, Plastik. Bestandskatalog des Käthe-Kollwitz-Museums Berlin* (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 1999), p. 194.

drama of the scene: 'Alan [the French soldier] tries, without answering, to reach out to the Italian and take his hand. He moves, straightens up, leans towards him and embraces him. Dying, both fall down.'[60] This wartime death is presented as tragic and unnecessary. The reason for the death of both men becomes obsolete in the moment of their reconciliation. In the face of death, all men are equal and as unbridgeable as the hostility between both men appeared, it was not deep enough to outlast their lives. There is no pain, no violence and no visible wartime scenario in the image, therefore disregarding the realities of wartime death and not adding any uncomfortable element. It is a harmless peacetime version of a wartime death. After the end of the hostilities, the image suggests, all soldiers were vulnerable, all were humans facing the same dangers and the same end. This depiction of death was made easier as the play by Rolland referred to a different conflict, yet Kollwitz's artistic response has to be seen within the context of her own wartime experiences as disclosed by her diary.[61]

The image and the play read like a parable that can be applied to any wartime scenario. Kollwitz's diary reveals that she was deeply impressed by Rolland's work and corresponded with him.[62] Kollwitz herself was deeply affected by the war: her younger son Peter volunteered and died in 1914 at the Western Front. Throughout the conflict and the 1920s, Kollwitz searched for an understanding of the conflict, the meaning of her son's death and her own attitude towards both. Her engagement with Rolland represents the interest of learning as much as possible about the conflict and approaching the theme of wartime death in a more general fashion. It was part of her process of coming to terms with her own experiences. A deeper analysis of her response will be part of chapter five. Kollwitz's engagement with Rolland and their correspondence is also remarkable for a different reason. It is the evidence of a fast resumption of an exchange of ideas and opinions between artists and intellectuals of former belligerent countries.

Conclusion

The images in this chapter are important evidence to prove the existence of an imagination of wartime death that was of a 'realistic' and naturalistic character. The

[60] Quoted in Ibid.
[61] 3 March 1918, Kollwitz, 'Die Tagebücher, 1908-1943,' p. 356.
[62] 19 and 23 February 1918, Ibid., pp. 354-55.

suggest that confronting death was part of coming to terms with the experience and scale of wartime death. These artistic testimonies might be related to the demand for realistic war art and eyewitness-accounts at the time which, in order to resonate with the public or the artists themselves, had to address the burning topic of the time and confront existing fears and perceptions about wartime death.

The differences in the art of men and women moreover reveal that the wartime experience at the front and in the rear influenced the artistic approaches of death. And death was given various forms. The existence of symbolic representations of death in the art of women seems to be a specifically female angle to try and transform the distant death on the battlefield into a more tangible form. While symbolic accounts of death are absent in the art of men, the violence and gruesome details of their portrayals of death are not to be found in the art of women. They clearly reflect the men's familiarity with the nature of the conflict. Both groups show an artistic response to the wartime dying that neither denied the violence, nor the scale of the deaths. The realistic and secular artistic approach demythologises death on the battlefield and represents aspects of a rational dealing with wartime death as part of the war experience of contemporaries.

Chapter 4 *The Mourning Process*

Consecrated Grounds

Churches, cemeteries and graves make up the scenery of a distinctive group of images in the art produced by German women during the First World War. In religious practice, these sites have designated functions. First of all they provide the location for rituals to be carried out. Cemeteries, individual grave cites, and occasionally church interiors, are places used for Christian burials. People visit these sites to pay respect to the dead and to pray for the souls of departed loved ones. In Christian societies they play an integral role in the mourning process through their association with the Christian practice of mourning and its focus on consoling the bereaved. This tradition is rooted in the belief in the resurrection and a continued existence of the soul. In this understanding, death is not an end but a transitory phase leading to a life after death.

Right from the outbreak of the war in 1914, the casualties exceeded those of any previous conflicts. In the German case, the number of the war dead spiralled to over two million by 1918.[1] Essentially, this meant that almost every family lost a male relative during the war. By placing mourning relations on 'consecrated grounds' in their work, artists established a connection to Christian burial traditions, thereby allowing access to the support and comfort offered within a Christian congregation. Thus, artistic reflections either mirror, replace, or become part of the actual Christian rituals of burying and mourning. They represent a direct engagement with, and recourse to, religious practices during the war and in its aftermath.

The following images were produced while the war was ongoing and most of them therefore preceded the erection of official war memorials. While possible styles, locations, and materials for war memorials were intensely debated during the war, their practical completion was postponed until after the hostilities had ended.[2] Contemporary theoretical debates reveal that the objective of sponsors, architects, and state officials

[1] Rüdiger Overmans, 'Kriegsverluste,' in *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, et al. (Munich, Vienna, Zurich: Schöningh, 2004), pp. 664-65.
[2] Meinhold Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, vol. 3 (Heidelberg: Esprint Verlag, 1985), 34, 39, 45, 120, Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 78-79.

was primarily to create places to honour the fallen of the war, and not to establish public sites where relations could mourn their deceased loved ones.[3] The German term *Kriegerdenkmal* (warrior memorial) illustrates the commemorative function of these sites and the respect for the 'warrior' that they demanded. Yet the mourning process which large numbers of relations naturally underwent played virtually no role in the considerations of the national and regional advisory committees for the erection of war memorials that were formed in 1916. While the political perspective in the importance of war memorials for the identity of the survivors has been acknowledged in secondary literature,[4] the private urge to mourn needs to be further examined.

Jay Winter rightly demands that the history of bereavement and the mourning process should be studied as part of the history of warfare.[5] But to start this analysis with memorials that were, with very few exceptions, erected after the war, is to neglect the more immediate, more personal, and more emotional artistic expressions of the mourning process that were created in the years before the armistice. The interdependence of the iconography employed in women's art, and its substitute function for the distant bodies of dead soldiers, will constitute the focus of this chapter. Art, it will be argued, had a special function for the bereaved and formed highly personal, but very real, 'sites of mourning' from an early stage in the war.

The images in the first section of this chapter depict consecrated places: a church, a cemetery and individual gravesites. These were Christian sites that had existed for centuries and were used before war memorials were erected to commemorate the fallen of the First World War. The delay in time between receiving news of the death of a loved one and the establishment of designated sites for the remembrance of the war dead led people to use the already familiar and available facilities provided by the local parish. On the other hand, even when official memorials were erected, the political ideology behind these sites meant that they were designed to be awe-inspiring and to instil national pride in the younger generation.[6] Hence it is difficult to determine the role official commemorative sites played for grieving relatives. It seems reasonable to

[3] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, p. 58.
[4] Reinhart Koselleck, 'Kriegerdenkmale als Identifikationsstiftungen der Überlebenden,' in *Identität*, ed. Odo Marquart and Karlheinz Stierle (Munich: Fink, 1979), pp. 256-76.
[5] See in particular chapter three: 'War memorials and the mourning process' in: Winter, *Sites of memory*, pp. 78-116.
[6] Sabine Behrenbeck, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe,' in *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, et al. (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, Zurich: Schöningh, 2004), p. 844, Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, pp. 56-58.

suggest that the larger and more public the memorial, the less inclined people were to use it for the expression of private grief. Jay Winter on the other hand describes the popularity that official war memorials and commemorative functions enjoyed in France and Britain.[7] In defeated Germany, the identification of mourning relations with the official versions of the war may have been more complex. Nevertheless, photographs of women touching the names of fallen soldiers on memorials in Germany exist,[8] yet these gestures were possible only long after the armistice when the immediate grief had abated. Where did mourning relations and mourning women in particular turn to for consolation and healing during the war?

The more traditional surroundings of churches and ordinary cemeteries may have provided an environment in which a more emotional response to loss was possible, where grief and pain could be shown, and where mourning could be part of a personal honouring of the dead. In contrast to war memorials which often presented stylised visions of the classic hero's death,[9] simple depictions of religious buildings constituted a plainer approach in dealing with death by abstaining from adding an ideological significance to the death of a soldier. Instead, the images focus on the bereaved. Here, the link to Christian sanctuaries was employed not to add a religious dimension to battlefield death but to console mourning relatives.

Absent Corpses

In 1918, artist Sella Hasse produced a linocut that depicted a group of mourning women in a church. The pointed gothic arches and ribbed vault of the building bring to mind the architectural beauty of medieval cathedrals, their usually prominent location, and long established social role in a community. The women gathered in the church are not attending a prayer service, or any kind of religious ceremony, as they are not seated in front of the altar and no priest is present. It seems clear, however, that their presence in the church is deliberate and the women appear to have settled in for an extended stay,

[7] Winter, *Sites of memory*, pp. 93-108.
[8] Jay Winter, *The experience of World War I* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 206.
[9] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, p. 37. Despite the religious iconography, the memorial designs analysed by Probst suggests that these were used primarily to elevate the soldier's death and not to console the bereaved, see Volker Probst, *Bilder vom Tode. Eine Studie zum deutschen Kriegerdenkmal in der Weimarer Republik am Beispiel des Pietà-Motives und seiner profanierten Varianten* (Hamburg (Diss.): Wayasbah, 1986), p. 10.

probably to hold a vigil. This assumption is supported by the clothing of the women who wear long mourning gowns which cover their bodies from head to toe.



39 Sella Hasse, *Women in the Church*, 1918 [10]

This impression is reinforced by the body language of both groups of women in both the background and foreground of the image. The woman in the front left of the scene bends to her side, her eyes are barely open, and her facial expression is one of distress. With both hands, she clutches her knees tightly as if in great pain or fear. This woman is probably the chief mourner as all the other women face her from the side with bent and covered heads and folded hands. All the women look sad and bereaved, yet silent and secluded in their mourning. The women in the background are seated underneath what is possibly a crucifix. They appear to have been assembled there for a while, resting their heads on their knees. There is no motion or intent of movement in the image, emphasising the peace and quiet of the church. No men are present in the

[10] Sella Hasse, *Frauen in der Kirche*, linocut (1918) Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

image, implying that these women mourn for male relations who have presumably been killed in the war. The absence of male mourners, moreover, suggests that the men are still away at the front.

It is worth emphasising that the women depicted by Hasse are gathered in a church and not in someone's home. This highlights the deliberate choice of the church as a location where women could follow religious rituals in a way they were not able to in their homes. The object of the vigil, a corpse or coffin, is not part of the composition. This could point to a real absence of both, but the result is a strong emphasis on the mourning process. Vigils were traditionally, and still are, held before a funeral in the time between the death and the burial. It is possible that women who were informed of the death of a relation, or several relations, at the front chose to hold a vigil in their home church to mark the tragedy, as most soldiers would have been buried before their relatives knew they were dead.

Sella Hasse herself did not lose a close male relative during the war, but her wartime letters and sketch books reveal that she took great interest in the fate of male relations of befriended families and was deeply moved by what she viewed as the mercilessness of the war.[11] Her sketchbooks show that she spent some time drawing and observing wounded soldiers in a home near Wismar on the Baltic Sea where she was permanently based. Through conversations, and through her own observations, Hasse familiarised herself with the experiences of soldiers and the consequences of warfare. This is something to which her drawings of injured soldiers bear witness.[12] The artistic work she carried out at the soldiers' home may have made her even more aware of the fragility of human existence and more sensitive to the lethal nature of the war and the mourning of those left in its destructive wake. So, while her linocut *Women in the Church* does not reflect her own personal tragedy, Hasse may well have attended a vigil for a fallen friend or witnessed bereaved women gathered in a church. Her work may therefore be primarily of an observing nature, instead of directly expressing personal loss.

A very similar motive lay behind the work of artist Lotte B. Prechner who depicted the female members of a family mourning in a church. Although her woodcut bears the title *Old Woman in the Church* and depicts what appears to be an elderly woman, the image also features a younger woman kneeling in front of the altar with two

[11] NL Sella Hasse, Schabbelhaus Wismar.
[12] Sketch book of Sella Hasse, KI65/ 1207 W, NL Sella Hasse, Schabbelhaus Wismar.

small children. Both women are praying, the older one bows in deep devotion, but curiously has her back turned to the altar on which a crucifix is surrounded by two burning candles. The younger woman kneels down, in a pious gesture of religious devotion. The younger woman is possibly the daughter or daughter in law of the older one. Her presence with her children suggest that they are all praying for or possibly mourning for the husband or brother of the younger woman, the son of the older one. They could also be mourning the death of one male relative, while praying for the survival of another.



40 Lotte B. Prechner, *Old Woman in the Church*, around 1918 [13]

The scene in the woodcut, like that in Hasse's image, does not manifestly take place in the context of wartime, but considering the time of their production, both images seem to make most sense when linked to the ongoing conflict. The absence of any men, in particular, and both the grievous facial expressions and wailing body

[13] Lotte B. Prechner, *Alte Frau in der Kirche,* woodcut (around 1918), Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn 75.3952.

language of the depicted women suggest that both artists mirrored wartime scenarios. Lotte B. Prechner was Jewish, which makes the choice of the obviously Christian church background particularly interesting and suggests that the church here is not primarily depicted for its representation of Christian belief. The emphasis seems to be placed on the consoling function of a religious site.

The presence of the children adds to the impression that this is not a regular church visit, as they seem helpless and do not know what to do. The little girl on the right is reaching out her hand to the older woman, who is praying and does not attend to the child. The child on the left keeps body contact with the mother, but is facing away from the altar. The children reach out to both women for care and consolation, yet the adult women are themselves seeking consolation and comfort. One possible interpretation of the image is that the older woman, who has turned her back to the crucifix, has lost all hope and merely seeks the consolation of prayer, while the younger woman, who faces the crucifix, may still have hope and appeal to God to allow her husband to live.

The following lithograph by Katharina Heise is entitled *Funeral Procession* and was produced in 1916. It depicts a funeral procession moving along the walls of a cemetery towards the entrance gate. The procession is led by three women and a child. In common with the Sella Hasse image reproduced above, all the figures are dressed in full body mourning robes of grey and black which stand out against the white walls of the cemetery. The woman in the front is bending backwards while the other two and the child hold their heads down low. Their body language signals silent grief and torment. The women and the child are followed by the congregation on the right. The most significant section of the image, however, is the space between the women and the remaining funeral procession. This empty space is prominently placed where a coffin should be, thus emphasising the missing body for which the funeral is held.



41 Katharina Heise, *Funeral Procession,* 1916[14]

The absence of any men among the chief mourners suggests that a close male relation is being mourned for, possibly the husband of the woman in black and father of the small child. This image provides a striking parallel to *Women in the Church.* The women and the congregation are enacting a burial despite the absence of a corpse. They are staging the funeral neither they, nor the dead relative, could have had.

Whether this image reflects an actual funeral that was re-enacted by a family after the death of a relation, or whether its subject is fictional, it includes the actual ceremony as part of the mourning procedure. In 1915, Sigmund Freud referred to the importance of the existing 'fictional world' in literature and theatre for the bereaved.[15] Only there, Freud argued, could we be reconciled with the nature of death as real life was never harmed. People in mourning seek, according to Freud, a substitute for the loss in their lives. The 'second chance' or the 'happy end' not granted in real life, could be claimed in the 'multiple lives' provided by the fictional world.[16] Freud's theory is

[14] Katharina Heise, *Trauerzug*, lithograph (1916), NL Katharina Heise, Stadtmuseum Schönebeck.
[15] Sigmund Freud, 'Zeitgemäßes über Krieg und Tod,' in *Sigmund Freud. Studienausgabe*, vol. 9, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, et al. (Frankfurt M.: Fischer, 1974), p. 51 (original publication 1915).
[16] Ibid.

also highly relevant for women's wartime art and supports the argument that their images gained a substitute function in the mourning process.

It is likely that the deceased, for whom the funeral was staged in Heise's lithograph, had been a soldier in the war, and that his body was buried on a distant battlefield. The image possibly reflects the experience of the artist herself, who lost her fiancé in 1916, the same year the lithograph was produced.[17] The women and the funeral procession are about to enter a Christian cemetery, marked with three large crosses. Heise's fiancé fell on the Western Front in France. The double-barred *Croix de Lorraine* behind the gate may be a deliberate reference to the country in which he was killed and where his body had been buried. *Funeral Procession* prominently features the consecrated ground of a Christian cemetery, and highlights the importance of established customs in guiding the bereaved through tragedy.

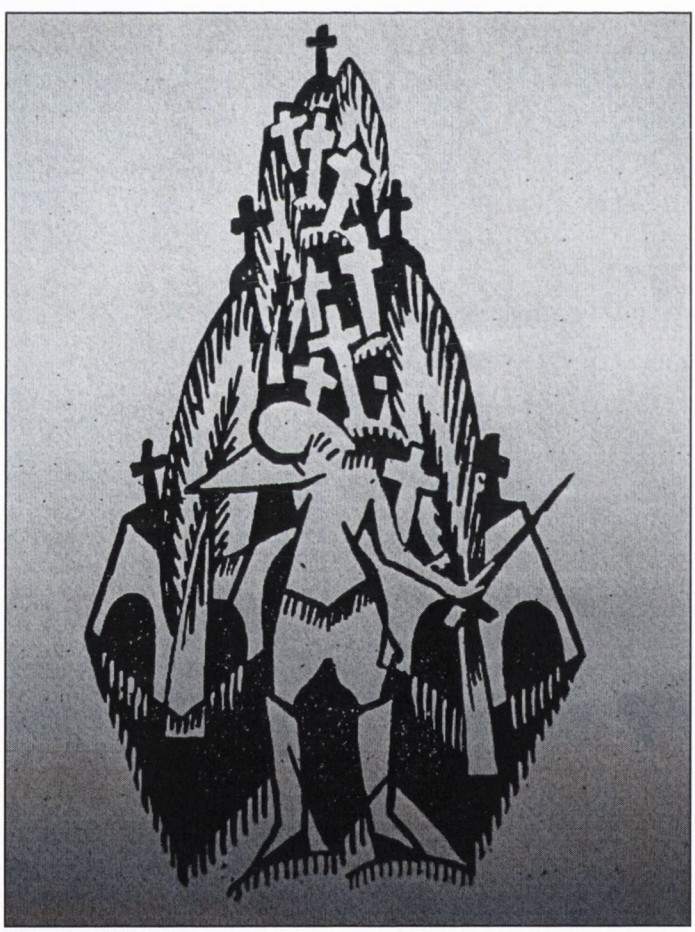
The images that have thus far been analysed were characterised by the absence of a corpse or coffin and its separation from a group of mourning women. It seems that the physical distance between the dead body and the women contributed to their pain and increased the difficulty of accepting death and coming to terms with the loss of a relation. The military wartime burial conventions and regulations that prohibited the repatriation of bodies strongly influenced the civilian mourning process. All the images show very strong physical expressions of grief. The depicted women meditate, pray intensely and bend their bodies in wailing, all gestures that emphasise the intensity of their emotions.

Buried bodies

While the following images are also set on consecrated grounds, they differ in their subject matter by artistically uniting mourning relations with the fallen soldiers at the site of the graves. All of the depicted graves in the following images are marked with crosses which represented an important form of symbolic support for the relatives. The responsibility for the dead was shared and they were handed over to God's care. The Christian belief in eternal life, moreover, went some way towards alleviating the shock of the finality of death.

[17] NL Katharina Heise, Stadtmuseum Schönebeck.

The following woodcut by Mizi Friedmann-Otten is remarkable in that it depicts several graves amounting to a hill of tombs. This image serves as both a response to the scale of wartime killing and as a lament for the loss of an individual. It was reprinted as an untitled piece in *Die Aktion* in 1918. Leaving an image without a captioned title was a simple method of avoiding censorship. The regulating practices were generally less strict when applied to visual images, and leaving out suggestive titles allowed different approaches in the interpretation of art. Interestingly, however, this particular woodcut was placed in a column next to a lyrical piece by Oskar Schürer entitled 'A Dance of Death'.[18] This text is a vision of the destructive force of death that pictures death as a rejoicing presence after his triumph over humanity. The juxtaposition of Friedmann-Otten's woodcut and Schürer's article does not appear to have been accidental.



42 Mizi Friedmann-Otten, *untitled*, 1918[19]

In the centre of the image, a woman stands in front of the tombs. The small frame of the figure and the indicated breasts on her chest identify her sex. The body

[18] Oskar Schürer, 'Ein Totentanz,' *Die Aktion*, no. 15/16 (1918), cl. 195-96.
[19] Mizi Friedmann-Otten, *untitled*, woodcut (1918) *Die Aktion* 15/16 (1918).

language of the figure is reminiscent of the figures in the previous images. The woman's head is bent and sheltered by her right arm. Her left arm is reaching out and her left hand rests on a sword. This gesture seems to either fend off the weapon through which those behind her found their death, in a symbolic sense. Alternatively, this could be interpreted as an expression of grief where the belongings of the deceased are touched as a substitute for their actual presence. In either case it is acknowledged that the deaths were perpetrated by a weapon, and even though the featured weapon is a sword which was only used in former times, it was still the epitome of a warrior's weapon.

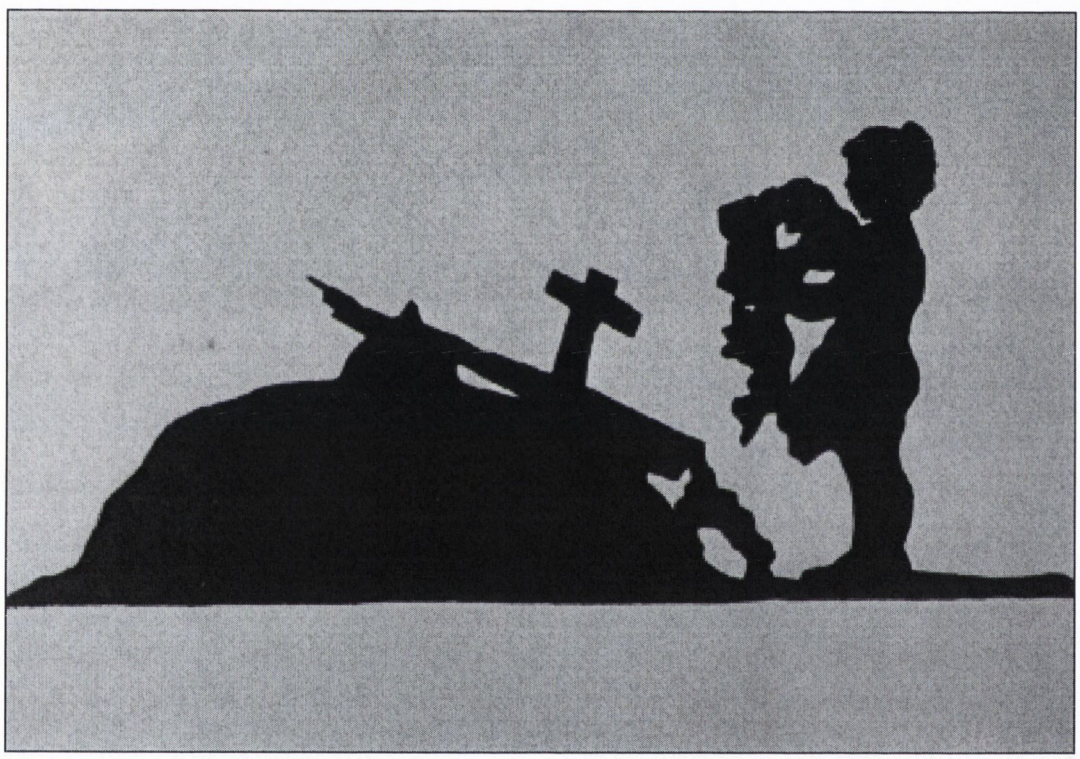
The crosses are interspersed with trees, echoing the closeness to nature that was also aspired to in the planning of military cemeteries.[20] The simplistic yet majestic character of trees, and oak trees in particular, was understood to provide natural surroundings for the eternal resting places of the fallen. Not only did wood represent a national symbol to those who considered harmony with nature an important element of Germanic heritage and culture. The natural element represented in soldiers' cemeteries by carefully tended plants and trees also helped to banish associations with violent death on the battlefield.[21] While the woodcut by Mizi Friedmann-Otten does not represent an aesthetically arranged soldiers' cemetery, the violent death of those buried can only be surmised. The nature of the actual death thus is not the concern of the image. Comparing the different elements in the image, it seems that most attention is placed on the bereaved woman in the front. Thus, it is again the mourning process that is depicted here and the tombs appear to be arranged with the trees to create a memorial-like shape, a place for mourning where the mass dead of the war could be remembered in peaceful reflection. The composition of this woodcut hence contains elements of figurative war memorials, although thematically it focuses on the bereaved.

The two designs reproduced below, on the other hand, depict individual soldiers' graves, and thus represent a different artistic approach in dealing with the mourning process. The conveyed impression is that the immediate shock of mourning was over and the bereaved were slowly coping with the loss. It is not the immediate pain of the mourners or a physical expression of grief that dominates these images. Instead, the

[20] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, p. 60.
[21] George L. Mosse, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe und nationale Wiedergeburt. Der Gefallenenkult in Deutschland,' in *Kriegserlebnis. Der erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nation*, ed. Klaus Vondung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), p. 255.

wellbeing of the surviving family – both images feature small children – demands that the needs of the living are looked after. The ability to face the death of the fallen husband by envisaging his grave, it is suggested, is also part of the mourning process.

The physical presence of the buried body is very prominent in the following silhouette by Eva Schmidt. The design, entitled *Abandoned Grave*, is dominated by a fresh soldier's grave, easily identified as that of a German soldier by the spiked helmet that lies on top. A rifle is placed across the grave and a wreath in front of it. The lopsided cross marks the grave as a Christian one, and discloses that the last respects had been paid to the dead soldier and that he had received a proper burial. A small child is about to lay a wreath on what is presumably his father's grave.



43 Eva Schmidt, *Abandoned Grave*, 1915[22]

The question of soldiers' graves was a sensitive issue for both authorities and bereaved relatives during the war. In the first year of the conflict the mass dying at the front was countered by digging individual graves in which each fallen soldier was buried. Then, soldiers were buried directly on the battlefield and the spot was marked with a simple wooden cross.[23] The duration of the conflict and the scale of the deaths,

[22] Eva Schmidt, *Verlassenes Grab*, in: Kriegszeit. 10 Schattenrisse von Eva Schmidt (Halle: Reichardt 1915).
[23] Behrenbeck, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe,' p. 843, Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, p. 32.

however, changed the burial practices of the German army. The maintenance of thousands of graves scattered over many miles of inaccessible territory was soon found to be too costly and too difficult to sustain. A solution was found in the establishment of war cemeteries behind the lines, in which the fallen soldiers were buried by their comrades.[24] Nonetheless burying soldiers in individual graves was still aspired to and mass graves were only dug when a different solution was not feasible.[25] Newly introduced badges allowed the identification of corpses, and graves were carefully marked on special maps. Relations were thus assured that the body of the husband, son or brother had been found and buried. While careful marking could theoretically provide families with the exact coordinates of where the grave was located, in reality the majority of graves could not be visited until after the war, and others were never visited at all.

The maintenance of complete records of casualties and individual graves was time consuming and expensive, and every military unit appointed a 'Graves-Officer', who – unfit for full military service – had to oversee and organise burials of the fallen comrades. The scale of the casualties demanded many practical solutions and a new department was set up in 1916 to coordinate soldiers' burials, the *Kriegsgräberfürsorge (Department for War Graves)* in the ministry of war.[26] In was within the department's duties to regulate burials as well as to suggest adequate architectural plans for the construction of war cemeteries and suggest artistic designs for the commemorative sites to be erected.

Even if not appreciated by families, the military burials reflected the heightened status of the 'citizen soldier' – as opposed to that of 'mercenaries' – and expressed acknowledgement of his contribution to the national war effort.[27] The burial rights of soldiers exceeded those of civilians, as they had been granted the eternal right to their burial plot.[28] The quite careful burial practices engaged in by the armed forces during the First World War were unlike those of previous conflicts.[29] During the Wars of Liberation (1813-1815), the object had been to get rid of dead soldiers' bodies on the

[24] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, pp. 31-41.
[25] Behrenbeck, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe,' p. 844.
[26] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, pp. 32-36.
[27] Christian Jansen, 'Die Militarisierung der Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert,' in *Der Bürger als Soldat. Die Militarisierung europäischer Gesellschaften im langen 19. Jahrhundert: ein internationaler Vergleich*, ed. Christian Jansen (Essen: Klartext, 2004), pp. 9-23, George L. Mosse, *Fallen soldiers. Reshaping the memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 9-11.
[28] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, p. 31.
[29] Klaus Latzel, *Vom Sterben im Krieg. Wandlungen in der Einstellung zum Soldatentod vom Siebenjährigen Krieg bis zum 2. Weltkrieg* (Warendorf: Fahlbusch, 1988), pp. 13-16, 28-30, 43, 53-54.

battlefields as quickly and easily as possible. In the aftermath of the war, commemorative plaques were installed in churches and mentioned the soldiers' names.[30] During the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), the above mentioned eternal *Ruherecht* (burial right) was granted. During both of these wars, burials in mass graves were common, so the new development during the First World War of digging individual graves for the fallen soldiers represents yet a further step towards the creation of what George L. Mosse calls the 'cult of the fallen soldier'.[31] Both images in this section mirror the burial cult by representing the individual graves of soldiers.

The title of the silhouette above *Abandoned Grave* may thus reflect the difficulty relatives experienced in accessing burial sites. This silhouette is from 1915, a time when fallen soldiers were still buried directly on the battlefield. It is unlikely that relatives, let alone a child, would have been able to visit such a grave. As we can see, the grave above had in fact not been abandoned. Someone had placed a cross, helmet and rifle on top and someone had even left a wreath. The continuing maintenance of soldiers' graves and soldier's cemeteries was among the duties of the 'Graves-Officer'. The designation of these duties to a specialist officer indicates that the army itself recognised the importance of caring for the fallen from the point of view of troop morale as well as for reputation of the German Army in the eyes of the enemy. It was believed that simple but carefully tended graves and cemeteries were an expression of the *Kultur* of the German army that would contribute towards restoring its reputation.[32] Feelings of the families on the home front about soldier's burials were not taken into consideration. The title of the silhouette consequently suggests that unless the family of the fallen soldier was able to care for the grave, the grave was considered an abandoned one.

The presence of the child at the grave above ends this 'neglect', as obviously someone is now looking after the burial place, someone who sent the child with the wreath to the grave. Since a soldier was buried in the grave, the person looking after the grave now was presumably the widow of the soldier. The caring role of women – their duty to look after their family members, dead and alive – is brought to the fore in the image.[33] The child is actively included in the care for the grave of the father and consequently familiar with death as a result of war. The grave here is not placed at a cemetery, and, as already noted, given the date of the production of the image, it is

[30] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, pp. 5-9.
[31] Mosse, *Fallen soldiers*, pp. 70-106.
[32] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, pp. 56-60.
[33] For example, Dr Ilse Reicke, 'Pflichterfüllung,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg. Ein Rat-, Tat-, und Trostbuch. Gesammelte Blätter aus Frauenhand*, ed. Karl Jünger (Stuttgart: 1916), p. 69.

unlikely that any family would have been able to visit the grave of their relation on the battlefield. The importance of the silhouette, then, is that it allows what could never be achieved in reality to be achieved artistically. The title may thus refer to the thousands of 'abandoned' graves on the battlefield that were not cared for by the relatives of those who lay in them.

The artist Johanna Klemm chose a very similar theme for *Blessed are Those who Bear Grief*, a painting she produced in 1917. A fresh soldier's grave can be seen in the background of the image. It is plain and marked only by a simple cross. Someone has placed a helmet on top of it, which again allows us to identify the grave as that of a German soldier. The grave is drawn in very light colours and the sketch-like style contrasts with the finished style in which the family in the left foreground is depicted. A mother and two daughters comfort and hold each other in their grief. The mother and older daughter wear long black dresses. It is therefore clear that they are mourning for the father of the family who died in the war.



44 Johanna Klemm, *Blessed are Those who Bear Grief*, 1917[34]

[34] Johanna Klemm, *Selig sind, die da Leid tragen*, 1917 in, *Heldendank* (Barmen: 1917).

A strongly Christian element in this design is established not only through the cross on the grave but also through the apparition of the angel who adds a vision-like atmosphere to the scene. The family is not physically placed at the burial site, rather the drawing represents their imagined presence by the grave. The angel, depicted in human form with wings, delivers his message from God with a raised arm: *Blessed are Those who Bear Grief.* Thus the bereavement of the family is both respected and honoured. The presence of the angel underlines the caring and consoling dimension of Christian faith; he is literally taking the family 'under his wing'. The mother bows to the angel and the older daughter gazes at him with an earnest but confident expression. The message delivered by the angel takes on an intriguing significance in the wartime context. The family is being blessed for the grief they bear, and thus their mourning allows them to attain a state of grace. The reason for their grief is neither questioned nor rejected. Wartime death is presented as a part of life, acknowledged and valued by God, who blesses those left behind. The presence of the angel also takes away the fear of death, as he represents the hope for resurrection.

Despite the efforts made to respect the individual soldier, wartime burial practices remained a military and state-regulated affair. The status of the fallen as a soldier continued to be maintained after his death, and families – unless the soldier died in a hospital on the home front – were not able to attend the funeral and were prevented from paying their last respects. A directive from the ministry of war in 1915 rendered it virtually impossible to relocate corpses that had already been buried at the front, and most families were not able to bring the bodies of their fathers, sons, and brothers home.[35] The logistical capacities of the military administration were seriously overstretched by coping with the sheer magnitude of dead bodies, with the result that the wishes of families who wanted to retrieve bodies could not be consented to. This facilitated the needs of the army, but caused much antagonism and grief in families who were not allowed to bring the bodies of their loved ones home. Regular visits to graves in France and Flanders and elsewhere remained impossible for many families. The importance of the burial question for relatives was ignored by most military authorities in Europe, adding anger and frustration to feelings of grief and loss.[36] Mourning families were thus left with a void – no body, no ceremony and no grave – which made any form of closure even harder to attain. That women were deeply perturbed about the

[35] Behrenbeck, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe,' p. 844.
[36] Winter, *Sites of memory*, p. 28.

distant war graves of their male relations is illustrated in the quotation from a letter by Margarete Schiel, a mother of five whose husband and eldest son were both fighting on the Western Front. On the 28 of November 1917, which was *Totensonntag*, the German traditional day to commemorate the dead and bring flowers to their graves, she wrote to her son Otto:

> [...]On this day one is in a totally different frame of mind. The dark atmosphere has a lot to with the stormy weather and the people in their black clothes, carrying the wreaths. It is much quieter than usual. Deep thoughts move one's attention away from the ordinary. One thinks of the loved ones who were taken by death. The spiritual eye moves to the distant hero-graves. How many mothers, sisters or brides think of their fallen love on this day? How much they would like to decorate their graves. But it is war...[37]

The letter reveals that tending a grave was clearly viewed as part of the mourning process. It seems that honouring and decorating graves had a consoling function to those who were in mourning and gave them a place to go if they wanted to be near their loved ones. The artistically rendered performance of the funeral in the previously discussed lithograph by Heise, in spite of the absence of the corpse, may therefore represent a desperate attempt to seek closure. The quotation illustrates the need contemporaries had to carry out the traditional burial practices themselves.

Not everyone was as brave as Frankfurt artist Lina von Schauroth, who went on a personal mission to retrieve the body of her nephew who fell at the Eastern Front.[38] She had encouraged and helped her under-aged nephew to volunteer for military service by using contacts of her late husband who had been a high-ranking officer in the German army. These contacts probably also helped her to complete her mission and she returned with the body. As Schauroth stated later in her life, she felt indebted to the mother of the young man and obliged to return her son's body to her. While this example should be viewed as an exception, it nevertheless illustrates the importance for the bereaved of maintaining a physical proximity to the deceased. The question was less pressing for relations who were in mourning for a soldier who had died in a hospital in Germany, as these men were buried on separate sections of existing cemeteries near the hospitals which made visits to the graveside possible.

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[37] 28 November 1917 Margarete Schiel – Otto Schiel, in Eberhard Schiel, ed., *Mein lieber Sohn und Kamerad. Stralsunder Briefe aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Kückenshagen: Scheunen, 1996), p. 239.
[38] Helene von Schauroth, ed., *Lina von Schauroth. Eine Frankfurter Künstlerin* (Frankfurt M.: Kramer, 1984), p. 26.

Both depictions of the graves by the artists Schmidt and Klemm above emphasise the status of the dead as a soldier by placing his military equipment (his helmet and rifle) on top of the grave. Both graves are depicted in isolation those of their comrades being manifestly absent. Representing single graves in this manner may have been an attempt to highlight the individuality of a single dead soldier within the masses of the fallen. The emphasis placed on the dead man's affiliation to the army illustrates the fact that the oath of allegiance sworn by every soldier remained valid even in death. The military status of the war dead transcended their mortal lives. Rather than returning soldiers' corpses to the bosom of their families, the military claimed them in an effort to maintain control and influence of every aspect of a soldier's life and death. Consequently, relations were not allowed to place personal grave stones at soldiers' cemeteries and civilian epitaphs were rarely found at soldiers' graves.[39] The images of the buried soldier's body therefore represent a civilian attempt to reclaim the bodies of the fallen. The exclusion of families from the death of the soldiers suggests that these images gained a substitute-like character that allowed mourning at the gravesite.

Towards a Memorial

Taken together, the above images illustrate a process of mourning that developed from an expression of pain and grief towards a more solemn practice of mourning that included tending to the grave of the fallen. In the first three images, in particular, the viewer is confronted with raw emotions that highlight the universal aspect of the pain of mourning. The last two images directly refer to the wartime context. By depicting war graves, the artists who created these images added a commemorative dimension to their work. The following design by Sella Hasse is an intriguing example that combines both elements with a specific public function. Issued as a wartime post-card, the design guides the interpretation of the viewer through an inscription. It therefore combines elements of artistic expressions of mourning with aspects of the later memorial culture.

[39] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, pp. 61-62, 148-50.



45 Sella Hasse, *Lamentation for Heroes*, 1914/18 [40]

Hasse's postcard lithograph, *Lamentation for Heroes*, features yet another group of mourning women. This time the women are assembled at a cemetery. The image is dominated by the figures of the three women in the foreground. Their body language and clothing, as well as the inscription, provide clues for the interpretation of the design. Hasse did not usually add text to her designs, but *Lamentation for Heroes* was commissioned as a postcard by the Hamburg publishing house *Graphik v. Singer*.[41] Knowing that the image was aimed at the general public may have led the artist to design it so that its interpretation would be clear and unambiguous. While the grief and pain of mourning women is depicted, attention is drawn to the fact that the men being mourned were heroes. During the war it was commonly accepted that the only death that was associated with heroism was that of a soldier. The inscription is a very interesting word combination that links bereavement with commemoration, explaining the nature of wartime death. These women do not simply 'think of' or 'remember' the

[40] Sella Hasse, *Heldenbeweinung* (1914/18), reprinted in Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Kupferstichkabinett und Sammlung der Zeichnungen Akademie der Künste der DDR, ed., *Sella Hasse zum 100. Geburtstag. Ausstellung in der National-Galerie* (Dresden, Meißen: GGV Dresden, 1978), p. 107.
[41] Ibid.

fallen, but they 'cry' and 'weep' for them. Likewise, these women do not simply lament a 'soldier', or 'warrior', but a 'hero'. The inscription therefore expresses grief as well as remembrance. On war memorials that were erected later grief was not referred to in inscriptions, and the more common expression employed was 'remembrance of heroes' *(Heldengedenken)*, and not 'lamentation for heroes' *(Heldenbeweinung)*.

The women in the foreground suffer silent grief, the woman in the middle looking almost peaceful with closed eyes and her head resting on her hands. The bare breasts of the woman on the left draw attention to the sex of the mourners, and, as in the previous images, no men are present. Above the heads of the three women in the front half circles appear, reminding the viewer of halos. This evokes the sacred rituals carried out at burial grounds. It also elevates women's mourning by adding a sacral character to their grief. Of the second row of mourners, we can see only their hands raised in prayer, whereby those on the left resemble the famous etching *Praying Hands* by Albrecht Dürer.[42]

The crosses in the background of the image are casually arranged, quite unlike the neat rows of graves one sees in most German cemeteries, or in soldiers' cemeteries which were deliberately arranged in uniform rows of crosses to resemble the formation of the regiments.[43] The site with the lopsided crosses at which these women gather, therefore, resembles more a hurriedly erected graveyard, representing a more emotional, darker vision of a burial place. The simple crosses resemble those that were put up on soldier's graves.[44] The choice of a cemetery as the subject of the image on Hasse's postcard reveals its 'mourning-memorial' function. In the theoretical discussions that took place during the war, cemeteries were rarely suggested as places for the erection of war memorials. Meinhold Lurz has argued that the emphasis placed on bereavement if a memorial was to be placed in a cemetery would not correspond with the intended didactic function of memorials to emphasise honour and achievement instead of grief.[45] By stressing the mourning process Hasse's postcard design offers quite a unique example. Official army memorial postcards on the other hand generally featured a more traditional iconography, depicting military events and achievements.[46]

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[42] Albrecht Dürer, *Das Gesamtwerk. Sämtliche Gemälde, Handzeichnungen, Kupferstiche und Holzschnitte* (Berlin: Directmedia, 2004), CD-Rom.
[43] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, p. 30.
[44] Behrenbeck, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe,' p. 843.
[45] Lurz, *Kriegerdenkmäler in Deutschland. 1. Weltkrieg*, p. 125.
[46] Ibid., p. 162. Also see Kriegspostkarten des Ersten Weltkrieges, CD-Rom, DHM.

It is intriguing that the artist inscribed her initials, S H, on the cross on the right side, instead of choosing a corner of the image as she usually did. This is possibly a reminder that every single one of the millions of dead soldiers was an individual person who was mourned for by his family. Perhaps the artist intended to illustrate something that was commonly felt by mourners – that with the death of a loved one, something inside themselves died as well. Here, Hasse puts herself into the position of one of these women, and as a later publication by the artist reveals, she was keenly aware of the interconnection of the life-giving function of the female body and the life-taking character of war.[47]

Significance

The themes of the images in this chapter suggest that the distinction which is conventionally drawn between the artistic genres of sculpture and painting may be too strict and overlook interconnecting themes. The true significance of the images above unfolds when linked to the burial and memorial practices of the German army. The vast majority of official memorials, conventionally sculptures, were not erected until after the war, and thematically their focus was not placed on grief or consolation. Hence, the mourning process depicted in the images produced by women above stood in stark contrast to the ongoing theoretical debate about the construction of war memorials.[48] In the designs by female artists, the mourning process was a distinctive theme which was explored through the emotional reactions that bereavement engendered. As the main subject of these images, the bereaved outweigh the death of the soldier and the cause of his dying. While the images above do not employ conventional religious iconography – perhaps with the exception of the angel – they do depict sites closely associated with Christian religious practice: a church, cemeteries, and individual graves. The act of mourning in these images, then, is physically carried out in proximity to a Christian establishment, and the bereaved can make use of the supporting and comforting nature of their belief. By referencing religious sites these designs allowed art to function as a source of solace and sanctuary.

[47] Published under the anagram: Essa Halles, *Zur sozialen Verwertung der weiblichen Fortpflanzungsorgane* (Leipzig: Xenien, 1918).
[48] For example, *Kriegergräber im Felde und daheim. Herausgegeben im Einvernehmen mit der Heeresverwaltung*, (Munich: Bruckmann, 1917).

While they clearly deal directly with the human cost of war, however, these depictions of the mourning process should not be mistaken for pacifist statements. The religious elements established in the images, in the placing of the bereaved on consecrated grounds, represent a search for consolation, but this should not be read as a critique of the war.[49] The example of Käthe Kollwitz, who turned the room of her fallen son Peter into a memorial shrine, also illustrates a very personal need that bereaved women felt to have a place to turn to in grief.[50] Images like those reproduced above can be viewed as fulfilling a similar representative function. The burying of dead soldiers and the civilian experience of the mourning process were part of the war right from its beginning. It is understandable that some of the bereaved did not feel adequately represented in the plans for the official memorials which were published in pamphlets and spoken of in public lectures and debates, and that instead, they sought more private means of expressing their grief. Also, a more personal 'site of memory', be it in the form of a painting or private shrine, could be realised immediately and meet a strong emotional need. Furthermore, the fact that groups of mourning women feature in the images is significant. Although the women are not shown comforting each other physically, the shared nature of their fate is given prominence.

Memorial to the Bereaved

The debate concerning the erection of official memorials during the First World War in Germany turned into a much wider public debate about adequate commemoration for the fallen and the need for a national war monument to represent the honour of the soldiers' wartime sacrifice. Government authorities, artists, and veterans' organisations often held quite diametrically opposed understandings of the symbolism of the planned national memorial and its meaning for national

[49] Wolfgang Mommsen argued that the theme of bereavement in the art of the 1920s should not lead one to backdate pacifist convictions of these artist, Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'German artists, writers and intellectuals and the meaning of war, 1914-1918,' in *State, society and mobilisation in Europe during the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 37.

[50] See for example entry from 12 November 1914 and 24 December 1914 in, Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher, 1908-1943*, ed. Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz (Berlin: Siedler, 1999), p. 175, 79. See also Winter, *Sites of memory*, pp. 110-13.

identification.[51] Throughout the 19th century, the establishment of a national memorial remained more an ambitious idea than something that was likely to be practically realised. To merge the numerous, and conflicting, cultural, historical, and political traditions within Germany into one memorial proved to be an impossible task.[52] While several memorials existed that bore the elements of a national memorial, the First World War seemingly provided an opportunity to create a national edifice that would represent the entire nation. Suggestions ranged from a construction bridging the Rhine to the planting of a 'Holy Grove' of oak trees near Bad Berka. Benjamin Ziemann argues that it was the contested symbolism of these memorials, which were so closely tied to what was identified as the essence of the German nation and national identity, that led to their failure. Adolf Hitler's eventual proclamation in October 1935 that Tannenberg would serve as the site of the German national war memorial ended – for some time – the debate about a national place of remembrance.[53] Importantly, none of the proposed national war memorials included representations of the bereaved in their design. The suggested designs focused instead on the ordinary soldier who died a sacrificial death for the fatherland.

It is within this context that the evolution of the memorial design, *The Parents*, by Käthe Kollwitz must be considered. Her memorial was completed in 1932 and erected in the soldier's cemetery in Vladslo in Belgium, where her son Peter fell in 1914. Different drafts of this memorial existed and early sketches date back to the war years.[54] Previous drafts, for example, depicted parents mourning over the dead body of their son. The finished version, however, no longer included the body of the fallen but focused exclusively on the bereaved. Interestingly, Kollwitz's completed sculpture, in contrast to the images reproduced above, represented herself as a mourning mother and her husband as a mourning father. Thus mourning for those who died in the war was not represented as a 'privilege' of women. Karl, the artist's husband, was also depicted on

[51] Benjamin Ziemann, 'Die deutsche Nation und ihr zentraler Erinnerungsort. Das "Nationaldenkmal für die Gefallenen im Weltkriege" und die Idee des "Unbekannten Soldaten", 1914-1935,' in *Krieg und Erinnerung. Fallstudien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmut Berding, et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), pp. 67-91. On the variety of suggestions for a national memorial publicly debated see chapter seven: 'War in peace time. Commemorations of the First World War in the Republic' in Nadine Rossol, *Visualising the republic - unifying the nation. The Reichskunstwart and the creation of republican representation and identity in Weimar Germany* (PhD thesis: University of Limerick, 2006), pp. 233-69.

[52] Thomas Nipperdey, 'Nationalidee und Nationaldenkmal in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert,' *Historische Zeitschrift*, no. 206 (1968), pp. 35-585.

[53] Ziemann, 'Erinnerungsort,' p. 69.

[54] See diary entry from 1 December 1914, in Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher, 1908-1943*, p. 177.

his knees with arms folded across his chest. A mourning man in a position of despair and grief is virtually non-existent in First World War memorials.

Käthe Kollwitz represented herself in a pose of dignified grief. The body language of her sculpture closely resembles that depicted in the images already discussed in this chapter. Her torso and head are bent and her arms crossed in front of her chest, creating a very physical expression of grief. Both figures are represented as lonely and grief-stricken. In contrast to a different version of the mourning parents from 1923, in which the parents hold and comfort each other, this version suggests that in the end everyone has to deal with sorrow and bereavement on their own. Kollwitz agonised for around seventeen years over the conception and production of a memorial to her dead son. The artist went through years of mourning and the complex processes that relate to mourning. It is still striking, however, that it is the mourning process which remains the overwhelming theme of her memorial sculpture. This memorial achieved in practice what the images above could only hint at: it united the bereaved with the fallen by being erected in the soldier's cemetery of her son. Another consecrated ground, providing the link between the fallen and the bereaved.



46 Käthe Kollwitz, *The Parents*, 1932[55]

[55] Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Eltern* (1932), Vladslo, Belgium, photograph: Käthe Kollwitz Museum Berlin.

Grief and Victimhood

The images in first section of the chapter, Consecrated Grounds, depict mourning women in the safe and sheltered environment of religious sites. Despite the grief visible in their body language, these women follow religious rituals mostly in female company which, in the eyes of the viewer, eases the pain of mourning. The following images also depict mourning women, but in more secular environments. The effect is a concentration on mourning women whose suffering, un-consoled by religious rituals, adds an enhanced victim-status to these women. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker argue that a 'great silence' existed after the Great War, a lack of words to capture and adequately describe bereaved individuals and their emotional responses to the loss of a male relation in the conflict.[56] Apart from the traditional word 'widow', no special terminology existed in either the German, French or British contexts, that described a mourning mother, father, sister or grandparent. Also, the term 'mourning' in all three languages neither distinguishes between different stages of mourning nor differentiates the nature of the emotional response.

Much like Jay Winter, Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker proceed on the assumption that the mourning process and commemorative activities were set into motion only after the end of the war in 1918. Both argue that even then many relations and women in particular remained silent. During the conflict, it is suggested, grief was repressed and largely remained socially invisible. "An ostentatious display of mourning seemed increasingly inappropriate as the mass slaughter of the Great War continued."[57] Whereas it seems clear that a different type of mourning commenced in the post-war period, it should be emphasised that mourning was part of the war right from its beginning in August 1914, and led to corresponding manifestations of grief. And while an adequate 'language of mourning' may not have existed, and grief was not expressed in words, it was a prominent subject in the wartime art of women. Death was not denied and mourning was given an artistic outlet.

One of the earliest testimonies to the suffering of the bereaved is the lithograph *The Lamentation* by Martha Schrag from 1916. Far from being an 'ostentatious display of mourning', Schrag produced a compelling account of the grave intensity of women's bereavement. The traumatic impact of mass dying is sensitively sketched, the image

[56] Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18 Understanding the Great War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), pp. 176-77.
[57] Ibid., p. 179.

featuring a group of women whose wailing appears inconsolable. The cause of their grief forms an integral part of the composition, as the women are placed among dead and dying men, as if looking for a familiar face.



47 Martha Schrag, *The Lamentation*, 1916[58]

The women's physical reaction is an explicit manifestation of grief. Their hands are the main keys to reading their body language. Some of the women are resting their heads in their hands, others are clutching their skulls. The woman in the right corner is on her knees, burying her face in her elbow. Only one woman, on the top right, is praying, which in this image represents the most obvious form of seeking consolation from somewhere else. And while the image reflects a solely female 'community', 'kinship', or 'circle' of mourning,[59] the women do not appear to console each other

[58] Martha Schrag, *Die Klage*, lithograph (1916), reprinted in, Gerhard Hahn, *Leben und Werk der Malerin und Grafikerin Martha Schrag, 1870-1957* (Chemnitz (Karl-Marx Stadt): Bezirkskunstzentrum, 1982), plate 19.

[59] On the concept of mourning communities, see Jay Winter, 'Communities in mourning,' in *Authority, identity and the social history of the Great War*, ed. Franz Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995), pp. 325-56, Winter, *Sites of memory*, pp. 29-53. On circles of mourning, see Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *14-18 Understanding the Great War*, pp. 204-25.

physically but with their company and the knowledge of a shared fate – the loss of a son, brother, husband or fiancé who died in the war.

The women are grieving amongst an array of dead and dying men. In the left foreground, a hand is visible amidst the women, whereas other body parts are merely suggested. Most of the dead are pictured in the left corner of the lithograph. Some of the men are motionless and clearly dead, others seem to be barely alive. Two of the presumably fatally injured men appear to be praying, their folded hands are prominently reaching out from amidst the corpses. One of the men, who faces the viewer from the front, appears to be moaning in great pain. It is remarkable that this intense image succeeds in focusing entirely on the bereavement of the women. No obvious indication of the circumstances that led to the mass dying is given. No military insignia identify the men as soldiers; neither uniforms nor rifles are included in the composition. The only indication that a battle has taken place is the chaotic manner in which the men's bodies are arranged – as if overwhelmed and vanquished in their position. Alternatively, they may have been hurriedly heaped into a pile.

The Lamentation constitutes an attempt, moreover, to look beyond a soldier's death by addressing its impact on the bereaved. In order to focus on their needs and their experience, the reality of the wartime situation is reversed. During the war, only the wounded could be visited and no relatives were present to attend to the dying men at the front. In addition, if a soldier was killed in action, his family only learned of his death some time after he had been buried, after his death had already become an established fact. All the stages that would normally prepare a person for bereavement were thereby eliminated and no rituals could ease the transition from life to death.[60] Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker confirm that the physical distance from the bodies had an additionally devastating effect on the bereaved.[61] Whereas the dominating expression of Schrag's design is the crushing force of grief, it is not completely without hope. The woman in the middle foreground presses a baby to her chest. The presence of the infant can be interpreted as the embodiment of the future and an assertion that life moves on, a theme which will be explored further in chapter seven.

[60] See Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *14-18 Understanding the Great War*, p. 215.
[61] Ibid., p. 215 ff.

News of Death

The lack of preparation for the receipt of a notification of death and the wartime elimination of rituals that would usually prepare relations for a death in the family is captured very strikingly in the woodcut *Letter Returned* by Sella Hasse. In this image, a woman has just a received a letter from the postman who is still standing in the open door. The sewing machine in the right foreground suggests that she had been in the middle of completing ordinary household tasks or engaged in domestic-employment. The setting transforms the arrival of the letter into an intrusion on a peaceful scene. Rays of sunshine come through the window on the right, touching the woman and the letter and thus further building a contrast to the shocking contents of the letter.



48 Sella Hasse, *Letter Returned*, 1918[62]

The woman has her mouth opened as if emitting a cry of grief, or even terror, and she touches her head in disbelief, a gesture that evokes her racing thoughts and intense emotions. She seems to be slowly bending backwards, going to the ground

[62] Sella Hasse, *Brief zurück*, woodcut (1918), Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

under the 'weight' of the letter in her hand. The title *Letter Returned* suggests that a letter she had sent, had been returned unopened, meaning the recipient was not alive to open and read it. The artist's initials are on the seal of the envelope, a sign that Sella Hasse herself closely identified with women who had received similar shocking news. Alternatively, the title could refer to the unexpected 'response' she received to her last letter, which instead of bringing a personal note was a notification of death from the front.

The fallen soldier is omnipresent in the image, alive as well as dead. On the wall, we can see a photograph of the deceased in uniform, informing the viewer of his soldier-status. Right next to the photograph, the grimacing face of the soldier appears like a vision rising in the woman's thoughts. The artist only sketched and indicated his features with thin lines in order to heighten the vision-like effect. In contrast to the timidly smiling man in the photograph, the appearance of the soldier's head depicts him with an expression of mortal fear. His eyes are fixed on something we cannot see, and his facial expression is distorted through wrinkles – a stark contrast to the smooth white face of the soldier in the photograph. His teeth, in particular, give his head an almost skull-like character, placing him somewhere between the living and the dead. As with the image by Martha Schrag above, the death of the soldier is an important element of the composition. Death is neither denied, nor ignored. Instead it is portrayed in its full scariness and pain – visible in the face of the soldier's head in the top right corner. The heart between the two soldier's heads possibly indicates the romantic attachment of the woman to the soldier.

To a large degree, letters and other forms of written communication between the home front and the battlefront represented 'lifelines' for both sides. Many couples wrote daily to each other.[63] Letters from the front represented the continued presence of the soldier within his family and the arrival of the postman became a fixture in the daily routine of many women. Chores were interrupted and the reading of the letter followed individual secret and sacred procedures. Most importantly, letters were the proof of life of their loved ones. The receipt of a letter from the front was a special event that was frequently described in women's wartime literature.[64] For soldiers, on the other hand,

[63] See the wartime correspondence of Richard and Ida Dehmel, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, DA, and Franz and Maria Marc, in Franz Marc, *Briefe aus dem Felde* (Munich: List, 1966). On wartime correspondence see also Bernd Ulrich, *Die Augenzeugen. Deutsche Feldpostbriefe in Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit, 1914-1933* (Essen: Klartext, 1997).

[64] See Margarete Böhme, *Kriegsbriefe der Familie Wimmel* (Dresden: Reißner, 1915), Ida Boy-Ed, *Die Opferschale* (Berlin: Scherl, 1916), Clara Viebig, *Töchter der Hekuba* (Berlin: Fleischel, 1917).

letters received from the home front symbolised the enduring link to home and life before the war.[65]

The thematic choice of depicting the arrival of the death news serves to underline the shock of the moment and the un-preparedness of women for such news, as referred to by Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker above. A similar moment is depicted in the silhouette entitled *The Message* and produced by Eva Schmidt in 1915.



49 Eva Schmidt, *The Message*, 1915[66]

The silhouette depicts the female members of a family gathered behind the mother of the household. As the title indicates, the image presents the scene that follows the receipts of news of death from the front. The mother, overcome with grief, is resting on a chair with her head buried in her arms on the table. With one of her hands, she is caressing the spiked helmet of her fallen husband. Her older daughter, the grandmother of the family, and her younger daughter form a row behind her. Her older daughter and the grandmother have their hands folded in a praying manner. This seems to be the only consolation they can offer in this moment, the physical distance between the family

[65] See the wartime correspondence of Richard and Ida Dehmel and Nikolaus Buschmann, 'Der verschwiegene Krieg. Kommunikation zwischen Front und Heimatfront,' in *Kriegserfahrungen. Studien zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, et al. (Essen: Klartext, 1997), pp. 208-24.

[66] Eva Schmidt, *Die Botschaft*, in *Kriegszeit. 10 Schattenrisse von Eva Schmidt* (Halle: Reichardt 1915).

members shows that in the end it is the mother herself who would have to face and come to terms with the tragedy. The devastating shock of the first moment, in which nothing can reach the bereaved, is very prominent in this image. The remaining family appear unsure of how to react to the news and offer counsel to the most bereaved. The immediate loneliness that many women had to face after the loss of their partner is brought very clearly to the fore. Again, this family had not been prepared for the shocking notification and the helmet and pieces of uniform represent a substitute for the body of the fallen, whom the family had not been able to bury.

That these depictions were close to how women's reactions unfolded in reality is illustrated by the following example. In November 1914, Ida Dehmel received a telegram that, because of a spelling mistake, delivered 'bad greetings' from her husband's regiment. Dehmel understood this to be the notification for fatal wounds and almost suffered a nervous breakdown by the time it was cleared up that her husband had actually sent her 'festive greetings' after the arrival of a food parcel that Ida had sent to the front. The change of a vowel in the German original is enough to turn the 'Schlemmer Gruß' (festive greetings) into a 'Schlimmer Gruß' (bad greetings).[67] It was not until over two years later that Ida Dehmel was to experience the shock of a telegram disclosing 'real' bad news – the fatal injury of her son Heinz-Lux on the Western Front in January 1917.[68] This time, the correspondence that had been the life-line and connection to her son was severed, and Dehmel was deeply physically and psychologically affected by his death.

The moment depicted in these images reveals a very intimate and vulnerable aspect of daily lives of women during the war. The shock of the moment after the news of the death of a loved one was intensified by the realisation that however dutiful, hardworking, and brave the women were, the fate of their 'loved one' was taken out of their hands. Fate could not be implored by impeccable wartime behaviour, as suggested in many didactic publications by members of the organised women's movement. The immediate shock and despair emphasised in the images after the receipt of a death notification openly shows the despair felt by those left behind and stresses their share of the sacrifice for the war effort.

[67] Richard Dehmel – Ida Dehmel, 29.11.1917, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, DA, Br. 933.
[68] Ida Dehmel – Alice Bensheimer, 08.01.1917, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, DA NL Ida Dehmel Br: Ida Dehmel – Alice Bensheimer.

Mourning Woman

One of the simplest, yet most moving depictions of a grieving woman produced by a German artist is in the form of a woodcut by Katharina Heise. Produced in 1918 and entitled *Mourning Woman in the Woods* the image refers neither to the scale of the experienced trauma nor the extent of the felt grief. Instead, the piece focuses purely on the act of mourning. The woman is wearing a long mourning gown but in this instance it is a long white – not black – gown, adding to the dignity of the bereaved. The wood around her is only roughly sketched and serves to illustrate her loneliness and isolation. Yet, the woman does not appear helpless or lost, but follows the direction of the footpath. This perhaps signifies that she is moving towards something and dealing with her loss, instead of being torn apart by sorrow.



50 Katharina Heise, *Mourning Woman* 1918[69]

As mentioned above, Katharina Heise herself had lost her fiancé on the Western Front in 1916. Her artistic response to the loss separates death and bereavement,

[69] Katharina Heise, *Trauernde* ,woodcut (1918), in *Die Aktion* 23/24 1918, and NL Katharina Heise, Stadtmuseum Schönebeck.

addressing these issues in different works. This woodcut solely focuses on the bereaved woman, and the artist does not deliver an open emotional reaction as in previous images. Thus, this depiction may reflect a stage within the mourning process when the pain had become bearable; a stage where the first shock and immediate pain had been endured by the bereaved and they were able to begin living with the loss. The woman's loneliness may further represent the need of the bereaved to think and rest in solitude, and emphasise a potential comfort that was found in natural surroundings. On the other hand, her loneliness may reflect the realisation that in the end, the woman in the image as well as the artist possibly herself had to bear their personal grief alone. As indicated in the images above, apart from existing 'kinships' or 'circles' of mourning, physical comfort and care were seldom expressed in these images.

The Physical Pain of Mourning

A comparison with the following image *Grief* by artist Sella Hasse, reminds us that the individual responses to or perception of bereavement differed profoundly. It suggests that loss engendered a variety of personal reactions. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker refer to the work of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs when asserting that *memory* exists on a social as well as on a personal level.[70] It seems that similar personal reactions exist also during the *mourning* process. In contrast to the reserved figure of the mourning woman depicted in Heise's woodcut *Grief* could not be more explicit in its depiction of the physical and emotional pain associated with mourning. We can see the torso of a nude woman whose head is resting in her right hand. Her face bears the marks of emotional strain, with large dark circles underneath her eyes and lips drawn in despair. The most striking element of the image is the woman's chest, which has been slit open and the woman is now holding her own heart in her left hand. The crow sitting on the woman's shoulder, which could easily be missed when viewing the piece for the first time, is very significant. The bird, as already noted in chapter three, is closely associated with death because of his preference for decaying flesh.

[70] See Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *14-18 Understanding the Great War*, p. 183.



51 Sella Hasse, *Grief*, 1917[71]

The composition seems to convey the message that the physical and emotional pain of grief and sorrow could be of a life-draining nature, the impact of mourning almost too much to bear. The woman's heart in the image is not simply broken, but has been cut out of her body. The association of a beating heart with the act of living is reversed in this image; a person whose heart is removed from their body is clearly closer to death than to life. What is suggested in the image is that the extent of the woman's grief has stripped her of the will to live. This interpretation is supported by the crow, whose pointed claws scratch the woman's shoulder and who seems to be about to peck at the woman's eyes, which are the first body parts carrion-eating birds consume. The raw aesthetics and broad lines of the woodcut create an atmosphere of complete despair in the image. Far removed from conventional artistic beauty, Sella Hasse's woodcut does not an attempt to aestheticise grief or mourning. Her woodcut gives voice to the unbearable pain of mourning and the ensuing physical decline of the bereaved. Significantly, her decision to openly display the tormenting nature of grief radically

[71] Sella Hasse, *Der Gram*, woodcut (1917), Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

contrasted with the advice given in many pamphlets and booklets that were published during the war by women and men alike. Members of the women's movement in particular demanded that grief should be borne with strength and dignity, and an emotional breakdown was considered a sign of weakness one should be ashamed of.[72]

Conclusion

Right from the earliest phase of the First World War, women produced artistic accounts of the emotional and physical strain that was caused by the enormous death toll on the battlefields. Women in particular were portrayed in different stages of the mourning process. Their grief, sadness and even physical pain were the subject of a wide range of artistically rendered scenarios. Stylistically, different types of black and white art predominated. The strong lines used in wood- and linocuts, as well as the effect created by stone carving for lithographs, seemed to provide a mood and atmosphere that corresponded with the theme of bereavement. Even if the individual artist herself did not experience an immediate personal loss, the research on existing 'circles of mourning' and 'communities of mourning' suggests that everyone, within their own wider family or circle of friends grieved the death of a soldier.[73] Besides personal or shared grief for friends, the existence of a more general, social bereavement in face of the mass dying at the fronts should also be considered. Female artists responded to the ongoing hostilities with numerous very personal and emotional images, which shows that mourning became an important theme during the war. The assumption that bereavement was met with silence must be revised. The artistic evidence in this chapter reveals that female artists publicly addressed grief and emotional devastation. The public sharing of the intense emotions expressed in their art places a remarkable emphasis on female suffering during the war.

All of the above images – with the exception of the post-war sculpture by Käthe Kollwitz which dates from 1932 – ignore or exclude mourning men. This could explain why many of the existing familiar historical sources which, in the vast majority of

[72] Gertrud Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, ed. Ernst Jäckh, vol. 15, *Der deutsche Krieg. Politische Flugschriften* (Stuttgart, Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1914), pp. 9-10, Lily Braun, *Die Frauen und der Krieg* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915), p. 51, Marie Herbert, 'Eiserne Selbstzucht,' in *Deutschlands Krieg und Deutschlands Frauen. Gesammelte Werke aus Frauenhand*, ed. Karl Jünger (Stuttgart: Lutz, 1916), pp. 35-37.

[73] Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *14-18 Understanding the Great War*, p. 207ff.

cases, reflect male experiences of the war, led to the assumption of an existing 'taboo' on the subject of death and mourning.

In this context, the role of art deserves special attention. Besides more conventional functions, such as providing an emotional outlet or presenting testimonies, art became an integral part of the mourning process. By choosing Christian sites as special places in which to locate the mourning women, art served as a link to access the consoling function of religious practices. Art, moreover, provided a space in which women could break down under the burden of their grief, families were allowed to attend to their dying men, and graves could be looked after. The substitute nature of art in place of the dead bodies is particularly compelling as it represented a clear response to the burial practices of the German army and the fact that most families were not able to visit the graves of their fallen. The complexities of the mourning process are astonishing, as is the extent to which these were mirrored in the art of women.

Chapter 5 *Mater Dolorosa on the Battlefields*

A predominant theme in women's art of the First World War is that of maternal sacrifice. Contemporary women's literature, short stories and poetry also depict the experience of mothers sacrificing their sons for the fatherland as the most important and drastic of women's war experiences. In the following artistic representations, the son's departure for war is not only portrayed as the soldier's sacrifice, but also as that of the mother who gives her own flesh and blood for her country. The iconography in these images was employed to emphasise the loss of the mother rather than focusing on the fate of the soldier. The images analysed in this chapter therefore emphasise a separate thematic context within women's mourning process. Asserting themselves as central victims of the war – alongside, if not ahead of their sons – in the attempt to come to terms with death and loss, becomes women's primary interpretation of sacrifice and consequently of the war itself.

Interpretations of the *mater dolorosa* and the *pietà* were composed by female artists regardless of whether or not they had a son at the front, and irrespective of whether they had a son at all. The figure of the dead soldier-son embodied all the tragedy associated with the casualties of war. Whereas fallen fiancés or husbands could be replaced, there was 'nothing earthly to console a mother's love'.[1] The finality of the loss was reinforced by, and linked to, the laws of nature, preventing most middle- aged mothers from bearing another child.[2] In addition, mothers burying their sons understood this to be in contrast with the natural course of life in which the sons would lay their mothers to rest.[3] Accordingly, the figure of the dead soldier-son became a template used in women's art and became a symbol reflecting the overall death-toll of war.

By portraying soldiers as the sons of the nation, women turned themselves into and presented themselves as mothers of the nation. Like the figure of the dead soldier-son, the mother not only represented the biological relationship between mother and

[1] Anne-Marie Tube, *Der Krieg und die Frauen. Ein Ausblick. Vortrag am 24. Juni 1915 in der Jahresversammlung des Deutsch-Evang. Frauenbundes* (Darmstadt: Waitz, 1915), p. 4.
[2] Regina Schulte, 'Käthe Kollwitz. Das Opfer,' in *Die verkehrte Welt des Krieges. Studien zu Geschlecht, Religion und Tod* (Frankfurt M., New York: Campus, 1998), p. 133.
[3] Margarethe von Meerheimb, 'Das große Auferstehen', in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg. Ein Rat-, Tat- und Trostbuch. Gesammelte Blätter aus Frauenhand,* ed. Karl Jünger (Stuttgart: Lutz, 1916), pp. 189-94.

child, but embodied every woman who was anxious about the well-being of someone at the front. The 'sharing' of this ordeal was an important element in the female experience of the war and was often referred to as the only form of consolation. The creation of art was one way in which women shared their emotional responses to the war, and the construction of an inclusive mother-figure in art gave all women a figure they could identify with. This 'kinship' of women's experiences is linked to a specific concept of motherhood prominent in German society at the time, which was not solely based on biological maternity, but proclaimed a more spiritual understanding of motherhood.

Since the late 18th century the intellectual concept of 'maternalism' had been in the centre of feminist discourse in the German women's movement. The traditional understanding of maternity as simple childbearing was extended to include a general concern for children's welfare, the family tradition, and an overall social and collective responsibility for the younger generation.[4] Moreover, motherhood was seen as the basis of a specifically feminine ethical position of care, and the mother–child bond was understood as the bedrock of social morality. Biological motherhood was not a prerequisite for exerting this moral influence, as women could transfer their maternal outlook to the relation between individuals and society or other communal bonds, so childless women could also identify with the role of the mother. Consequently, values associated with motherhood became a source for ethical authority and the basis for a claim of social prestige.[5] It was the figure of the mother, therefore, who became the overarching representative of women during the war. The mother was the least contested of women's wartime identities and the high social standing of a 'soldier's mother' is evidenced by the bad reputation soldiers' wives *(Kriegerfrauen)* suffered in the eyes of many other German women. They were seen as wartime profiteers, whose material gain from the state allowed them a comfortable existence.[6] In a similar manner, sympathy for soldiers' widows was limited, as they were 'compensated' for their husbands' death by a state pension. The mother's sacrifice on the other hand was understood to be the purest, most selfless and most final sacrifice.

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[4] Ann-Taylor Allen, *Feminismus und Mütterlichkeit in Deutschland 1800-1914* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 2000), 15-17, Ann-Taylor Allen, 'Spiritual motherhood. German feminists and the Kindergarten movement, 1848-1911,' *History of Education Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (1982), pp. 319-39.

[5] Allen, *Feminismus und Mütterlichkeit*, p. 19-33.

[6] Belinda Davis, *Home fires burning. Food, politics and everyday life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: 2000), p. 36.

In addition, the pre-war years had witnessed a heightened public debate about women's fertility and the falling birth rate which had, in turn, contributed to a widespread awareness of the value of motherhood. Whereas the debate that continued throughout the war focused on women as mothers of 'future soldiers', this idealisation of motherhood influenced the way in which women, and mothers of current soldiers, shaped their wartime identities. Concerns about mothers and their reproductive obligations to the nation were publicly expressed in newspapers and wartime pamphlets. Members of the women's movement engaged actively in the debate and attempted to spread a vision of women's roles that combined the biological and spiritual motherhood and would guarantee women an influential position in society.[7] Government figures in particular lamented the decline of the birth rate, an issue that raised exaggerated concern regarding the manpower that was required to defend Germany in the future.[8] Hence, politicians outlined a legal framework to guarantee a higher birth rate, regulate women's reproduction and criminalise the usage of contraception.[9] These measures did not seem to encourage women to have more children, however, and by 1916 it was estimated that Germany had 'lost' 680 000 births, based on pre-war figures. This number had more than doubled by 1917 and, as a result, the welfare of mothers and children gained political importance and measures were introduced to combat infant mortality.[10] The motivation for these changes, however, had not been concern for women for their own sake, but concern for the health of Germany's future generation. This was another factor which influenced the perspective from which women interpreted their wartime sacrifices and subsequently led mothers to view themselves as 'victims' of the war.

Mothers of sons of fighting age became the target of wartime propaganda, the production of which was dominated by leading members of the women's movement who claimed a natural authority on the subject of motherhood. Their published pamphlets and articles expressed a strong national focus, asserting that 'the claims of the fatherland exceed the rights of motherly love'.[11] Public appeals and propaganda,

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[7] Helene Lange, *Die Dienstpflicht der Frau. Vortrag gehalten auf der Kriegstagung des Allgemeinen Deutschen Lehrerinnenvereins Pfingsten 1915* (Leipzig, Berlin: Teubner, 1915), Elisabeth Metzdorf-Techner, *Die allgemeine Wehrpflicht der Frau während des Krieges* (Leipzig: Verlag Neueste Frauen-Korrespondenz, 1914).

[8] Cornelie Usborne, 'Pregnancy is a woman's active service,' in *The upheaval of war. Family, work and welfare in Europe, 1914-1918*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 389.

[9] Ibid., pp. 392-95.

[10] Paul Weindling, 'The medical profession, social hygiene and the birth rate in Germany 1914-19,' ibid., p. 424.

[11] Gertrud Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, ed. Ernst Jäckh, *Der deutsche Krieg. Politische Flugschriften*, vol. 15 (Stuttgart, Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1914), p. 6.

outspokenly formulated by, for example, Gertrud Bäumer, leader of the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF)*, and Agnes von Harnack, women's activist and daughter of theologian Adolf von Harnack, outlined guidelines for mothers who were confronted with their son's national duties. The advice given was very much in line with the pro-war attitude publicly stated by the BDF in August 1914. Many organised intellectual women turned the question of the mother who supported her son in going to war into one of national survival. Whether their publications intended to offer guidance, advice or directions they were all one-dimensional in their demand for mother's sacrifice. The style and format of these publications varied between appeals which directly encouraged mothers to face their son's departure with composure, and exalted treatises which highlighted the momentous nature of the war; emphasising that what was important were not women's feelings but the survival of the nation.

The following poster from 1918, which was produced by the artist Gerda Luise Schmidt, summarises how the concept of a general female maternalism was used in order to stir women's willingness to sacrifice for war. The design was part of a poster campaign for the 9th war loan in 1918 and is a moral appeal directly addressed *To the German Women and Girls* and subtitled *The Admonition of a German Woman*. The inscription raises the dramatic element in the poster and no doubt is left about the vital contribution of women for the national war effort.



52 Gerda Luise Schmidt, *To the German Women and Girls*, 1918[12]

The three silhouettes are introduced with the request 'Prove your worth', followed by the instruction 'that you can turn the whole nation into your child by sacrificing what needs to be sacrificed!' The image in the middle shows a woman on a hill, bending down and reaching out to three young men. This scene is accompanied with the inscription 'And all of them are your children because you are a German woman'. Above all, this poster illustrates how the idea of a spiritual motherhood was put into practise during the war. The female figure in the poster represents the maternal care of German women, just as the young males symbolise their sons. The series of silhouettes illustrates the grace and courage expected of German mothers. Although she laments her fate in the first image, the woman rises to 'the sons' off to war, a burden she carries with grace and her head held high, as shown in the third image. The three images hint at a process of sacrifice women go through, the impression of a continuing, cyclical evolution being reinforced by the changing seasons indicated by the trees.

[12] Gerda Luise Schmidt, *An die deutschen Frauen und Mädchen*, silhouette (1918), Stadt-Archiv München Z-Slg. 220/2.

The wartime art that depicts women sacrificing a son for the war amounts to a rich historical resource and allows for a detailed analysis of perceptions of motherhood in wartime. Such material shows an evolution within women's experiences of maternal sacrifice which can be structured into three main phases. The first phase is marked by the departure of the son for war which at the same time stands for the end of the nurturing relationship with the mother. The second stage reflects on mothers' attempts to come to terms with reality, a phase marked by insecurity, fear and often, the confrontation with death. In the final stage, mothers seek to make sense of their sons' sacrifice and the sacrifice they themselves have made. This phase is characterised by attempts to fill death with meaning to make the sacrifice worthwhile, and come to terms with the filial loss. Taken together the images in this chapter present an account of mother's sacrifice which is enriched by written reflections in the diary of Käthe Kollwitz and the correspondence of Ida Dehmel, both of whom lost a son in the conflict.[13]

The Departure of the Soldier-Son

When analysing the prevalence of the theme of mother's sacrifice in women's art, the impact of the sheer quantity of actual deaths faced by mothers has to be emphasised. Between 1914 and 1918, soldiers' mothers amounted to a substantial section of the female population, as almost 40% of the German war deaths throughout these years were young men between the age of 20 and 24.[14] Overall, this age group encountered the highest number of casualties. These were followed by 23% of casualties in the age of group of men between 25 and 29. In contrast to these high figures, only 3.5% of the war deaths occurred in the age group between 40 and 44 and only 1% of the over 45s. This meant that most of the mothers of the young soldiers would have been around to witness their son's departure for war and their death at the front.

[13] Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher, 1908-1943*, ed. Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz (Berlin: Siedler, 1999). See also the correspondence of Ida Dehmel, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, NL Ida Dehmel, Dehmel Archiv (DA).

[14] Source: Bewegung der Bevölkerung in den Jahren 1914-1919, *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches*, vol. 276, Berlin 1922, in Jay Winter, 'Some paradoxes of the First World War,' in *The upheaval of war. Family, work and welfare in Europe, 1914-1918*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 27.

Motherhood in wartime was also a theme of primary significance in women's wartime poetry and especially in amateur compositions. The following stanza of the poem *We Mothers,* reproduced below, is a typical example in its thematic representation of a mother who faced her son's departure for the front. The poem was written in the form of a mother's monologue and its powerful language and pathos is typical of much wartime poetry. Whereas the style and lyrical quality suggest the work of an amateur, the undisguised, raw emotions conveyed, leave a strong impression. This poem was published in 1917 in a collection of women's writings with the telling title *Women's Comfort and Women's Duty in Wartime.* The prose and poetry in the collection is dominated by an overall appeal to stir women's 'courage to sacrifice' and 'joy of offering' as demanded by the fatherland.

> We Mothers
> Who in the world is as proud as we are?
> Our sons marched out to the fields
> For Kaiser and country, to defend and defy
> – Germany's offspring for Germany's honour –
> To stand or to fall – whatever God's will,
> Every youth a man, every man a hero!
> Lord have mercy on them!
> – Mine is out there, too![15]

Overall, the words express a sense of duty, and seems to say: 'this is what mothers should be feeling.' Nonetheless, a genuine feeling of pride and an acknowledgement of wartime duty seemed to have played an important part in mothers' consent to their sons' departure for war. The line 'every youth a man, every man a hero' reads like an adaptation of wartime appeals and propaganda. Yet the fact that many women genuinely believed that sacrificing their sons was part of their wartime duty, and that these formulations were not simply empty propaganda but very much part of the language used by women at the time, should be taken into account. Käthe Kollwitz, whose sons both volunteered in August 1914, offers a striking example in her attempt to reconcile her sense of duty and willingness to sacrifice her sons with her maternal feelings.[16]

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[15] Wer ist so stolz wie wir in der Welt? / Unsere Söhne zogen hinaus ins Feld, / Für Kaiser und Reich, zu Trutz und Wehr /- Deutschlands Blüte für Deutschlands Ehr' – / zu steh'n oder fallen—wie's Gott gefällt, / Jeder Jüngling ein Mann, jeder Mann ein Held! / Daß Gott ihnen gnädig sei! / – Meiner ist auch dabei! First stanza of the poem 'Wir Mütter!' by T. Resa (female author), in: Anna Blanck, *Frauentrost und Frauenpflicht zur Kriegszeit* (Mannheim: Mannheimer Stadtmission, 1917), pp. 6-7.

[16] See section 'Der Krieg, 1914-1918' in Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher*, pp. 149-394.

In early August 1914, Käthe Kollwitz convinced her husband Karl, who was reluctant to give his approval to their under-aged son Peter to volunteer for military service, to sign the parental approval form required for military conscription.[17] Kollwitz recorded her husband's arguments in her diary: the fatherland would not need their son, otherwise he [their son Peter] would already have been called up. Whereas she appreciates that her husband 'is fighting' for their son, she herself has already accepted the inevitable. She describes Peter's glances and appeals to herself, looking for her support in his wish to go to war. She also recalled embracing her son and telling him that she was not a coward and would be ready. Acting on a clear sense of duty and in the firm belief that she was acting according to the will of her son, she pleaded with her husband on his behalf. 'This one [momentous] hour. This sacrifice to which he [Peter] pressured me and to which we pressured Karl'.[18] This entry reveals that Kollwitz understood her son's departure for war as her own sacrifice, a feeling that is likely to have been reinforced by her own engagement in the process of her son's enlistment.

Frankfurt artist Lina von Schauroth acted with a similar sense of obligation to the fatherland. Having a strong maternal relationship with her nephew, she went out of her way to enable the under-aged youth to enlist for military service. Her late husband had been a high ranking official in the army and von Schauroth used his contacts on her nephew's behalf.[19] These two examples demonstrate an active involvement by women in military mobilisation which had implications for the interpretation of their sacrifice. As the mother has become actively involved, the soldier's departure is not only the son's sacrifice, but also the mother's sacrifice, because despite fears and presentiments, she lets the son go. The following quotation highlights the fact that women presented their sons leave as being within their realm of influence, making the mothers active contributors in the sacrifice. As Lily Braun wrote in 1915, 'Behind every one of these hero-boys stands a mother who let him go!'[20]

Admiration for the sons who were prepared to 'give themselves so freely', was an important element of the sacrifice. Kollwitz's diary conveys the impression that she was witnessing something special that deserved admiration and support.

> The heart of the boys is undivided. They give themselves in jubilee. They give themselves like pure cinderless flames, rising steeply to the

[17] 10 August 1914, ibid., p. 152.
[18] 10 August 1914, ibid.
[19] Helene von Schauroth, ed., *Lina von Schauroth. Eine Frankfurter Künstlerin* (Frankfurt M.: Kramer, 1984), p. 26.
[20] Lily Braun, *Die Frauen und der Krieg* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915), p. 10.

> sky. To see them this evening, [...], saddened my heart, but it also was very very beautiful.[21]

Both of Kollwitz's sons had been active in the German Youth Movement before the outbreak of the war.[22] Their certainty that the hour had arrived in which their ideas of a rejuvenated Germany could be put into practice were transferred to their mother. Their conviction of the rightness and importance of their actions weighed stronger than their mother's doubts. Reading Kollwitz's diary entries, one catches a glimpse of envy of the strength of the belief of the youth that is unspoilt by any hesitation, uncertainty or indecision.

Another element that overwhelmed mothers was a genuine feeling of pride that their sons were part of the highly recognised and admired German army. 'Yes, the German women are proud, despite all pain, that their sons are called upon to fight for *Kaiser* and *Reich*.'[23] By fitting in, the sons proved to have qualities, or the ability to develop qualities which were needed at the time of war. Ida Dehmel wrote to her sister Alice Bensheimer in October 1914 to report her son's progress, and self-improvement, in the army. 'Imagine, Heinz wrote in his last letter that he felt really great, like never before – is that not wonderful? With him, this was not to be expected.'[24] Even if it was not expected, the son's decision to volunteer for military service was certainly anticipated, as is illustrated by a postcard the poet Richard Dehmel wrote to Heinz-Lux, who was his wife's son from her first marriage. He congratulated him on his decision to volunteer and wrote that he himself had been sure that he [Heinz] would not have acted 'unnaturally'. He continued: 'Mother [Ida Dehmel] did not believe you would act differently. However, she saw it as her duty to present the state of affairs to you as impartially as possible. She is delighted in you.'[25] This illustrates the way in which sons fulfilled a social expectation, and how their reaction after the outbreak of war became a test of their character, which was directly linked to their upbringing and hence reflected on the mothers.

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[21] 13 August 1914, in Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher*, pp. 153-54.

[22] On the initial enthusiasm for war in the German Youth Movement, see Gudrun Fiedler, 'Kriegsbegeisterung - Friedenssehnsucht. Reaktionen der deutschen Jugendbewegung auf den Ersten Weltkrieg,' in *Kriegsalltag. Die Rekonstruktion des Kriegsalltags als Aufgabe der historischen Forschung und der Friedenserziehung*, ed. Peter Knoch (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1989), pp. 166-87.

[23] Blanck, *Frauentrost und Frauenpflicht*, p. 6.

[24] Ida Dehmel to Alice Bensheimer, 25 October 1914, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, NL Ida Dehmel, DA, Br. Ida Dehmel – Alice Bensheimer.

[25] Richard Dehmel to Heinz-Lux Auerbach, 25 February 1915, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, NL Ida Dehmel, DA, Br. Ida Dehmel – Heinz-Lux Auerbach.

The wartime publications by leading intellectual women understood the 'mothers' war tax' as a natural contribution to the war effort, where years of solicitude and careful upbringing of their sons were put to the test.[26] Drawing on a moral obligation to the nation, women were expected to meet the soldier's sacrifice with grace and appropriate conduct. Any display of emotions, such as crying and lamenting were dismissed as weaknesses, damaging to the war effort and not worthy of the 'greatness of the time'. Women's reactions and mothers' responses to these appeals, however, were more complex and a constant to and fro between the belief that their sons should fight in the war, and doubts whether they really had to.

In her diary, Käthe Kollwitz reflects on the sort of publications that attempted to define women's role in wartime. A piece by the successful novelist and essayist Gabriele Reuter, published in the newspaper *Der Tag* made a particularly strong impact on her. Reuter described women's wartime behaviour and wrote about the 'voluptuousness of women's sacrifice'. Commenting on this article in late August 1914, Kollwitz wondered how these women, who had brought up their sons and cared for them for many years, were able to send them in front of the canons. She asked herself, how they were able to muster the will to commit this heroic act.[27] Tellingly, she avoided making the connection to her own sacrifice, as she herself was one of these women who mustered the strength to send her son to war. Her son had not yet left for the front, but was in training and still in Berlin and not yet exposed to the dangers of war. Whereas she realised that the death of the young men would cause terrible despair, she sees herself as being far removed from the situation, showing a certain degree of denial. This entry is especially interesting as it provides a good example of how wartime publications were received by educated women from the middle classes. Kollwitz felt as if Reuter's article spoke to her personally and it drove her to re-evaluate her own attitude to the conflict in her writing.

The son's departure for war evoked feelings in women that were described as being comparable with the separation of mother and child after birth. The termination of the physical connection with their son was outside women's control and caused, on the one hand, by biology, and on the other by war, which represented another major force that was beyond their control. 'As if the child is cut off from the navel again. The first

[26] Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, p. 11, Braun, *Die Frauen und der Krieg*, p. 10, 31, Marie Herbert, 'Eiserne Selbstzucht,' in *Deutschlands Krieg und Deutschlands Frauen*, ed. Karl Jünger, pp. 35-37. Flugschrift des Katholischen Frauenbundes, Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln NL Walter Bombe 1158 Nr. 87.

[27] 27 August 1914, Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher*, p. 158.

time for life, now for death;'[28] was, how Kollwitz described her feelings when writing a goodbye letter to her son Peter in October 1914. This powerful parallel, which was also used in artistic responses, attempted to conjure up a time when mothers nurtured their sons and were able to protect and take care of them. One example of an image that deals with this theme is an oil painting by Charlotte Berend with the title *The Mothers*, was reprinted in *Die Jugend*, a weekly cultural magazine published in Munich, in 1916. The painting depicts mothers nursing and holding their infant children. This maternal scene, along with the title of the piece, takes up the influential ongoing pro-natalist debate in German society as well as symbolising a stage in the mother-child relationship when the child is fully dependent on the mother.



53 Charlotte Berend, *The Mothers, 1916* [29]

In the centre of the painting, a mother is breastfeeding her infant, thereby emphasising the strong physical link between mother and child. The painting is not a joyful depiction of mothers and their young children. Instead, earnest facial expressions hint at something looming over the group, an impression that is intensified by all the mothers embracing their children protectively. No fathers are present in the scene which

[28] 5 October 1914, ibid., p. 168.
[29] Charlotte Berend, *Die Mütter*, in *Die Jugend* (1916) Bayrisches Hauptstaatsarchiv PrA Slg. 3037.

could illustrate a scenario where the men were on duty somewhere else, possibly at war. The fact that a group of mothers is represented, and not an individual mother, is important and hints at women's shared experiences of motherhood. The scene above does not take place in the surroundings of a traditional family setting, but focuses on a group comprised of women only and their small children. The role of woman as mother was thereby accentuated, whereas men as fathers were actively excluded.

The nurturing role of the mother is also a central theme in the following woodcut by Sella Hasse entitled *War Christmas 1914*. The title suggests a double meaning. On the one hand, this woodcut interprets the scene of the birth of Jesus, the religious setting signifying a specific Christian dimension in the perception the war. Christmas had been proclaimed as the point in time by which the war was supposed to end, yet the image suggests that Christmas was the time when the extent of the wartime sacrifice began to be understood by those at the battle and the home front. The idyllic conventional image in the barn, usually associated with the birth of Jesus, is replaced by martial surroundings.



54 Sella Hasse, *War Christmas 1914*, 1914[30]

[30] Sella Hasse, *Kriegsweihnacht 1914*, woodcut (1914), Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

Mary, the mother, holds an infant with an adult face in her arms. Next to her kneels a male figure in armour, pausing to glance at the child but ready to leave, ready to fight with a sword in his hand and the helmet on his head. A star casts light on mother and child, and the mother's and infant's halos are clearly visible. In the background corpses ascend to the sky, guided by the rays of light. They are skeletons, possibly dead soldiers as martyrs of the time who fulfilled their duty on earth and float towards their paradisiacal afterlife.

The religious symbolism employed by the artist contributes to a striking composition which uncovers how the roles mothers and their sons played were interpreted in wartime. The use of light and shadow in the woodcut draws the viewer's attention to the mother and the child, both of which are cast lighter and in a stark contrast to the dark surroundings. Similar to the Charlotte Berend painting above, a woman nursing her child constitutes centrepiece of the image. One of Mary's breasts is exposed, drawing attention to the act of mothering a child, which is something only a woman can do. This again emphasises the physical bond between mother and child and draws the attention to childbirth and nursing as universal experiences shared by Mary and all mothers. These distinctly female experiences allow women to identify with Mary as depicted in the woodcut.

One feature of Hasse's woodcut that contrasts with Berend's painting is the presence of a male figure. Whereas stylistically, the knight forms a part of the holy family and his physical appearance and closeness to mother and child suggest a protective role, his figure represents a fascinating, but separate story. He could represent Joseph and thus complete the picture of a family. The miracle of the Immaculate Conception, however, decreases the importance of biological fatherhood and excludes Joseph from the mother and son bond. The male figure could also represent Archangel Michael in armour, which would support the interpretation of the conflict as a crusade. Another possibility is that the figure stands for a timeless warrior, a Teutonic knight whose armour is neither of the time of the birth of Jesus, nor of the time of the First World War. Whether the figure represents either one or all three figures, it is startling that he clearly is not associated with the same notion of sacrifice and emotion as the son, despite his martial outfit which suggests fighting and danger. Again, the special nature of the sacrifice of a son is emphasised.

The antagonism of life and death present in the image was also discussed with particular attention in women's wartime writings. Many of these attempted to reconcile

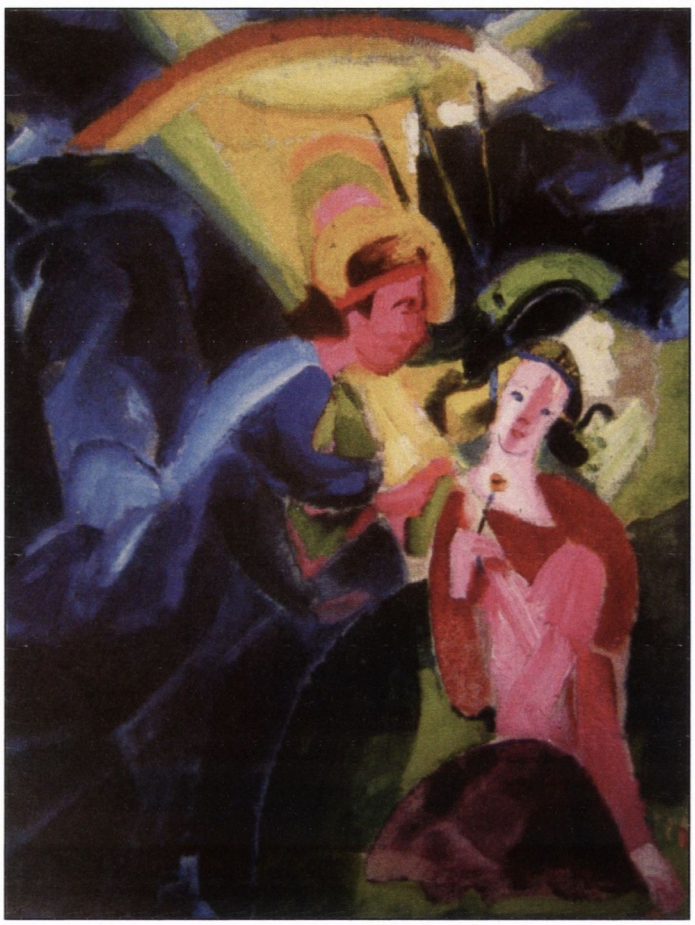
women's life-giving power as mothers with their national duties at times of war. 'Women and war – rarely are two terms combined that sound so incompatible, so disparate! Women should give life, tend and protect life! What is their task in mortal war?',[31] asks Minna Tube, the author of numerous wartime pamphlets concerning women and war, who was married to the artist Max Beckmann. She insisted that a woman's primary goal should be to find and reach an inner attitude to the war that would free her from all constraints and allow her to fulfil the wartime demands with loving grace.[32] Interestingly, the women's activist Helene Stöcker who had obtained a doctorate in philosophy in 1901 in Berne, viewed women's work as mothers, along with their activities as nurses and helpers, as equal to men's wartime service. Although she later became an outspoken pacifist, Stöcker proclaimed motherhood as a service and duty to the fatherland in the early stages of the conflict.[33]

The importance of maternity is also reflected in artist Sella Hasse's choice of the nativity scene as the first scene of her multi-themed war cycle. The parallels in life and work between Sella Hasse and Charlotte Berend are worth noting: Both artists had children, yet neither had a son of military age. In their depictions, both women direct the viewer's attention to the mothers and their unique role in bearing and nursing children, drawing on a common female experience. Both scenes explicitly depict the act of mothering a child, the attempt of holding on to a child that has grown up to become a soldier. The underlying pain of departure in the images is contrasted by a contemporary statement by writer Marie Diers, expressing what would have been considered as the true and right spirit of mothers at the time: 'Take my child, I did not give birth for my sake. It is yours, my fatherland.'[34]

Wartime images depicting the *Annunciation*, the announcement of the *Incarnation* by the archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, emphasise the sacredness that was attached to motherhood. These thematic choices disclose that some women attached a sacral element to their maternal role and status in wartime. The painting by Ida Kerkovius below shows Gabriel telling Mary that she was pregnant with Jesus. It is a colourful depiction, in a modern, almost naïve style. There is no religious pathos in the image and the halos of Gabriel and Mary only hint at the sacred nature of the scene. A possible result of the chosen artistic style might have been that women no longer saw

[31] Tube, *Der Krieg und die Frauen*, p. 3.
[32] Ibid., p.4.
[33] Dr Helene Stöcker, 'Die innere Welt,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg*, ed. Karl Jünger, pp. 92-94.
[34] Marie Diers, 'Fürs Vaterland,' ibid., p. 133.

the scene as a unique miracle, but were able to see themselves in the position of having given birth to a Christ-like child.



55 Ida Kerkovius, *Annunciation*, 1916[35]

This perspective places women in the role of Mary, similar to the scene in the barn above, and elevates their own positions. If women saw themselves in the role of Mary, then their fate and the sacrifice of their sons became comparable to that of Mary and gained a sacred character. In order to make the comparison plausible, the war had to be fitted into the story of selfless sacrifice. The writer Clara Heitefuß saw the war as God's messenger. That understanding united God and war as one entity. Like Mary, God was used as an example for the women and men in wartime Germany as someone who had given his only son on behalf of others.[36]

The woodcut by Katharina Heise, reproduced below, depicts a pregnant woman in a long gown. Simple forms are used in order to accentuate the shape of the body. No

[35] Ida Kerkovius, *Verkündigung*, oil (1916), printed in, Gerhard Leistner, ed., *Ida Kerkovius. Retrospektive* (Regensburg: Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie, 2001).
[36] Clara Heitefuß, *In des Königs Heerbann* (Neumünster: Ihloff, 1914), p. 3.

religious insignia identify the woman as Mary, nor is the archangel Gabriel present at the scene. Only the title of the image, *The Annunciation to Mary*, marks the depiction as the moment when Mary was told she was to be the mother of the son of God. Mary's face, moreover, is left blank, enabling every woman to see herself in Mary's place, suggesting that the mothers as well as their sons had been chosen for a special task. Some women believed at the time that 'great sacrifices were only demanded of exceptional souls'.[37] The Annunciation images therefore elevated the status of the individual mother and allowed women to believe that they were carrying a Christ-like child.



56 Katharina Heise, *The Annunciation to Mary*, 1918[38]

Confronting the Reality of Warfare

For the mothers who had watched their sons march off to war, the phase following the filial departure was marked by uncertainty, fear and an unavoidable

[37] Herbert, 'Eiserne Selbstzucht,' pp. 35-37.
[38] Katharina Heise, *Maria Verkündigung*, woodcut (1918), *Die Aktion,* special issue Karl Luis Heinrich Salze [pseudonym of Katharina Heise], 23/24 (1918).

confrontation with reality. The second stanza of the aforementioned poem 'We Mothers' by T. Resa, captures suppressed feelings of anxiety. According to the wartime codes of conduct, such feelings which could not be publicly expressed. Emotions and despair could only be admitted to in the presence of another mother, someone who could empathise with the enormity of the sacrifice.

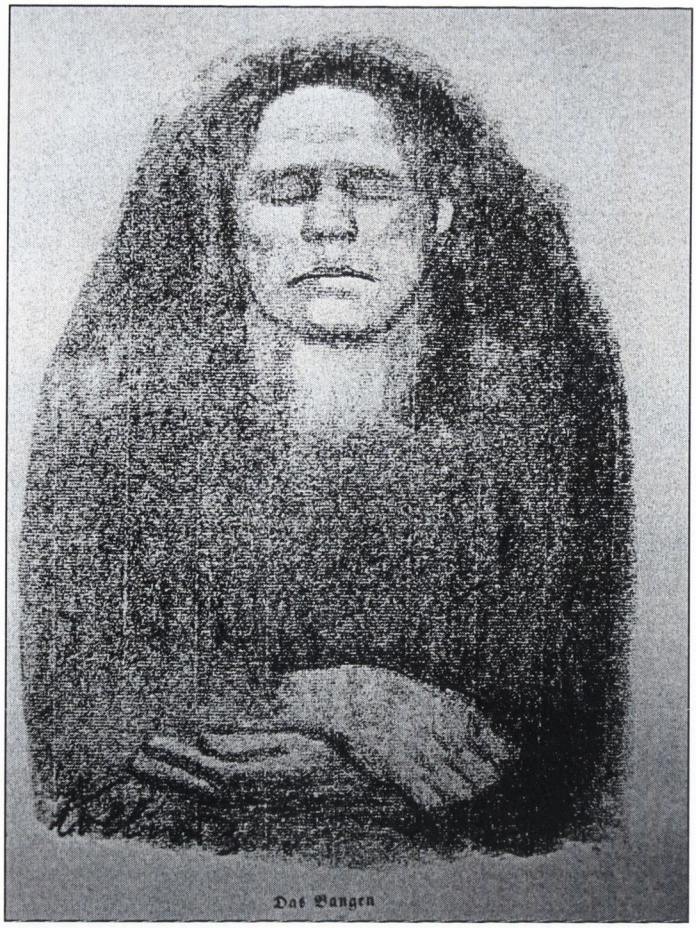
> We all know, it had to be;
> We carry the lot bravely and resigned
> Only sometimes – when passing by –
> Two will halt together;
> With eyes burned by secret tears,
> Stretch out their shaking hands –
> From the heart leaps their cry:
> – Mine is out there, too![39]

Yet Resa neither questions nor rejects the war itself; instead it is asserts that 'We all know, it had to be'. Thus the supremacy of wartime demands above maternal feelings is accepted, as is the form in which the sacrifice had to be delivered – 'bravely and resigned', with dignity and pride. The shared nature of these emotions and experiences is presented as a consolation – mothers do not 'carry the lot' alone, but together.

The drawing reproduced below is an artistic embodiment of the immobility and paralysis felt by mothers after their son's departure for war. This drawing by Käthe Kollwitz has the title *Anxiety (Das Bangen)* and was published in the compilation of war art pamphlets *Die Kriegszeit* in October 1914.[40] The drawing shows a woman's torso, possibly Käthe Kollwitz herself. The posture of the body is upright, a pose expressing pride and strength, resisting submission to the turmoil of emotions. As becomes clear in a text written by Gabriele Reuter in a later issue of *Die Kriegszeit*, women's emotional conduct was understood as a component of national strength.

> [...] this fight against a supremacy of a world of enemies can only lead to victory if no fear and no weakness arise. Those with the strongest nerves will be victorious – well let us have strong nerves.[41]

[39] Wir wissen alle, es musste sein; / Wir tragen's tapfer und schicken uns drein./ Nur manchmal – so im Vorübergehen— / Bleiben wohl zwei beisammen stehen; / Mit Augen von heimlichen Tränen verbrannt / Reichen sie sich die zitternde Hand— / Da bricht's aus der Brust wie ein Schrei:/ –Meiner ist auch dabei! Second stanza of the poem 'Wir Mütter!' by T. Resa (female author), in Blanck, *Frauentrost und Frauenpflicht*, pp. 6-7.
[40] *Die Kriegszeit*, no. 10, 28 October (1914).
[41] *Die Kriegszeit*, no. 36, 21 April (1915).



57 Käthe Kollwitz, *Anxiety*, 1914[42]

The woman's hands in the drawing are crossed, lying immobile in front of her. Her eyes are closed, as if she does not want to see reality. The closed eyes allow for pausing, they seem to buy time and signify the hope that her son might be spared his all too predictable fate. *Anxiety* stands for women's paralysis in wartime, a mixture of fear and anxiety, of hope and denial. The appearance of the figure is carried out in a dreamlike fashion; parts of the drawing appear unfinished, adding to the impression that the current situation was only a bad dream that would pass. This drawing seems to stand for Käthe Kollwitz's own emotional conflict of the time.

The image was published before Kollwitz learned of the death of her 18 year-old son Peter on 30 October 1914. Her diary entries preceding the publication of the drawing vary between despair and a feeling of confidence that things were not that bad and that the boys would return from the war. These statements can be directly linked to the 'good war news' from France which form a regular part of Kollwitz's diary entries

[42] Käthe Kollwitz, *Das Bangen*, lithograph (1914), printed in *Die Kriegszeit* October (1914).

and which led her to believe it would all be over in a few weeks.[43] Small acts of patriotism appear as attempts to implore military victory as a guarantor of her son's return. The weekend before Peter's departure, on the day the news of the fall of Antwerp reached the home front, for the first time in their lives the Kollwitz family hoisted the black-white-red German flag. As Kollwitz wrote 'This is for our Peter and for Antwerp. Above all, yes, above all this is for our son.'[44] At that stage, the diary and the drawing *Anxiety* assert that fate could still turn both ways, the hope for life predominated over a fear of death which was not put into words.

Yet death, more specifically the death of a son, became a daily occurrence and meant that for many mothers their worst fears became reality. A striking treatment of this theme can be found in the following image by Sella Hasse. Her woodcut *Mater Dolorosa on the Battlefields* is the fourth piece of her war cycle, produced in 1916, and another dramatic example of the combination of traditional religious symbolism and imagery in a very modern expressionistic style.

[43] 27 August 1914, in Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher*, p. 157.
[44] 10 October 1914, ibid., p. 169.



58 Sella Hasse, *Mater Dolorosa on the Battlefields*, 1916[45]

The centre of this woodcut depicts a disoriented woman, staggering among corpses on the battlefield. The title *Mater Dolorosa* indicates that this figure represents Mary mourning her crucified son Jesus. Yet the Mary in the woodcut is not only mourning for one dead body, but for heaps of corpses forming a path to Calvary, the white hill in the background marked by crosses of salvation. The large number of dead bodies portray the rising death toll. The mother figure seems to illustrate a widely used wartime phrase that every solider who marched out and every soldier who died had been 'a mother's son'.[46]

The attention is consequently moved from the mass dead to the suffering, traumatised woman, clad in the dark robe of mourning. The woman endures pain – her naked feet are pierced by swords – which exceeded even that of the soldiers. The soldiers are dead already and cannot feel any pain anymore. It is interesting that death is

[45] Sella Hasse, *Mater Dolorosa auf den Schlachtfeldern* (1916), Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.
[46] For example: Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, p. 11.

depicted in a clean and undisturbed manner. The dead soldiers almost seem to be sleeping. Their bodies are intact, there are no limbs, and no disfigured faces, there are no wounds and there is no blood visible. The only physical wounds are Mary's pierced feet, with the underlying meaning that she endures what her son endured. Yet she continues to feel the pain after his death which draws the attention to her, the mother's suffering. Another comparison is opened by Mary's pierced feet, that her son's sacrifice is ultimately her own sacrifice. This is a deliberate comparison with the feet of Jesus, which were pierced and nailed to the cross.

In visual representations, the motif of the mourning mother Mary and her dead son developed as an independent theme in the art of German female convents at the end of the 13th century. It was a further development from Byzantine liturgical icons representing the burial of Jesus.[47] The image of the mourning Mary is deeply rooted in German medieval mysticism. Whereas different variations of the *Vesperbild* exist, the medieval composition experienced no change in the baroque period. Many modern representations also adopted the medieval framework for representations of Mary and her dead son often in front of a cross, at the hill of Calvary or in front of the burial chamber.[48] In early 20th-century art, Käthe Kollwitz's sculpture *Pietà*, which was completed in 1903, represented a very emotional interpretation of the motif, focusing on the group of mother and child and disregarding the surroundings. The woodcut by Sella Hasse, placing the mourning Mary in a wartime scenario was a radical variation of the theme. This work was also one of the earliest pieces in German wartime art using the *mater dolorosa* motif in response to the immediate experiences of war. After 1918, the pietà was a widely used motif on war memorials in Germany.[49] Considering common interpretations of the traditional *Vesperbild*, which agree that its function was not only to highlight Mary's pain, but to emphasise the salvation brought about by the grief,[50] another dimension is added to the meaning of the woodcut: an expectation that something positive will come out of death.

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[47] Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, *Dictionary of Christian art* (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 278, Engelbert Kirschbaum, ed., *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 4 (Freiburg, Rome, Vienna: Herder, 1972), pp. 450-51.

[48] Kirschbaum, ed., *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, p. 451.

[49] Volker Probst, *Bilder vom Tode. Eine Studie zum deutschen Kriegerdenkmal in der Weimarer Republik am Beispiel des Pietà-Motives und seiner profanierten Varianten* (Hamburg (Diss.): Wayasbah, 1986). In France, different iconography dominated over the pieta motif, see: Annette Becker, *Les monuments aux morts. Patrimoine et mémoire de la Grand Guerre* (Paris: Editions Errance, 1989).

[50] Kirschbaum, ed., *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, p. 450, Georg Minkenberg, *Die plastische Marienklage. Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Entstehung und ihren geistesgeschichtlichen Grundlagen* (Diss., University of Cologne 1984).

The tragedy of death was followed by an immediate phase of helplessness and emptiness on the side of women, which was marked by grief and mourning. For days, the only sentence Käthe Kollwitz dedicated to the death of her son Peter was taken from the telegram received from the army 'Your son was killed in action'.[51] The regular and extensive correspondence of Ida Dehmel over the war years became extremely fragmented after her son Heinz-Lux was killed at the Western Front in January 1917, showing no sign of either trivial correspondence or long letters. The following poem *The Mother* by the modernist painter Margarete Kubicka, however, shows that the trauma experienced after death soon became part of a search for meaning.

The Mother

Speechless she holds the dead body-
Helpless rigidity.
Limbs hang still, earnest.
A soft hand moves them to a different place,
There, they lie again
A severe bent.
But you mother of the son,
You have again – your child:
Helpless – only yours – just like in those days.
Spirit fled, you were far from it.
Would you otherwise have to hold lifeless limbs now?
[...]
Women
Without a leader
Faltered
Who shows us the way?[52]

This poem was published in the cultural journal *Die Aktion* in 1918, which, while not undermining the national war effort, had adopted a critical stance towards the costs of the conflict, allowing a public platform for emotions and experiences outside the prescribed wartime conduct. The poem describes the shock of the confrontation of a mother with the dead body of her son. Here, the retrieval of the dead body of the son seems more a penance instead of a consolation. The lifeless limbs, without a spirit – this was not the reunification hoped for by many mothers. Interestingly, as the images used before, the poem refers back to the childhood of the son, a time when he was dependent on the mother and the nurturing, caring relationship still intact 'You have again – your

[51] 30 October 1914, Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher*, p. 174.
[52] "Die Mutter / Wortlos hält sie den Toten. / Hilflose Starrheit. /Glieder hängen still, ernst. / Weiche Hand hebt sie auf andere Stelle, /Dort liegen sie wieder / Ein hartes Geknick. /Du aber, Mutter des Sohnes, / Hast wieder – dein Kind: / Hilflos – nur dein – wie damals. /Geist entfloh, dem standest du fern. / Brauchtest du sonst jetzt leblose /Glieder zu halten? / [...]Frauen /Führerlos / Wankend / Wer zeigt uns den Weg?" Margarete Kubicka: '*Die Mutter*' in *Die Aktion* 21/22 (1918).

child: helpless – only yours – just like in those days'. Kubicka openly asks for a way to overcome the grief, the last lines of her poem are a call for guidance. Again, the gap left by the death of the youth is emphasised and the examples of Käthe Kollwitz and Ida Dehmel make very clear that the enthusiasm and firm belief and idealism displayed by their sons had been a source of admiration and inspiration to them. The loss of life these women experienced triggered the search for an interpretation to make the sacrifice worth while.

Interpreting the Sacrifice

The essence of the third stanza of the poem by T. Resa also illustrates the third phase of the experience of sacrificing a son to the fatherland. It is marked by the search for a cause which matched the value of the son's death. In this poem, a despairing appeal to God is voiced, pleading to guarantee the further existence of Germany which was identified as the reason for which the sons fought and ultimately died. The line 'A single thought that keeps us going' underlines the need for a meaning of the sacrifice. In order to be able to accept fate and continue life, the sacrifice had to be worthwhile, it had to have a meaning.

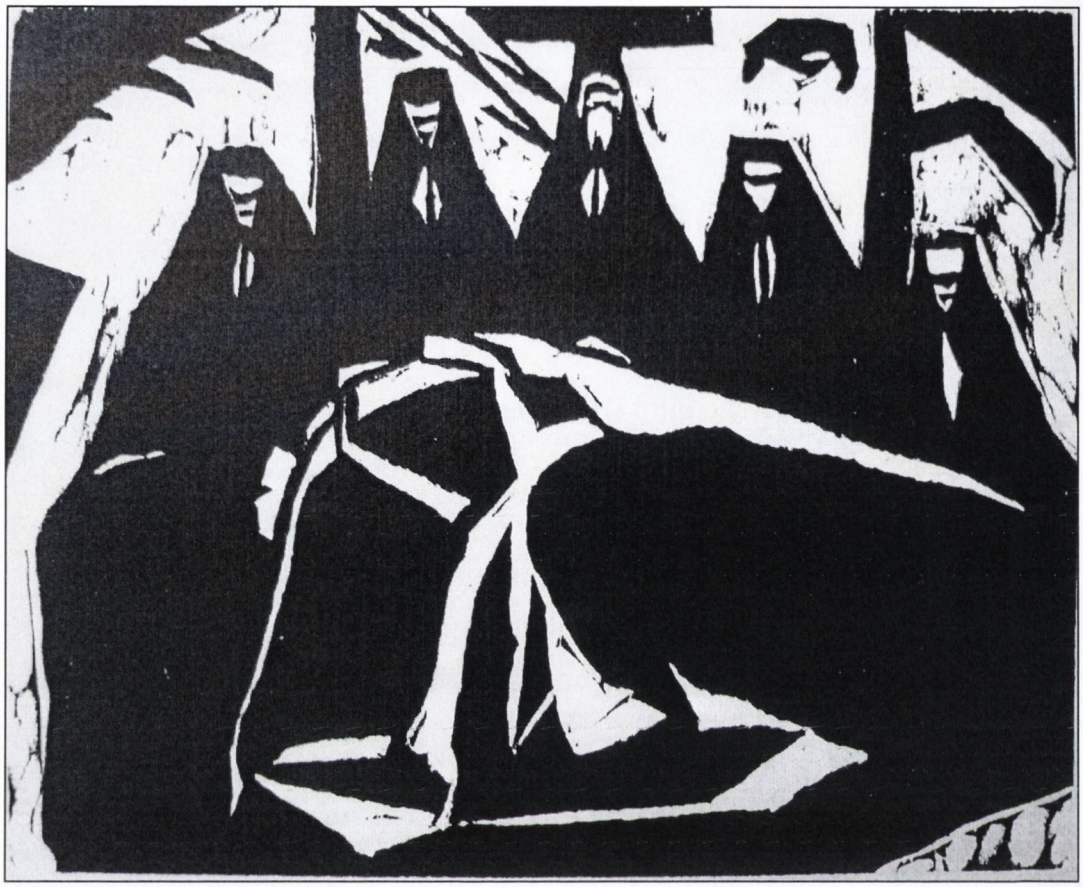
> O times so hard – O times so great!
> We all carry the same lot.
> A single thought that keeps us going,
> A belief – a hope – a prayer:
> 'Lord, don't let Germany be ruined,
> the land for which our sons bleed and die
> Lord, listen to the mother's cry!
> – Mine is out there, too![53]

The last stanza of the poem suggests that the future of the fatherland, of Germany, was referred to as the reason for which the sons sacrificed themselves. A mother's pain might have been easier to bear knowing that her son's death had not been in vain. The search for a meaning was thus an integral part of mourning and coming to terms with death.

The artistic evidence suggests that women utilised the death of the sons of the nation in order to publicise a reading of the sacrifice that asserted women as active

[53] O Zeit so hart! – O Zeit so groß! / Wir alle tragen das gleiche Los. / Ein einz'ger Gedanke mit uns geht, / Ein Glaube – ein Hoffen—ein Gebet: /„Herrgott, laß Deutschland nicht verderben, / Für das unsere Söhne bluten und sterben!"— / Herr, höre der Mütter Schrei!— /– Meiner ist auch dabei! Third stanza of the poem 'Wir Mütter!' by T. Resa (female author), in: Blanck, *Frauentrost und Frauenpflicht*, pp. 6-7.

participants in the sacrifice rather than passive minor bystanders watching their sons' sacrifice. The following woodcut by Katharina Heise, portrays five women who appear to surround 'their' offering, a body draped over an altar-like stand.



59 Katharina Heise, *Lamentation,* 1918[54]

This woodcut by Katharina Heise which was published both in *Die Aktion* in 1918 and as a portfolio, is part of a series responding to the impact of war. The women are dressed in the black gowns of mourning, similar to the one worn by the *mater dolorosa* in the woodcut by Sella Hasse. The women's hands are held chest high and their heads appear bowed as if in prayer. The women form a row, all are looking at the corpse in front of them. The body is lying on a stand, torso and limbs hang down lifelessly. His legs are stretched, indicating a suspense that the body once had, and which now contributes to a grace in death. A dead body bent to the back in an extreme angle to the limit of its flexibility is an expression of physical pain, as often applied in

[54] The woodcut *Beweinung* by Katharina Heise was printed on the front page of *Die Aktion* under the pseudonym K. L. Heinrich-Salze 11/12 (1918), NL Katharina Heise, Kreismuseum Schönebeck.

baroque versions of the pietà.[55] It is likely that Katharina Heise used the same technique to refer to the pain the man had endured before and his violent and painful death on the battlefield.

The women make a determined impression, they present 'their' sacrifice which is laid out on the altar of the fatherland. The group of five women refer again to the shared women's experience and their companionship in the process of mourning. The dead body represents as before every mother's son. Although this woodcut does not contain any direct religious symbols, the layout of the image and formation of the women and the body resemble a Christian burial scene as well as a pagan offering. The staging, the presentation of the dead body as a sacrifice is very important, implying there was a reason for dying. The perception that death was meaningful and worthy if it was for something, was a powerful concept, which also meant that in order for women and mothers to make sense of the death of their sons, they had to believe in the same cause. Käthe Kollwitz, in her diary, periodically agonises over the attempt to live her life in a true and upright manner to uphold the ideas her son Peter died for. She also reflects on his beliefs such as love of the fatherland which she openly shares.[56]

Yet Kollwitz's diary entries were not primarily concerned with the loss of life and future for Peter himself, but the deprivation his death meant for her. In January 1916, Kollwitz wrote that with one son dead and another far remote in the war, everything had changed for ever. 'My life has become poorer. And my whole life as a mother actually lies behind me already'.[57] Kollwitz thus concentrates on her own pain and the extent of her own sacrifice in relation to Peter overshadows any other emotion in her diary. As Regina Schulte argues in an insightful article, the assertion of Kollwitz's own victimhood remains a central theme in her diary for years to come. She cannot afford to think that the sacrifice might have been wrong and senseless.[58] The following image, *The Sacrifice* which Kollwitz drew in 1915, exactly reflects her understanding of Peter's death as part of her own sacrifice. Although the face of the woman who offers her infant is not shown, no attempts are made to disguise her emotional pain, as Kollwitz herself describes in her diary: 'Now she no longer stands

[55] Probst, *Bilder vom Tode. Eine Studie zum deutschen Kriegerdenkmal in der Weimarer Republik am Beispiel des Pietà-Motives und seiner profanierten Varianten*, p. 21.
[56] See for example, 31 December 1914 Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher,* p. 180. 11 June 1915, ibid., p. 190. 15 August 1915 , ibid., p. 195. 2 January 1916, ibid., p. 207.
[57] 17 January 1916, ibid., p. 214.
[58] Schulte, 'Käthe Kollwitz. Das Opfer,' p. 146.

upright. She bends down very low and holds out her child. In deepest humility.'[59] The child is represented as an infant, turning the mother into the active force. The drawing appears to be a means for Kollwitz to express and interpret her emotions and through which she could re-live the sacrifice of her son.



60 Käthe Kollwitz, *The Sacrifice,* 1915.[60]

The death of her son Peter had a profound impact on Kollwitz and the struggle to fill his sacrifice with meaning hindered her own creativity. For almost 20 years, she worked and agonised over a sculpture to honour her son's death. The finished piece, unlike earlier drafts, does not depict her son Peter. Instead, it features both of the parents in clear, visible pain.[61] The sacrifice of the survivors takes precedence over the sacrifice of the dead, turning the attention to Kollwitz herself and what the loss of her son meant to her.

[59] Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher,* p. 185.
[60] Käthe Kollwitz, *Das Opfer* (1915), SAdK Berlin, Kollwitz.
[61] Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 109-14.

The following lithograph by Dora Brandenburg-Polster is an interesting example of how death on the battlefield was staged as a primarily women's sacrifice. The image is filled with an incredible amount of dead bodies covering the surface close by close. Uniforms of the men and spiked rifles sticking out from between the bodies identify the dead as soldiers who were killed on a battlefield. The dominating figure in the image is, however, a woman who is sitting on top of the bodies, pressing the arms of one of the deceased against her chest. The woman sits down in a graceful posture and lifts her head towards the sky as if expecting a divine blessing. Despite the heaps of the dead soldiers, the title of the lithograph is women's sacrifice, pointing at women's contribution to the sacrifice. The image commemorates the mother who let her son go to war or the wife who let her husband depart, but not primarily the soldier who died.



61 Dora Brandenburg-Polster, *Women's Sacrifice* 1915[62]

The woman's gesture of pressing two hands of one of the dead soldiers on her own chest is full of pathos. Rather than expressing sorrow or care for the dead, it is a gesture placing the heartache of the woman in the foreground. The men appear like lifeless puppets in the production of the woman's sacrifice.

[62] Dora Brandenburg-Polster, *Frauenopfer*, lithograph (1915) *Kriegs-Bilderbogen* 8 (1915).

The sacred nature accorded to bereaved mothers is the theme of the lithograph by Hannah Höch below. The image entitled *Pietà* is a plain drawing that simply depicts the contours of the mother and the corpse. While the mother is wearing a long gown, the body of the son is naked, emphasising its vulnerability. Höch's design lacks all pathos and overt religious symbolism, turning the scene into a more private one. The scene could again resemble any woman mourning for her son as both, Mary and Jesus seem to have a more symbolic character. The image, moreover, enables the mother to enjoy a last body contact wither dead son whom she hugs closely. This gesture hints at an important function of wartime art which allowed for the fictional projection of actions, wishes and dreams that could not be carried out in real life.



62 Hannah Höch, *Pietà*, 1918[63]

Although this image is not placed in an immediate wartime framework, it is a reflection on the death toll of the war and mourning experienced on the home front. Hannah Höch herself did not suffer from a bereavement in her close family. The

[63] Hannah Höch, *Pietà*, lithograph (1918), Archiv des VdBK, 147 Höch, Hannah.

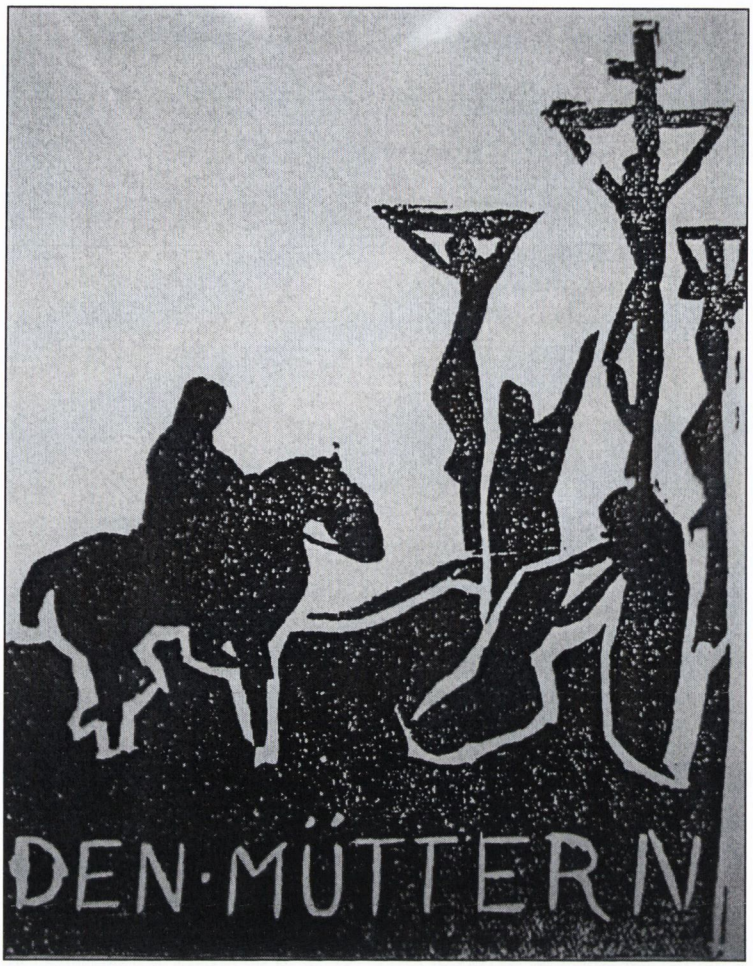
following extract from a poem that Höch wrote in 1916, however, illustrates that she dealt intensely with the effect of the war. The poem deals with mourning and the loneliness of death, therefore the pietà might well represent a search for consolation.

> War. May 1916
> [...]
> Our tears have long dried
> When the news arrives: fallen.
> By this time the grief has silenced...
> War insatiable...
> Humanity –
> Abandoned by God
> Bleeding in sorrow.[64]

The feeling of abandonment by God expressed in the poem might be picked up again in the pietà motif. This time it is a conscious turn to Christian iconography, possibly seeing a parallel in the abandonment Mary might have felt when her only son was crucified. The image thus does have a consoling function by communicating that Jesus' crucifixion had followed God's plan, therefore the death of the soldiers also follows his plan, even if his wish does not seem evident at a first glance.

The status of victimhood claimed by women who lost someone in the war is illustrated by the fact that many paintings and poems were directly dedicated to mothers at the time. One example is the poem used above, by T. Resa, which is entitled '*We Mothers*' and not 'Our Sons'. The theme is the suffering of women, not the suffering of their sons in wartime. The woodcut below is a similar example. The Berlin based painter Auguste von Zitzewitz explicitly honours mothers for their sacrifice. The artist depicted a crucifixion scene and prominently dedicated her woodcut to 'The Mothers'. Although the wartime scenario is not an obvious element of the woodcut, the memorial-like design appears to have been developed from the wartime experience. Significantly, the image does not commemorate the dead but the living.

[64] Mai 1916: Krieg/[...] Die Tränen unserer Augen sind längst versiegt/wenn die Nachricht sich naht: Gefallen./Längst lautlos der Gram... Krieg unersättlich... Die Menschheit – Gott verlassen verblutend im Leid, in *Hannah Höch. Eine Lebenscollage, vol I, 1889-1918*, ed. Berlinische Galerie (Berlin: Argon, 1989), p. 194.



63 Auguste von Zitzewitz, *To the Mothers*, 1918[65]

Although the crucified men are also depicted in the woodcut, their physical pain and sacrifice is not the primary concern of the artist. Instead the scene is interpreted from the perspective of the bereaved mothers. It should be stressed that the strong emphasis placed on female bereavement represents a departure from many of the crucifixion scenes produced during the war years. The design does not show the explicit suffering or physical pain of the men and allows for the change in focus toward to the female group. Mourning is thus presented as a more painful experience than dying. The parallel drawn by the artists between the sacrificial death of Jesus and that of the soldiers in the war was the subject of numerous images produced during the war by both male and female artists. Yet none of these, however, give women such a prominent role in the artistic design. It seems that the image is also used as a reminder to request public

[65] Auguste von Zitzewitz, *Den Müttern*, woodcut (1918), printed in *Die Aktion*, special issue, 'Golgatha' 11/12 (1918).

acknowledgement for mothers' roles in the sacrifice of their sons, as it was published in *Die Aktion* in 1918.

Male Artists and Mourning Mothers

In the wartime art by male artists, the theme of mourning mothers is not nearly as widely depicted as in the art by women. Only very few examples exist, which highlights the significance of this motif for women's wartime art and their understanding of the conflict. Instead of being sympathetic to women's loss or highlighting mother's sacrifice, the two of the following images by male artists below appear to be rather of an accusatory nature. The following example by Otto Dix is quite aggressive in its style. The title of the drawing, *Mater Dolorosa*, places the image in the context of maternal sacrifice as discussed in this chapter. The style and violent character of the image on the other hand, bear no resemblance to the images by female artists produced on the subject.



64 Otto Dix, *Mater Dolorosa*, 1918[66]

[66] Otto Dix, *Mater Dolorosa*, ink and chalk (1918), in Otto Conzelmann, *Der andere Dix - sein Bild vom Menschen und vom Krieg* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983), p. 104.

This design by Dix does not appear to focus on a mourning mother. In comparison to the images by female artists above, Dix reverses the scenario and gives an explicit account of the violent nature of wounds and death caused by the technology of war. The weapons are symbolised through the metal spikes and corners and bullet holes all over the image. The four cones on the left hand side resemble shells in their shape. The distorted and disfigured body of the Mater Dolorosa extends the aggression to the bereaved. Her heart has been cut out of her chest and blood is dripping down from the organ. In medieval iconography, Mary was often depicted with a heart that had been pierced by a sword to illustrate the depth of her pain. In Dix's design it does not seem as if the violence represents the pain of loosing a lost son. The violence that could not be stopped is instead the main subject of the drawing. The mother Mary is not represented as a dignified grief-struck woman, but as an ugly grimace, turned away from the figure on the cross. The image represents chaos, a world where the conventional order of things has been disrupted. It seems full of anger and aggression but does not focus on depicting the pain of a mother.

An equally extreme design was created by artists Hans Richter. Whereas he, like Auguste von Zitzewitz above, also dedicated his drawing directly to the mothers the intention of both artists could not be more disparate. Whereas Zitzewitz honoured mothers for their loss and bereavement, Richter intends to confront mothers with the scale and nature of wartime death. His depiction of the mother above the gruesome war scenes, shows a blind woman, carefully groping her way forward. The artist suggests that mothers turned a blind eye on the brutality of the war. Richter's image is very bitter, cynical and highly critical of the war. It is a considerably early artistic manifestation of dissent that was published in the artistic literary journal *Zeit-Echo*, which was founded in response to the outbreak of the war in 1914. Whereas the first editions of the *Zeit-Echo* mirror enthusiasm for war that was felt by many artists and intellectuals, growing political criticism becomes visible in the later editions.[67]

[67] Vera Grötzinger, *Der Erste Weltkrieg im Widerhall des 'Zeit-Echo', 1914-1917* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 1-16.



65 Hans Richter, *To the Mothers in Europe*, 1915/16 [68]

Considering the tone and nature of many women's wartime publications, as referred to earlier in the chapter, Richter had a point. Wartime sacrifice was publicly demanded and mothers were encouraged to send their sons off to the war. Richter on the other hand openly shows the ugly side of warfare and disfigured bodies are strewn across the picture. To emphasise the animalistic character of warfare, pigs wander around the corpses, taking bites and crows in the right corner also appear to enjoy their share. Richter ridicules symbols representing the military and the Kaiserreich. A faceless soldier in the middle of the design holds an oversized moustache with a laurel wreath, the symbol of victory. The style of the moustache is that worn by the Kaiser, commanders, and many soldiers. The German militarism was internationally seen as an important factor in the outbreak and nature of the conflict, the artists shared this point of view. The decorated officer on horseback is thus celebrating a victory won at the cost of the broken and desecrated bodies in the picture.

[68] Hans Richter, *An die Mütter Europas*, *Zeit-Echo* (1915/16).

It is interesting to speculate about the purpose of Richter's design. Was this an attempt to shock mothers in an attempt to mobilise them against the war? Did the artist feel that it was his duty to inform mothers about the violent nature of warfare and disfiguring wounds? Or was Richter blaming the mothers, accusing them of not wanting to see the effects of the war that they enthusiastically supported? In any case, similar to Dix's image, sympathy for the loss of mothers or their bereavement has no room in the composition. The outspoken anti-war stance displayed by Richter is not evident in the images produced by female artists on the subject.

The last image by Max Slevogt is less aggressive in style and statement, but nevertheless conveys strong emotions. The drawing with the title *The Mothers* shows a ditch, presumably a trench, in which an endless line of corpses has been placed next to each other. The dead bodies have been neatly arranged and appear to be sleeping peacefully. Thus they built a stark contrast to the wailing and crying mothers who walk along the corner of the trench as if looking out for the bodies of their dead sons.



66 Max Slevogt, *The Mothers*, 1917[69]

[69] Max Slevogt, *Die Mütter*, etching (1917), leaf 16 from portfolio 'Gesichte', Annegret Jürgens-Kirchhoff, *Schreckensbilder. Krieg und Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Reimer, 1993), plate 83.

Slevogt, as opposed to Dix and Richter, vividly depicts mourning women, some of whom break down at the sight of the corpses. Slevogt does not depict the violence of the war, nor is his drawing an aggressive response to women's presumed ignorance of wartime death. Slevogt places the fallen and the bereaved next to each other and the shocking element in his image is the scale of corpses and scale of mourning mothers. Slevogt portrays the death of the sons as a human tragedy that is met by an extreme emotional response. The dead bodies are not overtly depicted as soldiers, but the confrontation of the mothers with their dead sons could well be placed in no-mans land. Slevogt's image is an imagined account of how, after a recent battle, the large number of casualties had been brought back. Whereas this did happen in reality, the lined up mothers walking besides the row of dead bodies were entirely fictional. The artist seemed to have been deeply affected by the mass dying at the front and, in this image, paid respect to the dead soldiers, while also acknowledging the loss of the mothers.

Conclusion

The emergence of iconographical depictions of mourning mothers in women's art in a wartime context represented an artistic innovation. The *pietà* and the *mater dolorosa* had been taken out of their conventional pious context and were applied to women's immediate experiences during the conflict. Depictions of the mourning Mary are the oldest existing visual manifestations of a mother's grief in art history. Mary's mourning, in medieval as well as in more modern religious artistic compositions, is depicted with respect and honours the mother of Jesus and her pain. The worship of and admiration for Mary in popular religion increased the attraction of this motif for women at the time, as the heightened status of Mary is based in the sacrificial death of her son. In the images above, women at the time of the First World War aspired to the noble reputation of the mother Mary.

The focus placed on mother and son in women's art also highlights the mother's crucial role in his upbringing. As briefly mentioned in chapter one, women were understood to be responsible for the children's education and teach them moral values and prepare them for their role in life. The mother's role in her son's sacrifice thus is not only biological and not only does she let him go to war, it was her preparation over years that made the son ready and able to deliver his sacrifice for a

greater cause. The loss of the son therefore becomes a deeper cut, but was enabled by the mother.

The images above succeed primarily in depicting the loss and bereavement of the mothers: the actual sacrificial death of the son does not represent the main focus of the images. The prominence given to especially the mothers' loss serves to raise, enhance and also publicise their grief and sacrifice. By portraying soldiers as sons, women turn themselves into and depict themselves as mourning mothers of the nation whose contribution to the war effort caused much grief. Perhaps, by expressing women's anxiety and pain, artistic interpretations of the mourning mother were a way of coping with the realities of warfare and attempts of finding consolation. The omission of the person who is mourned for in women's art could also reflect a psychological state within the mourning process. As Freud observed in 1917, overcoming the loss of the 'loved object' represents a stage in coming to terms with the loss.[70] In art, this phase could be mirrored in the iconographical focus on the bereaved, on the mourning mothers and not on their dead sons.

[70] Sigmund Freud, 'Trauer und Melancholie,' in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10, ed. Anna Freud (London, Frankfurt, Hamburg: Fischer, 1946), p. 442.(Original Publication, 1917).

Chapter 6 *The Passion of the Soldier*

Religious symbolism was used in wartime art not only to portray the victims of bereavement but also to capture the perceived experience of soldiers. The suffering of soldiers and what was viewed as the sacral nature of their deaths at the front were repeatedly depicted following the traditional iconographical motifs used to illustrate the Passion of Christ. The last image discussed in chapter five by Auguste von Zitzewitz is not only important in its role as a memorial wood-cut to the suffering of women during the war; it also pays tribute to the sacrifice of the soldiers by drawing a parallel between their fate and that of Christ. Yet what does this usage of biblical references reveal about the meaning contemporaries attached to the conflict? Why was religious iconography so widely employed in wartime art? If traditional motifs, and religious motifs in particular, have a consoling function and help to come to terms with the suffering, where exactly is comfort and hope artistically embodied in such depictions? This chapter will endeavour to answer these questions by analysing a selection of images that employ religious iconography to portray the Passion of the soldier – his physical sacrifice and death on behalf of others.

In art, religious analogies and pious interpretations of sacrifice were applied to the circumstances of the First World War from the earliest phases of the conflict. As seen in chapter one, a religious interpretation of the conflict was an integral part of women's ideas of 1914. Religious parallels were easily drawn by women during the war and faith and trust in God ranged right next to patriotism on top of the hierarchy of women's idealised wartime qualities. Faith was emphasised as a particularly positive German quality and as a source of physical and mental strength.[1] One interpretation of the conflict that was frequently put forward was that the war was fought with God's support, and was even orchestrated by God.[2] Turning to religion for comfort and consolation was posited as the ideal way to overcome bereavement in the family caused

[1] Anna Blanck, *Frauentrost und Frauenpflicht zur Kriegszeit* (Mannheim: Mannheimer Stadtmission, 1917), 4-5.
[2] Clara Heitefuß, *In des Königs Heerbann* (Neumünster: Ihloff, 1914), p. 7.

by the war.[3] The ideal of a modest Christian lifestyle, moreover, enjoyed prestige in the minds of contemporaries, and God's expected approval was glorified. This is illustrated by the following quotation from a wartime booklet by Marie Herbert: "The decoration of our Lord – carried invisible in the soul – is more wonderful than medal, iron cross or ribbon."[4]

From there, it was only a small imaginative step before commentators began to apply this religious dimension to soldiers' deaths. Bernd Hüppauf suggests that this process was necessary for the population to come to terms with the experiences of the war, and the phenomenon of mass dying in particular.[5] Mythological interpretations of wartime death fulfilled necessary functions in society, offering, according to Hüppauf, more bearable interpretations of death. Although Hüppauf's hypothesis is based purely on an analysis of literature, the argument is relevant to wartime art and the large number of religiously mythologizing depictions of the soldiers' perceived sacrificial death. George Mosse argues, in a similar fashion to Hüppauf, that a mythological, even glorifying interpretation of the war served to make the 'bloodbath' endurable for contemporaries.[6]

The evidence presented in this chapter supports Hüppauf's and Mosse's argument that it was the mass death at the front and the experiences of years of violence and warfare that contributed to the artists' choice of adjusting Christian iconography to a wartime context. It does not seem likely, however, that this artistic choice represented 'a lack of awareness' at home of 'the magnitude and horror' of the war years, as argued by Catherine Moriarty in an analysis of Christian iconography in First World War memorials in the British Isles.[7] Besides contributing to the popular perception of the war as a crusade waged on behalf of God, and in addition to portraying soldiers' deaths as Christ-like, depictions of the ascension and resurrection in the wartime context were important manifestations of hope and faith in women's art. In contrast, religious

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[3] Auguste Supper, 'Stille Stimmen,' in *Stille Opfer. Den deutschen Frauen und Jungfrauen in großer Zeit*, ed. Helene Christaller, et al. (Hagen: 1915), p. 91, Marie Walther, *Der Krieg entscheidet. Vortrag gehalten am Montag den 4. September 1916 im Evangelischen Saal in Stuttgart.* (Stuttgart: Ulshöfer, 1916), p. 4.

[4] Marie Herbert, 'Eiserne Selbstzucht,' in *Deutschlands Krieg und Deutschlands Frauen. Gesammelte Werke aus Frauenhand*, ed. Karl Jünger (Stuttgart: Lutz, 1916), 35-37.

[5] Bernd Hüppauf, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg,' in *Ansichten vom Krieg. Vergleichende Studien zum Ersten Weltkrieg in Literatur und Gesellschaft*, ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Königstein: Forum Academicum, 1984), p. 59.

[6] George L. Mosse, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe und nationale Wiedergeburt. Der Gefallenenkult in Deutschland,' in *Kriegserlebnis. Der erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nation*, ed. Klaus Vondung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), p. 243.

[7] Catherine Moriarty, 'Christian iconography and First World War memorials,' *Imperial War Museum Review*, no. 6 (1991), p. 63.

analogies applied by many combatant painters to the wartime scenario appeared bleak and hopeless.

After the outbreak of the war, religious parallels to the conflict were not only drawn by laymen. On the contrary, priests and spokespeople of religious associations offered theological interpretations of the war as a crusade and a 'holy war'. These pious representatives were also among the main advocates of wartime sacrifice.[8] Members of religious women's associations were as outspoken in their support for the war as clergymen and male church officials. In October 1914, the Catholic Women's Association of Germany issued their own public appal to the women and women's associations in neutral countries. Similar to the initiative by the BDF (the women's Appeal discussed in chapter one), it showed open patriotism and denied German atrocities; moreover, it presented a view of the conflict in religious terms and emphasised God's support for Germany in this struggle of civilisations.[9]

Denominational differences were small, although it is often suggested that the Lutheran Protestant Church in Germany exceeded their Catholic colleagues in their efforts to support and justify the war.[10] From the beginning of the war, priests told civilian congregations how simple Christian principles could be transferred to the ongoing conflict. Generally, the Christian doctrine of a universal struggle between 'good' and 'evil' was applied and Germany presented as the consecrated, God-favoured, nation. God was praised for victories on the Eastern and Western fronts and continued prayer was seen as contributing to victory. Such religious-tinged commentary strengthened, and indeed popularised, the belief in the righteousness of the war, as shown by contemporary writer Frieda Ufer-Held who asserted that if God was on Germany's side, who could possibly be against her?[11] Even the Kaiser, in his famous speech delivered on 4 August 1914 in which he declared that there were no more parties in the German nation but only true Germans, continued by asserting the importance of cohesion and that only if the nation stood together like brothers would 'God help the

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[8] For example: Prof Karl Dunkmann, *Kreuz und Krieg* (Herborn: Nassauischer Colportageverlag, 1915), Johannes Haecker, *Von Krieg und Kreuz und Ewigkeit! Predigten* (Berlin: Edwin Runge, 1915).

[9] 'Appeal by the Catholic Women's Association to the women and women's associations of neutral countries', Stadtarchiv Köln NL Walter Bombe 1158 Nr. 87.

[10] Wilhelm Pressel, *Die Kriegspredigt 1914-1918 in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), pp. 21-22. On the initial enthusiam for war displayed in both Churches, see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914-1949*, vol. 4 (Munich: Beck, 2003), pp. 21-26. On the Catholic theological support for the war, see Heinrich Missalla, *"Gott mit uns". Die deutsche katholische Kriegspredigt, 1914-1918* (Munich: Kösel, 1968).

[11] Frieda Ufer-Held, *Stark in Gott. Ein Wort an Deutschlands Frauen in schwerer Zeit* (Barmen: Müller, 1915), pp. 13-14.

sword to victory'.[12] He went on to issue a decree for a national day of prayer to be held on 5 August.[13] The text of the speech calls strongly for a sense of national unity and solidarity and asks the German people to assemble and call to God so that He would 'bless our weapons'. All German churches in the country were expected to carry out the necessary preparations for the day of prayer and the population was expected to dutifully return to their work when the services were over. Appeals to God therefore constituted a component of the political mobilisation for war – a component that was publicly performed and authorised by the country's political and religious leaders.

Theologically, the biblical compatibility with warfare was based on a change in the Christian attitude to warfare that was brought about by a new interpretation of the New Testament in the 3rd century.[14] The bellicose language that St. Paul employed in his sixth letter to the Ephesians presents an image of the heroic soldiers of the crusades who were killing members of a different faith, or non-believers, in the name of God.[15] During the First World War, the idea of being on the side which was supported by God was prominent in all belligerent nations. In addition, the war was elevated from the level of a military or political contest to that of an existential conflict in which nothing less than the fundamental values of western civilisation were at stake.

The Christian ideal of sharing goods and giving to those in need, for example, was widened to a Godly expectation that one should also be prepared to 'give' one's life on behalf of others.[16] Those who were not prepared to accept this were portrayed by the priest Johannes Haecker as cowards, 'abandoning nation, Kaiser, brothers, women and children for the sake of saving their own pitiful life'.[17] Karl Dunckmann, priest and professor of theology in Greifswald went further and stated that:

> The true meaning of life lies not in having pleasure and the power to rule, but in serving and sacrificing. And the highest among all is self-sacrifice! [...] We now notice, there is something more honourable and

[12] 'Eine neue Rede des Kaisers' *Kreuz-Zeitung* (2 Aug. 1914), no. 358, p. 1.
[13] Erlass der Kaiserlichen Regierung 2 August 1914, printed in Eberhard Schiel, ed., *Mein lieber Sohn und Kamerad. Stralsunder Briefe aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Kückenshagen: Scheunen, 1996), pp. 343-43.
[14] Gerhard Bauer, 'Ritter, Tod und Teufel. Das Furchtbare und seine Überwindung in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters,' in *Ares und Dionysos. Das Furchtbare und das Lächerliche in der europäischen Literatur*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Horn and Hartmut Laufhütte (Heidelberg: 1981), p. 77.
[15] Eph. 6, 11-17 „Legt die Waffenrüstung Gottes an [...], greift zur Waffenrüstung Gottes [...] So tretet denn an: eure Hüften umgürtet mit der Wahrheit, angetan mit dem Panzer der Gerechtigkeit, die Füße beschuht mit der Bereitschaft für das Evangeliums des Friedens. Zu alledem ergreift den Schild des Glaubens [...] Nehmt auch den Helm des Heils und das Schwert des Geistes, das ist das Wort Gottes."
[16] Haecker, *Von Krieg und Kreuz*, p. 37.
[17] Ibid., p. 38.

> worthwhile than to live and die for oneself – it is more sublime to die for the fatherland.[...]'[18]

Part of the self-declared mission of the clergy was to resolve any difficulties or conflict members of their congregation might perceive in the relationship between the cross and the sword.[19] Sermons were often designed with the intention of convincing the population of the righteousness of the war, as it was feared by church officials that were they not seen as an essential part of the war effort, their status in the aftermath of the conflict would follow its pre-war decline. Thousands of sermons were consequently published after their delivery, and special wartime pamphlets targeted groups within the population. Women, for example, were constantly reminded of their Christian duties and a loyal and supportive outlook on the war was demanded of them.[20]

The following poster by Max Seliger illustrates the manner in which the religious symbolism of the Passion of Christ was adapted to the contemporary wartime scenario. Here, the design is primarily a moral appeal to those on the home front, women and non-combatant men, to make themselves worthy of the sacrifice made by German soldiers. The caption 'He Carries the Cross, What Do We Do that is Equal? demands that civilian sacrifices be maintained on the home front. The image depicts a soldier in full battle dress, carrying a large cross on his shoulder over ground covered in barbed wire. The contemporary comparison with the suffering of Christ is depicted in a very straightforward, unambiguous manner. The soldier himself is put in the position of Christ, carrying the sorrow, symbolised through the cross, for the whole nation, and sacrificing his own life for its salvation. Although the cross is very large and lies heavy on the soldier's shoulder, he does not hesitate but moves forward dutifully.

[18] Dunkmann, *Kreuz und Krieg*, pp. 7-15.
[19] Haecker, *Von Krieg und Kreuz*, p. 39.
[20] For example, Prof Gerhard Hilbert, *Die Erneuerung Deutschlands und die deutschen Frauen* (Schwerin: Bahn, 1916), Eduard Le Seur, *Die Aufgabe der deutschen Frau im Krieg. Vortrag von Pastor Le Seur* (Stuttgart: Steinkopf, 1916).



67 Max Seliger, *He Carries the Cross for Us!*, 1917[21]

The message of the poster is typical of those produced on the home front during the war. The moral appeal incorporated in the image is thematically in keeping with the 'spirit of 1914'. The symbolism, however, is unique for a poster and adds a very dramatic element. Produced in 1917, after the appalling losses suffered during the battles of Verdun and the Somme the previous year, the poster attempted to revive the will to sacrifice on the home front. The message is conveyed both visually in the image and verbally in the text of the caption. Everyone who saw the poster was called upon to ask themselves, 'what do I do to match the sacrifice of the average soldier?' The soldier's status is thereby elevated, turning the individual common soldier into the saviour of the nation. Most German Christians would have been familiar with the iconography that inspired the design of the poster from illustrations of the Passion of Christ. 'Jesus carries the cross', or Simon carrying it for Jesus, is one of the fourteen Stations of the Cross. In Church practice, images of the last hours and death of Jesus are

[21] Max Seliger, *Er trägt das Kreuz für uns! Was tun wir Gleiches?* (1917) DHM P 64/425.

used to commemorate his Passion, a tradition that exists in both Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism.

The religious format was used to evoke a sense of guilt and insufficiency in the viewer on the home front who would ideally be inspired to redouble his or her own contribution to the war effort. The readily available religious interpretations of the war, sanctioned by representatives of the church, intuitively also found their way into the artistic interpretations of the wartime sacrifice. George Mosse on the other hand argues that the role of the 'wartime theology' should not be overestimated, and that at least among soldiers, priests were not held in high esteem. What led people to see the war through a religious perspective, according to Mosse, was not so much their acceptance of the views of the clergy regarding the conflict as their familiarity with the Christian tradition. A more folkloristic understanding of Christian analogies, rather than intellectual or theological interpretations, allowed people to identify on a wide scale with a vision of Christian sacrifice that also embodied hope.[22] Benjamin Ziemann in a chapter on religion in *Front und Heimat* concludes that the war initially intensified religiosity until 1916. However, among the Bavarian, almost exclusively Catholic soldiers from rural areas in his study there was a decline in religiosity: for almost half of them religion lost its importance by the end of the war.[23]

The bourgeois and largely Protestant women who formed the majority of the artists in this study appeared to have followed a different trajectory in relation to religiosity. Religion had a crucial influence on women's outlook on life and society and women's roles therein.[24] This was especially true among educated women of the middle and upper classes. The outbreak of the war gave a new impetus to definitions of women's roles in society based on a Protestant ethical model. The German Protestant Women's Association proclaimed women's responsibility for the moral and religious rejuvenation of the nation which equated religion with national values.[25] The various protestant sub-groups formed an influential section within the women's movement and

[22] Mosse, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe,' pp. 244-45.
[23] Benjamin Ziemann, *Front und Heimat. Ländliche Kriegserfahrungen im südlichen Bayern 1914-1923* (Essen: Klartext, 1997), pp. 246-65.
[24] Ursula Baumann, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation in Deutschland 1850-1920* (Weimar: Campus, 1992), pp. 56-98.
[25] Clara Heitefuß, *Deutsche Frauen - deutsche Treue. Ein Wort an Deutschlands Frauen.* (Elberfeld: Licht und Leben, 1915), p. 13.

the emphasis they placed on a modest, Christian, and conservative image of women matched the 'ideal' demanded by contemporary society.[26]

Religion also offered a set of values and priorities that women readily interpreted as war aims.[27] The numerous publications and lectures precisely tailored to women's outlook on the war, and offering various angles of intellectual religious analogies to the war, were provided not only by officials of the religious wings of the German women's movement, but also by contemporary female writers and poets. Not only do these efforts illustrate women's own engagement in offering religious interpretations of the war, they also suggest that there had been a popular market for religiously themed art and literature that engaged with the ongoing conflict. Women, moreover, may have been attracted to the notion that their own pious behaviour could influence fate. If only they themselves made sufficient sacrifices, and believed and trusted in God, then their loved ones out at the front might be spared.[28]

When dressed in religious imagery and symbolism, the war and wartime sacrifice could be interpreted in a more comforting manner. The Christian ideal of laying down one's life for one's friends enabled religiously-minded commentators to turn every wartime death into a heroic one and the image of the suffering, New Testament figure of Jesus proved to be particularly popular during the war years.[29] Both the tragic and heroic elements of Christ's crucifixion enabled people to focus on the parallels to the soldier's death in wartime. This narrow, even simple, reading of the war suggests that the actual political realities of the time had little place in a religious-mythological understanding of the conflict.

Another factor that should be taken into account when analysing religious wartime art is the close connection between militarism and religion in the German *Kaiserreich*. Appeals to the soldier's faith as an element of his new role were already made during swearing-in ceremonies in the pre-war army.[30] On such occasions, Wilhelm II himself often made an appearance and used language that suggested he was speaking on behalf of God. During one particular ceremony held in Potsdam in 1891,

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[26] Doris Kaufmann, 'Die Ehre des Vaterlandes und die Ehre der Frauen oder der Kampf an der äußeren und inneren Front. Der Deutsch-Evangelische Frauenbund im Übergang vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik,' *Evangelische Theologie* 46 (1986).

[27] Baumann, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, pp. 229-44.

[28] Jenny Ritzhaupt, ed., *Fürs Vaterland. Ein Kriegsbuch. Gesammelte Beiträge, Poesie und Prosa des literarischen Frauenvereins "Zodiakus"* (Pegau: Zodiakus, 1915), Clara Viebig, *Töchter der Hekuba* (Berlin: Fleischel, 1917).

[29] Blanck, *Frauentrost und Frauenpflicht*, p. 4.

[30] Address held by the Kaiser at the swearing-in-ceremony of new recruits of the Potsdam Garderegiment, 1891, in, Johann Ernst, ed., *Reden des Kaisers* (Munich: dtv, 1966), p. 55.

the assembled soldiers swore their oaths to the Kaiser in a chapel, a sacred place that underlined the alliance between Kaiser and God. During the speech that followed the ceremony, the Kaiser advised the new recruits to say the Lord's Prayer now and then for moral support and in order to help them fulfil their duties. Religion was thereby incorporated into military ideology and also took on a social-disciplinary function. This close association between militarism and religion may have helped facilitate the production of symbolic representations linking the war with God and the soldier with Christ.

The religious interpretation of the war also furthered the development of images and literature in which wartime death was glorified. This should be viewed, however, as distinct from the realistic approach to death as described in chapter three. In the religious-mythological imagination, death was not the end, but the highest fulfilment of life.[31] In the case of a death of a soldier, a sacral character could be added to his sacrifice. The following quotation by Gertrud Bäumer is an example of a glorifying account of wartime death. Bäumer suggests that if those left behind recognise the true meaning of wartime death, this will have an empowering effect.

> This power is gained from the fact that on the battlefield, death is stripped of its meaninglessness. Seldom are people allowed to die for something. Seldom in the ordinary course of life has death a vocation. Often it is nothing but an end, a robbery: the sore, cruel cut of Fate which only destroys hopes and annihilates plans. Death on the battlefield, however, has its place in the great chain of human strife and struggle. This is the currency a generation uses to buy blessing and preservation for the future. Knowing that it was an honour that was conceded to himself alone, among millions of others, to ennoble his death with a meaning; the soldier at all times finds it sweet and sublime to die for the fatherland.[32]

This extract suggests that dying in a war for a cause was viewed as an ideal end. Martyr status was conferred on all fallen soldiers, and dying for a cause was presented as a desirable fate that would deliver soldiers from the fear, misery, and pain that they witnessed daily in the trenches.

[31] Hüppauf, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg,' p. 88.
[32] Gertrud Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, ed. Ernst Jäckh, *Der deutsche Krieg. Politische Flugschriften*, vol. 15 (Stuttgart, Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1914), pp.9-10.

This glorification of the fallen soldier was part of a general re-symbolisation of the soldier's death during the course of the war.[33] Ulrich Linse has asserted that this re-symbolisation of meaning originated in the minds of contemporaries; from there, new interpretations and perceptions of, in this case the soldier's death, spread out into society.[34] Through the respective media in which they visually display personal experiences or observations, artists and writers have been in a unique position to define and present new interpretations and re-symbolisations. The central innovation in representations of the soldier's death during the First World War was the popularly evoked comparison between the fate of Jesus and the fate of fallen soldiers, and in particular the usage of the crucifixion scene. Conceptions of heroic death as a combination of Christian and Germanic ideals had existed in Germany since the Wars of Liberation.[35] In art, however, allegorical Christian interpretations of wars prior to 1914 were rare and did not equalise the sacrificial death of the soldier with that of Christ.[36] Artists who produced depictions of war simply did not incorporate overtly religious elements in their work. Hence, the adjustment of the religious iconography to the wartime scenario between 1914 and 1918 serves to illustrate the impact the war had on contemporaries. The Christian themes of immortality and resurrection were central to this understanding of death. Death had a meaning if it was seen as a step towards eternal life.

Jay Winter has argued that all European societies reacted to the appalling events of 1914-1918 by attempting to interpret the war within traditional frames of reference.[37] In much the same way as war memorials arose out of a post-war search for meaning,[38] the religious symbolism in the following images represent a *wartime* search for meaning in the experience of war and death. It is significant that a large number of artists chose to incorporate religious symbolism in their work, thereby using very traditional frames of reference. Perhaps, as suggested by Winter, this was a language in which the values of a community or society for which the soldiers had laid down their lives could be

[33] Ulrich Linse, '"Staatsfrüchte sollen nicht vermahlen werden!" Zur Resymbolisierung des Soldatentodes,' in *Kriegserlebnis. Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Gestaltung der Nationen*, ed. Klaus Vondung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), pp. 262-85.
[34] Ibid., p. 267.
[35] Hüppauf, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg,' pp. 87-88.
[36] Sybille Bock, *Bildliche Darstellungen zum Krieg von 1870/71* (University of Freiburg, Diss., 1982), p. 287.
[37] Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[38] Ibid., p. 79.

reaffirmed.[39] Perhaps the recourse to traditional symbolism was a way of finding a fitting 'sacrificial ideology' in which wartime death was given a meaning

The Traditional and the Modern

In the 19th century in Germany, religious art which had been so dominant in previous centuries had long given way to monarchic representative art and history-painting which was then the dominant and most respected art form. Religious imagery began to enjoy a revival in the late 1880s when it became a popular source of inspiration in particular for German expressionist artists.[40] During the First World War, even more artists produced visual representations that incorporated biblical references. This was especially the case among female artists. The religious symbolism used during the First World War should thus be analysed not only as a phenomenon in itself but should be considered in the wider context of visual representations of Christian iconography in an age that was largely characterised by a process of secularisation.[41]

The decline of a world view dominated by Christian values and ideas after the Enlightenment and the French revolution in Western Europe occurred in tandem with new scientific discoveries, and under the influence of the humanistic philosophical ideas of the 19th century. In Germany, philosophers, such as Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831), Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) all addressed the question of Christianity and their writings range from rejection of Christian dogma[42] to a reduction of religion to the level of a human construct.[43] For Schopenhauer, religion was basically insignificant and not more than a beautiful allegory.[44] Under Nietzsche, the philosophical dissection of religion reached its height, through the publication of his 'Anti-Christ' in 1895.

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Artists such as Max Beckmann, Albert Weisgerber, Ernst Barlach, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Christian Rohlfs, Ludwig Meidner, Oskar Kokoschka, Ernst-Ludwig Kirchner, Willy Jaeckel and sculptors such as Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Karl Albiker, Ludwig Gies and Joachim Karsch worked on religious iconography, see Renate Ulmer, *Passion und Apokalypse. Studien zur biblischen Thematik in der Kunst des Expressionismus* (Frankfurt M.: Lang, 1992), p. 11.

[41] Thomas Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch, Deutschland 1870-1918* (Munich: Beck, 1988).

[42] Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Glauben und Wissen*, vol. 4, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968) (original publication 1802).

[43] Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, vol.5, *Gesammelte Werk* , ed. Werner Schuffenhauer and Wolfgang Harich (Berlin: Akademie, 1984) (original publication 1841).

[44] See chapter about religion, in Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena*, vol. 5, *Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1987) (original publication 1851).

Nietzsche not only rejected the Christian idea of a Godly existence, he also rejected the associated moral values. His counter-model was personified in the *Übermensch*, who sought fulfilment not in the after- but the present life.[45]

The intense philosophical debates about a re-orientation or total rejection of religion may have contributed to a renewed artistic interest in religious symbolism and iconography since the turn of the century. The Christian symbolism that was incorporated into German expressionist art in the decades before the war reveals that, in contrast to traditional religious art, different thematic choices were made which, to an extent, reflected the preceding philosophical debates. The expressionist artists, for example, tended to looked for a contemporary relevance to the imagery they used, and identified to a larger extent with the fate of mankind. The mythological preferences of the individual, rather than just those of Church officials, were also given room by the artists.[46] This new approach in Christian art made it a suitable medium for capturing the civilian and combatant experience of the First World War.

The artistic experimentation and exploration of themes of the pre-war years allowed for artists to readily apply religious iconography to the ongoing events of the war. It was not only the tragedy of the war that led to an increase in Christian symbolism in art; these depictions also reflected a contemporary intellectual discourse about the place of religion in society. A similar development can be traced in the work of expressionist poets, whose main source of inspiration had been the bible.[47] As will be seen below, the wartime art that employed religious symbolism was mostly produced in the equally traditional art medium of wood-cutting. This, along with lino-cutting, was widely used by female and male artists after the turn of the century. Artists using this media were often inspired by the *Brücke* school of expressionist artists, who were among the first to return to producing the very stylised but bold and expressive sort of work that can be achieved through wood and lino cutting from 1905 onwards.[48]

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[45] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Anti-Christ (1895)* (Hannover: Licht, 1932).
[46] Ulmer, *Passion und Apokalypse*, p. 9.
[47] Armin Arnold, *Die Literatur des Expressionismus. Sprachliche und thematische Quellen* (Stuttgart, Berlin: 1966), Dietrich Bode, ed., *Fünfzig Gedichte des Expressionismus* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002).
[48] *Brücke und Berlin. 100 Jahre Expressionismus. Eine Ausstellung des Kupferstichkabinetts und der Nationalgalerie der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Brücke-Museum Berlin*, (Berlin: Nicolai, 2005).

In reference to the historiographical debate on whether or not the First World War can be viewed as a promoter of modernism,[49] it should be asserted that the war produced a myriad of artistic responses, only some of which contain modernist elements. Taking the moral dimension and symbolic frameworks of artistic responses to the conflict into account, even seemingly 'modernist' art is often founded on a 'traditional' approach.[50] The images reproduced below do not indicate that the war caused a rupture in the world of artistic representation, rather they support Jay Winter's understanding of the war and its aftermath as a period of 'overlapping languages' and approaches between the old and the new, the 'traditional' and the 'modern'.[51] Perhaps more than any other feature of wartime art, religious iconography exemplifies how the war brought 'modern' and 'traditional' elements in art together. An analysis that focuses on either one or the other misses a crucial element of wartime art – the manner in which traditional representations were adapted to current events, or how modern designs were carried out using old techniques. Recognising these overlapping currents allows us to gain a greater understanding of the character and contents of wartime art than any discussion about degrees of abstraction as indicators of modernism.

The Kiss of Judas

The Passion of Christ begins with the messiah's betrayal by his disciple Judas. For thirty silver coins, Judas agreed to reveal Christ's identity to the high priests and guards of the temple in Jerusalem. The pre-arranged sign was a kiss on the cheek. Jesus was taken into custody by the high priests and guards and brought to Pilate to receive judgement for his 'seditious' teachings. It was due to the demands made by the high priests and the population that Pilate agreed to the proposed crucifixion. Jesus then embarked on what Christians refer to as the *via dolorosa* or 'path of sorrow' during which he was severely beaten, ridiculed, and nailed to a cross. It was not until after his death which, according to scripture, caused an eclipse of the sun and tore the temple

[49] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and modern memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), Samuel Hynes, *A war imagined. The First World War and English Culture* (London: Bodley Head, 1990), G.D. Josipovici, 'The birth of the modern, 1885-1914,' in *Total war and historical change. Europe 1914-1955*, ed. Arthur Marwick, et al. (Birmingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2001), pp. 56-71, Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de corps. The art of the Parisian avant-garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).
[50] Winter, *Sites of memory*, p. 3.
[51] Ibid.

asunder, that guards, priests, and population realised who he was and understood their own role in the betrayal of Christ.[52]

The scene depicted in the following lithograph by Sella Hasse allegorically captures the moment when Judas kissed Christ's cheek. Hasse's thematic choice is somewhat unconventional as the majority of wartime art employing religious symbolism depicted the crucifixion and the suffering of Christ. This image from 1918, however, clearly features the betrayal. The torsos of the two men are central to the image. The figure of Jesus, on the left, is easily identified by his halo. Judas, on the right, is embracing Jesus and purses his lips for a kiss. Jesus is looking at him with a sad face, conscious of the betrayal and fully aware of his inevitable fate. The background is filled with armed men in uniform, presumably the guards of the temple. The contemporary context of the image suggests that they perhaps represent modern soldiers. The large number of armed men present at the scene, in particular, is suggestive of the presence of an army and not that of a handful of temple-guards.



68 Sella Hasse, *Kiss of Judas*, 1918[53]

[52] Luke 22 – 23.

Sella Hasse produced a range of images between 1914 and 1918 in which she freely used and adapted Christian symbolism to the circumstances of the war. It is therefore likely that the lithograph *Kiss of Judas* had a layered meaning that encompassed a contemporary angle. This raises questions about the motivation for depicting the betrayal scene in a wartime context and prompts speculation about the role distribution in the scene. Conventionally, in wartime religious depictions, the soldiers were compared to, or represented by, the figure of Jesus. The role of the traitor, on the other hand, could be occupied by several possible candidates. During the war, those who were seen as 'traitors' were men fit for military service who were not included in the conscription but who chose not to volunteer. Wartime profiteers who materially gained from the sacrifice of others were also seen as traitors and viewed with particular disdain by ordinary soldiers and civilians. That Judas represents a wartime profiteer seems quite plausible when one considers the thirty silver coins he received for his betrayal. Hasse very clearly leaves the role of the traitor open, but nevertheless the impression remains that the artist was searching for someone to blame.

The image can perhaps also be understood on a more abstract level. Then, Judas may be viewed as representing all the hope and glory that was promised at the outbreak of the war and was so vividly present in the 'ideas of 1914', but never actually materialised. In this reading, Judas stands for the self-betrayal of the soldiers or the population who believed that war could bring about a spiritual renewal and have a positive effect on all areas of life. The *Kiss of Judas* may thus represent an awakening and ensuing awareness of the German people that they have been betrayed by their own hopes and beliefs, by the war, and by their own actions.

The Path of Sorrow

Following the contemporary practice of comparing the fate of the soldier between 1914 and 1918 to that of Christ, the average soldier's experience of the horrors of trench warfare was his *via dolorosa*. Contemporary commentators emphasised the German soldier's role as a selfless defender by drawing on passages in the gospel in which Jesus' anger after the desecration of the temple in Jerusalem, and his subsequent protection of the sacred site, are equated with the duty of the German nation to also

[53] Sella Hasse, *Judaskuß*, lithograph (1918), Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

protect something sacred: their homeland. Just like Jesus, the soldiers do not fight for their own sake, but act in order to honour and protect an ideal.[54] The selflessness of the soldiers was regarded especially highly as, from a Christian perspective, no one shows greater love than he who lays down his life for his friends.[55]

The following 1918 painting by artist Ottilie Roedersein depicts the suffering Christ who sacrificed himself to save the world. The portrait captures Christ at the height of his sacrifice. His face is still bleeding from the thorns, and his eyes are barely open. It seems as if all life has drained from him. The suffering Christ symbolises the endurance of the greatest possible pain. The artist deliberately focuses on displaying the physical torment on the face of Christ, which, in light of the time it was produced, may be viewed as representing the suffering of the soldier.



69 Ottilie Roederstein, *The Veil of Veronica*, 1918[56]

[54] Blanck, *Frauentrost und Frauenpflicht*, pp. 3-4.
[55] Ibid., p. 4.
[56] Ottilie Roederstein, *Das Schweißtuch der Veronika* (1918), printed in, Barbara Rök, *Ottilie W. Roederstein, 1859-1937. Eine Künstlerin zwischen Tradition und Moderne. Monographie und Werkverzeichnis* (Marburg: Jonas, 1999), plate 204.

According to the title of the depiction, *The Veil of Veronica*, this interpretation can be taken even further. Veronica had wiped Jesus' face with her veil while he was carrying the cross. His blood and sweat are said to have an impression of his face on her veil, and the Veil of Veronica is today perhaps the most important relic of the Christian Church.[57] Station number six of the fourteen Stations of the Cross features Veronica wiping Jesus' face while he struggles toward cavalry with the cross on which he will be put to death. The presence of woman, evoked through the title and the associated story, attempts to relieve the pain of the suffering man. Transferred to the wartime scenario, the female care for a wounded suffering soldier is an obvious inference. The image thus indirectly reflects a commonly applied gender role distribution in wartime that required the man to fight and the woman to tend his wounds, as was previously discussed in chapter two.

The Veil of Veronica is believed to consist of Christ's sweat and blood. If this dimension is taken into account, the image can be understood as the embodiment of the pain of the soldier and visual proof of his suffering. The image, moreover, does not portray Christ in a noble light but as a broken man. This broken spirit may have been something that the artist recognised in soldier's during the war, and particularly in the last phase of the conflict when the piece was produced. Conventional religious images often emphasised the composure and strength of the dying Jesus. Roederstein clearly avoids such a representation. In addition, the figure of Jesus has not been incorporated into a biblical composition and only his face is shown. This has the effect of emphasising his physical suffering.

The following linocut by Sella Hasse *Sans Défense (Pushed into War. La Guerre. Der Krieg)* also illustrates, especially by its title, the sacrificial role ascribed to soldiers during the war. The centre of this highly stylised image is filled with the figure of a warrior whose head is framed by a halo which appears to be casting rays of light and arrows of energy. With waving hair and drawn sword, the warrior is advancing up a steep slope, followed by a group of men whose swords point towards the peak. The leading warrior is wearing some kind of robe, but he is not dressed in a uniform, nor does he wear a helmet or shoes. The swords clearly evoke a wartime scenario,

[57] It has not been resolved, however, whether the original veil is kept in St. Peter's in Rome, or in the monastery of Manopello. Critics have suggested that the imprinted face is a painting of Christ by Albrecht Dürer. A scientific analysis has not been carried out, as it is feared that Christ's face will disappear. Paul Badde, 'Im Schweiße seines Angesichts', *Welt am Sonntag* 27 August 2006, p. 11.

presumably of the Great War. On the other hand, the image could also represent a timeless allegory. The title of the linocut is important in defining the soldiers' roles as sacrificial lambs. Hasse thus suggests that while soldiers who fought at the front were courageous, ultimately, they were defenceless innocents who had been pushed into fighting the war.



70 Sella Hasse, *Without Défence (Pushed into the War. La Guerre. The war)*, 1914[58]

The halo and the descending stream of lights add a mystical atmosphere to the image and highlight the special role of the leading warrior. His appearance and clothing were possibly meant to evoke a direct comparison with Christ himself. This design is not a direct adaptation of the traditional Passion iconography. Nevertheless, the steep uphill advance symbolises a wearisome struggle. The only obvious Christian reference is the halo which results in the representation of a more secular figure of Christ. Although Christ never engaged in armed fighting, the image could be an adaptation of the saviour into the contemporary wartime scenario. The warrior appears strong and

[58] Sella Hasse, *Sans défense (In den Krieg gehetzt. La guerre. Der Krieg)* linocut, no. 2 of the war cycle (1914), Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

brave and faces his fate with his head held high. Yet, as we know from the title, the soldiers were without defence and therefore doomed. The erected swords suggest otherwise, but perhaps this is a reference to the inescapable position of soldiers in battle.

The painting *The Saviour* by Johanna Klemm sees the role of Christ from a very different perspective. In this image, Christ wears a long white gown and can be seen tending to a fatally wounded soldier. A very unambiguous link to the current war is therefore established. The soldier, who is still wearing his uniform, appears to have been left behind by his comrades near or on a battlefield. The soldier's wounds have been dressed, but he is lying motionless and seems to gaze already into the next world. Thus, the appearance of Jesus may represent his imagination on the verge of death. This image is an artistic attempt to reassure the viewers that the soldiers were not alone in the hour of their death, as Jesus was with them.



71 Johanna Klemm, *The Saviour*, 1917[59]

The title *The Saviour* indicates the orthodox manner in which Klemm defined Christ's role on earth. In the image, Christ is tending to a dying soldier whose wound is still bleeding and while he is perhaps not saving the soldier's life, he is saving the

[59] Johanna Klemm, *Der Erlöser* (1917) in, *Heldendank* (Barmen: 1917).

soldier from his pain. On a more abstract level, the presence of Christ beside a gravely wounded soldier may indicate that the souls of dying soldiers will be saved, thereby guaranteeing their continued existence in the afterlife. Thus Christ is not used to symbolise the sacrifice of the soldiers or their suffering in the conflict. Instead, Christ's role is to ennoble the soldier after his death by saving his soul. For the living, this is a comforting vision of death and confirms that the dying soldier in the image, who viewers may imagine is their own deceased loved one, had been a good person and that his sacrifice had been worthwhile. In this instance, the soldiers' sacrifice is not necessarily presented as Christ-like, but as worthy enough to gain the soldier God's recognition and a place in paradise.

The Crucifixion

The scene from the Passion of Christ that was most frequently and most directly applied to the wartime situation in the art produced between 1914 and 1918 was the crucifixion. Drawing a very direct parallel between the selfless sacrificial death of a German soldier and the biblical death of Christ allowed people to view individual wartime deaths as tragedies in their own right. If the focus was placed on the undeniable suffering of the average soldier, the political rights and wrongs of the war could be left to one side.

The degree to which Christ-like suffering was applied, both artistically and in literature, to the fate of soldiers varied in intensity. In a lyrical obituary to the poet Georg Trakl who died in a field hospital at the Eastern front, the writer Else Lasker Schüler published a poem that portrayed his life and death as following a path that was pre-determined by God.[60] The poem refers to his strong, good-hearted beliefs, compares his poetry to Martin Luther's 95 theses, and depicts the war he fought and died in as a 'holy' one. Yet while Lasker Schüler laments the eternally lost potential of a talented, idealistic young poet she seems to accept that Trakl's life was cut short through God's will.

[60] Else Lasker Schüler, *Georg Trakl* (1914), Zeit-Echo 3 (1915/16), p. 33: Seine Augen standen ganz fern – / Er war als Knabe schon mal im Himmel. /Darum kamen seine Worte hervor /Auf blauen und weißen Wolken. /Wir stritten über Religion; /Aber immer wie zwei Spielgefährten; /Und bereiteten Gott von Mund zu Mund;/ Im Anfang war das Wort!/ Des Dichter Herz, eine feste Burg. /Seine Gedichte, singende Thesen. /Er war wohl Martin Luther. /Seine dreifaltige Seele trug er in der Hand, /Als er in den ‚heiligen Krieg' zog. /Dann wusste ich, er war gestorben – /Sein Schatten weilte unbegreiflich / Auf den Abend meines Zimmers.

In a booklet published in 1918, the writer Henriette Brey offered a much more explicit description of the sacrifice of ordinary soldiers,

> It is late at night. They are still carrying through the wide open gates of heaven the bloody harvest of the battlefield. These sacred men who sacrificed for us their blood and their shattered limbs, who gave their young and fresh bodies.[61]

The awareness that the soldiers who fought were fighting on their behalf, and that women themselves would not have been able to physically defend the 'fatherland', comes across quite strongly in women's wartime writing.[62] The parallels that were drawn between the suffering of Jesus and that of German soldiers may therefore have been an expression of respect and esteem. On the other hand, however, as was suggested in chapter two, the analogies may have served to reassure women that they were being valiantly defended by their male relations at the front.

The following woodcut by artist Katharina Heise depicts an actual crucifixion scene. It was published in 1918 under her pseudonym K.L. Heinrich-Salze in a specially themed edition of the literary-artistic journal *Die Aktion* entitled 'Golgotha'.[63] The title and composition of the piece are very clearly evocative of the biblical crucifixion scene in which Jesus is crucified at Golgotha (a Hebrew word meaning 'place of the skull') along with two other men. Significantly, Jesus promises one of his companions in suffering, the 'good thief', that he will join him in paradise. Heise's design is plain and centres around the crucified figure on the cross in the middle. Emphasis is clearly placed on the dying men, and the mourning woman standing to the left of the central cross draws attention to the tragedy of the sacrificial death. The position and size of the cross in the foreground that bears the large, white body suggest that it is of special importance and represents the dying figure of Jesus.

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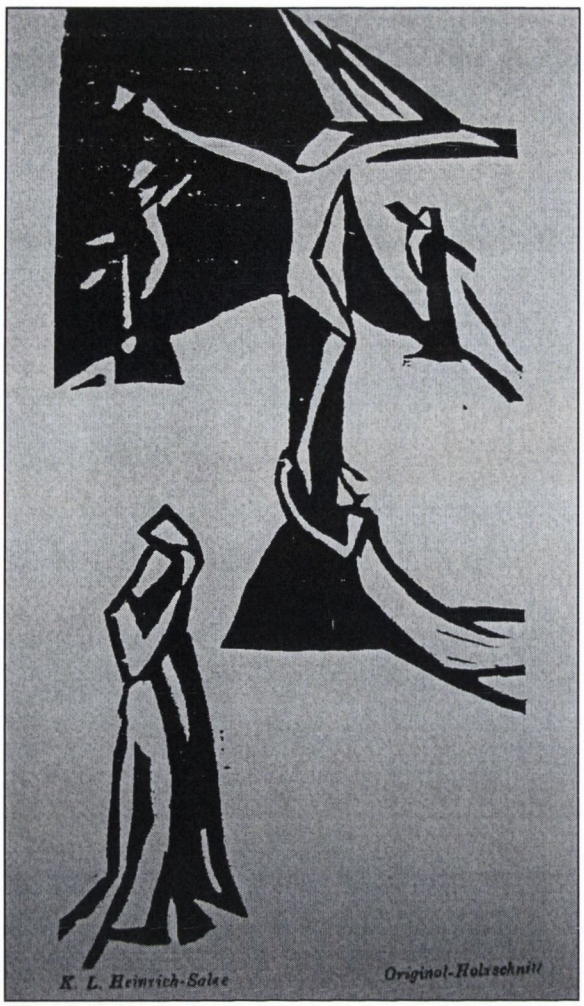
[61] Henriette Brey, *"Mein Bruder bist du!". Ein Trostbüchlein für schwere Tage den lieben Verwundeten und Kranken* (Einsiedeln, Cologne: Benziger, 1918), p. 7.
[62] For example, Lili von Hackewitz, *Öl und Wein für Verwundete* (Kaiserswerth: Diakonissen-Anstalt, 1915). See also chapter two: *The Body of the Soldier and the Defence of the Heimat.*
[63] *Die Aktion*, special issue 'Golgotha' 11/12 (1918).



72 Katharina Heise, *Golgotha*, 1918[64]

This woodcut does not contain a straightforward visual reference to wartime events. On its own, Heise's image could merely be interpreted as a contribution to the re-symbolising of biblical themes in expressionist art. It is only in the wartime context, however, that the significance of the piece can be fully understood. As already noted, the artist herself was deeply affected by the war, her fiancé having been killed at the front in 1916.[65] Her subsequent artistic work intensely engages with death and mourning – as seen in previous chapters – but also with religious symbolism. The thematic choice of the crucifixion may therefore be seen as a deliberate attempt by the artist to explore her wartime experiences from yet another angle.

The simplicity of her design serves to highlight the dramatic nature of the deaths depicted in the image. Against the background of the war, the crucifixions in the image

[64] Katharina Heise alias K.L. Heinrich-Salze, *Golgatha*, woodcut, printed in, *Die Aktion*, special issue 'Golgotha' 11/12 (1918).
[65] NL Katharina Heise, Stadtmuseum Schönebeck.

may be seen as representing the battlefield deaths of German soldiers. The crucifixion symbolises the painful nature of wartime death, but does not, in this highly stylised image, represent any of its violence or horror. The interpretation of the soldier's death therefore becomes the primary objective of the image, and is elevated to the level of the sacrifice delivered by Jesus. Both died on behalf of others, both died to save the world. Although the artistic style does not employ pathos, the symbolism of the image nevertheless represents a glorification and elevation of the soldier's death in the war. The facial features of the crucified men and mourning woman are not in a detailed manner, thus allowing contemporaries to envisage themselves and their loved ones in the image.

A similar design, entitled *To the Mothers*, was produced by Auguste von Zitzewitz in 1918 and printed in the same special issue of *Die Aktion*. [66] This image, which was discussed in chapter five, differs from Heise's woodcut in its emphasis on the mourning women as opposed to the crucifixion. The image *Mater Dolorosa on the Battlefield* by Sella Hasse, discussed in chapter five, also includes the hill of Calvary and a prominent cross on top of the hill. This serves to portray the soldiers' death as sacrificial and, again, establishes an unambiguous comparison with the death of Christ.[67] Much of the written and artistic contributions of the special issue provide variations on biblically inspired interpretations of death, sacrifice, and mourning, with obvious or hidden references to the war.

The Resurrection

The religious symbolism applied by artists and writers to the war did not end with the crucifixion and interpretations of a sacrificial death. A number of artistic representations and wartime writings envisaged the resurrection and a life after death. In the context of a war in which an unprecedented number of soldiers were killed such imagery suggests an artistic and literary understanding of death that entailed hope as well as sorrow. Bernd Hüppauf argues that references to the resurrection were of particular relevance to women as they expressed their prevailing hope for the return of a loved one from the front, even in the case of women whose husbands or sons had been

[66] See chapter five, p. 174.
[67] Ibid., p. 164.

registered as dead.[68] Whether women believed in an actual physical resurrection of the fallen, or whether resurrection visions instead represented the wish for salvation and support for the living,[69] they were created out of bereavement. Whether this was a directly personal or a more general bereavement, its primary function was to provide comfort by resorting to the traditional, consoling beliefs of Christianity.

The following quotation from the writer of religious wartime booklets, Frieda Ufer-Held, provides a significant example of how the resurrection was imagined by contemporaries. The resurrection here is not only seen as the return of the 'prince of peace' *(Friedensfürst)*, but also as the occasion for the creation of a new paradise on earth.

> One stands near an abyss and looks down frightened! Nothing but entangled snakes, undergrowth and morass. This is our only life! This is the hour, when the cross of Christ appears to a deeply shaken woman's heart. This is the scene of peace amidst the fighting that allows one to rest. We do not need to despair... This poor earth will yet become a place of peace when the 'prince of peace' returns and erects his paradise as was promised. We will pray daily for his arrival as God taught us, because it is only then when the sacred and lasting fulfilment of all hopes will be heard... After a last wave of storms and fighting he will lead the earth into a bright eternity. The vision of a home up there in the light gives strength to God's children to hold out until the end in this fearful time of war.[70]

Although the language that Ufer-Held employs appears quite dramatic, similar language was widely used at the time. The message of the text is straightforward and emphasises that the wartime sacrifice will ultimately have been worthwhile. The resurrection, in this context, is doubly significant. Firstly, the resurrection heralds a return of the 'prince of peace' – a reference to the figure of Christ. Secondly, the resurrection will lead to the creation of a paradise from the ruins of the earth, thus symbolising the rebirth not just of individual people, but of a new, better and more enlightened world on earth. It is the hopeful vision of a beautiful post-war world.

Even the war itself was given an essential role in bringing about the resurrection, the resurrection almost being given the status of a war aim, as the following excerpt from a 1915 booklet by Lily Braun demonstrates,

> The war is not the gravedigger of peace, but the spirit of the resurrection knocking on the tomb. In the past decades of peace, the nations almost

[68] Hüppauf, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg,' pp. 18-19.
[69] Mosse sees this as the main function of the 'return of the dead' in male post-war literature, see Mosse, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe,' p. 245-47.
[70] Frieda Ufer-Held, *Friedensstätten* (Barmen: Müller, 1916), pp. 8-16.

> forgot the essential role of war and it was reduced to being rhetorically discussed and imprisoned in an imagined palace of peace.[71]

Braun implies that war was a necessary event in the development of all nations, and therefore suggests that, despite its horror, it had a positive outcome.

Casting the dead and their possible return as a force of moral authority who would judge the living for their wartime conduct was also part of the contemporary understanding of the resurrection. Lily Braun uses this image effectively in order to appeal to women's wartime consciences,

> Only now, when those out at the front prove to us daily what sacrifice is, do we start to realise again that sacrifice always means 'giving'; be it of material or moral nature. The rich man who shares part of his abundant wealth sacrifices absolutely nothing. On the contrary, he allows himself the greatest joy imaginable: to make someone happy.[...] If the dead, our dead, could talk, they would rise and call: What, you my mother, you my wife, will you prove to be not worthy of my blood? Will you not give everything for the Greatness that will come and while the dead still serve those living?[72]

The reminder that a sacrifice, in order to 'count' as a sacrifice, must entail true deprivation, and possibly pain, raises the standard for genuine contributions to the war effort. Merely paying lip service to support for the war was understood to lead – if we interpret Braun's pamphlet correctly – to an immediate judgement by the dead who would rise to investigate and judge unworthy behaviour. Braun's appeal to women's respect for, and possibly fear of, the dead in an attempt to ensure that women fulfilled their wartime duty and share of the national sacrifice.

A very explicit link between the necessity of wartime death and the possibility of a subsequent resurrection is presented by Margarethe von Meerheimb:

> The will to power in its highest and most beautiful manner will be the harvest of this seed of blood and tears. This alone is the meaning and purpose of this terrible world war, which destroyed so many beautiful things, only to resurrect them as bigger and more beautiful.[73]

Meerheimb quotes Nietzsche to underline the purpose of the sacrifice: 'Only where there are graves, will there be resurrections,' and adapts the phrase to wartime Germany: 'We have many graves in our German fatherland and we will celebrate a

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[71] Lily Braun, *Die Frauen und der Krieg* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915), p. 43.
[72] Ibid., pp. 31, 51.
[73] Margarethe von Meerheimb, 'Das große Auferstehen,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg. Ein Rat-, Tat-, und Trostbuch. Gesammelte Blätter aus Frauenhand*, ed. Karl Jünger (Stuttgart: Lutz, 1916), p. 192.

magnificent resurrection!'[74] One can almost detect a sense of desperation in Meerheimb's words. The zeal with which she and other writers sought to impose meaning on wartime sacrifice suggests that there was a great social need for such meaning during the war years. In order to cope with and sustain years of warfare, people had to believe that ultimately something good would arise from it.

In 1918 Mizi Otten-Friedmann produced a woodcut for the aforementioned special issue of *Die Aktion*. In her design, a man ascends into the sky with arms open and raised in expectation. The figure appears to be rising above a scene of destruction, with burning and ruined houses arranged in a circular form. The blazing flames literally illustrate the *Weltenbrand*, the world in flames, a term widely used to refer to the war at the time.



73 Mizi Otten-Friedmann, *It is Accomplished*, 1918[75]

[74] Ibid., p. 193.
[75] Mizi Otten-Friedmann, *Es ist vollbracht*, woodcut, printed in *Die Aktion*, special issue 'Golgotha' (1918).

Through the combination of the wartime scenario with the iconography of the Ascension, the soldier is represented as Christ-like. After he has sacrificed himself during the war on earth, he ascends into to the sky and begins to embrace the afterlife. The man is not wearing military insignia any more, he is almost naked. His nakedness suggests that he has been cleansed of all blood and guilt and ennobled through his sacrificial death. The halo around the head of the figure is strikingly large, and thus highlights the sacred character of the figure and his ascension from the war on earth.

The title of the woodcut, *It is Accomplished*, is a reference to last words Jesus uttered before he died on the cross, according to the gospel of St. John.[76] These words marked the completion of his sacrifice, and the end of his earthly torment, and announced his death. In the woodcut, they refer to the sacrifice which had been made by the men during the *Weltenbrand*. The image illustrates a hoped-for moment in the journey of the fallen soldier when war and destruction could be left behind and the after-life could be embraced. Hence it is an image full of hope that attempts to look beyond a time of war and death.

Katharina Heise produced a woodcut in 1918 that closely resembles Otten-Friedmann's image in both style and content. The image by Heise, entitled *Resurrection*, depicts a man appearing on earth surrounded by rays of light. Here Heise has chosen to depict the extraordinary moment of the Resurrection of Christ. Three days after his death Christ is said to have re-emerged from his grave. The wild arrangement of shadow and light convey an idea of the forces released in that moment, when the conventional laws of life and death are overthrown by Christ. Style and the iconography of the woodcut emphasise the miracle of Christ's re-appearance after his death. Again, a halo underlines the holy status of the figure and sacredness of the resurrection. The figure of Christ and the wonder of the moment dominate the image; the reaction of the women in the picture merely serving to accentuate the momentous nature of the occasion. Instead of focusing on a sacrificial and painful death as most of the above images, here Heise produces an image in which death is a stage of transition to afterlife which is embraced with open arms and imagined as good and welcoming.

[76] John, 19,30.



74 Katharina Heise, *Resurrection*, 1918[77]

Heise's woodcut does not contain any direct references to the war, but much like her previous work it should be considered in the context of the artist's own wartime experiences. This designs appears to be of a primarily consoling function in that, related to the wartime scenario, death on earth does not represent the final end of men. The image points at the existence of a 'life' after death, an imagination which consoles those left behind. The body language of the women could also be viewed as slightly distraught, perhaps confusion about the mystic nature of the event also has to be considered along with a sense of abandonment. Because even if the dead move on to their afterlife, they leave their life on earth.

One of the most complex resurrection images of the war was designed by Sella Hasse in 1915. This woodcut, entitled *Invocation*, is the third leaf of her 'war cycle',

[77] Katharina Heise, *Auferstehung*, woodcut (1918), NL Katharina Heise, Stadtmuseum Schönebeck.

and was thus produced as a conscious response to wartime events. In the foreground of the image, three figures are depicted floating in an ocean. Their stiff bodies and rigid faces reveal that they are dead. A heart-shaped island can be seen in the centre of the image. On its surface a large cross and three men are visible. The men are on their knees with their arms raised and look up at a figure above them who ascends to the sky. The head of the figure is surrounded by a halo, which casts rays of light through the otherwise darkened sky.

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75 Sella Hasse, *Invocation*, 1915[78]

This image is a rare example of an artwork for which the artist noted down the source of inspiration. Hasse inscribed the back of the image with the words of a poem by Paul Meyer, also entitled *Invocation*:

[78] Sella Hasse, *Beschwörung*, leaf 2 of the war cycle, woodcut (1915) Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

Invocation
Throw into the oceans of blood
Your world-loving heart as an island
Degenerated under the delusion of arms
Those who hate deride the Saviour...
... send the lamb to us to graze,
Because we are courted by the pagan Gods.
Allow the son to suffer
Death on the cross one more time[79]

The lyrics contain a number of clues for the interpretation of the image. The ocean is apparently not an ordinary ocean, but one consisting of blood. This is a direct lyrical and artistic representation of the bloodbath caused by the war. Hence, the floating corpses can be understood as victims of the conflict. The poem describes the state of the earth as one of degeneration – a world torn by hate and disdain for God. Meyer sees the only hope for salvation and the prevention of yet more carnage in a renewed Passion of Christ. His poem may therefore be read as an appeal to God to send his son one more time in order to save the world.

What Hasse has depicted in her woodcut is the possible return of Christ – the fabled second coming. Rather than ascending to heaven, the figure of Christ in the image could also be seen as sailing over the earth, looking down on the ocean of blood and realising the scale of the bloodbath on earth. The posture of the kneeling men underlines their endeavour to plead with God and implore Jesus to return and resurrect the earth. In this image, no attempt is made to compare the fate of the soldiers to that of Jesus. On the contrary, Jesus' sacred status as saviour of the Earth is represented as distinct from that of those engaged in the conflict. Jesus is portrayed as the last hope for an end to the carnage. In this reading of the piece, the title of both the poem and the image admits that it is beyond human power to end the conflict and help has to be invoked and drawn in from outside. That last hope is God's mercy.

Male artists of the First World War rarely used the theme of resurrection to symbolise hope and salvation. The resurrection images by female artists above, all focus on the figure of Jesus as the saviour. The moment of the resurrection is presented as one of great force, artistically represented with rays of light that emphasise the positive and hopeful nature of Christ's return. A 1918 etching by Max Beckmann entitled *Resurrection* marks a stark contrast to the work by female artists dealing with a similar

[79] Paul Meyer, Beschwörung/ Wirf in die Blutozeane/ Dein weltliebend Herz als Eiland/ Verwildert im Waffenwahne/ Höhnen sonst Hasser den Heiland .../ ...Sende das Lamm, uns zu weiden,/ Denn uns umbuhlen die Baale./ Erlaube dem Sohne zu leiden/ Kreuztod zum anderen Male.

theme. Beckmann envisions the post-resurrection world as a degenerate and disillusioned place, bare of all happiness and hope. In Beckmann's image the figure of Jesus is totally absent and the composition focuses instead on those who populate the earth after its resurrection from the ruins of war. The dark sun in the centre of the image reinforces the atmosphere of pessimism and the absence of all hope and light – presenting instead a dark, apocalyptic vision of the resurrection.



76 Max Beckmann, *Resurrection*, 1918[80]

Max Beckmann, who had volunteered as a medical orderly in 1914, produced a range of religiously inspired images reflecting his experiences of the war.[81] His letters to his wife Minna Tube reveal that his essential understanding of life and death was fundamentally shaken by his wartime experiences.[82] The *Resurrection* was completed while he was recovering from a nervous breakdown in Frankfurt, where he was subsequently worked in military hospitals, although first drafts of the piece were

[80] Max Beckmann, *Auferstehung*, etching (1918), leaf 12 of the series 'Gesichter', reprinted in, *Max Beckmann. Das graphische Werk 1911-1946*, (Bonn: VG Bildkunst, 1989), plate 15.
[81] Sebastian Giesen, ed., *Max Beckmann - Krieg. Zeichnungen und Druckgraphik 1913-1919* (Bonn: Bild-Kunst, 2000), pp. 4-5.
[82] Max Beckmann, *Briefe im Kriege* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1916).

produced at the front in Belgium.[83] Beckmann included himself in the *Resurrection*, thus revealing how much he was personally affected by the war and how deeply he identified with a perceived hopelessness as a result of the destruction and violence of the conflict. His face appears in the left foreground in a group that features two women and another man. In a conversation he had with Lili von Braunbehrens in 1916 Beckmann talked about his drawings of the resurrected dead and how the ghosts of dead men continued to haunt him: 'I drew most of them, the dead. Perhaps they hold it against me, considering that they visit me.'[84] Thus, Beckmann's art can perhaps be understood as a kind of refuge, where he gave his wartime experiences an expressive outlet.

Sacrificial Ideologies

A general increase in the depiction of religious themes is evident in the works of both female and male artists during the war. Women mainly resorted to depicting different thematic representations around the Passion of Christ. Male artists on the other hand used wider frames of biblical reference.[85] Of the different thematic representations of the *Passion* of Christ, it was primarily the crucifixion that male artists engaged with during the war. Yet other thematic adaptations were equally important for male artists. The story of the martyr Sebastian, for example, was frequently applied to the circumstances of the war, as was the tragic fate of Job. A selected number of works by male artists will be analysed below. Comparisons to the religious art of women will be restricted to Christian themes that were adapted to the suffering soldier.

The significance of sacrificial ideologies for the combat motivation of German soldiers may have sprung from an influence of religious thought on the understanding of sacrifice. Religious symbolism is a major component of the wartime oeuvre of both combatant and non-combatant artists. Whether the original religious meaning of this symbolism was rejected, adapted, or accepted by the artists, its artistic exploration highlights its relevance to the search for an understanding of wartime experiences. While it may perhaps be going too far to suggest that existing general sacrificial ideologies actively motivated soldiers for combat, as argued by Watson and Porter, the

[83] Giesen, ed., *Max Beckmann - Krieg. Zeichnungen und Druckgraphik 1913-1919*, pp. 10-11, 16.
[84] Quoted in ibid., p. 11.
[85] See Ulmer, *Passion und Apokalypse*, pp. 63-98.

effect of a religious understanding of sacrifice may well have helped soldiers to sustain their collective sacrifice.

The crucifixion scenes created by male artists often depict Christ's removal from the cross. It is significant that artists such as Max Beckmann, Max Gubler, and Carlo Mense, whose version of the removal was published in *Der Sturm* also in 1916, chose to capture the moment immediately *after* the suffering and pain of Christ's Passion has ended. The images created by these artists all feature a dead Christ with stiff limbs who has just been released from the physical pain, suffering, and humiliation he experienced on the cross. Significantly, the discomfort of those actually lifting Jesus from the cross is quite apparent, as if the weight of the dead messiah is almost too much to bear.

The image by Max Gubler reproduced below provides a good example of this type of image. His woodcut was printed in *Die Aktion* in 1916 and amounts to a very emotional depiction of the removal of Christ, clearly identified by his halo, from the cross. Of all the moments in the *Passion* of Christ, the removal scene is arguably the most hopeless. It is the moment after the people present at the crucifixion have realised just who has died, and when the act of slowly executing the messiah has been irreversibly completed. Christ is dead, and the impact of that realisation is written on the faces of those who support him. The people around the cross appear grief-stricken and all hope has been drained from their faces.



77 Max Gubler, *Removal from the Cross*, 1916[86]

Transferred to a contemporary setting, the image conveys a sense of the painful and sad realisation of the finality of death. Gubler's design pinpoints the ultimate result of Christ's sacrifice – his own death, and does not shy away from depicting that final truth. Choosing the moment of the removal as the subject of an image produced during the war may also have been an attempt to offer hope to the bereaved by depicting a scene in which the suffering of the main figure has ended for good. Although those who loved Jesus are clearly portrayed as despairing figures in these images, the physical pain and mental suffering of Jesus himself is at an end. Equally, those who lost loved ones during the conflict may have been able to console themselves with the knowledge that, while they themselves felt the pain of loss, the earthly suffering of their husband, son, brother or friend was now over. Finally, such images, in common with other images that depict scenes from the Passion, equate the sacrifice of soldiers with that of Jesus and thereby elevate those who have died.

[86] Max Gubler, *Kreuzabnahme*, woodcut, printed in *Die Aktion* 16/17 (1916).

Artistic interpretations of the fate of the martyr Sebastian refer even more clearly to the physical sacrifice made by the soldiers in the First World War. Depictions of Sebastian were numerous. The legend of the martyr, an officer of the personal guard of emperor Diocletian who was converted to Christianity, offers an interesting perspective on how combatant artists interpreted the sacrifice of German soldiers. Sebastian used his position to support persecuted Christians in the prisons of Rome. Charged for his actions, the punishment ordained by the Emperor was that tie Sebastian should be tied to a tree and executed by archers. Sebastian miraculously survived the arrows and was nursed back to health by the Christian Irene. Sebastian, therefore, is not only seen as a brave man who was prepared to sacrifice his life to protect others, but he was also understood as someone who protects people from danger.[87]

The following image by Willy Geiger shows a man who had been lacerated, like Sebastian, with arrows. He is naked, emphasising his vulnerability, and seems to be wearing a crown of thorns, like Christ during his crucifixion. His head has sunk to his chest indicating that he has perhaps lapsed into unconsciousness because of his many wounds. He is barely upright, but has not yet been killed. The background shows combat scenes involving infantry and cavalry, and features man to man fighting. The raging battle in the background of the image transports the legend of Sebastian to the wartime context of 1914/15, the period in which the drawing was produced.

[87] See Ulmer, *Passion und Apokalypse*, p. 99.



78 Willy Geiger, *Man of Sorrow*, 1914/15[88]

Although it does not realistically capture the sort of technological warfare that dominated the First World War, the image highlights the danger and pain experienced daily at the fronts. The arrows therefore symbolise the actual physical sacrifices made by ordinary soldiers. On one hand, then, the image can be viewed as an appeal to German men to follow Sebastian's example and face physical dangers and be prepared to die in order to protect others. On the other hand, however, portraying Saint Sebastian, a figure known for his ability to survive terrible wounds and protect people from evil, may have been an artistic attempt to evoke the powers of a patron saint who would protect the fighting soldiers from fatal wounds.

[88] Willy Geiger, *Schmerzensmann*, lithograph (1914/15), printed in *Zeit-Echo* 3 (1914/15).

Another biblical figure who was artistically transported to the events of the First World War was Job, a Jewish patriarch from the Old Testament who maintained his faith in God in spite of the numerous disasters and afflictions that God sent to test him. Originally a wealthy and successful figure, Job lost all his possessions, his ten children died and he became so ill that he wished he had never been born. He never turned his back on God, however, and ultimately became successful again. Traditionally, Job is understood to represent any person who withstands great suffering without despairing. The appeal Job's fate had for male artists during the war seems understandable. The war was indeed interpreted by some as a Divine test, and, having being confronted with the appalling carnage of the conflict, one can appreciate the difficulties contemporaries may have had in maintaining their faith in a loving God. The following lithograph by Willy Jaeckel, a combatant artist of the First World War, illustrates an old Job, pleading and quarrelling with God. The landscape is plain, deserted excepted for a dead tree in the right foreground, and thus resembles the barren topography of no-man's-land.



79 Willy Jaeckel, *Job*, 1917[89]

[89] Willy Jaeckel, *Hiob*, lithograph, part of series 'Hiob' (1917), portfolio published by Erich Reiß (Berlin 1917).

By presenting Job in a position of desperate devotion, the image is reminder of how one should cope with despair and destruction, with death and devastation. Jaeckel himself described his Job series as testimonies of 'helpless isolation and submission under the ways and will of the fate that binds us and releases us...'[90] It is not surprising that the experience of war, which for many amounted to a direct confrontation with extreme violence and mass death, led to explorations of how humans can deal with or recover from suffering. The image depicts a mortal man, in this case Job, demanding to know why he has been so harshly treated by God and may thus be interpreted as an attempt to represent those who wanted to know how such a destructive war could be part of a Divine plan. On the other hand, Job teetered on the brink of despair but managed to maintain his faith in God, and thus the image could be viewed as a reminder to those who had suffered loss and bereavement not to give up hope. It was his continued belief in God that enabled Job to survive his tragedies. During the war, a number of artists produced similar depictions of Job's fate, including Oskar Kokoschka, whose Job portfolio was published by Cassirer in Berlin in 1917, Ernst Barlach and Joachim Karsch.

Conclusion

The frequent references to the bible made in written wartime pamphlets and the religious symbolism incorporated in the art of the First World War reveal how the traditional and familiar religious analogies of suffering, sacrifice and death entered contemporary interpretations of the conflict. The images discussed in this chapter either compare the suffering soldier with the suffering Christ or emphasise Christ's role as a saviour from suffering. The understanding of the soldier's death as the ultimate sacrifice, equal even to that of Christ, allowed artists, and their audiences, to view the war as a noble endeavour and to elevate those who died in it to the level of martyrs. The need for a comforting framework through which the war could be understood on both the battle-front and the home front fostered the development of sacrificial ideologies which upheld the belief that salvation was brought about through sacrifice. Such ideologies are visible in the resurrection images produced by female artists.

[90] Willy Jaeckel, 'Autobiographische Skizze,' in *Das graphische Jahr*, ed. F. Gurlitt (Berlin: 1921), p. 63.

The physical pain and sacrifice of the ordinary soldier became a key theme of wartime art between 1914 and 1918. An even stronger emphasis on physical sacrifice can be seen in the images produced by male artists. Inspired by wartime pamphlets which elevated the significance of the war, religiously themed art provided the most accessible examples of heroic suffering and tragic sacrifice that could be applied to the experience of the ongoing conflict. The familiar symbols and well known traditions associated with Christianity allowed for an interpretation of the conflict as a crusade in the name of God and on behalf of humanity. The soldier's death could therefore be viewed as selfless and sacrificial, but never as wrong or meaningless. Allusions to Christian iconography, moreover, enabled women to develop sacrificial ideologies linking the losses of the First World War to Christ's sacrifice for mankind on the cross. The references to the resurrection and the life after death were equally important, and illustrated a future-oriented outlook on life, show that the bereaved mourned, but ultimately were able to cope.

Chapter 7 *Pregnant Widows*

Besides the religiously inspired search for meaning in the war, a secular, more pragmatic, and perhaps more immediate reading of the conflict focused on the imagined future beneficiaries of wartime sacrifice. In women's visual and written testimonies, especially towards the later phase of the war, the idea that, thanks to the soldiers' sacrifice, the future generation would still have a fatherland to grow up in, which moreover would be strengthened and improved, gained increasing importance. The children of the fallen soldiers are presented as the ultimate reason for which the wartime sacrifice would be worthwhile. This concluding chapter will analyse how women succeeded in viewing the conflict and wartime sacrifice as meaningful after all, in spite of the encountered suffering and tragedy.

The range of artistic depictions of pregnant widows and widows with small children suggest that this interpretation of the war arose directly from women's fate during the conflict. The figure of the widow embodied the suffering and bereavement experienced by so many women during the war, while pregnancy was a compelling symbol of hope. The presence, then, of both life and death in the figure of the pregnant widow lends her special status. These images serve to underline the life-giving power of women, which counters death in times of war. They suggest that the growing of new life offered comfort and hope amidst the carnage and that women's roles as future mothers are therefore vitally important. The deaths of so many fathers moreover raised women's responsibilities in educating and guiding the new generation. Thereby, widows are given an important role in post-war society because their ability to shape the future through their children. On the other hand, the images can be understood as a pragmatic realisation that life had to move on, and that while the dead were still mourned, the living had be cared for. Depictions of pregnant widows were peculiar to the art produced by women of the First World War, and as thematic representations, pregnant widows appear to have been directly linked to the biological differences between the sexes.[1]

[1] In 1923, Otto Dix produced a post-war drawing of a pregnant widow, which Conzelmann describes as unprecedented in art history. The visual evidence presented in this chapter suggests, however, that Otto Dix was inspired by existing women's portrayals of pregnant widows that predate his design. Otto Conzelmann, *Der andere Dix - sein Bild vom Menschen und vom Krieg* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983), p. 248.

As demonstrated in chapter one, a group within the organised women's movement campaigned from the outbreak of the war in August 1914 for a clear specification of women's wartime tasks in society. Their efforts were directed at defining women's role as 'cultural missionaries', representatives of German ideals, and the embodiment of the moral backbone of the nation.[2] Women were also responsible for passing on their understanding of culture and values to the next generation to so that 'German' social ideals would be safeguarded. During the war, the national importance of this task was formulated by male and female authors alike.[3] Commentators called for an improvement in women's education and greater female participation in national events so that women would be qualified to teach the coming generation. This led many women to a re-evaluate their role as educators not only of children, but of the nation as a whole.[4]

The crucial role mothers played in the guidance and education of their children was frequently referred to in women's wartime publications. Such publications also prepared women for the possible loss of their husband in the war, in which case their 'strength should not lapse'. Even bereaved women, it was argued, should continue to be active and energetic, 'because the home was now the sole responsibility of women'. Clara Heitefuß, the author of a wartime pamphlet that dealt with this subject, maintained that:

> Children should experience and understand this 'Great Time' through their mothers. The enormous sacrifice which the men make by giving their blood and lives is for the future of the children. This should make women realise how precious their children are – in case they are not already aware of it.[5]

This quotation exemplifies the type of wartime rhetoric that presented children as the end for which the war was being fought. It was their future which made their fathers' sacrifice worthwhile. As the ultimate beneficiaries of wartime sacrifice children, it was felt, needed to be carefully guided and looked after. The role mothers had in teaching

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[2] See chapter 1: *Women's cultural mobilisation for war*, pp. 21-27.

[3] During the 18th century, the responsibility for the education of the offspring had been a male duty. The visible shift of the education of children to women's duties during the Napoleonic Wars attached new national importance to the role of women, see: Ann-Taylor Allen, *Feminismus und Mütterlichkeit in Deutschland 1800-1914* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 2000), Ute Planert, ed., *Nation, Politik und Geschlecht. Frauenbewegung und Nationalismus in der Moderne* (Frankfurt M.: Campus, 2000), p. 29.

[4] Doris Kaufmann, 'Die Ehre des Vaterlandes und die Ehre der Frauen oder der Kampf an der äußeren und inneren Front. Der Deutsch-Evangelische Frauenbund im Übergang vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik,' *Evangelische Theologie* 46 (1986), pp. 277-92.

[5] Clara Heitefuß, *In des Königs Heerbann* (Neumünster: Ihloff, 1914), p. 8.

children about the sacrifices that were made on their behalf had been realised and wartime publications addressed mothers directly to remind them of their duties.[6] The nature of children's education was also made the subject of pamphlets produced by male authors during the war. A good example of such a pamphlet was written by Albert Wagner in 1915. Wagner argued that 'the German mother will create the new German man, as part of a new reformation guided by the gospel.'[7] In this religiously inspired reading, children were the resurrection, and the inhabitants of the 'future paradise' envisaged for the post-war period. Wagner suggests that their upbringing should follow Christian guidelines. Some members of the women's movement made what was then quite a radical suggestion – that the state should provide financial assistance for mothers. The raising of children, it was argued, was a task of vital national importance that served everyone's interests and should be adequately and paid for. This would solve financial problems arising from pensions for widows and childcare.[8]

Gertrud Bäumer, head of the BDF, asserted that it was a basic motherly experience that 'strength and life had to be sacrificed so that new life could flourish even more richly'. She wrote that mothers 'have given their own life, happiness and hopes a hundred times for the happiness and future of their children'.

> The mother finds her destiny in sacrificing her present time to the youth and its future. She understands deep in her heart that it is the fate of this generation to buy with their blood a richer and more worthy life for the coming generation.[...][9]

This quotation draws a parallel to the wartime situation in which it was now the father's time to make a sacrifice for his children, something Bäumer suggests mothers always have done. Again, the emphasis is placed on children who would be raised in a renewed, better world after the war. This association was used to demand the sacrifice of men of fighting age. In contrast to the 'ideas of 1914', the fatherland or German culture were not presented as the primary and worthy cause for the which the war was being fought. Instead the children, the flesh and blood of German soldiers, are evoked

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[6] Hermine Proschko, 'Vaterlandsliebe,' in *Deutschlands Frauen und Deutschlands Krieg. Ein Rat-, Tat-, und Trostbuch. Gesammelte Blätter aus Frauenhand*, ed. Karl Jünger (Stuttgart: Lutz, 1916), p. 91.
[7] Albert Malte Wagner, *Der Krieg und die Aufgabe der deutschen Mutter* (Gotha: F.A. Perthes, 1915), p. 17.
[8] Karin Hausen, 'The German nation's obligations to the heroes' widows of World War 1,' in *Behind the lines. Gender and the two world wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, et al. (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 130-31.
[9] Gertrud Bäumer, *Der Krieg und die Frau*, ed. Ernst Jäckh, *Der deutsche Krieg. Politische Flugschriften*, vol. 15, (Stuttgart, Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1914), p. 10.

as the reason for which the war was carried on. Bäumer claimed in her pamphlet that women, owing to their biological function and social roles, had an instinctive understanding of the mechanics of sacrifice. They would thus be able to understand that their children's profit would eventually exceed the costs of wartime death.[10]

The following postcard, designed in 1915 by artist Elly Frank, illustrates in quite a light-hearted manner, the idyllic, easy post-war world that was occasionally imagined during the conflict. The image shows two children, a boy and a girl, in a highly romanticised pastoral setting. The two children are kissing each other shyly, presumably in the act of 'peace-making' that follows an argument or disagreement. Both children hold half an apple in their hands, quite likely the reason for the argument, which was resolved through sharing. Their rosy cheeks and the neat clothes they wear make the children seem clean and healthy. They seem happy, playful and carefree.



80 Elly Frank, *Making Peace*, 1915[11]

[10] Ibid., p. 11.
[11] Elly Frank, *Friedensschluss*, war postcard 1915, DHM.

Although the postcard is close to what would have been dismissed by many as *Kriegskitsch*, the symbolism applied by the artist is interesting and fits well into the concept of children as the future of the country. The war features only very indirectly in the image, through the caption *Making Peace*. The title not only describes the actions of the two children, but can also be transferred to the conflict which was dominating the adult world at the time. In this reading, the two children embody the unbroken, stable world that people wanted to return to after hostilities had ended. In light of the carnage of the war, the image seems naïve, a forced attempt to cling to a vision that sees happy children in the post-war world which would compensate for the blood sacrifice.

Depictions of widows in women's art were not always positive, however, and included examples with a darker outlook on the future. In contrast to women's wartime publications, artistic interpretations seemed to empathise with the difficulty of the situation in which pregnant widows and widows with small children found themselves. Perhaps the wartime publications were also meant to offer consolation and provide emotional support to mothers by emphasising that the women's children will eventually benefit from their father's sacrifice. On the other hand, the publications were intended to exercise social control. During the war, upper and middle class women became very much involved in wartime charity initiatives and welfare organisations and, through their positions, influenced funding decisions for social purposes. Often, they were responsible for writing reports on applicants for financial assistance and rewarded dutiful housewives with special clothes donations or food provisions.[12]

The class differences in German society during the war, and between women in particular, should therefore be taken into account when considering the circumstances of war widows. Those middle and upper class women who were financially well off may well have had a different outlook on the war and been more likely to view wartime sacrifice as a step towards a brighter future. For working-class women who had to look after their children, pressing concerns about their health and hunger were unlikely to have inspired feelings of worthwhile sacrifice. The artistic depictions therefore contain interesting statements of empathy for widows, expressed by artists from a generally middle-class background. It seems that the artists who produced images of war widows were more aware of their hardship than the female authors of women's booklets which were quite moralistic in tone. Not everyone was able to envisage a bright future after the

[12] Hausen, 'Widows of World War 1,' p. 136.

war, and children, moreover, may have been viewed as a burden by widows whose financial circumstances had been adversely affected by the war. So while small children represented hope for the future, because they had lost their fathers they also acted as public a reminder of the wartime sacrifice German men had made on behalf of German society.

War widows from poor backgrounds were viewed, along with their children, as a social problem during the war and their welfare was by no means sufficiently ensured by the state. The social status of the approximately 600,000 war widows,[13] and empathy with or recognition of their loss and bereavement, lagged far behind official calls for sacrifice for the fatherland and elevated statements about heroic death. The financial support for widowed mothers during the war was not based on social need but on the rank of the deceased soldier. 98 per cent of the casualties during the conflict were enlisted men. Under the Military Casualties' Dependants Law *(Militärhinterbliebenengesetz)* of 1907, the widows of these men received the lowest support of 33.33 marks monthly with another 14 marks for each child.[14] In comparison, the average working man earned about 25 marks a week.[15] In addition, the little money widows received rapidly lost its value as a result of the accelerating inflation rate. The path towards a state pension was hindered, moreover, by bureaucratic obstacles. Welfare organisations provided vital practical assistance in filling out forms and organising child care. Some welfare and charity organisations even financially supplemented state pensions or supported those widows whose claims for relief were considered ineligible. In such cases the cause of the husband's death was not considered a result of military service. Such a judgement would be made if the man was missing, or had committed suicide, or was executed at the front, and hence the surviving family were entirely dependent on their own earnings and on charity.[16]

Wartime concern about the social circumstances of war widows was not generally informed by their misery, but viewed, rather, as an obligation to the soldier who had sacrificed his life. Throughout the war, no thorough legal revision of the Military Casualties' Dependants Law was carried out although slight amendments were

[13] This is an estimated number for the entire period of the war, see ibid., p. 129.
[14] Denkschrift des Reichsarbeitsministeriums betreffend die bisherigen Aufwendungen für Kriegshinterbliebene vom 16. Oktober 1916,' in *Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags*, vol. 339, 1276-80, 1281, quoted in ibid., p.132.
[15] Belinda Davis, *Home fires burning. Food, politics and everyday life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: 2000), p. 37.
[16] On the role of welfare organisations in society see Young-Sun Hong, 'World War I and the German welfare state: Gender, religion and the paradoxes of Modernity,' in *Society, Culture and the State in Germany, 1870-1930*, ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 345-69.

agreed upon at a Reichstag conference on 'Social welfare for War Widows and Orphans' in 1915.[17] Officials were slow to adopt the idea of pensions for widows. While the state allowance for wives of living soldiers was raised twice in 1916, pensions for dependents of the fallen remained the same. Demands for an inflation supplement were rejected and widows' municipal rent allowances ceased with the death of their husband and were not re-issued until 1917. Only in January 1919, a once-off inflation supplement was paid to widows and it was not until 1920 that legislation was passed which for the first time considered child maintenance as a basis for calculating pensions for war widows.[18]

The Widow by Käthe Kollwitz, reproduced below, illustrates a case in which a woman's pregnancy is not used to offer comfort or hope but is represented as a cause for despair and worry. This is communicated through the facial expression and body language of the depicted woman. She seems exhausted and has clearly experienced hardship. The rags the woman wears and her uncombed hair disclose her social status. Her poverty and helplessness are emphasised by her raised but empty hands which allow the viewer to see her pregnant belly. The wrinkles on her forehead and her half-opened mouth suggest a life in hardship and emphasise the general tragedy of her situation. Bearing a child whose father had been killed in the war could not have been easy for any woman. But for women from a lower or working-class background, economic hardship determined their outlook on the situation and the immediate pain of bereavement served to further aggravate their perceived hopelessness.

[17] See *Soziale Fürsorge für Kriegerwitwen und Kriegerwaisen, Allgemeine Deutsche Tagung einberufen vom Deutschen Verein für Armenpflege und Wohltätigkeit am 16. und 17. April 1915, im Plenarsitzungssaal des Reichstags in Berlin*, Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen (Munich: 1915), quoted in Hausen, 'Widows of World War 1,' p. 129.

[18] Ibid., p. 133. The Act was known as the 'National Relief Law' *(Reichsversorgungsgesetz)*.



81 Käthe Kollwitz, *The Widow*, 1917[19]

From 1917 on, Käthe Kollwitz produced sketches for a series about the war which she had planned to publish. *The Widow*, also entitled *The Pregnant Woman* in different early sketches, was intended to be part of a series of images that, as Kollwitz wrote in her diary, 'would comprise elements of what I have to say about the war'.[20] Käthe Kollwitz continued to revise her sketches over the following years and it was not until 1922/23 that her war series was completed. She was only satisfied with her images after she began to experiment which woodcuts, which she felt produced the desired intensity.[21] The example reprinted below is the version of *The Widow* that was ultimately included in Kollwitz's war series. The woodcut still depicts a lone pregnant widow, but the impression of her desolation and loneliness has increased. No longer is

[19] Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Witwe*, etching (1917), printed in, Martin Fritsch, ed., *Käthe Kollwitz. Zeichnung, Grafik, Plastik. Bestandskatalog des Käthe-Kollwitz-Museums Berlin* (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 1999), p. 189.

[20] 17 December 1917, Käthe Kollwitz, 'Die Tagebücher, 1908-1943,' ed. Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz (Berlin: Siedler, 1999), p. 346.

[21] Kollwitz describes her dissatisfaction with the artistic styles used for the earlier drafts of the war series, drawings and etchings. Having been 'blown away' by woodcuts from Ernst Barlach, which she admired in Berlin, Kollwitz began woodcutting herself, compare diary entry from 25 June 1920, in ibid., pp. 467-77.

the woman looking directly at the viewer. Instead, her head is tilted to her shoulder and her eyes are closed, reinforcing the sense that the widow is deeply isolated and withdrawn from the events around her. She is comforting herself and embraces her unborn child, neither expecting or wanting support or assistance.



82 Käthe Kollwitz, *The Widow I*, 1922/23[22]

Around the time in 1917 when Kollwitz began drawing sketches for this piece, she also explored possible consequences of widowhood and economic deprivation that neither featured in the patriotic wartime writings nor has been researched in the secondary literature of the war: the suicide of widows and their children. Kollwitz wrote about her idea to compose a woodcut of a woman floating in water with a child on her chest in December 1917.[23] Unfortunately no early drafts of this image exist, but

[22] Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Witwe I*, woodcut (1922/23), leaf 4, of the series 'War', Käthe Kollwitz Museum Berlin.
[23] 17 December 1917, Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher, 1908-1943*, pp. 345-46.

Kollwitz's own description of the idea in her diary suggests that it resembled the final version from the war series which she completed in 1922/23:

> Made plans today for a new etching: A young woman floating in the water with a child on her body. Was thinking of a flat relief. Not impossible. But an etching is probably better. Only shades. Dark streaming water. Contours of a body. Focus on her head. She smiles proudly, secluded, but already departed. The child is not smiling. But it accompanies the mother. Trust. Being close to her. Yes – this could be beautiful. They float in the water like an island. Entirely separated from the living.[24]

The completed woodcut entitled *The Widow II* and largely reflects the notes Kollwitz made in 1917. Her depiction of the suicide of a young woman with a child is quite shocking and goes further than most images depicting women's wartime suffering. Kollwitz shows a woman who, in a state of utter despair, saw no escape from emotional suffering, financial deprivation or social disdain, but to take her own life and that of her child. The image is an interesting social document, as it may well depict a case that Kollwitz was familiar with. It could also be an attempt to represent a realistic alternative for women at the time, an escape from the pain and suffering caused by the war. Kollwitz, whose own son was killed in 1914, struggled for years to cope with the loss. Her empathy with those who suffered because of the war may, as a result, have been even more intense. Generally, her artistic focus was directed towards the life and condition of the working classes, and of women in particular. Her approach to suicide, as an indirect result of the war, is similar to much of her work which concentrates on depicting the fate of those outside the light of public interest.

[24] Early December 1917, ibid., pp. 343.



83 Käthe Kollwitz, *The Widow II*, 1922/23[25]

The woodcut reproduced above depicts the tragic suicide of a war-widow. The scene is set at night-time with moonlight reflecting from the two bodies and the surface of the water. If it were not for the expression on the woman's face, one might think both figures were peacefully resting. The woman's head however is bent backward and her body seems stiff already. Her mouth is half-open and her face appears marked by wrinkles and shadows caused by stress or hardship. Thus the impression of her death is less peaceful than Kollwitz may have originally been intended. The dead woman holds an infant on her chest, and the child appears equally lifeless. Yet the tone of the piece is not accusatory and Kollwitz withholds judgment on the actions of the young mother. The clear tragedy of the scene raises questions about the level of pain and misery that could have led to such an end. The image suggests that if anything should be under scrutiny, it is the circumstances forcing a young woman to drown herself and her child.

The fate of war-widows is very much a neglected theme in the historiography of the war. In 1930, a collection of written accounts by women, widowed between 1914 and 1918, was published. The following quotation is taken from this collection and provides a vivid insight into the difficulties widowed women with children experienced in trying to make ends meet.

[25] Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Witwe II*, woodcut (1922/23), Käthe Kollwitz Museum Berlin.

> In August 1914, after five years of happy marriage, my husband was called up for military service. He left me behind with three children, aged one, two, and three years. In September 1916, he was wounded and in December sent back home to work for three months. On March 17, he died from his war injuries. A that time I was ten weeks pregnant...The oldest boy started school at Easter. I had to go on poor relief for six months because [my husband's] war injury was being investigated. I received sixteen marks support weekly and the rent money. The money was already greatly devalued and covered only the bare necessities. Clothing or other purchases were out of the question... On September 24 my last boy was born, a child who never knew his father. On September 26, my second day in childbed, I was informed that the pension had been approved. .. Thus I could support my children myself and in addition work as a domestic servant part-time. I stayed up working many nights while others slept and when morning came returned exhausted to my household duties.[26]

Although this description was given in hindsight, it appears to be a rational account of the family's financial situation. Neither bitterness, nor accusations colour the quotation, although the fact that the woman had to engage in nightly work to secure an extra income for raising four small children indicates that the widow's pension had been insufficient. In her study of soldiers' wives, Birthe Kundrus examines the multiple loads that working mothers, whose husbands were at the front, had to carry during the war, which is described as an extreme burden.[27] The distinctive circumstances of working widows, however, are not taken into account.

The following painting by Käte Lassen portrays, in common with the Kollwitz image reproduced above, a pregnant widow. She wears simple clothes, and her head is covered with a dark scarf. Her expression seems to be one of pride but her pain and bereavement seem to be carved into her face in visible lines. The widow gazes into the distance, and her mouth forms a line, creating an expression of deep sadness. The woman's left arm is protectively placed above her pregnant belly, emphasising her condition. She is still wearing her wedding ring on her finger, a sign of faithfulness and love to her husband beyond death. Her right arm, propped against her hip as if defying her inevitable fate, makes her seem strong and prepared to continue life instead of despairing and giving up.

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[26] Helene Hurwitz-Stranz ed., *Kriegerwitwen gestalten ihr Schicksal. Lebenskämpfe deutscher Kriegerwitwen nach eigenen Darstellungen* (Berlin: Heymann, 1931), pp. 85-88, quoted in Hausen, 'Widows of World War 1,' p. 127.

[27] Birthe Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen, Familienpolitik und Geschlechterverhältnisse im Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: Christians, 1995), pp. 178ff. .



84 Käte Lassen, *The Widow*, 1919[28]

During the last phase of the conflict, and in its immediate aftermath, Lassen produced a range of images featuring simple fishermen's wives that attempted to capture their emotional reactions to the wartime events. Lassen was based in Northern Germany for the duration of the conflict and the women in her images were mostly placed in the natural surroundings of the seaside. Women are depicting lamenting on beaches, seeking solitude in sand dunes or gazing out over the sea, as if comforted by the stability and regularity of nature. The woman in *The Widow* also appears in an outdoor setting. The image dates from 1919, after hostilities had ended and the armistice had been signed, but the consequences of the war are still very visible.

Prior to the First World War, widows were not regularly depicted in women's art. The frequent portrayal of widows during the war directly reflected their increased presence in society. The ink drawing by Luise Deicher reproduced below is simply

[28] Käte Lassen, *Die Witwe*, oil painting (1919), printed in Ludwig Rohling, *Käte Lassen. Das Werk der Malerin* (Flensburg: Christian Wolff, 1956), plate 47.

entitled *Widow* and also dates from 1919, and represents further evidence for the continuing presence of the war in women's lives. Deicher only very roughly indicates the objects in her drawing. The widow appears as a large dark shadow, with a light spot in place of her face. She holds an infant on her lap, wrapped up in white clothing and also depicted as a raw outline.



85 Luise Deicher, *Widow*, 1919[29]

As expression and body language are not central to Deicher's drawing, the essence of the piece is to be found in the composition itself and the strikingly vague style employed by the artist. Deicher's image radiates a dark, almost mythical atmosphere. The black figure of the woman which almost fills out the entire image is omnipresent and emphasises the tragedy of her situation and bereavement without making a statement about the social situation of the woman. The focus is therefore placed on widowhood itself and attention is drawn to the existence of widows and their loss. Stylistically, the figure resembles an apparition – someone who is there, but quickly forgotten. This may be a comment on how widows were treated socially during the war. Disrespect for families without a male breadwinner was common and often

[29] Luise Deicher, *Witwe*, ink drawing (1919), printed in Ingrid von der Dollen, *Malerinnen im 20.Jahrhundert. Bildkunst der 'verschollenen' Generation. Geburtsjahrgänge 1890-1910* (Munich: Hirmer, 2000), plate 22.

replaced sympathy.[30] The child, on the other hand, adds light and life to the drawing and thereby adds a glimpse of hope. In contrast to the patriotic women's publications, the child is not presented as the beneficiary of the soldier's sacrifice; it is presented, rather, as a reason for the woman to continue living and overcome her bereavement.

An impression of hope embodied through children is even more evident in the following image by Sella Hasse. Again, the child in the image does not appear to represent the 'glorious future' of Germany as envisaged in wartime pamphlets, but it does represent hope. The note of hopefulness is reinforced by the flower in the child's hand. The scene here reproduced is an extract from a larger image of lamenting, lonely women. The child is on its mother's lap, and twists a flower in her hand. The mother is wearing a long gown that covers her from head to toe, the clothes of mourning. Thus, the woman is a widow too and has been deserted – as the title suggests – by her husband and possibly other sources of support.

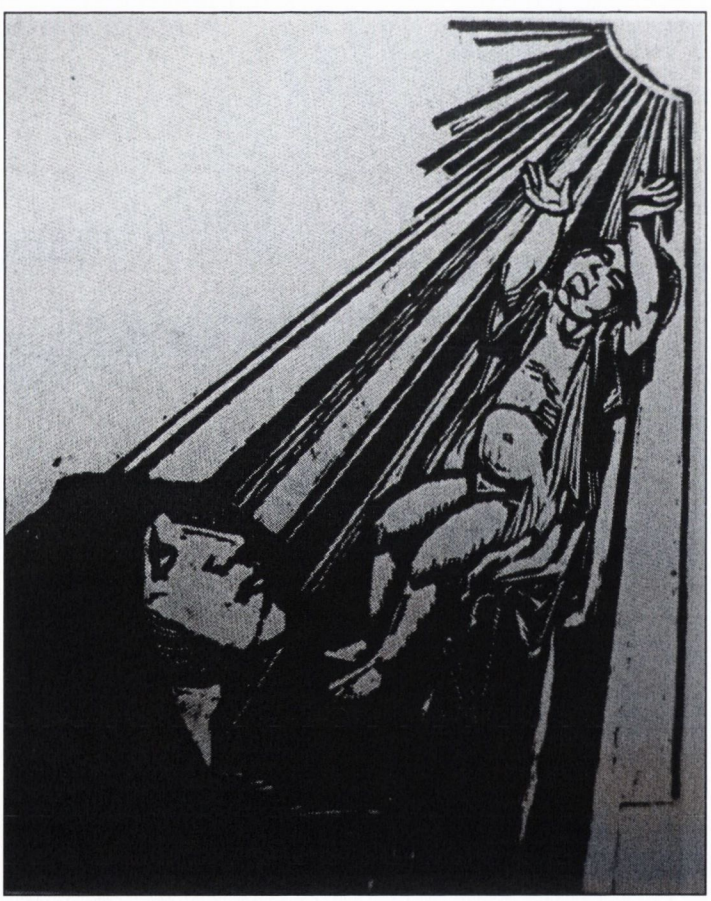


86 Sella Hasse, *The Deserted*, 1918[31]

[30] Hausen, 'Widows of World War 1,' p. 129.
[31] Sella Hasse, *Die Verlassenen*, brush (1918), Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

The child with the flower is a very obvious symbol of vitality and the existence of hope and beauty in life, even in periods dominated by death and loss. The child seems to be in its own little world, holding on to the flower, the only other sign of beauty and joy amongst the grey clad, sad-faced women.

The next example shows an intriguing depiction of a widow, also by Sella Hasse. The linocut is entitled *War-Widow* and was issued as a post-card in 1918 by a Hamburg publishing house. The image portrays a young woman, wearing a black hood over her head. Her face is clearly visible, and she seems to be gazing in anticipation at her infant, whom she is lifting towards rays of light, possibly sunshine. The child himself is almost naked, but lifts both arms towards the light. The head of the child is tilted and the mouth opened, but the eyes are closed. The body language and facial expression of both, mother and child are not marked by bereavement and sadness as in the previous images. Instead, it seems that they are expecting something to happen.



87 Sella Hasse, *War-Widow*, 1918[32]

[32] Sella Hasse, *Kriegswitwe*, linocut (1918), postcard issued by Graphik and Singer, Hamburg in 1918, Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

The arrangement of the three elements in the image – mother, child and rays of light, can lead to different assumptions. One possible reading of the image is that the child is being placed within the rays of light as a symbol for hope and life. If, on the other hand, one focuses on the gesture of the woman who is reaching out to her child, it is possible to understand this as a form of presentation. Since the physical father of the child fell in the war and had sacrificed his life, the widow might be calling on the one father the child still had: God in heaven. Thus she could be asking for a divine blessing, or spiritual support. An element of anticipation is conveyed in the image, also through the raised arms of the child who is prepared to embrace whatever descends from the heavens. In contrast to most of the previous images, Sella Hasse's linocut is not marked by desperation. Even the bereavement of the widow appears bearable on account of the hope entailed in the design. It is possible that after an initial phase of mourning and pain a more positive outlook on the future was permitted by the presence of children.

Hasse engaged intensely with the relationship between motherhood and mass dying and emphasised the importance of creating a new generation to restore a universal respect for life. At Easter, 1918, she published a pamphlet under her anagram pen-name, Essa Halles, in which she analysed the 'Social importance of women's reproductive organs'. Witnessing the carnage of the war over years had motivated her to write the pamphlet, which becomes evident in the first paragraph.

> The longer we have to watch how Europe's male strength bled to death and trickle into nothingness; the longer we lament the heaps of corpses of perishing men – a crying shame – and the longer we see millions of precious human seed wiped out with these men who were robbed of their lives, the more we will turn to women's fertility and their ability to give life. And the stronger will be our belief in the invincibility of nature. The woman, the mother of mankind, is more powerful than death. Over centuries, she has embodied the shine of new life: on a basic straw bed or on an ornate throne, the godly child is delivered from her womb, illuminated with Madonna's halo.[33]

Hasse's description is based on biological considerations. Women's ability to give life is presented as a way of undoing or neutralising the death toll of the war. Men's wartime death, however, is neither presented in an embellished fashion, nor as a requirement for a better future for the children. It is not the male sacrifice that is glorified and mythically enhanced by Hasse, then, but motherhood and women's fertility. In this respect, her outlook differs from women's wartime writing in which

[33] Essa Halles, *Zur sozialen Verwertung der weiblichen Fortpflanzungsorgane* (Leipzig: Xenien, 1918), p. 1.

men's sacrifice becomes a necessity for their children's future. But despite the different foci, motherhood in both cases represents hope, the future, and a forward-looking approach to life.

Sella Hasse also designed the cover for her booklet, a linocut dominated by a woman giving birth to a child. Mother and child are surrounded by rays of light which perhaps represents the illumination through Madonna's halo, as mentioned in the quotation. The woman herself also resembles depictions of Mary, in particular through the hood that covers her head. On the other hand, the hood could also represent a gown of mourning and the source for the light could also be the sun or the moon. The representation of the figure is very sexual; both breasts of the woman are clearly visible. It seems that Hasse is presenting a view into the woman's womb, where the child has already turned into the birth position, with the feet up and facing down. The child is depicted in white, which represents innocence, hope and possibly, again, the light of Mary's halo. The woman in the image remains dark, only her face and breasts reflect some light. She appears calm and her eyes seem to be facing her womb. Hasse thereby captures a moment that entirely focuses on the miracle of birth and the life giving power of women.



88 Sella Hasse, *cover illustration*, 1918[34]

[34] Sella Hasse, linocut, cover illustration for her booklet *Zur sozialen Verwertung der weiblichen Fortpflanzungsorgane* (Leipzig: Xenien Verlag, 1918).

This cover illustration, like the commentary within booklet, reflects Hasse's mythological view of motherhood. The concentration on mother and child excludes the father from the traditional family grouping. The woman, moreover, is alone, no midwife or other female company are present to assist during the birth. Amidst the mass dying caused by the war, Hasse reminds people of the miracle of life. She seems to be demanding a pause to recapture the lost respect for life. The association with Mary and Jesus seems deliberate, both appear to be cast in sacred light and support her appeal to value and encourage motherhood.

Hasse, mother of a twenty year old daughter at the time of the war, had given birth herself and was thoroughly informed about legal, medical, financial, and moral aspects of motherhood, which she addresses in her booklet. Her intention also seemed to have been to provide both information and opinions on reproductive and women's issues. These included the treatment of unmarried mothers whose husbands had fallen in the conflict. Hasse argued that they should be treated as the equal of married mothers because the sacred nature of motherhood should be honoured. Thus she uses her emphasis on the value of motherhood to increase the perception of women's worthiness which she saw entirely in their ability to recreate life. Consequently she put arguments forward to encourage mothers to breastfeed their children, was critical of abortions and gynaecologists in general. She advised against operations when reasons for abdominal problems remained uncertain. In her eyes the doctors were far too quick to perform operations, which in turn often left women infertile. In wartime, this would be an especially critical field, argued Hasse, as this diminished the hope for a child that could console a woman over the loss of a loved husband.[35] For the moral constraints of the time, Hasse wrote very openly about new medical developments. Although her focus on maternalism and the well-being of mothers was generally compatible with existing ideas of women's roles at the time, her frank approach would have been considered as a breach of a taboo.

Hasse's pamphlet should also be considered with attention to the class structure in German society. The artist herself was from an educated bourgeois background. Thematically, however, physical labour represented the artist's favourite *sujet*. She was therefore familiar with the social situation of the working classes, but considerations of financial obstacles for bringing up children or the burden of working mothers did not

[35] Halles, *Zur sozialen Verwertung der weiblichen Fortpflanzungsorgane*, p. 17.

enter her booklet. The intended readership of this booklet were women from a well off background, who might share her idealisation and celebration of motherhood.

A positive attitude towards motherhood and the joy of motherhood were also depicted in women's art of the time. On the surface seemingly unrelated to the conflict, these images represent a conscious disregard of the war by picturing a world consisting of women and children only. A depiction of Mary with the baby Jesus is per se nothing special. During the war and in the post-war period, however, it was the mourning mother Mary which dominated artistic depictions.[36] The Mary depicted in the image below, however, is a young happy mother, smiling at her baby. The colour red chosen for the lithograph also adds a lighter tone that contrasts with black, the dominant colour in graphic art.



89 Rose Friedrich, *Mary with Child*, 1919[37]

[36] See chapter 5, '*Mater dolorosa* on the battlefield', and Volker Probst, *Bilder vom Tode. Eine Studie zum deutschen Kriegerdenkmal in der Weimarer Republik am Beispiel des Pietà-Motives und seiner profanierten Varianten* (Universit of Hamburg, Diss.: Wayasbah, 1986).

[37] Rose Friedrich, *Maria mit dem Kind*, lithograph (1919), printed in Neue Chemnitzer Kunsthütte, ed., *Künstler Abseits vom Wege. Künstlergruppe Chemnitz* (Chemnitz: Künstlergruppe Chemnitz, 1999), p. 38.

This is an idyllic image of mother and child, and the absence of Joseph the father does not disturb the peaceful atmosphere of the design. The surroundings are only indicated in the image, but could represent the stable, which places the scene shortly after the birth of Jesus. Both, mother and child are cast in a happy glow. The absence of any overtly religious or mythical symbolism places the focus on the happiness of the mother and the miracle of birth. It is a simple image, yet full of hope and life. Friedrich produced the lithograph in 1919, after the conflict had ended. Whereas other artists were still caught up in portraying the misery of the war, Friedrich might have deliberately chosen to envisage happy motherhood despite the loss and absence of so many men.

Although not a portrayal of happy motherhood, Kollwitz's lithograph *The Mothers*, represents a group of mothers who are clinging on to their children and held them in close body contact. The emotional bond between the mothers and their children appears strong. Yet it seems that the mothers are as vulnerable as their children and relied on their offspring to keep body and soul together. Again, men are absent, and a woman on the left is mourning and crying into her palms. Presumably, this is a group of war widows and orphans. As the above image, it also dates from 1919, but is bare of openly displayed happiness or sense of peace. The presence of the bereavement and poverty caused by the war is overwhelming.



90 Käthe Kollwitz, *The Mothers*, 1919[38]

[38] Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Mütter*, lithograph (1919), Frankfurter Städelmuseum.

On the other hand, the inclusion of so many small children in the image adds, despite the desperation of their mothers, an underlying sense of hope. These mothers struggled, but did not kill themselves with their children as depicted in *The Widow II* above. From that perspective, the children represent a very important element in the image, as it is for their sake, that the mothers endure life.

Children were also used as an object to mobilise their mothers politically for the elections after the armistice in 1918. The revolutionary government coalition of Social Democrats and Independent Social Democrats had agreed to introduce universal suffrage which, for the first time, included women. Tactical political considerations of the SPD, USPD and the workers'- and soldiers' councils were ended at a congress in Berlin in December 1918, when the majority of the delegates decided to hold general elections for a German national assembly. The German population was asked to vote for delegates who would design and negotiate a new constitution for Germany. The electoral poster by Martha Jäger, reprinted below, was designed shortly after the decision. Curiously, the poster does not campaign for a specific party, or for a particular delegate. Instead, the sole intention was to activate women to use their vote to secure peace and bread for their children.



91 Martha Jäger, *Your Children Need Peace and Bread Therefore Women Vote!* 1918[39]

This poster finally represents a design that no longer demanded material or personal sacrifice. Times have moved on and, thematically, the poster focuses on the maternal desire to build a safe environment for children. The poster is an attempt to visually combine the traditional role of women as mothers with their new role as citizens. In the poster, women are not confronted with any political issue other than the well-being of their children. The image depicts a mother cutting bread for her two sons. The two boys are looking up to their mother in anticipation of receiving food. Women are thus reminded of those dependent on them and stabilising the country by voting is presented as a serious responsibility. The message of the poster is simple, but it may have appealed to women disillusioned by the politics of the war and apathetic due to economic hardship. Jäger possibly felt that while women may not have been motivated enough to vote for their own sakes, mothers might be moved to vote because of the prospect of improving the living conditions for their children. The drawing again

[39] Martha Jäger, *Eure Kinder brauchen Frieden und Brot. Darum Frauen: wählt!* (1918) IWM PST 7917.

depicts a fatherless family, placing the sole responsibility for bringing up children on the mothers.

The promise of the poster is deceptive, suggesting that simply voting would provide the means to gain peace and bread. Perhaps, after the upheaval of war and confusion of the revolution, a return to orderly political relations was suggested to improve the economic situation. Expectations for life in the post-war world had been reduced considerably compared to the visions presented in the wartime pamphlets quoted above. The demand for peace and bread reveals that ordinary and practical needs replaced the imagined glorious future of Germany. The poster presents children and the ability to look after them as the one reason worth voting for. Perhaps this reflects how women felt at the time and perhaps this had been the most compelling reason to politicise women and drive them to re-engage with life and politics. Women were suddenly part of the political system, and the poster was appealing to them to seize their votes and exercise influence – although the political posts for which they voted appeared not to have been of primary importance.

Women not only had a new political role in the country, the re-building and re-population of post-war Germany depended on their contribution. This is at least the impression conveyed by the lithograph *The New Seed* by artist Martha Schrag. The image depicts a farming woman who is energetically walking along ploughed ground, spreading sowing seeds from a basket. The woman holds her head high and is proudly carrying out her field work. The ground appears furrowed, rough and uneven, yet the woman is completing her task unswervingly. The image carries an obvious double meaning. On the one hand, it mirrors women's achievements in farming during the war, where they faced new responsibilities and engaged in physical labour that used to be carried out by their husbands. Some of these women whose husbands fell during the conflict or suffered from severe physical wounds had to continue carrying out what were considered as male tasks. It emphasises women's roles as the breadwinners in families and actual producers of food for their children. The woman's strength in the image is emphasised, she is working on her own without aid from machines, farm hands or male farmers. Again, the world for which the woman was planting the new seed was one without men. The poster may also reflect the understanding that the future of the country lay in people's own hands. Even if the future of the nation and the political

shape of the state remained uncertain, people were nevertheless able to rebuild their own homes and lives on their piece of land.



92 Martha Schrag, *The New Seed*, 1920[40]

Another way of understanding the image would be to see the 'new seed' as a metaphor for the future generation that will be born and raised by women. It is an image of growing life that is forward-looking and full of hope and, in the long term, would replace what had been lost during the war. The image dates from 1920, a time when the wounds of the war were still fresh in people's minds and the human losses were still very visible. Children therefore still represented a means of healing the wounds of the war and presented hope for the future and a fresh start. Women's contribution was vital, and their task of educating and raising the new generations secured them a prestigious position in society. The man's role on the other hand seemed to lose its importance.

[40] Martha Schrag, *Die neue Saat*, lithograph, leaf of the series 'The storms' (1920), printed in, Gerhard Hahn, *Leben und Werk der Malerin und Grafikerin Martha Schrag, 1870-1957* (Chemnitz (Karl-Marx Stadt): Bezirkskunstzentrum, 1982), plate 24.

According to the image, men hardly seem necessary for planting the new seed of the country. This indicates that the upheaval and re-orientation of the social roles for men and women in German society were fundamentally influenced by the experience of the war.

Conclusion

The images reprinted in this chapter vividly represent the social changes in the structure of society as a result of the war. They provide glimpses into the manless world of widowed mothers. Recognition of their existence in society was low and state support for their situation meagre, and women's art appears to be the only medium that addressed their fate. The number of war widows and orphans increased rapidly and their provision – although inadequate – is understood as the beginning of the modern welfare state.[41] The personal loss and bereavement experienced by widows, combined with their economic hardship and duties as mothers, presented a burden that was almost unbearable for women from working class backgrounds. Desperation and poverty turned these women and their children into the victims of the war.

However, the images were not all dominated by hardship and loss, but were complemented by strong symbols of hope: the children of the widows. An elevated idea of motherhood and the life-giving power of women enabled widows to deal with the loss of their husbands. The value of motherhood was emphasised and socially important roles for were created women. In contrast to the material examined in chapter five, in which motherhood was praised for the soldiers it had produced, motherhood here became important for rebuilding a life worth living for. Children represent comfort and consolation. It is for their sake that women overcome bereavement and hardship. Thus children were seen as helping mothers and society to deal with the experience of war and bereavement caused by the losses. Children were vital part of the way the future was imagined. It was for their sake that mothers were asked to participate in the elections, and it was the hope and happiness of a new generation that filled women with hope and energy.

[41] Young-Sun Hong, 'Gender and the politics of welfare reform in World War I Germany,' *Social History* 17 (1992), Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of a new world. Maternalist politics and the origins of the welfare states* (New York, London: Routledge, 1993).

Conclusion

For women on the German home front, the First World War had its own evolution. This was determined by the political sequence of the events and linked to the soldiers' experiences, but nevertheless represented a distinctly female view of the conflict that was informed by women's lived wartime experiences. Women's artistic testimony produced between 1914 and 1919 bears witness to the major impact the war had on women's lives and reveals how extreme events and intense emotions marked the time of war.

In 1914, many bourgeois women, including members of the women's movement, writers and artists, emphatically claimed to be part of the German nation and pledged that, in their role as *Kulturträgerinnen* they would contribute significantly to the national war effort. Initially, therefore, many bourgeois women either greeted the war with enthusiasm as they believed it would have a cathartic effect on the German nation, accepted it as a necessary political move to defend the *Heimat*, or understood it as a terrible but irrevocable phenomenon. As can be seen in women's art, however, the nature of the war as it unfolded proved to be unexpected and unprecedented. The disillusionment caused by the war[1] and the enormous cost of the war changed women's perceptions of the conflict and their roles therein.

The body of women's wartime art amounts to an assertion of their participation in the sacrifice demanded, and suffering caused, in the course of the long war – the lasting fear, incessant sacrifice, and the continual confrontation with death. Ultimately, the war cost the lives of over two million German soldiers. For female artists as well as for many other women on the home front, this had several implications. They were confronted with repeated news of death and many lost husbands, lovers, friends, sons, brothers or fathers in the conflict. The casualties occurred with a frequency that had been unparalleled in previous conflicts, but which reflected the character of modern warfare and the destructive power of highly developed technological weapons.

Women's art, moreover, not only reflects women's losses, it expresses women's loneliness in their bereavement, the pain of their grief, and the desperation of their

[1] Sigmund Freud, 'Zeitgemäßes über Krieg und Tod,' in *Sigmund Freud. Studienausgabe*, vol. 9, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, et al. (Frankfurt M.: Fischer, 1974), pp. 35-54.

search for consolation and meaning in wartime sacrifice. In art, the novel experience of mass death manifested itself in 'realist' and 'symbolic' representations. The 'realist' depictions of death and dying, while not presenting eye witness accounts from the battlefield, nevertheless reveal that a number of women were prepared to confront the terrible reality of wartime death. An in-depth examination of women's wartime art thus challenges the conventional historiographical view that death was a taboo subject in western society,[2] and that women on the home front unhesitatingly glorified death on the battlefield.[3]

The burial practices of the German army during the First World War were informed by military and financial considerations. The majority of soldiers were buried in cemeteries behind the front-lines and repatriations were generally avoided. This meant that civilian women could neither attend the funerals, nor care for the graves of their loved ones. This left a void in women's lives and hindered the process of coming to terms with loss. Women's art therefore took on a crucial function in acting as a substitute by – fictionally – enabling women to take part in funerals, and tend to and visit the graves of fallen soldiers. Women's wartime art also testifies that the mourning process, and different forms of remembrance and commemoration, began in August 1914, long before the Armistice, and long before official war memorials were erected. The period of the war itself, therefore, constitutes part of the history of mourning and bereavement.

Depictions of mourning mothers on the battlefield gained particular relevance in women's art of the First World War and served to emphasise women's contribution to wartime sacrifice. Comparisons with the fate of Mary elevated mothers' status, drew attention to their loss, and called for the respect that was paid to Jesus' mother Mary. These depictions of the *mater dolorosa* and the *pietà* in a wartime setting mark the beginning of a new iconographical tradition as they were taken out of their conventional religious context and used to represent the mothers in wartime Germany. The art produced during previous German conflicts does not employ this type of symbolism,

[2] Werner Fuchs, *Todesbilder in der modernen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp, 1973).
[3] Bernd Hüppauf, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg,' in *Ansichten vom Krieg. Vergleichende Studien zum Ersten Weltkrieg in Literatur und Gesellschaft*, ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Königstein: Forum Academicum, 1984), pp. 55-91.

whereas it was frequently employed internationally in the aftermath of the First World War and is still, today, applied to wartime scenarios.[4]

Women's artistic use of religious iconography, moreover, served to add a particular significance to the death of German soldiers and the cause for which they had died. The war was given the character of a crusade in the name of God and on behalf of others. The soldier's sacrificial death, in this reading of the conflict, was compared to that of Jesus, and thus took on a sacred character and became worthwhile. Again, depictions placing the ordinary soldier in the position of the suffering Christ represented a new iconographical departure. Earlier conflicts were certainly fought as crusades and biblical analogies were used to justify wars, yet the death and suffering of soldiers had not traditionally been represented as directly analogous to the Passion of Christ. In their attempt to impose meaning on wartime death, female artists could not have chosen a more sacred or more well-known symbolism in western culture than that of the Passion.

It was not only the violence and aggression of total war that, once started, appeared impossible to halt. The empathy, loss and mourning experienced by many women also seemed to work in perpetual motion. Demonstrating loyalty to the troops and to the nation's cause became a war aim in itself. Neither the sacrificial death of a son or a husband, nor their idealism, could be betrayed by denouncing the war and demanding its end. If this were allowed to happen how could the sacrifices then become worthwhile? The soldiers' sacrifices were only worthwhile if the war was won and idealistic notions were eventually put into practice. Perhaps the only thing worse than the experience of losing someone in the conflict would be the discovery that their sacrifice had been in vain. Children, and the future generation, therefore became crucially important as the ultimate beneficiaries of their fathers' and the soldiers' sacrifice.

Whereas the usage of traditional iconography illustrates the function of art as a sanctuary in the search for comfort and consolation, art also served to create an alternative truth which can be seen as part of the process of coming to terms with the nature and scale of traumatic wartime experiences. The conflict was consequently

[4] For example, in 2004 the American artist John Emerson created a pietà design that features the Statue of Liberty as Mary, holding a dead body wrapped in an American flag in her arms. This design was produced for a poster and is accessible at: www.norncposters.org/posters/pieta.jpg.

presented as a noble, or even sacred endeavour and not seen as an aggressive grasp for world power. Women's art interpreted the war as a painful, yet meaningful event and presented and asserted the value of sacrifice in a tangible form. As sources, the images women produced during the war provide access to a whole range of female feelings and emotions, engendered by traumatic experiences of war, which were not noted down in writing but expressed artistically.

The effects of the experience of war, which are so visible in women's wartime art, shaped society for some time to come. People's responses to grief, public acknowledgement of sacrifice, the need for consolation and healing and the hope for a better future all influenced how contemporaries understood the conflict, determined its meaning, and framed the manner in which the war was remembered. The reverberating effect of the experience of the First World War can be seen in the production of art that referred to the war until the early 1930s. This illustrates the significance not only of the war as an artistic theme but also that of art as a medium. The experience of the First World War also influenced the critical manner in which many female artists responded to the advance of National Socialism in Germany and the resumption of aggressive politics. Moreover, the works of over ten of the forty artists included in this study, were denounced as degenerate in the 1930s.

The body of art produced by women during the First World War shows what exactly, for contemporaries, were the prevailing issues and experiences of that time. As very personal accounts, the perceptions and interpretations of events in art differ from those found in official documents. Nonetheless the artists during the First World War were contemporaries who bore witness to their time and whose visual accounts reflect their enthusiasm and disillusionment, fear and hope, bereavement and consolation and therefore represent and reveal their historical truth. The significance of art as medium is thereby highlighted for it is uniquely well placed to capture how an actual historical event, such as the First World War, was understood and interpreted by contemporaries. Visual sources are thus of concern not only to the art historian but to historians more generally, for they enable these personal experiences to be included in a historical narrative.

Abbreviations

BDF	Bund deutscher Frauenvereine
DA	Dehmel-Archiv, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg
Eph	Ephesians
cl	colon
GSPK	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz
HLA	Helene Lange Archiv
IWM	Imperial War Museum
LAB	Landesarchiv Berlin
NFD	Nationaler Frauendienst
NL	Nachlass (personal papers)
VdBK	Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen
VF	Vaterländischer Frauenverein
SAdK	Stiftung Akademie der Künste, Berlin
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
Stellv. Genkdo	Stellvertretendes Generalkommando

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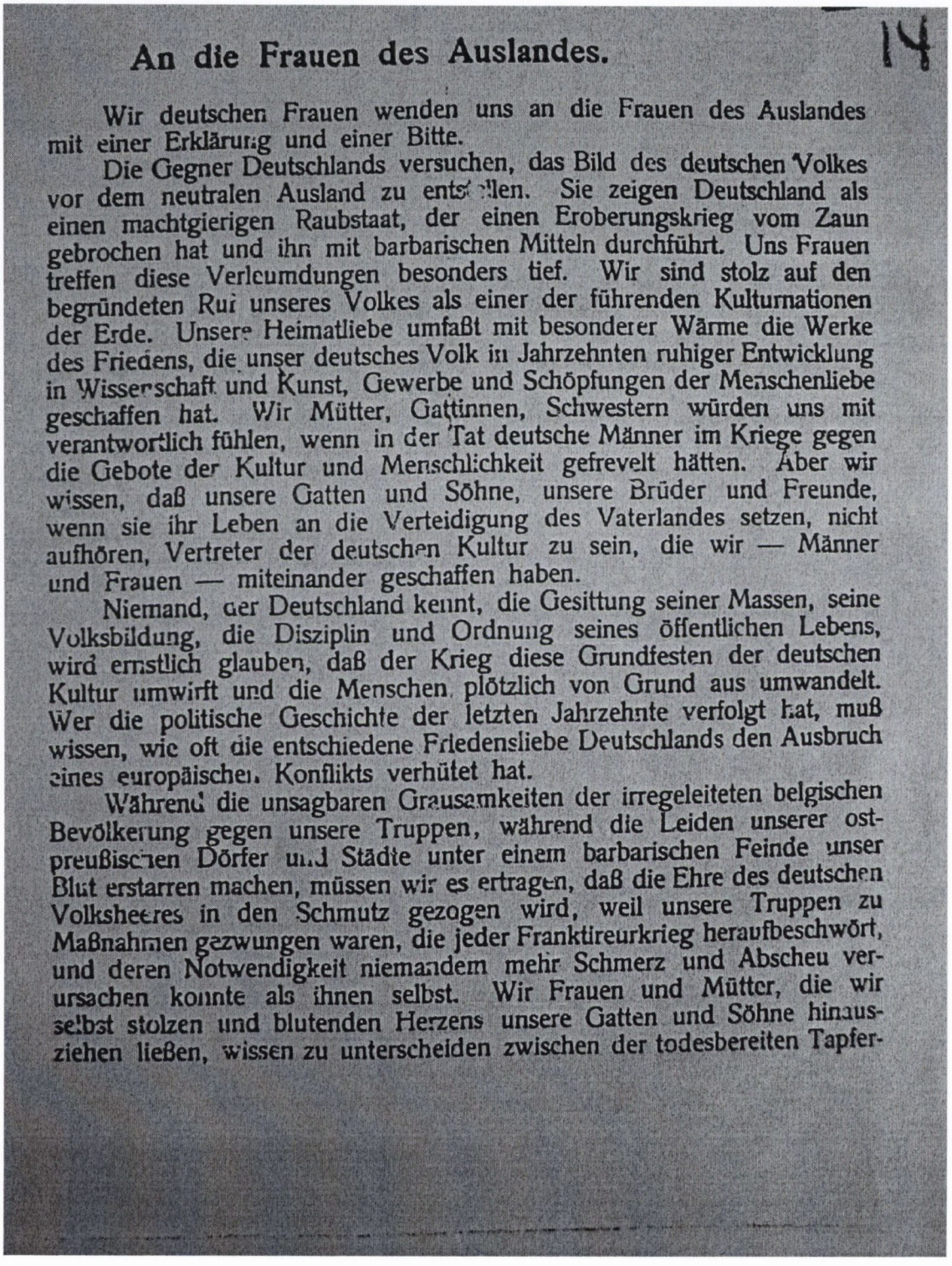
Appendix

1. Appeal to Women Abroad [1]



An die Frauen des Auslandes. 14

Wir deutschen Frauen wenden uns an die Frauen des Auslandes mit einer Erklärung und einer Bitte.

Die Gegner Deutschlands versuchen, das Bild des deutschen Volkes vor dem neutralen Ausland zu entstellen. Sie zeigen Deutschland als einen machtgierigen Raubstaat, der einen Eroberungskrieg vom Zaun gebrochen hat und ihn mit barbarischen Mitteln durchführt. Uns Frauen treffen diese Verleumdungen besonders tief. Wir sind stolz auf den begründeten Ruf unseres Volkes als einer der führenden Kulturnationen der Erde. Unsere Heimatliebe umfaßt mit besonderer Wärme die Werke des Friedens, die unser deutsches Volk in Jahrzehnten ruhiger Entwicklung in Wissenschaft und Kunst, Gewerbe und Schöpfungen der Menschenliebe geschaffen hat. Wir Mütter, Gattinnen, Schwestern würden uns mit verantwortlich fühlen, wenn in der Tat deutsche Männer im Kriege gegen die Gebote der Kultur und Menschlichkeit gefrevelt hätten. Aber wir wissen, daß unsere Gatten und Söhne, unsere Brüder und Freunde, wenn sie ihr Leben an die Verteidigung des Vaterlandes setzen, nicht aufhören, Vertreter der deutschen Kultur zu sein, die wir — Männer und Frauen — miteinander geschaffen haben.

Niemand, der Deutschland kennt, die Gesittung seiner Massen, seine Volksbildung, die Disziplin und Ordnung seines öffentlichen Lebens, wird ernstlich glauben, daß der Krieg diese Grundfesten der deutschen Kultur umwirft und die Menschen plötzlich von Grund aus umwandelt. Wer die politische Geschichte der letzten Jahrzehnte verfolgt hat, muß wissen, wie oft die entschiedene Friedensliebe Deutschlands den Ausbruch eines europäischen Konflikts verhütet hat.

Während die unsagbaren Grausamkeiten der irregeleiteten belgischen Bevölkerung gegen unsere Truppen, während die Leiden unserer ostpreußischen Dörfer und Städte unter einem barbarischen Feinde unser Blut erstarren machen, müssen wir es ertragen, daß die Ehre des deutschen Volksheeres in den Schmutz gezogen wird, weil unsere Truppen zu Maßnahmen gezwungen waren, die jeder Franktireurkrieg heraufbeschwört, und deren Notwendigkeit niemandem mehr Schmerz und Abscheu verursachen konnte als ihnen selbst. Wir Frauen und Mütter, die wir selbst stolzen und blutenden Herzens unsere Gatten und Söhne hinausziehen ließen, wissen zu unterscheiden zwischen der todesbereiten Tapfer-

[1] *An die Frauen des Auslandes*, LA Berlin, Helene Lange Archiv (HLA), 187/1: 2741.

keit, die von jeher in der ganzen Welt als höchster Ruhm eines Kulturvolkes gegolten hat, und barbarischer Zerstörungswut.

Wir vertrauen darauf, daß auch Ihr, Ihr Frauen des Auslandes, diesen Unterschied zu machen wißt. Darum richten wir an Euch die Bitte: Helft der Wahrheit zum Siege gegenüber den Entstellungen des Hasses und der Leidenschaft und den Fälschungen einer gegen uns gerichteten Politik.

Wir zweifeln keinen Augenblick daran, daß die Geschichte einst ihr Urteil sprechen wird über die Mittel, die unsere Gegner zur Täuschung des Auslandes gebrauchen. Aber wir glauben, daß es auch heute in dieser erregten Gegenwart, zwischen Menschen gleicher Kulturstufe eine Verständigung geben muß, die das Lügengewebe eines skrupellosen Nachrichtendienstes zerreißt.

Mit vielen von Euch verbinden uns die Bande persönlicher Freundschaft, gemeinsame Interessen für die Werke des Friedens, der Arbeit, der Kunst und Kultur, und aus dieser Gemeinschaft ist ein gegenseitiges Vertrauen erwachsen. Euch alle, denen unser Wort etwas gilt, bitten wir: **Laßt durch das Chaos der Leidenschaft und des Hasses die Stimme der Wahrheit hindurchdringen!**

Im September 1914.

Frau Julie Bassermann Dr. **Gertrud Bäumer** Frau **Helene Böhlau** Frau **Ida Boy-Ed** Frau **Helene von Budde** Frau **Marie von Bülow** **Marie von Bunsen** Frau **Richard Dehmel** Frau **Hedwig Dohm** **Hedwig Dransfeld** Frau **Lisbeth von Drigalski-Dill** Frau **Irene Eucken** Frau **Helene von Forster** Frau **Adele Gerhard** Frau **Amalie von Harnack-Thiersch** Frau **Elisabeth von Heyking** Frau **Hedwig Heyl** Frau **Ricarda Huch** Frau **Käthe Kollwitz** **Isolde Kurz**, Dr. phil. h. c. Frau **Sabine Lepsius** **Helene Lange** Frau **Lilly Lehmann** Frau **Gertrud von Liszt** **Paula Mueller** Frau **Anna Muthesius** Frau **Cornelia Paczka-Wagner** Frau **Lucie von Schmoller** Frau Gräfin **von Schwerin-Löwitz** Frau **Ellen von Siemens-Helmholtz** Frau **Gertrud Simmel** (Marie Luise Enckendorf) Frau **Marie Stritt** Frau **Clara Viebig** Frau **Cosima Wagner**, Dr. phil. h. c. Frau **Marianne Weber**

2. List of artists, including short biographies in alphabetical order:

Annot (Anna Ottonie Jacobi)
1894-1981
1894 born in Berlin, great-niece of Adolf Menzel
1914 imprisoned for distributing pacifist leaflets during WWI in Berlin, emigrated to Norway

Beckmann, Johanna
1914-1918 produced wartime posters

Berend, Charlotte
1880 born in Berlin into a Jewish family in Berlin, her father is a businessman
1889 artistic education at the State art school in Berlin, the School of the Museum for the applied arts and the private painting school of Lovis Corinth
1903 married her teacher Lovis Corinth
1906 member of the Berlin Secession
1914-18 exhibited regularly with the Berlin Secession
1916 published art in *Die Jugend*
1939 emigrated to the USA

Brandenburg-Polster, Dora
1914-18 published lithograph *Frauenopfer* in the journal *Kriegs-Bilderbogen* in 1915

Caspar-Filser, Maria
1878-1986
1878 born in Riedlingen, father was a civil servant
1896 enrolled at the Women's Classes of the Royal Art School in Stuttgart
1901 studied in Munich
1905 study trip to Paris
1913 founding member of the Munich New Secession
1914/15 published lithographs in the journal *Zeit-Echo*
1933 denounced as degenerate

Dehmel, Ida
1879-1942, based in Hamburg
1879 born into Jewish family, her father owned a winegrowing estate. Wrote for newspapers in Berlin, founded a literary salon and was acquainted with many artists and writers
1901 second marriage with poet Richard Dehmel
1906 founded the Hamburg Women's Club, a cultural initiative
1910 active as applied artist, member of the *Deutsche Werkbund*
1911 president of the League for women's suffrage in Northern Germany
1913 co-founder of the 'Association of Northern German artists'
1914 husband Richard Dehmel volunteered for military service. Son Heinz-Lux Auerbach from her first marriage was drafted for military service
1914-1918 second chairman of the initiative "Deutscher Frauendank", and active in the distribution of financial support for soldier's wives
1916 member of the National Liberals and president of the *Frauenbund zur*

FörderungDeutscher Bildender Kunst in Hamburg
1917 her son Heinz-Lux died at the Western Front. Her husband was wounded
1920 Richard Dehmel died from his war injuries
1927 founder of the *Gemeinschaft Deutscher und Österreichischer Künstlerinnenvereine aller Kunstgattungen (GEDOK)*
1933 had to give up official posts as a Jewish citizen
1942 commited suicide

Deicher, Luise
1891-1973
1908 art education at the women's classes of the Royal Art Academy in Stuttgart
1910 art classes with Adolf Hölzel
1912 member of the *Württembergische Malerinnenverein*
1913-17 turned to biblical themes
1914 first solo exhibition and silver medal in Stuttgart
1919 produced *Die Witwe*
1937 exhibited at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* in Munich

Frankenberger, Hedwig
1915 published painting of a nurse in *Die Jugend.*

Friedrich, Rose
1877-1953
1877 born in Chemnitz, where her family owned a factory
1897 art education in Dresden
1907 continued her studies in Paris. Member of the Artists group of Chemnitz.
1909 praised for her work in the 1909 exhibition of the Artists group of Chemnitz
1919 produced lithograph *Maria with child* 1919

Gerhardi, Ida
1862-1927
1862 Gerhardi was born in Hagen in Westphalia as the daughter of a doctor
1890 moved to Munich for her art education which she completed in Paris
1902 exhibited at the Berlin Secession and Munich Secession
1904-1914 exhibited in Paris at the Societé des Artistes Indépendantes, Vienna, Cologone, Suttgart
1916 exhibited at the Free Secession in Berlin
1914-1918 keept a diary with references to the war. Her art does not depict direct wartime experiences, she focuses on portraits and flowers .

Goetz, Margarethe
1917 published woodcuts reflecting the war in *Die Aktion.*

Hasse, Sella
1878-1963, Pseudonym: Essa Halles, based in Wismar
1878 born into family that sympathised with the SPD
1896 art classes in Berlin
1901 member of the Berlin Female Artists Association
1902 met and befriended Käthe Kollwitz, studied briefly with her
1898 married mathematician Robert Hasse who was active in the SPD
Since 1902 exhibited at the Berlin Secession

1904-1910 press illustrator in Hamburg
Since 1910 based in Wismar
1912 took art classes in Paris
Since 1912 exhibited regularly with the *Deutsche Künstlerbund*, of which she was a member. In the followings years Hasse exhibited in Prague, Zurich, Paris and Moscow.
1914 won a silver medal for her work that was exhibited at the First International Graphic Art Exhibition at the International Exhibition for Book Trade and Graphics in Leipzig
1914-16 produced war cycle
1916 solo exhibition at Emil Richter in Dresden, exhibits with the Berlin Secession
1918 wrote booklet on the social importance of the female reproductive organs under pseudonym Essa Halles
1919 exhibition in Zurich. Husband died.
1928 daughter died
1937 banned as degenerate artist, 15 art works seized
1963 died in Berlin

Heise, Katharina,

1891-1963, pseudonym: Karl Luis Heinrich Salze, based in Schönebeck and Berlin. First art classes at the school of Applied Arts in Madgeburg.
1911 attended a private Women's Art Academy in Dresden
1913/14 study trip to Paris
1914 moved to Berlin to artists colony in Wilmersdorf, member of the *Frauenkunstverband* Berlin
1916 her fiancé Oskar Hesse dies in the war, her art becomes heavily influenced by the loss. After 1916 regularly publishes woodcuts in *Die Aktion* and exhibits at the gallery *Die Aktion*
1917 started sculpting
1918 joined the November-Group
1934 banned as a 'degenerate artist' under the National Socialists, her works were removed from public exhibitions

Höch, Hannah

1889-1928, based in Berlin
1889 born in Gotha. Her father was an insurance broker
1912 Kunstgewerbeschule in Berlin
1915 volunteered to work as a nurse in 1915 in her home town Gotha
1916 resumed her studies in Berlin
From 1917 on associated with the Dada movement in Berlin
1918 member of November-Group. Produced a range of political photomontages. Produced Pietà.
1919 Dada exhibtion in Berlin.
1932 banned as degenerate artist under National Socialist rule

Hoeltz, Ilse

1914-1918 produced posters for wartime charity initiatives

Kerkovius, Ida

1879-1970 based in Stuttgart

1879 born in Riga. Grew up in a German-Baltic family with twelve children. Her father was a wealthy landowner and merchant. Kerkovius attended a private art school in Riga.
1902 travels to Rome, Venice, Florence. Then studied with Adolf Hölzel in the Dachau painters colony
1908 after some time in Riga, moved to Stuttgart and became Hölzel's assistant. Member of the *Würrtembergische Malerinnenverein.*
1914-1918 produced a range of religious paintings
1915 family lost possessions in Riga. Kerkovius as a Russian citizen lost her teaching position and gage private lessons during the war
1920 joined the Bauhaus in Weimar
1922 German citizenship
1937 some of her art was seized as degenerate art, but no official ban

Klemm, Johanna

1917 published a portfolio with a series of paintings as part of the war invalids charity initiative *'Frauendank'* (women's gratefulness)

Koken, Aenne

1914 produced war postcards for Bahlsen.

Koll, Madgalena

1879-1962 based in Bremen
1914-1918 was able to establish a career through the design of war posters

Kollwitz, Käthe

1867-1945 based in Berlin
1867 born in Königsberg, her father was a master builder
1881 art classes in Königsberg
1885 continues her art education in Bern
1887 further art classes in Königsberg
1898 art classes in Munich
1891 married the doctor Karl Kollwitz. 1898 her 'Weavers cycle' is exhibited at the Great Art Exhibition of Berlin. The Kaiser rejected the suggestion of the jury to decorate her with the gold medal
1899 member of the Berlin Secession
1898-1903 taught at the School of the Female artists association in Berlin
1904 stay in Paris
1907 stay in Italy. 1907-09 drew for the caricature magazine Simplicissimus
1914 her younger son Peter died at the Western Front. Published drawing *Das Bangen* in Die Kriegszeit
1914-1918 continued to produce art that reflected on her wartime experiences
1917 anniversary exhibition for her 50th birthday at the Cassirer gallery in Berlin
1919 the first female artists to be issued with a professorship at the Prussian academy of the arts
1919 memory lithography for Karl Liebknecht
1922-23 woodcut series *The War*
1931 memorial *The Parents* completed and erected in 1932 at the cemetery in Vladslo, Belgium
1933 left the Prussian academy of the arts
1936 inofficial ban to exhibit

1940 husband died
1942 her grandson Peter died at the Russian front
1943 evacuated from Berlin. Her house, atelier and much of her art was destroyed
1945 Käthe Kollwitz died near Dresden

Kubicka, Margarete

1891-
1911 studied in Berlin
1914 teaching position in Berlin
1914-1918 published poems and woodcuts in *Die Aktion*
1919 member of the Novembergroup

Lassen, Käte

1880-1956 based in Flensburg
1880 born as daughter of a goldsmith
1898 studied at the women's classes of the Female Artists Association in Munich
1902-1904 private art classes with Hugo von Habermann
1914-1918 produced images of women in Northern Germany and their coming to terms with the consequences of the war

Meyer, Anni

1914-1918 produced war posters

Münter, Gabriele

1877-1962
1877 born in Berlin. Her father was from a Westphalian merchants and ministers family
1897 started her art education at a private women's academy in Düsseldorf
1898-1900 extended stay with relatives in the USA
1901 continued her art education at the women's classes of the Female Artists Association in Munich
1901 attended classes at the newly founded school of painting 'Phalanx', where she met Wassily Kandinsky who taught evening classes
1904-1905 Münter and Kandinsky travelled to the Netherlands, Tunis, Italy, Rapallo
1906 Münter and Kandinsky settled in Paris for one year. Münter attended the 'Académie Grande Chaumière'
1907 Münter exhibited at the 'Salon des Indépendants and the 'Salon d'Autonme'
1908 exhibition at the Cologne Salon Lenoble, exhibition in Bonn. Travelled to Italy. Münter and Kandinsky settle in Munich.
1909 foundation of the 'Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NVKM)' of which Münter is a founding member
1910 international exhibition at the NVKM. Münter bought house in Murnau
1911 Münter, Kandinsky, Franz Marc and Alfred Kubin left the NVKM and found the artists group 'Der Blaue Reiter'
1912 exhibition of Der Blaue Reiter at the Munich gallery Hans Goltz and the Sturm gallery in Berlin
1913 solo-exhibition at the Sturm gallery in Berlin
1914 Münter and Kandinsky left Munich and stayed with friends in Switzerland. Kandinsky returned to Russia

1915 Münter moved to Stockholm. 1916 exhibited in Sweden
1917 Münter exhibited widely in Stockholm
1918 Münter moved to Copenhagen
1920 returned to Munich
1934-36 Münter was a member of the *Reichskammer der bildenden Künste*. 1936 exhibited at the exhibition 'The streets of Adolf Hitler in art'
1940-46 lived in Murnau with the art historian and philosopher Joseph Eichner, where she successfully hid works of the *Blaue Reiter* group.
1962 Münter died in Murnau.

Nauth, Dora

1914 published portfolio with 8 lithographs of soldiers' lives with the title *Witnessed at the border*

Nicklass, Lotte

1914-1918 produced wartime posters

Otten-Friedmann, Mizi

1914-1918 published wartime work in *Die Aktion*

Pasedag, Lisa

1918 published woodcut on the revolution in *Die Aktion*

Prechner, Lotte B.

1879-1967 based in Cologne
1879 born into Jewish family, father owned a cigar-manufactory
1900 art education at the women's classes of the Female Artists Association in Munich. Continued her education in Paris,Cologne and Düsseldorf
1901 married Jewish dentist Hermann Prechner
1916 travelled to Brussels, permission to paint in the *Etappe*
1917 travelled to Prague
1918-1920 produced many woodcuts that portray social misery in the aftermath of the war. Turned to religious imagery.
Since 1918 numerous exhibitions in the Rhineland, in Prague and Brussels. Member of many artist's associations, including the 'Junges Rheinland'
1936/37 emigration to Brussels
1967 died in Portici

Preusschen, Hermione von

1854-1918 based in Berlin, artist and writer
1854 born into family with four children, her father was a civil servant. Art education in Karlsruhe, Rome and Paris
1878 member of the Association of the Berlin Artists, well networked in cultural circle of Berlin
1887 her painting 'Mors Imperator' was famously removed from a Berlin exhibition for insulting the Kaiser
1891 second marriage with poet Konrad Telman
1893/94 exhibited at Gurlitt Gallery in Berlin
1889 exhibited in Paris, Vienna and the USA
1911 travelled widely
1914-1918 suffered from economic hardship

1918 died in Berlin

Röderstein, Ottilie

1859-1937 based in Frankfurt
1859 born in Zurich to German parents. Started art education in Zurich against the wishes of her mother
1879 moved to Berlin for further studies.
1882 exhibited in Zurich.
1883 exhibited in Paris. Financially independent through selling of art.
1891 moved with her partner, the doctor Elisabeth Winterhalter, to Frankfurt
1900 won silver medal at the world exhibition in Paris. Exhibited widely, her atelier in Paris which was occupied at the outbreak of the war
1914-1918 visible stylistic changes through the war, generally deeply affected by the war and produced many images reflecting her view of the conflict.

Schauroth, Lina von

1875-1970 based in Frankfurt
1875 born in Frankfurt. Grew up in wealthy family, her father was a successful building contractor. Art education with different Professors in Frankfurt, despite initial opposition of parents. Art classes in Paris.
1896 married Prussian officer Hans von Schauroth who died 1909 after a horse-accident.
1914 sees World War as a patriotic challenge, designed numerous war posters and postcards, initiates charity events and personally delivered *Liebesgaben* to the front. Supported her under-aged nephew to sign up for military service and repatriated his body from the Eastern Front.
1914-1918 produced numerous war posters
1918 member of the Deutschnationale Volkspartei. President of the *Luisenbund*, the women's equivalent of the *Stahlhelm*. Sympathises with the Kapp-putschists and was imprisoned for political agitation
1934 abandoned her political engagement in disapproval of the NSDAP
1944 her atelier in Frankfurt was bombed and much of her artistic oeuvre was lost

Schrag, Martha

1870-1957 based in Chemnitz
1870 born near Leipzig as daughter of a higher judicial officer
1898 art classes in Dresden
1904 exhibition of the Association of Painters and Patrons in Chemnitz of which she was a member
1907 founding member of the Chemnitz Artists Group
1914 won the silver Medal at the Leipzig Book Graphics Exhibition
1915 produced a series of four lithographies about women's hardship in the war. These were sold to support charity projects.
1937 23 pieces removed as degenerate from public exhibitions
1945 atelier destroyed, many art works lost

Schmidt, Eva

1915 published a series of 10 silhouettes with the title *Times of War*.

Schmidt, Gerda Luise

1914-1918 produced war posters

Spanier, Käte

1914 produced war posters for the National Women's Service

Stroever, Ida Carola

1914-1918 produced posters for wartime charity initiatives

Weiß, Hedwig

1915 published series on bourgeois women' s daily lives in *Die Kriegszeit*

Wetzel, Ines

1882, based in Frankfurt and Berlin. Art education in Munich

1914-48 art published in Die Aktion, exhibited at *Die Aktion* gallery. Some of her work thematically dealt with the war.

1918 member of the November-Group in Berlin

Wolf, Grete

1914 produced war posters in Vienna

Zitzewitz, Auguste von

1880-1960 pseudonym Arno Zitzewitz, based in Berlin

1880 born in Berlin into Prussian nobility. Father was an adjutant under Kaiser Wilhelm II, mother was a British citizen. Enrolled at the school of the Berlin artists association against the wishes of her family

1912 exhibition at Salon Keller&Reiner in Berlin

From 1912 on continued art education in Paris. In committee of the Female artists association of Berlin

1918 published woodcuts in *Die Aktion*, special edition of *Die Aktion* with her work and exhibition at the *Aktion* gallery. Some of her work thematically dealt with the war.

1937 declared degenerate, continued to paint portraits to support herself and her daughter. Atelier destroyed during WW2