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Käthe Kollwitz: Women's Art, Working-Class Agitation, and Maternal Feminism in the Weimar Republic

By

Jamie Dortch

Under the Direction of Joseph Perry

ABSTRACT

The German artist Käthe Kollwitz challenged the cultural constraints placed on women during the Weimar Republic. My thesis analyzes the artwork of Kollwitz and the effects of maternal imagery within the political debates of abortion reform, sexual equality and pacifism in the 1920s and explores historians' use of the ideas of maternal feminism to understand Kollwitz's art. I challenge the social constructs of private versus public spheres to illustrate the diversity of experience and the agency of women like Kollwitz who manipulated these spheres. I argue that Käthe Kollwitz gained a voice within the public domain by creating artwork and imagery that focused on the private sphere. Using these images of motherhood, Kollwitz manipulated gender roles and created new spaces for the female experience in public discourse, particularly regarding maternal feminism, abortion reform, and pacifism.

INDEX WORDS: Käthe Kollwitz, Maternal Feminism, Pacifism, Weimar Germany, Weimar women, Weimar feminist movement, Abortion Reform

KÄTHE KOLLWITZ: WOMEN'S ART, WORKING-CLASS AGITATION, AND MATERNAL FEMINISM IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

by

Jamie Dortch

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Introduction

Käthe Kollwitz – "the name conjures up powerful images of mothers and children, of solidarity among human beings, and of protest against social injustice and suffering."[1] Why was and is Käthe Kollwitz so revered? For historians that have studied Kollwitz, her artwork provides the answer. Drawings and lithographs of hungry children, etchings of women left broken-hearted and alone, and images of people living during war are all examples of the powerful nature of Kollwitz's contributions to not only the art community but also to the history of Germany during the Weimar Republic. Through her art, Kollwitz provided a powerful voice for women and children during a time of chaos, world war, and poverty and used maternal images in pursuit of social change.

By focusing on the artwork of Käthe Kollwitz, I intend to illustrate the changing nature of the public versus private sphere and the agency of women. Women artists of the Weimar period depicted complex and varying images of womanhood – not just the homogenous middle-class mother. Creating strong and diverse images of women allowed artists like Kollwitz to argue for women's rights through the depiction of the mother. As Marsha Meskimmon notes, "women of the period used the issues around maternity to stage a genuine intervention into popular political arguments of the day."[2] Through her artwork, Kollwitz gained recognition for not only depicting the economic hardships of the working class but also the controversies concerning women's issues such as abortion reform and pacifism. In this thesis I will analyze Käthe Kollwitz but at the same time evaluate feminist scholarship of the separate spheres theory and challenge scholars who claim that women did not gain agency through manipulating maternalism.

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[1] Elizabeth Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 13.

[2] Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 76.

The concepts of feminism and motherhood have proved problematic for scholars over the years. Early feminist movements stressed the distinct feminine nature of women and the motherly role. In response, scholars such as Joan Scott and Giselda Bock called for deconstructing labels of "equality versus difference," positing that the categories of feminism were created by male-dominated rhetoric using male-created language. Present-day feminism (post-1960/70s liberal feminism) attempts to redefine the movement without glorifying motherhood or the unique maternal qualities of women. Furthermore, modern feminists reject the notion of maternalism and claim that it reinforces paternalism as opposed to more progressive movements. My aim is to illustrate that this rejection of feminist maternalism denies the agency of many important women, including Käthe Kollwitz.

But why study Käthe Kollwitz? While Kollwitz attempted to influence social change, the critical acclaim with which her works were met proves that people of her generation appreciated her voice of reform. For example, the popular art movie *Creative Hands* (1922) depicted the hands of Kollwitz along with other popular artists such as Liebermann, Delling, Corinth, and Grosz and exhibited at the 55th Street Playhouse. She also received rave reviews at the major exhibit given in honor of her 50th birthday in 1917. Professionally Kollwitz was awarded several honors. She was the first woman elected for membership in the Prussian Academy of Art and named professor in 1919. She traveled to Moscow as an honored special guest at the 10th anniversary of the Russian Revolution in 1927 and became the director of the Master Class for Graphic Arts at Berlin Academy in 1928.[3] In addition to professional success, Kollwitz also gained

[3] Jean Owens Schaefer, "Kollwitz in America: A Study of Reception, 1900-1960," *Women's Art Journal,* 15 (1), Spring-Summer, 1994, 29.

recognition in the Weimar press. Major articles on her artwork appeared in 1903, 1913, 1920, 1925, and 1927. Kollwitz also experienced success in the United States with "unprecedented" solo shows in New York from 1937 through 1941. These accolades and exhibits illustrate that Kollwitz's attempt to draw attention to working class women did not go unnoticed. An art critic of the time described the women in Kollwitz's *The Revolt of the Weavers* series as "enraged by years of privation – tear[ing] up cobblestones."[4] The number of successful exhibits and numerous articles and awards are further proof that Kollwitz's message of equality gained widespread popularity among the international art community.

Not only was Kollwitz successful professionally but she was also successful within popular German culture. In order to reach as many people as possible – particularly the working class – Kollwitz was careful to work in a medium that would allow easy access for all Germans. Therefore, she produced the majority of her works in the form of lithographs that were easily and cheaply reproduced. Furthermore, many of her works were reprinted as postcards. For this reason, her art became known to the average German citizen, the very audience she targeted. She also produced posters for various groups throughout her career which reinforces the idea that her artwork was relatable to the German masses. Many streets, parks, and riverbanks in towns throughout Germany bear the name of Käthe Kollwitz. Museums across the country including Stüttgart, Munich, Frankfurt, Bielefeld, and Hamburg feature her work with museums in Berlin and Cologne dedicated solely to her art. Her fiftieth birthday traveling exhibition in 1917 was completely sold out in Dresden and Königsberg, and a folio of her work

[4] Elizabeth McCausland, "Kathe Kollwitz," *Parnassus*, 9 (2), February 1937, 23.

introduced in 1913 was reprinted due to popular demand in 1924, 1925, 1927, and 1931.[5] Because of her success, Kollwitz is a worthy subject of study in order to understand her role in Weimar reforms. I explore these issues in three related chapters outlined below.

The first chapter locates Kollwitz within changing historiography and traces the different trends historians have used to study Kollwitz's art and her impact on social issues. Historiography of the Weimar feminist movement in general went through similar shifts as found in the historiography of Käthe Kollwitz. First, most scholars in the 1970s studied women as victims of male-dominated society, using language that reinforced the passive nature of women. In response, some scholars began to question this trend, focusing on the possibility of social change by identifying the agency within separate spheres. Finally, scholars in the 1990s began to question the positivity of modernism and the agency other scholars had identified using the separate spheres theory. These scholars are known as postmodernists and focus on deconstructing social constructs and language. In this first chapter, I will take a closer look at these trends including the most important scholars behind these shifts as well as the similar changes in the historiography of Käthe Kollwitz. By analyzing these trends, I locate my own scholarship within these broader themes and argue that postmodernism and the separate spheres theory can be useful tools in studying Kollwitz's influence in the feminist movement of the Weimar Republic.

The second chapter uses Kollwitz's artwork to argue that women within the maternal feminist movement did not accept male domination of the public sphere submissively but instead manipulated the private sphere in order to create new avenues into the public realm. According to historian Ann Taylor Allen, "middle-class women

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[5] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 117-123.

did not accept the male stereotype passively…but used it as an instrument of their resistance…carrying the maternal myth into the public realm and struggling in its name for an expansion of their rightful share of responsibility."[6] By creating images of women fighting for abortion reform, suffering from hunger and need, and grieving for their sons lost in battle, Kollwitz manipulated Weimar patriarchy to challenge existing societal norms and introduce new spaces for women within public discourse. By focusing on Kollwitz's role within Weimar society, in this chapter I challenge the trend in historiography that claims maternal feminism did not have any beneficial influences on the struggle for women's rights. I argue that historians who adhere to the notion that Weimar German feminism was another sign of "illiberalism" deny the role maternalism played in future accomplishments of liberal feminists. By stressing the importance of motherhood, feminists in Weimar Germany were able to change the political atmosphere of the early 20th century in ways that had lasting effects.

The final chapter explores Kollwitz's contributions to the Weimar pacifist movement. During early 20th-century Germany, an increased interest in eugenics and "Neo-Malthusianism" resulted in a newfound interest in and official emphasis on motherhood. Because of this focus, feminists manipulated the separate spheres in order to create space within pacifist discourse. Because the government barred public expressions of pacifism, artists such as Kollwitz used art to subvert political boundaries. Therefore, Kollwitz was an active political agent drawing attention to the pacifist cause. However, many scholars deny Kollwitz this agency. Richard Evans suggests that the contemporary feminist movement was drawn to pacifism because Weimar women

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[6] Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 6.

believed themselves to be "imbued with a peaceful, humane, non-aggressive and life-giving outlook."[7] This biological determinism disregards the agency of the women fighting for peace. Women such as Kollwitz did not believe in the inherent peacefulness of women. In fact, prior to her son's death, Kollwitz was openly supportive of the war, labeling herself a "revolutionary." Therefore, my thesis will suggest that women during the pacifist movement of Weimar were not "naturally" drawn to the pacifist movement but were active agents choosing to speak out against a war in which they did not believe.

In addition to the idea that feminists of the era believed in a biological determinism toward pacifism, other scholars have suggested that Kollwitz was not a true pacifist in her beliefs. Dora Apel posits that Kollwitz's pacifism was qualified – Kollwitz did not oppose war, just that young men were being sacrificed. Apel further states that Kollwitz did not oppose older generations who had "lived the best part" of their lives from sacrificing themselves.[8] This argument fails to acknowledge the message found within Kollwitz's artwork concerning the war. Numerous lithographs and sculptures by Kollwitz stress the horrors of war experienced by women and children – not just young men. Further reading of Kollwitz's journals and diary prove that after the outbreak of World War I and the death of her son, Kollwitz's attitude toward war shifted drastically. She became opposed to all war and even claimed that she was no longer a "revolutionary." Therefore, I will argue that pacifism was a very important aspect of Kollwitz's life and artwork, and although this shift was influenced by personal

[7] Richard J. Evans, *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism, and Pacifism in Europe, 1870-1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 121.

[8] Dora Apel, "'Heroes' and 'Whores': The Politics of Gender in Weimar Antiwar Imagery," *The Art Bulletin*, 79 (3), September 1997, 380.

circumstances, it was not simply a response to the younger generation's - or her son Peter's - sacrifice.

In conclusion, my thesis explores the impact of maternal feminism during the Weimar Republic. By concentrating on the artwork of Käthe Kollwitz, I argue that women of Weimar made advances in the feminist movement and the pacifist movement. I challenge scholars such as Marsha Meskimmon and Atina Grossman who claim that Kollwitz's imagery reinforced the mother as a passive victim and argue instead that Kollwitz's art depicts women as strong agents of political change. Present-day feminism tends to depict the women of Weimar as failures because of the results of National Socialism;[9] however, I contend that women such as Kollwitz did not anticipate the results of the Weimar Republic (i.e. National Socialism) but instead made significant contributions to their generation and to the feminist movement of the late 20th century.

[9] Because my thesis focuses on Käthe Kollwitz during the Weimar Republic, I will not include material from the National Socialist era unless relevant to Kollwitz's experience.

Chapter One - Historiography of Käthe Kollwitz and Weimar Women

During the Weimar period, Germany experienced increasing social, political, and economic upheaval, establishing an era labeled by scholar Detlev Peukert as the "crisis of classical modernity."[10] Historians have struggled to understand societal trends during this time of upheaval, including feminist historians who have attempted to define the role of women in Weimar Germany. An analysis of scholarly work in this period also reveals dramatic shifts in the historiography of women's issues. As identified by Joan Scott, some historians analyzed the opposition between men and women while others studied the "woman question" and others developed theories highlighting the subjectivity of female sexuality.[11] All of these issues parallel broad themes of historiography including the rise and fall of the master narrative, the emergence of social and cultural histories, and the rise in popularity of the postmodern discourse.

In this chapter, I review and evaluate the historiographical background of women's history and its connections to Weimar government to provide the context necessary to understand the feminist aspects of Kollwitz's art. I first will discuss the trend in historiography that labeled women as victims of a patriarchal Germany. Then I will examine the response of historians that claimed that women were not absolute victims but instead had the possibility of agency. These historians introduced the theory of separate spheres and the possible agency within maternal feminism. Finally, the postmodernists claim that separate spheres actually reinforced the theory of "biology is destiny" and therefore were an ultimate failure for the feminist movement in Weimar

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[10] Detlev Peukert, *Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*. Translated by Richard Deveson. (New York: Hill & Wang, 1992).

[11] Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91 (5), December 1986, 1066.

Germany. In this chapter I not only analyze these issues but I also draw parallels to the historiography of Käthe Kollwitz and locate my own scholarship within these trends.

Woman as Victim: Historiography in the'70s and Early Views of Käthe Kollwitz

Examination of Weimar's crisis of modernity led some historians, particularly during the 1970s, to embrace the theory of female victimization. According to these historians, women were passive victims with no voice. Labeled by Simone de Beauvoir as the "second sex," women during the time of modernization (i.e. biological rationalization) were delegated to the "woman's place" as predetermined by nature as well as to the double burden of housewifery and wage earning.[12] This method of study was popular in examining the Weimar feminist movement. Historians who adhere to this "biology is destiny" theory include Claudia Koonz and Karin Hausen who stress the role of women as victims in Weimar Germany particularly within the job market. Women were frequently removed from the work force or shifted into lower wage jobs after World War I in order to accommodate returning soldiers. Women within the job market maintained "women's jobs" and rarely if ever replaced male workers. Furthermore, during the years of the Depression, women were more likely to wait for benefits, lose benefits, or be completely dropped from the labor market. Despite their right to vote, in reality women held very little political power and had little to no opportunity to voice such complaints.[13]

The political parties of Weimar held little sympathy for the emerging "new woman." Conservatives stressed that nontraditional roles for women were "un-German,"

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[12] Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation.* Translated by Stuart McKinnon-Evans (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997), 3-5.

[13] Renate Bridenthal, et. al, eds, "Introduction," *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 16.

condemning the rights of women in Weimar while progressives utilized political action in order to regulate them. The fact that maternity benefits were only available for full time workers suggests the growing trend of government intervention into the personal lives of women.[14] By analyzing the political and economic structure of Weimar, Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz suggest that despite new advances outlined within the new constitution, women in reality made very little gains toward gender equality.[15] Instead the Weimar Republic created a hierarchy of gender within the workplace and the home because of the diminished political space occupied by women. Furthermore, the two scholars suggest that male domination in the public sphere discouraged women from becoming politically active. Despite these hardships, women – as mothers – were expected to nurture Weimar through these turbulent years.[16]

Karin Hausen also contends that women were victims of the Weimar period, a fact particularly evident with the establishment of Mother's Day. In her essay on the holiday, Hausen posits that government officials became increasingly concerned that women would reject traditional roles of motherhood, blaming the "crisis" of the family on the woman. Mother's Day was one way political parties promoted "moral" motherhood while ignoring the actual economic conditions that limited a woman's ability to care for her family (i.e. war, inflation, economic depression). Hausen also suggests

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[14] Bridenthal, et. al, "Introduction," *When Biology Became Destiny,* 12-13.

[15] Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, "Beyond Kinder, Kuche, Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work," *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, Renate Bridenthal, et. al., eds. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 33-60

[16] Bridenthal, et. al. "Introduction." *When Biology Became Destiny*, 8.

that during this time the state increased government intervention in the lives of women in order to raise the moral conditions of the Volk.[17]

Similar to the historiographical trends of Weimar women in general, the historiography of Käthe Kollwitz also stressed the victimization of female artists. Two examples of works that label Kollwitz as a victim of her gender are Arthur and Mina Klein's *Käthe Kollwitz: Life in Art* and Martha Kearns' *Käthe Kollwitz: Woman and Artist*. Both written during the 1970s feminist movement, these works categorize Kollwitz as a passive victim of male domination. By analyzing the language used in both works, one can conclude that these scholars viewed Kollwitz as an essentialized "woman" trapped in a man's world. These works are merely biographies of Kollwitz's life, reflecting on Kollwitz's work as a "weapon" used during her "dynamic, troubled period."[18]

For the Kleins, Kollwitz's struggle for "real equality in treatment…is far from over in the 1970s."[19] Furthermore, Kearns analyzes Kollwitz's artwork not by studying the technical parameters of the work or by acknowledging artistic accomplishment but by focusing on the personality and personal life of the artist. Even the format of the book removes artwork from its analysis. Pages of Kollwitz's work fall intermittently within the narrative, not following the specific works mentioned. Likewise, pages and pages of artwork go unanalyzed within the Klein's work. The authors tell the story surrounding the creation of the artwork but fail to mention any technical or artistic accomplishment

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[17] Karin Hausen, "Mother's Day in the Weimar Republic," *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, Renate Bridenthal, et. al., eds (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 131-150.
[18] Arthur and Mina Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz: Life in Art* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972), 1.
[19] Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 48.

achieved by the works or the reception of Kollwitz's art by the public in general. Both works address Kollwitz's art by telling the story of her life and personality through gross generalizations, providing little to no citations or evidence of scholarly research.

In addition to the many instances of Kearns and the Kleins portraying Kollwitz as a victim, the language found in both works further illustrate the lack of art or scholarly analysis, leaving these works resembling dramatic biographies written during the American feminist movement of the 1970s. Both works open with drama-filled introductory sentences. For the Kleins, they focus on the "bloody" history of East Prussia where Kollwitz was born and stress that in fact Kollwitz's birthplace no longer exists on the map because Königsberg was defeated and handed over to Russia after World War II.[20] Kearns' opening sentence is telling of the sensational tone of the book: "Katharina Schmidt lay resting on the bed, exhausted from hours of labor in the close summer heat."[21] Examples of speculative language can be found at the conclusion of the Kleins work. When describing the monument of Kollwitz placed in her old Berlin neighborhood, the Kleins claim: "They [the neighborhood children] clamber familiarly into the great stone lap. Käthe who so loved children, might well have smiled, even laughed aloud…had she known that one day Berlin youngsters would play without awe on a stone statue above the name Käthe Kollwitz."[22] Further, the Kleins liken Germany to "an enormous insane asylum" after World War I but fail to include evidence for this statement. By using melancholy and dramatic language and by calling Kollwitz by her

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[20] Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 2.

[21] Martha Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz: Woman and Artist*. (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1976), 1.

[22] Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 166-167.

first name, Arthur and Mina Klein's and Martha Kearns' works tend to reduce Kollwitz's life to a simple story of personality.

The Kleins and Kearns consider Kollwitz to be a victim of her gender and at the mercy of the male figures in her life – her father, husband, brother. Both biographies suggest that Kollwitz's father played a key role in her life from the moment of her birth. First, these works suggest that Kollwitz's father was disappointed that she was not born a boy. As stated by Kearns: "Even so, he was willing to support her training in art – which few fathers did in that day."[23] By beginning this sentence with "even so," Kearns qualifies Kollwitz's father's actions and portrays Kollwitz as exceptional or different from other girls. The Kleins' claim that Kollwitz's father considered it a "pity that Katuschen (Käthe) is not a boy."[24] Likewise, Kearns further generalizes Kollwitz's life and relationship with her father when discussing Kollwitz's *The Weaver's Rebellion*. According to Kearns, Kollwitz "must have been especially pleased that her father liked the series, for it showed that she had successfully managed the three lives of artist, wife, and mother."[25] Through this statement, Kearns suggests that Kollwitz continues to seek male approval and validation for her decision to become both artist and mother. However, these accusations are not supported in any other texts or within Kollwitz's diary entries.

Furthermore, these books claim that Kollwitz's father played a part in her decision to marry. Kollwitz's diary entries tell us that her father strongly opposed her marriage because it would mean the end of her art. According to Kearns, living alone as an artist was not an option for a Weimar woman. Women who did not marry remained in

[23] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 20.
[24] Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz, 10*.
[25] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 75.

their parent's home.[26] Like Kearns, Arthur and Mina Klein stress the fact that Kollwitz's father was against her marriage and continuously mention that Kollwitz would have to choose between marriage and career. They state that "Kollwitz longed intensely to be free from domestic ties so as to go to Paris and concentrate on her sculpture. Nevertheless, she felt also the need to be needed by her husband and sons."[27] However, they provide no citation for these comments, leaving the reader to believe that these statements are speculative. Neither the Kleins nor Martha Kearns consider the possibility that for Kollwitz choosing between marriage and a career may not have entered her mind. By neglecting to stress the dairy entries that prove that Kollwitz felt capable of succeeding in both, these works ultimately portray Kollwitz as being a victim of societal pressures and a father she cannot please.

Not only do these works by Arthur and Mina Klein and Martha Kearns focus on Kollwitz as a victim but they also stress the fact that Kollwitz was a woman, living an atypical life. Kearns classifies Kollwitz as the "most well-known woman artist in the Western world"[28] as well as "Germany's lone successful woman artist."[29] Kearns fails to mention other female artists such as Hannah Hoch and Alice Lex-Nerlinger who were popular German artists as well. More importantly for my argument, by qualifying Kollwitz as a "woman" artist Kearns reduces any success by Kollwitz within the art community to her gender. For the Kleins', Kollwitz is exceptional because of her upbringing. Typical German households according to the Kleins' work meant domination by the husband or father. Wives could not express themselves freely in the

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[26] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 57.
[27] Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 62.
[28] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* xv.
[29] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 175.

home or voice their opinions.[30] Because of these gross generalizations, the Kleins find it easy to label Kollwitz's childhood as atypical. Because of the nature of the popular biography, the Kleins' do not feel the need to substantiate these assertions and speculations.

Rather than emphasizing Kollwitz's contributions within the art community or her successes in her career, Kearns focuses instead on her life as a woman and mother and posits that the relationship between Kollwitz and her mother was the basis for her future relationships. According to Kearns, Kollwitz's mother was quiet, did not express her opinions despite being well-read, and did not discuss important topics with Kollwitz (especially sexuality).[31] Further, Kearns describes the women in Kollwitz's works as being "subjected but not humiliated, victimized by force but not weak; they have the power – through strong love to face and endure trials."[32] For Kearns, Kollwitz's works are not examples of strong, active women but instead are subjected victims powered by "love." This type of language still adheres to the underlying principles of the "biology is destiny" theory. Both authors use sensationalized, sexist language that plays into the desires of the 1970s audience. Without citing sources or establishing the direction of the research, both works are popular biographies rather than examples of scholarly literature. Despite these limitations, these works are important and should be considered in the historiography of Kollwitz because they introduce her and her art as a subject of study.

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[30] Klein, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 32.

[31] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 12. This is in direct contradiction to what is posited by Arthur and Mina Klein above.

[32] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 190.

Maternal Feminism: Beyond "Biology is Destiny"

As a response to historians that studied women as victims of male society, other scholars began to study the positive and negative aspects of women's lives in Weimar Germany and their agency within the feminist movement. These scholars stressed the possibility of agency through the manipulation of the private sphere. In this section, I will take a closer look at those scholars who support the separate spheres theory as well as those who claim that using this method of study further reinforces the theory of "biology is destiny." Scholars like Marion Kaplan and Renate Bridenthal acknowledged that modernization and rationalization established new ideas and opportunities for women's equality. They believe that women gained equality through the establishment of separate spheres – male and female realms of separate but equal opportunity – and questioned whether or not women and men should be measured by the same (male) standards. As noted by Bridenthal, during the Weimar Republic housewives began organizing in order to gain power over a small part of their lives. The formation of the women's group the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF) furthered women's economic interests by focusing on the idealization of motherhood and housewifery.[33] Marion Kaplan suggests that Jewish women worked together toward gender equality by establishing Jewish women's organizations with broader ties to mainstream German women's organizations.[34]

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[33] Renate Bridenthal, "Professional Housewives: Stepsisters of the Women's Movement," *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany,* Renate Bridenthal, et. al., eds. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 155-157.

[34] Marion Kaplan, "Sisterhood under Siege: Feminism and Anti-Semitism in Germany," *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, Renate Bridenthal, et. al., eds. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 174-192.

Despite instances of women establishing agency through the separate sphere of domesticity, scholars also suggest that agency experienced within maternal feminism may have led to complicity within gender inequality. Bridenthal contends that although developing housewives' associations offered a political voice for women, within the associations women further divided themselves. Over time, factions developed along class lines – bourgeois women wanted to maintain a class hierarchy while the socialist women stressed equality. Bridenthal suggests that this diversity or crisis within the feminist movement led to the ultimate demise of the women's movement of the period.[35] On a similar note, Kaplan suggests that Jewish women experienced turmoil within the chaotic period of Weimar. Because of growing anti-Semitic sentiment in Germany, the primary Jewish women's organization turned to Jewish men's associations, aligning with groups of similar racial identity rather than gender identity.[36] These setbacks caused by racial and class divisions reinforce the idea that women gained power during this time. The factions and splintering groups resulted from women openly debating public issues and exhibiting female agency within the Weimar feminist movement.

Previous Weimar historiography that defined 1920s German society as an unchanging patriarchy denies women's ability to manipulate their circumstances; more recent scholarship allows for flexibility within patriarchy, a social construct open to change.[37] This possibility of change and agency within the separate spheres theory is the primary strength of this method of study. Maternalism legitimized the presence of women in the public realm while challenging socially constructed boundaries of

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[35] Frevert, *Women in German History,* 2-5.

[36] Hausen, *When Biology Became Destiny,* 193.

[37] Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey, eds., *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency and Experience from the 16th to the 20th Century* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 4.

public/private, men/women.[38] Power relations were constantly shifting because "real political actors, including women, negotiated and contested them."[39] This notion of power through the manipulation of separate spheres is evident in the works of Käthe Kollwitz. By depicting strong, active women, Kollwitz introduces "private" subjects such as maternalism, abortion, and pacifism into the public realm.[40]

Not all historians agree that the theory of separate spheres is a positive method of study, and some argue that it reinforces the notion that "biology is destiny." As Linda Kerber notes, the separate spheres theory focuses on the study of spaces "socially constructed both *for* and *by* women"[41] The separate spheres theory is neither an accident nor biologically determined but is instead socially and culturally constructed. As women gained more and more freedoms from the impact of the Industrial Revolution, male-dominated society created new methods of subordination for women within the public sphere, regulating their actions to the private sphere. Along with Kerber, scholars such as Atina Grossmann, and Cornelie Usborne acknowledge that Weimar women were ultimately unsuccessful in the bid for equality because they emphasized the differences between men and women, further isolating the female experience. Despite this setback, scholars acknowledge that these separate spheres were fluid and that women played a key role in creating new opportunities within the public sphere.

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[38] Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain and the United States, 1880-1920," *The American Historical Review*, 95 (4), October 1990, 1079.

[39] Abrams and Harvey, *Gender Relations,* 5.

[40] The primary purpose of this thesis is to utilize Kollwitz's artwork in order to argue that women within Weimar Germany did not accept male domination of the public sphere passively but instead manipulated the private sphere in order to create new avenues into the public realm. By focusing on Kollwitz's role, I will challenge the trend in historiography that claims maternal feminism did not create lasting influences. Because of this approach, a separate section on Kollwitz and separate spheres historiography is omitted from this section and found within the following chapters.

[41] Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History*, 75 (1), June 1988, 18.

Calling into question actual gains made through maternal feminism, Usborne and Grossmann acknowledge that women in Weimar experienced small victories within the feminist movement but denied that they achieved overall success towards female equality. Usborne stresses the importance of the reproductive role of women rather than the productive role emphasized by political and economic studies. She suggests that because reproductive issues are generally overlooked in current studies of the Weimar feminist movement, the general opinion of this movement is negative.[42] However, the debate concerning birth control within the Weimar Republic has uncovered the influence of women legislators and doctors and their involvement in the feminist movement. At the time, Usborne posits that Weimar women no longer believed that maternity was their natural duty which allowed them to pursue interests outside the home. Birth control clinics dispensed birth control and offered advice to women of all social classes, leading Usborne to conclude that advances in birth control and women's increased participation in their sexuality led to some advancement towards women's emancipation.[43]

Despite these gains of the feminist movement in terms of birth control, Usborne contends that the ultimate goal of individual female agency and equality was not realized. She suggests that complete emancipation and equality was elusive because conversations involving reproduction caused tension between the individual versus the collective and showed that progress held different meanings to women of different classes and races.[44] Supporters of the birth control movement possessed the general understanding of a "hierarchy of human value and the priority of the collective as opposed to the

[42] Cornelie Usborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), xiii.
[43] Usborne, *The Politics of the Body,* 209-211.
[44] Usborne, *The Politics of the Body,* 207.

individual."[45] After acknowledging small gains in female emancipation within her work, Usborne ultimately concludes that because of the economic and political upheaval of the Weimar Republic and the strict adherence to traditional gender roles, the Weimar birth control movement failed to provide women with any real power in the public sphere.[46]

Like Usborne, Grossmann analyzes the emergence of birth control and abortion reform within Weimar culture but attempts to study the movement across international boundaries and not as a precursor to Fascism.[47] According to Grossmann, the sex reform movement in Weimar Germany struggled to reform gender and sexuality through the understanding of the body. With innovations in public health and maternal care, counseling centers and birth control, the women of the sexual reform movement developed new political influence and occupied key spaces within public health systems and health departments.[48] Else Kienle – the Communist sex reformer and doctor – adhered to the maternal feminist ideology of "women's essential difference from men," claiming the right of women to control their own bodies.[49] With the popularity of the birth control and abortion reform movement, women of all classes identified with the desire for self-determination and control of their bodies.[50] However, despite addressing these gains in the Weimar birth control movement, Grossmann contends that the political and economic chaos of the Weimar Republic ultimately destroyed the advances of the feminist movement.

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[45] Usborne, *The Politics of the Body,* 212.
[46] Usborne, *The Politics of the Body,* 213.
[47] Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), vi.
[48] Grossmann, *Reforming Sex,* 12-13.
[49] Grossmann, *Reforming Sex,* 88.
[50] Grossmann, *Reforming Sex*, 92.

As suggested by Usborne, Grossmann concludes that the failure of the birth control movement resulted from the lack of individuality within its ranks. For Grossmann, the movement was not about allowing women to gain control over their bodies but instead was a source of power for competing political factions. With the increase in economic hardships and political infighting, the Weimar sexual reform movement splintered into disorganized factions, and as Grossmann suggests became convoluted and resulted in failure. Like Usborne before her, Grossmann contends that the collective Volk became more important than the individual woman.[51]

Deconstructing Categories: The Postmodern Approach to Scholarship

At the end of the 20th century, scholars began to question existing methods of study, labeling the separate spheres theory as essentializing women as homogenous "woman." The psycho/socio approach stressed by Freud depicted women as constantly weak.[52] With these criticisms, scholars began to seek another approach to historical study. The postmodern approach emerged and challenged pre-existing notions of power, gender, and language. The positivism of modernity was called into question with Jacques Derrida leading the field in deconstructing language and Michael Foucault analyzing and redefining power structures. For feminists of the 1990s, the stress placed on deconstructing categories and language allowed scholars to evaluate female agency without reinforcing biological essentialism.[53] However, postmodern scholars such as Joan Scott, Jacques Derrida and Jessica Benjamin disagree on certain issues concerning

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[51] Grossmann, *Reforming Sex,* 107.

[52] The Oedipal theory introduced by Sigmund Freud maintains men actively fight over woman while she passively observes. Woman is dependent object for male control and domination. See Laura Downs, "If 'Woman' is Just an Empty Category, Then Why am I Afraid to Walk Alone at Night? Identity Politics Meets the Postmodern Subject," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 35 (2), April 1993, 414-437.

[53] Downs, "If 'Woman' is Just an Empty Category," 416.

the "other." For Derrida and Scott, the "other" must either destroy or be destroyed by the powerful. In response, Jessica Benjamin and others challenge this thought, claiming the possibility that unlike beings may coexist and that the "other" may have agency.[54] This point is particularly important for my thesis because I will attempt to locate agency within Kollwitz's work as the "other" – a female artist in a male dominated field.

New historiography of the Weimar women's movement appears to move towards the idea that social categories should be challenged as socially constructed and always evolving. This postmodern approach does not escape limitations. Deconstructing language opens historical study to voices other than the most powerful, but language will always be problematic – how can scholars deconstruct language without using language?[55] Despite this challenge, many scholars have attempted to deconstruct social categories such as "woman" in order to avoid broad generalizations of populations. By challenging these categories and deconstructing language, historians such as Kate Lacey and Marsha Meskimmon question the role of "woman" as a homogenous category and look to deconstruct the notion that female equality is a uniform absolute.

Kate Lacey focuses on the importance of radio within the women's movement and the gains attributed to female equality as a result of the invention of the radio. Through her research, Lacey finds that radio programs acknowledged the power of choice for women to work inside or outside the home. These radio programs encouraged mutual respect for women, stressing the importance of acceptance for different ways of life.[56] With this evidence, Lacey's discourse suggests that women had power through

[54] Downs, "If 'Woman' is Just an Empty Category," 425.
[55] Downs, "If 'Woman' is Just an Empty Category," 420.
[56] Kate Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio, and the Public Sphere, 1923-1945* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 165.

new opportunities regardless if they chose to inhabit them.[57] Despite the existence of new opportunities, Lacey contends that the Weimar women's movement was ultimately a failure. The radio emphasized the homogenous role of the German woman without questioning the individuality of each woman. Therefore Lacey states that the "rationalizing maternalist and domestic science programs of the Frauenfunk, for all their claim to modernity, ultimately, implicitly, preached a continuation of the status quo."[58]

Similar to the increased popularity of the postmodern approach in studying Weimar women, historians also began to question previous methods of study of Kollwitz and her influence in Weimar Germany. One scholar who has consistently challenged previous historiography of Kollwitz is Elizabeth Prelinger who contends that because Kollwitz was a successful artist in a field dominated by men, her works were described and analyzed in a different manner. She suggests that Kollwitz's works have been reduced to a "story" of mother with scholars studying her role as a woman rather than studying the artistic achievements and accomplishments Kollwitz contributed to the art community.[59] Prelinger's work does not dwell on the choices Kollwitz made as a woman. She does not mention Kollwitz's engagement to Karl Kollwitz as a struggle or as a disappointment to her father but instead briefly mentions the marriage in a small section dedicated to an overview of Kollwitz's life.[60]

Prelinger's study of Kollwitz focuses on her artistic ability from a technical viewpoint rather than stressing the personality and life of the artist. First, Prelinger points out that Kollwitz's depictions of World War I differ greatly from other prominent artists

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[57] Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies,*157.

[58] Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies,* 5-7.

[59] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 67. This assertion brings to mind the works of Arthur and Mina Klein and Martha Kearns that focus primarily on Kollwitz's life as a woman – wife and mother.

[60] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 76.

of the era such as Otto Dix and Willibald Krain. Instead, Kollwitz portrays war solely from the homefront and its effects on women and children. She never shows scenes from the battlefield or material devastation.[61] By examining Kollwitz from an artistic point of view, Prelinger suggests Kollwitz's change to lithography from drawings and watercolors as her primary medium reinforces her change in attitude towards her work. The chaos around her – her son's death, world war, and the November Revolution – convinced Kollwitz of the importance of art as a voice of social change. The avant-garde movement and basic theory of "art for art's sake" did not agree with Kollwitz's social outlook. She wanted her works to speak to people and have a purpose. The medium of lithography was the easiest method that did not take up extreme amounts of energy or time. The message of her art became more important to Kollwitz than the medium.[62]

With this newfound dedication to social change, Kollwitz became increasingly engaged with social issues – abortion reform, poverty, pacifism. According to Prelinger, the women in Kollwitz's work were never passive victims or bystanders but were active agents of social change. Prelinger examines the process Kollwitz went through in producing *The End* (Figure 1) which was originally inspired by Hauptmann's play *The Weavers.* In her initial sketches, Kollwitz depicted the woman in the scene as she was represented in Hauptmann's play – standing still, hand's folded, sad and passive. However, Kollwitz made subtle changes that drastically altered the woman's countenance and in the completed work, the woman appears angry. Her lips are pursed and her hands are clenched implying anger and impending action. By making these small changes in

[61] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 56. Her depictions of war also differ greatly from her earlier artwork (i.e. *Peasants War* and *A Weavers Rebellion*), a fact that is generally attributed to the death of her son in WWI.

[62] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 50.

the woman's appearance, Kollwitz changed the original passive woman in the play into an active, angry image in her artwork. For Kollwitz, these social issues required action from women. She did not believe that women could sit passively in mourning but instead needed to act.

By taking a closer look at Prelinger's work, we see that Kollwitz's motivations and artwork are far more problematic and complex than acknowledged in past scholarship. She challenges scholars to deconstruct Kollwitz's artwork and her attitude towards her subjects without applying preconceived stereotypes of woman artist or mourning mother.[63] Prelinger suggests that *A Weaver's Rebellion* was Kollwitz's way of engaging social issues through literary influences. She made changes to the scenery and titles and conflated images from two literary sources (*Germinal* and *The Weavers*) to form the series.[64] She didn't produce pictures of the proletariat in order to gain recognition of their plight or give them a voice. Originally, she focused on the working class because she found them beautiful. According to her diary, "people from the bourgeoisie were entirely without charm to me. The bourgeois life seemed entirely pedantic to me. On the other hand, the proletariat had great style. Only much later, when I became acquainted, especially through my husband, with the difficulty and tragedy of the depths of proletarian life, when I became acquainted with the women, who came to my husband seeking aid and incidentally also came to me, did I truly grasp in all its power, the fate of the proletariat."[65] Other sources quote Kollwitz as saying that "when you characterize me exclusively as a portrayer of the proletariat, I say that you know my

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[63] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 14.
[64] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 30. This interpretation of *A Weaver's Rebellion* shows Kollwitz actively creating the series rather than simply copying from others work.
[65] Hans Kollwitz, ed., *Diary and Letters of Käthe Kollwitz.* Translated by Richard Winston. (Northwestern University Press, 1989), 741.

work only very incompletely."[66] Kollwitz was not an artistic outsider or rebel; instead she was popular and successful within her field. Rewarded for her work, Kollwitz was fully accepted by her peers and her audiences.[67]

Conclusion

In conclusion, the historiography of Weimar women has evolved over the last decades as has the historiography of Käthe Kollwitz. Beginning with grand narratives followed by social and cultural studies concluding with the postmodern approach, historians have attempted to give a voice to those previously ignored and break down essentialized categories of "woman." For scholars of the Weimar feminist movement, historians first stressed the victimization of women by male-dominated society. These scholars viewed women as victims of their gender and adhered to the "biology is destiny" trope regardless of the situation. During the next decade, scholars began to question the idea that women were always passive victims and began to explore the potential for women's historical agency using theoretical categories like "separate spheres" and "maternal feminism." Scholars of this trend believed that women could occupy spaces within the public sphere by manipulating the private sphere. However, over time, historians began to acknowledge that the positive aspects of the separate spheres theory did not outweigh the negative impact. According to these scholars, by categorizing themselves as different from men, women further excluded themselves from the public

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[66] Cited in Gunther Thiem, "Vorwort" in *Die Zeichnerm Käthe Kollwitz* (Stuttgart, 1967), quoted in Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 81.

[67] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 77. Over the course of her career, Kollwitz was named the first woman professor at the Berlin Academy of Art, appointed member of the Berlin Secession – a predominately male organization, and was elected a jury member of the Secession exhibition organization. However, in a letter written to her friend "Jeep," Kollwitz admitted that she did not want to accept the university position. Because it was publicly announced while she was out of town, she accepted because she didn't want to cause trouble. See Kollwitz (1989), 195.

(male) sphere. From these observations, the current trend in historiography emerged – the postmodern approach to historical analysis – which emphasizes the need to deconstruct social categories including "woman." Without deconstructing these labels, the experiences of all women are reduced to a homogenous experience.

Like the changes in the historiography of Weimar women, trends in the study of Käthe Kollwitz have also undergone changes. Beginning with scholars such as Martha Kearns and Arthur and Mina Klein, the primary method of study was in the form of biographies. Kollwitz as a "woman artist" became a personality. These scholars failed to acknowledge any artistic influences or accomplishments of Kollwitz but they did introduce her into the realm of historical analysis. The other end of the historiographical spectrum is Elizabeth Prelinger who primarily focuses on Kollwitz as an artist, following her changing mediums and analyzing her artwork from a technical perspective. My scholarship will fall somewhere in the middle of these two trends. Even though I agree with the postmodern approach to deconstructing language and social constructs, I also contend that Kollwitz was an example of maternal feminism at work. By utilizing maternal imagery and by focusing on the role of the mother during turbulent social times, Kollwitz allowed new spaces to be available to her in the public realm. Through this manipulation of the private sphere, Kollwitz opened new spaces for the next generation of artists.

Chapter Two - Maternal Feminism: A Challenge to Weimar Patriarchy

"I found the proletariat beautiful…It was not until later, when I came face to face with the poverty and misery of the workers, that I also felt the duty to put my art in their service."
--Käthe Kollwitz (Questionnaire 1942/3 on the dignity of art)

In this chapter, I will analyze Kollwitz's artwork in order to argue that some Weimar women did not accept the male domination of the public sphere passively but instead manipulated traditional notions of femininity to create new avenues into the public realm. By creating images that reflected the reality of motherhood – i.e. women fighting for abortion reform and suffering from hunger and need - Kollwitz criticized Weimar patriarchy. Her efforts in the art community paralleled larger historical processes. During the Weimar Republic, women began to openly debate female sexuality and the role of motherhood. Through these debates and public opposition to Paragraph 218 (the legislation outlawing abortions), Weimar feminists brought the "private" topics of motherhood and sexuality into public discourse. By stressing the importance of motherhood, feminists in Weimar Germany were able to change the political atmosphere of the early 20th century in ways that had lasting effects.

According to Marsha Meskimmon, contemporary art is a crucial venue for negotiating gender identity, and women artists during the Weimar period were no different. Past historiography has marginalized female artists as homogenous "other" in reference to man; however, recent trends have shifted the focus to include the various voices of women within the quest for modernity.[68] Images depicting women as mothers

[68] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern,* 3/9.

varied greatly during this time, reflecting the fact that maternity was not homogenous but included a wide-range of representations.[69] During the Weimar period, male artists consistently portrayed mother and child as idyllic and peaceful images, further reinforcing the social norm of woman as "natural" mother. However, female artists during this time recognized the complex issues of motherhood, depicting various images of women as mothers and their struggle for reforms.[70] For these artists like Kollwitz, images of mothers served as powerful political agents in the quest for political and social equality.[71] For example, Kollwitz created images of working-class mothers and children in order to comment on "male issues" such as war, economic hardships, and abortion reform.[72] Therefore, despite the diversity within the women's movement, important issues were brought to light because of the voices of female artists.

Political and social gains attained by Weimar women are usually overshadowed by the ultimate rise to power of the National Socialists. However, women during the Weimar period made significant gains during the women's movement that would lay the basis for modern liberal feminism. By addressing women's issues such as reproductive rights and sexuality, Weimar women created a space for the female voice within public discourse of the time.[73] To illustrate Kollwitz's influence on social reforms in Weimar Germany, I will outline her early days followed by her participation in the abortion debate. Finally I will argue that Kollwitz knowingly used maternal images in order to further her agenda of social equality and legalized abortion. I contend that historians who

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[69] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern,* 115.
[70] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern,* 77.
[71] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern,* 95.
[72] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern,* 93.
[73] Patricia Herminghouse and Magda Mueller, eds, *Cultural Productions of a Nation, Volume 04,* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), 125.

adhere to the notion that Weimar German feminism was another sign of "illiberalism" deny the role maternalism played in the future accomplishments of liberal feminists.

Abortion Reform and Sexual Politics in the Weimar Republic

Analyzing the sexual politics of the Weimar Republic is necessary in order to understand the context of Käthe Kollwitz and her use of maternal imagery to influence reform. The nineteenth century ushered in the "cult of domesticity" that continued to silence female voices. During this time, women became more and more confined to the household – performing "non-productive" work – while men worked outside the home.[74] This notion of a domestic world of women, also known as the "cult of motherhood," originally gained popularity during the French Revolution, resulting in polarized sexual norms reinforced through popular culture.[75] Along with an increased interest in eugenics and New-Malthusianism, 20th-century German politics reinforced a double standard for the sexes and widely discriminated against women. After marriage, most husbands expected their wives to work in the home. Some married women were allowed to work part-time but their salary was considered supplemental to the husband's income. Also women could not attend universities or request a divorce and held little political power.[76] However, with the advent of Weimar reforms, conflicts over sexuality, politics, and the role of motherhood resulted in fierce debates with women artists such as Kollwitz playing a unique role.[77]

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[74] Marion Gray, *Productive Men, Reproductive Women: The Agrarian Household and the Emergence of Separate Spheres During the German Enlightenment* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 1-2.

[75] Stewart Buettner, "Images of Modern Motherhood in the Art of Morisot, Cassatt, Moderson-Becker, Kollwitz," *Woman's Art Journal*, 7 (2), Autumn 1986-Winter 1987, 15.

[76] Evans, *Comrades and Sisters,* 2-3.

[77] Rosemary Betterton, *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists and the Body* (London: Routledge, 1996), 3.

From the beginning of the Weimar Republic, the government held substantial power over women and their sexual bodies. Passed in 1919 under the Weimar Constitution, Paragraph 218 made abortion illegal and criminalized the purchase of contraceptives.[78] Amended in 1926, Paragraph 218 prohibited all abortions except those deemed medically necessary. Also, Paragraph 184.3 restricted all access to contraception while Paragraph 175 prohibited homosexuality.[79] In addition to governmental control, class issues played a key role in the lives of Weimar women. Stipulations of Paragraph 218 denied working-class women access to abortions and contraception because advertising abortions was strictly prohibited. Therefore, wealthier women had access to doctors willing to describe the procedure as "medically necessary" and subsequently allowed under the law. Because of these loopholes, the legal system forced proletarian women to search for a doctor willing to help or settle on a 'quack' willing to perform the procedure for a price, often resulting in trauma or even death, while upper class women underwent "medically necessary" procedures in sanitary clinics.[80]

During this time, party politics also contributed to the abortion debate but for specific political gains. The Communist party fought for abolishing Paragraph 218 not because the party considered women to have rights to their own bodies but because party members believed that capitalism was making childrearing virtually impossible. Friedrich Wolf, a Communist physician and playwright, claimed, "every healthy German woman has the desire for a child," but until the state improved social benefits, women would not return to their "natural state of motherhood."[81] Women were not only

[78] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern*, 79.
[79] Grossman, *Reforming Sex*, 79.
[80] Grossman, *Reforming Sex,* 83.
[81] Grossman, *Reforming Sex,* 93.

controlled by the Weimar legal system but also by the different political factions fighting over the right to women's bodies. Almost at the same time the government began passing abortion legislation, social protest against sexual discrimination increased, beginning with the Bund für Mütterschutz und Sexualreform (League for the Protection of Mothers and for Sexual Reform) in 1904.[82] Social protestors, feminists, and socialists called for an end to Paragraph 218 as well as legal equality for women in instances of divorce and children born out of wedlock.[83] For supporters of the women's movement, aborting women were seen as agents of their own sexuality rather than victims of biology. By controlling their bodies, women publicly challenged gender boundaries.[84]

After World War I, experts began to reassess their opinions concerning contraceptives in addition to the debates over abortion. Because of the war and subsequent economic hardships, contraceptives proved to be the only way to ensure families would not continue to have children in poverty. A professor of gynecology at the University of Berlin during this time remarked that the "unbearable life of wide sectors of our population in extreme poverty and dire housing forces us to acknowledge a social indication for family limitation."[85] However, state preoccupation with fertility was not only about population reduction or decline but also about changes in the social order. Declining birthrates along with access to contraception and abortions would allow women more freedom. Fertility control would enable women to separate their sexuality from the role of motherhood, further reinforcing the concept of the "New Woman"[86] – a

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[82] Myra Marx Ferree, et. al., eds., *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Pulibc Sphere in Germany and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 26.
[83] Ferree, et. al., eds, *Shaping Abortion Discourse,* 26.
[84] Abrams and Harvey, eds, *Gender Relations,* 164.
[85] Cornelie Usborne, *The Politics of the Body,* 103.
[86] Usborne, *The Politics of the Body,* 30.

sexually and politically independent citizen of Weimar. Public perception of the "New Woman" included the notion that women were aborting children out of the desire to postpone family in favor of work or in an attempt to limit family size.[87] Because of the images of the "New Woman" and an increased interest in population decline, the state gained more control over the female body.[88]

Käthe Kollwitz: Sexuality, Motherhood and Abortion Reform

Käthe Kollwitz first experienced the reality of German sexism during the early years of her life. At this time, the German educational system was segregated by gender with female education inferior to that of males. However, because of her father's progressive attitude concerning his daughters' education, she enrolled in one of the first art schools for girls.[89] Because of her obvious talent, Kollwitz's father encouraged her to focus on her art and never marry. Yet at the age of 17, she accepted the proposal of Karl Kollwitz, her brother's friend and fellow social democrat. Despite her father's misgivings, Kollwitz was able to successfully juggle marriage, family and her art career. However, from an early age, Kollwitz held a very ambivalent attitude concerning her sexuality and her future role as a mother. Throughout her young adulthood, she often wondered if the "advent of motherhood would force her to abandon her work, as was the case with virtually all women in such circumstances."[90]

Due to this ambivalence, Kollwitz's images of mothers during the early years of her career varied drastically between idealistic portraits of mother and child and pictures of mothers in grief. For example, her work *Mother With Child in Arms* (Figure 2) stands

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[87] Atina Grossman, *Reforming Sex,* 99.
[88] Abrams and Harvey, eds, *Gender Relations,* 14.
[89] Wendy Slatkin, *The Voices of Women Artists* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1993) 164.
[90] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 24.

in sharp contrast to *Mother With Dead Child* (Figure 3). The images in the first work are almost impressionistic with the mother smiling and happy, holding a healthy, content (almost chubby) child. Kollwitz provides very little detailed etching in this piece. On the other hand, Kollwitz provides great detail in *Mother with Dead Child*. The etching gives the impression that Kollwitz was creating the many lines out of anger, striking at the paper with fierce strokes. The mother in this image is torn with grief at her child's death. She is almost animalistic in nature, and it appears that she is trying to fold her child up into her body - as if she believes that she can take him back into her womb where he will be protected. Both mother and child look aged and thin and her body, especially her hands, looks old and wrinkled. Yet she is still strong, as evidenced in her muscular arms and legs. Kollwitz also plays with the shading in this piece with the mother in the shadows and the innocent, dead child facing upward and his face illuminated. His face and innocence are the focal point in this work. These two works illustrate how conflicted Kollwitz was in terms of her role as mother. In her early years, she wavered from producing idyllic images of motherhood to images that depicted the reality of motherhood for the working class.

Maternal images depicted by Weimar artists demonstrated the emergence of private topics (i.e. birth control, sexuality, abortion reform) into the public realm,[91] and Käthe Kollwitz was no exception. When Kollwitz first moved to Berlin after her marriage, she was still trying to perfect her craft and did not see the misery that surrounded her. She did not pay attention to the patients suffering from tuberculosis, alcohol and physical abuse, and unwanted pregnancies who constantly visited her

[91] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern,* 76.

husband's office;[92] instead, Kollwitz worked on literary drawings and self-portraits. After constant exposure to the plight of the working class, Kollwitz began drawing the women and children who came to her husband, particularly those affected by the ongoing war. Rejecting the notion of "art for art's sake," Kollwitz began to depict images that represented the true life of working-class Germans.[93] Although Kollwitz's early years are plagued with an inconsistency in maternal images, after years of exposure to the working-class patients of her husband and the death of her younger son Peter, Kollwitz began to see her experience as a mother as a unique method of negotiating social change. After these life-changing events, the majority of her pieces include images of motherhood and the reality of Weimar society. Kollwitz is no longer ambivalent but is steadfast in her efforts to bring about social change. By depicting images of strong, active women, Kollwitz uses women to argue for social change, especially within abortion reform.

In order to argue against abortion legislation, she provided artwork for the Communist paper *Die Internationale* as well as illustrations for the play *Volk in Not*, an adaptation from the book written by Dr. Carl Credé, a physician imprisoned in 1926 for performing abortions. Although Kollwitz won critical acclaim from fellow artists, many people including the government did not welcome her art not only because of her subversive political messages but also because of her gender. Kaiser Wilhelm refused to award her the gold medal for her work *The Revolt of the Weavers*, remarking that "a medal for a woman would really be going too far...Orders and medals of honor belong on the breasts of worthy men."[94] Despite these setbacks, Kollwitz continued to produce

[92] Alessandra Comini, "Kollwitz in Context: The Formative Years" in *Käthe Kollwitz*, Elizabeth Prelinger, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 96.
[93] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 21.
[94] Comini in Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 100.

artwork that forced audiences to acknowledge the hardships of the working class and the need for abortion reform.

Kollwitz's most popular imagery used during the abortion debate was the 1924 poster created for the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD) entitled *Down with the Abortion Paragraph* (Figure 4). A closer look at this poster shows the powerful message of the images. The woman depicted is cradling a baby while her belly is round with another pregnancy. She also holds the hand of another young child at her side. Her eyes and cheeks are sunken and hollow and show sheer exhaustion. She is a woman staring into a blank void – a bleak and empty future. Yet she still holds her children with large, strong hands; but she knows that she has no more hands to hold the impending baby. Through this imagery, Kollwitz shows just how desperate this woman is for relief. Furthermore, the writing on the poster is natural handwriting which makes the work more relatable to the average viewer. By depicting an impoverished mother, pregnant with a child that she cannot afford, Kollwitz's method is "traditional" but also effective. By using maternal images as the face of abortion, Kollwitz stressed the link between women and the lack of sexual information and advice that Paragraph 218 forbade. Instead of focusing on sexual freedom and promiscuous identity of the "neue frau" –an image that created apprehension in many during this time, Kollwitz provided a sympathetic picture of abortion through the working-class mother.[95] Because she used the image of a working-class woman, Kollwitz brings to light the fact that working-class women did not have access to abortions equal to those of the upper-class. Through this imagery, Kollwitz subversively creates the proletariat a voice within the public debate of abortion reform.

[95] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern,* 109-110.

Not all historians agree that Kollwitz's images of women represented a call for social change. For example, Atina Grossman and Marsha Meskimmon contend that Kollwitz's maternal images reinforced the passivity of Weimar women and assert that artists such as Alice Lex-Nerlinger depicted active women within the abortion debate. Grossman posits that Lex-Nerlinger's 1931 poster entitled *Paragraph 218* differs from Kollwitz's *Down with the Abortion Paragraph* because Kollwitz's woman is "dumb, passive, and helpless" compared to Lex-Nerlinger's "active, strong, and united" women.[96] Lex-Nerlinger's depiction shows women pushing over a cross that symbolizes Paragraph 218. Meskimmon adds to this argument by stating that Lex-Nerlinger's "central figures in the piece were a group of women together, pushing over the symbol of the paragraph" while Kollwitz's woman is passively standing.[97] I disagree with these conclusions, arguing that Kollwitz's work represents a different generation from Lex-Nerlinger and therefore cannot be compared without acknowledging this fact. The imagery depicted in Kollwitz's artwork – a pregnant, working-class mother – produced a sympathetic response from people during her years as an artist. The woman in Kollwitz's work could be any proletariat German woman. By using this image, Kollwitz produces a poster that is relatable to the average German onlooker. Because of government sanctions, Kollwitz manipulated the system by producing what appeared to be "harmless" images of motherhood. Due to these accomplishments, later artists such as Lex-Nerlinger had opportunities to challenge the government in more direct methods. Kollwitz used her artwork to introduce numerous voices for the abortion debate. By manipulating the

[96] Bridenthal, et. al., eds, *When Biology Became Destiny,* 68.
[97] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough,* 110.

"private" image of motherhood, Kollwitz merged the traditional imagery of mother with the radical message of social reform.

Maternal Feminism and Social Change

Current historiography tends to underestimate the effects of maternalism or maternal feminism within Weimar social and political reforms. Pre World War I feminism in Germany, according to Wendy Slatkin, "wished to maintain feminine qualities – especially women's maternal, nurturing 'instincts'"[98] and reduced the feminist movement to a "biology is destiny" paradigm. Dora Apel adds that Kollwitz's art further regulated women to the "mother" role, claiming that Kollwitz's work depicted "tragic proletarian mothers whose images depended on stereotypes of women as reproducers and protectors of the young."[99] Apel further claims that Kollwitz's *The Beggers* (1924) depicts "pathetic female figures [that] play on stereotypes of women as helpless, pathetic, and passive victims."[100] Historians Koven and Michel posit that past scholarship concerning maternalism "produces narratives of loss and victimization, in which women appear as passive, disorganized, and helpless in the face of the encroaching male power of the state."[101] Labeling maternal feminism as another sign of Weimar "illiberalism," some historians conclude that maternal feminism was a complete failure compared to modern liberal feminism.[102]

I argue that the rejection of feminist maternalism denies the agency and the existence of many important women including Kollwitz. Artists like Kollwitz did not

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[98] Slatkin, *The Voices of Women Artists,* 163.
[99] Apel, "'Heroes' and 'Whores,' 380.
[100] Apel, "'Heroes' and 'Whores,' 381.
[101] Koven and Michel, "Womanly Duties," 1084.
[102] Allen examines these debates in *Feminism and Motherhood,* 5.

passively accept male-created stereotypes of "woman" but instead manipulated this social construct into a weapon for social change.[103] Maternalism legitimized the presence of women within the public debate for women's rights by stressing the importance of women within the private sphere and challenging political, social, and economic boundaries.[104] Allowing women to be nurturers, maternal feminism expanded roles of women, opening up spaces in public spheres (i.e. teachers, social workers) rather than reinforcing patriarchal roles.[105] I argue that Kollwitz's feminist stance developed as a result of her strong socialist background and her belief that women required equal rights in order to overcome capitalist society.[106] Like Kollwitz, many feminists did not attempt to break down existing gender barriers but instead chose to develop new roles for women by stressing the strength in femininity.[107] Some Weimar feminists stressed the importance of women in the home and charity organizations and the need for equal opportunity and education in order to maintain this influence. Weimar women no longer believed motherhood was their natural destiny but an option that could be individually chosen.[108] German feminists also emphasized the concept of 'organized motherhood' as a method to argue for political and social reform.[109]

Kollwitz in particular used this idea in her artwork as evidenced by the many pieces of work that portray strong groups of women working together for social change. In her work *The Mothers* (Figure 5), Kollwitz uses women to argue against war. Here the women are wrapped together in a strong embrace in order to shield their children from

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[103] Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood,* 6.
[104] Koven and Michel, eds, "Womanly Duties," 1079.
[105] Herminghouse and Mueller, *Gender and Germanness,* 116.
[106] Evans, *Comrades and Sisters,* 9.
[107] Gray, *Productive Men,* 4.
[108] Usborne, *The Politics of the Body,* 209.
[109] Abrams and Harvey, eds, *Gender Relations,* 22.

the horrors of war. Kollwitz's women are all looking outwards, reinforcing the idea that they are willing to fight for their children. The women's bodies are creating a fortress to protect their children in a way that Kollwitz believed that Germany should protect its children. The women's hands are large and strong, as per usual in Kollwitz's depictions, yet the women's faces show their honest feelings. Although they are providing protection for their children now, their eyes are worried because the mothers know that Germany is not providing protection for their children but will one day call out to them to go to war. This work stresses the importance of mothers working together to call attention to social issues.

After World War I, Kollwitz did not depict sentimental images of motherhood but focused on poverty and the plight of the working class.[110] For Kollwitz, motherhood and protecting children was not a biological absolute but was an intellectual choice, yet the stress of war in addition to the loss of male workers led many women into the workforce. This reality made childcare difficult and caused infant mortality to rise. Kollwitz witnessed the effects of economic struggles firsthand at her husband's office. Sick and malnourished children became a daily sight for Kollwitz along with overworked and underpaid mothers. In order to draw attention to this reality Kollwitz produced *Infant Mortality* (Figure 6). This woodcut presents the subject in an opposite manner than is normal in the woodcut medium. The background is completely black with only the face and hands of the woman and the coffin cut in white. The woman depicted has large mournful eyes with dark circles. Like so many images produced by Kollwitz, this woman's eyes are sunken and tired. She is not crying but is standing, cradling her child. Ironically, the child is actually dead in a coffin, but the mother continues to hug it close

[110] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern,* 162.

to her body. This image is striking because it depicts the sadness experienced by women who have lost their children. In this piece, Kollwitz brings to light the psychological effects of poverty and emphasizes the fact that a child's death was a very real concern for working peasant women.[111]

Although Kollwitz depicted women in distress as seen in *Infant Mortality,* in many of her works, Kollwitz explores the mediation into the public sphere through the private yet active bodies of women and children. The vital role played by women within social change is evident in her pieces entitled *The Riot* (Figure 7), *The Weaver's Rebellion* (Figure 8), and *Outbreak* (Figure 9).[112] In these pieces women and children play a central role in the artwork, literally and figuratively. Women are in the center of the canvas with the male characters in the background. Kollwitz's *Outbreak* portrays a woman as the instigator for social uprising, the leading voice in the call for rebellion. The woman, "Black Anna," stands before charging men with her hands above her head, urging the charge. She is a natural force, an organic vision of revolt, like a storm unleashed. The woman is calling forth action and the men are reacting and following her call.

In *The Weaver's Rebellion*, Kollwitz shows a group of workers, all men except for one women and child. Two men with scythes are carrying their tools on their shoulders, but a closer look shows that Kollwitz has drawn the child's arm to continue the line created by the scythe of the man behind the woman. This image reinforces the idea that the woman's "tool" is the child. She is walking with the men as an equal and is

[111] Buettner, "Images of Modern Motherhood," 18.

[112] See Deepwell, *Women Artists*, 20 and Renate Hinz, "Kathe Kollwitz: Her Talent Was a Responsibility," ArtNews, 80 (10), December 1981, 85.

burdened by the child in the same manner that the men are burdened by their tools. Finally, in *The Riot* Kollwitz depicts a group of workers rioting by a gate. In this work, the men are throwing the rocks through the gate but the women, including one woman holding a child's hand, are the ones gathering the stones. In this image, Kollwitz shows that women are participating in the quest for social change and play a role in helping men to rise up against injustice. Ironically, the women are not throwing stones but are helping the men, by supplying them with their weapons. Kollwitz is not removing men from the riot, but instead is introducing women into the action as the ones providing the means for fighting. The women remain in the maternal role, as shown by the woman holding on to a child, but are aiding in social change. By stressing the importance of women in social change and by placing women in such central roles within her artwork, Kollwitz drew attention to the female experience during Weimar reforms.

Another area of Kollwitz's influence was within the quest for sexual equality. Frauenkultur was a group formed to fight for full partnership in marriage, reproductive rights, and equality within the public realm and sexual identity. Female artists such as Kollwitz continued this fight by negotiating through the symbolic essence of 'woman.'[113] Kollwitz used her art to draw attention to social issues that she could not address within contemporary discussion. By maintaining the feminine perspective Kollwitz appears to be adhering to societal norms; however, by allowing the female to also embody the active subject, Kollwitz subversively argues that women are not simply objects for the male gaze. She also challenges cultural norms concerning the female body. Yet Kollwitz was careful not to create overtly sexual women within her art. Instead she chose to emphasize the role women played within society and sexual reforms. The women in *The Riot* (See

[113] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern,* 8.

Figure 7), *March of the Weavers* (See Figure 8), and *Down with the Abortion Paragraph* (See Figure 4) are not sexually explicit women but are working-class women within the reality of Weimar's economic and political hardships. Because Kollwitz depicted physically active images of women rather than sexual bodies, she became one of the first artists to reject the typical image of woman as sexual object and instead stressed the importance of women in action.[114]

Conclusion

The sexual politics of the Weimar period created an opportunity for artists to bring the private topic of motherhood and sexuality to the forefront. The beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed a rise in popularity of motherhood – otherwise known as the "cult of motherhood" – and allowed the state (men) to dominate and repress women. However, in response, Weimar women began to question this control and began to call for reforms in the regulation of abortion and other issues of sexuality. These reformers were able to change the political atmosphere in a way that would cause lasting effects. As a social reformer, Käthe Kollwitz used maternal images in order to open possible spaces within public discourse, particularly within the abortion debate.

In this chapter I have argued that Kollwitz played a vital role in establishing the abortion reform movement. Through her artwork she gave a voice to working class mothers who were affected by laws against birth control. By bringing these issues to the public eye, Kollwitz strengthened women's role in public debates and social reforms. Other scholars disagree with the fact that Kollwitz was an active participant in the fight for reform. These scholars contend that artists such as Alice Lex-Nerlinger had more

[114] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 105.

influence on the movement than Kollwitz. However, these scholars fail to acknowledge the drastic difference between the two artists. Most scholars in the art community consider Kollwitz to be from a generation before Lex-Nerlinger. Therefore, her contributions to the abortion reform movement paved the way for other artists such as Lex-Nerlinger. Failing to consider the different time periods allows for scholars to disregard the actual impact of Kollwitz's artwork. Therefore, after analyzing the social and political atmosphere of Weimar regarding motherhood and women as well as after considering critiques of Kollwitz, I contend that Kollwitz was important to the abortion reform movement not only because she participated in the debate but because she brought much needed attention to the working-class mother's experience.

Chapter Three - *Nie wieder Krieg!*: The Role of Pacifism in the Works of Käthe Kollwitz

"All art can be placed somewhere along a political spectrum, supporting one set of class interests or another, actively or passively, at the very least supporting existing conditions by ignoring other possibilities, silence giving consent"

--- May Stevens[115]

A central theme in Kollwitz's work after World War II was her devotion to pacifism, a subject that became particularly important following the death of her son Peter, an early victim of World War I. In an attempt to censor the growing popularity of pacifism, the government repressed all organized anti-war groups, leaving them paralyzed by censorship and constant investigations, but Kollwitz manipulated these boundaries through art.[116] Because of her gender the government did not consider Kollwitz to be politically influential, allowing her to avoid the government scrutiny that fell on many of her contemporaries.[117] This left her to challenge the war virtually unchecked. By first focusing on pieces such as *Nie wieder Krieg*, the *Krieg* series, *The Mourning Parents* and others followed by the scholarly response to these images, in this chapter I illustrate the power of maternal imagery within Kollwitz's work. At the same time, my analysis of Kollwitz sheds light on larger debates regarding the value of maternal feminism and political action. Through the use of maternal images, Kollwitz produced works of art that not only questioned the war but also the role and responsibility of women. By studying these images, I hope to show that women during the pacifist

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[115] May Stevens, "Taking Art to the Revolution." *Heresies*, 9, 1979, 40.

[116] James D. Shand, "Doves Among the Eagles: German Pacifists and their Government During WWI," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 10 (1), January 1975, 104.

[117] For example, Otto Dix, a prominent artist during this time, had his art removed from public exhibition due to the controversial nature of his antiwar works.

movement of Weimar could be active agents who used the private sphere (i.e. motherhood) in order to gain a voice within public discourse.

Weimar Pacifism: The Aftermath of World War

A broader analysis of the German pacifist movement is necessary in order to better understand Käthe Kollwitz's specific role within Weimar German pacifism. During the first half of the twentieth century, the German pacifist movement underwent substantial changes. Prior to World War I, many German women felt obligated to send their men into battle despite their pacifism because they considered war to be an honorable and noble act. The leader of the Social Democratic Party's Women's Organization Clara Zetkin encouraged women to give up their sons and husbands for their country, arguing that "women are endowed with the strength to make sacrifices which are more painful than the giving of our own blood. That is why we are able to see our own fight and die when it is for the sake of freedom."[118] At the outbreak of World War I when nationalistic fervor was on the rise even pacifist leaders encouraged mothers in Germany to "accept the necessity for one generation to shed its blood for the good of those to come."[119] As the war progressed and more and more Germans died in battle, a general shift occurred within the pacifist movement. More women began to denounce the patriotic duty of sacrifice and move toward the idea of absolute pacifism, ultimately rejecting the idea that mothers should willingly sacrifice their children for the good of the nation.[120]

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[118] Angela Moorjani, *The Aesthetics of Loss and Lessness* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1992), 107.

[119] Angela Moorjani, "Käthe Kollwitz on Sacrifice, Mourning and Reparation: An Essay in Psychoaesthetics," *MLN*, 101 (5), December 1986, 1110.

[120] Shand, "Doves Among the Eagels," 97.

German pacifist movements after World War I consisted predominantly of middle-class, educated individuals. Although very few actually belonged to a political party, the majority of pacifists leaned toward the Social Democratic Party and followed fundamental socialist philosophies.[121] The pacifist movement of the 1920s emphasized the negative impact of war – senseless killing of young soldiers, forced conscription, and the increased power of the state at the expense of people's lives.[122] The Great War provided a moral opportunity for pacifists to critique warfare, claiming that women and children would be sacrificed through bombings and economic hardships and that young men would be molded into emotionless killers. Because of this philosophy, interwar German pacifists sought a better way for younger generations to challenge authority without being forced into the military – to solve problems without sacrificing their nation's children.[123] The ultimate goal of Weimar pacifism was to create a "New Woman" and "New Man," working together for peace.[124]

The primary objective of Weimar feminist-pacifists was to define female space within a male war.[125] Historians who study the shifts in the Weimar women's movement developed two different concepts to describe contemporary feminist thought: maternal versus liberal feminism. According to these scholars, maternal feminists claimed that women were naturally peaceful and nurturing and used this philosophy to argue that women could bring peace if allowed to participate in politics. Scholars such as Jo-Ann

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[121] Blanche Wiesen Cook, et. al., eds., *Voices of German Pacifism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972), 15.

[122] Peter Brock and Nigel Young, eds., *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 120.

[123] Brock and Young, *Pacifism,*106.

[124] Regina Braker, "Helene Stöcker's Pacifism in the Weimar Republic: Between Ideal and Reality," *Journal of Women's History*, 13 (3), 76.

[125] Micaela di Leonardo, "Morals, Mothers, and Militarism: Anti-Militarism and Feminist Theory," *Feminist Studies*, 11 (3), Fall 1985, 600.

Pilardi, Birgit Brock-Utne, and others suggest that maternal feminism allowed women to participate in public discourse by stressing the inherent peacefulness of women and their potential within politics.[126] On the other hand, scholars such as Dora Apel and Laura Kaplan argue that groups attempting to lure women into the peace movement manipulated the maternal feminist idea by stressing sexual determinism and a call for the return to the home and maternity in order to achieve peace.[127] These scholars emphasize the positive aspects of liberal feminism, an ideology that based its arguments on the notion that all people – male and female – possess equal and universal rights and opportunities and reject biological determinism.[128] Proponents of liberal feminism challenged the idea that women were "natural" caretakers while men were "natural" competitors, claiming that women who emphasize the image of woman as caretaker further reinforce the dichotomy of male versus female and maintain the woman as the inferior "other."[129]

Scholars also identified these different trends in the feminist movement within the art community. Some artists during this period reflected maternal feminist views, believing that women were different from men and embracing these differences as strengths. These artists made frequent use of maternal images, suggesting that women naturally possessed a peaceful and humane attitude.[130] The primary symbol of the mother

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[126] Laura Duhan Kaplan, "Woman as Caretaker: An Archetype that Supports Patriarchal Militarism" in *Bringing Peace Home: Feminism, Violence, and Nature*, Karen J. Warren and Duane L. Cady, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 165. Also, Birgit Brock-Utne's *Educating for Peace: A Feminist Perspective* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1985) and Jo-Ann Pilardi's "The Changing Critical Fortunes of the Second Sex," *History and Theory*, 32 (1), February 1993, 51-73.

[127] See Apel's, "'Heroes' and 'Whores'", 379 and Laura Duhan Kaplan's "Woman as Caretaker" noted above.

[128] Amira Gelblum, "Feminism and Pacifism: The Case of Anita Augsburg and Lida Gustava Heymann," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, Band XXI, 1992, 207.

[129] Laura D. Kaplan, "Woman as Caretaker," 165/170.

[130] See di Leonardo, "Morals, Mothers," 601 and Evans, *Comrades and Sisters,* 121.

as inherently peaceful was the image of the “Moral Mother.” This imagery represented women as inherently pacifist, as the nurturing and compassionate voice of all that was vulnerable, and men as inherently warlike. This language implied a biological reasoning behind the idea that women as mothers could transform warring men.[131] In order to argue for equal rights during the Weimar Republic, many feminists utilized the theory of separate spheres, claiming that women were peaceful and therefore better able to shape policies for peace.[132] Although many post-WWI feminists rejected the argument that “biology is destiny,” women manipulated the system by emphasizing the maternal qualities of women, developing separate political avenues in order to justify feminist-pacifist ideology.[133] The feminist movement of Weimar motivated women to act as social agents of change while creating space within pacifist discourse.[134] This broader understanding of the Weimar feminist-pacifist movement helps us to understand the impact of Käthe Kollwitz and her work. By embracing the ideas of maternal images and the role of mothers in public discourse as a means of power, Kollwitz produced artwork that furthered the Weimar pacifist cause.

Käthe Kollwitz: “Ich will wirken in dieser Zeit”[135]

Käthe Kollwitz manipulated the public sphere in order attract attention to the role of women within pacifist discourse. Just as the pacifist movement as a whole underwent substantial changes, Kollwitz’s own ideas of revolution, nationalism, and peace also underwent a dramatic transformation during World War I. Prior to the war, Kollwitz

[131] di Leonardo, “Morals, Mothers,” 602.
[132] Gelblum, “Feminism and Pacifism,” 212.
[133] Gelblum, “Feminism and Pacifism,” 210.
[134] di Leonardo, “Morals, Mothers,” 599.
[135] “I want to work in this time.”

celebrated the socialist theme of revolution, succumbing to the nationalistic fervor by volunteering to feed women, children, and the unemployed.[136] Obviously rejecting the pacifist movement at this stage in her life, Kollwitz produced works that exhibited themes of social revolt and violent struggles for social emancipation. After the death of her son Peter in battle, Kollwitz felt betrayed by her country, and her ideas about nationalistic sacrifice gave way to devout pacifism. She no longer agreed with her fellow socialists about violent war and revolution as a means of social change; instead she denounced war of any kind and became an influential voice in Weimar feminist-pacifism.

Prior to this shift in personal ideology, the women Kollwitz depicted were revolutionary in nature, calling all people to fight for the Fatherland. During this period, Gerhart Hauptmann's play *The Weavers* played a crucial role in shaping Kollwitz's art. After seeing this influential play, Kollwitz became engrossed in revolution and social politics, spending the next five years producing lithographs and etchings that glorified violent protest.[137] Examples of artwork that Kollwitz produced during this time period include *The Peasants' Rebellion*, *The Uprising*, *Die Carmagnole,* and *The Revolt of the Weavers*. In these pieces, Kollwitz depicted violent working-class uprisings. In *The Revolt of the Weavers* -- a series of three lithographs and three etchings depicting the 1844 Silesian revolt of Hauptmann's play -- Kollwitz's working women participate in the revolt rather than act as passive bystanders. In *Outbreak* (See Figure 9), the primary character – a woman known as Black Anna – calls people to rebellion by leading the charge with raised arms. Unique because her images of women incite revolution,

[136] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 133.
[137] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 70-71.

Kollwitz broke the tradition of women as passive bystanders and instead produced images of women leading the fight for social emancipation.[138]

At this stage in her life, Kollwitz adhered to the belief that sacrifice was a sign of strength. Furthermore, at the onset of war, the desire of idealistic young people to fight for honor and nation overshadowed the pacifist movement; included in this group of zealous youth were Kollwitz's own two sons, Hans and Peter.[139] Because of her sons' enlistment, Kollwitz was torn between supporting her sons' decision and the fear that they would be harmed in battle. She voiced her indecision in her diaries, saying that "in such times, it seems so stupid that the boys must go to war. The whole thing is so ghastly and insane. Occasionally there comes the foolish thought: how can they possibly take part in such madness? And at once the cold shower: they *must, must*!" (September 30, 1914).[140] At this point, Kollwitz believed that despite the tragedies of war, all Germans should be willing to sacrifice for the Fatherland. Her ideal of blind nationalism drastically changed following the death of her son Peter,[141] leading Kollwitz to believe that "the right to voluntary death, even beyond the deaths of you boys, was no longer a right possessed by the individual, as I formerly thought. For back of the individual life stood the Fatherland, and as long as one could be of use to it, one had to *live*." (Letter to Hans, February 21, 1915)[142] Through works such as the *Krieg* series, Kollwitz used her talent to dramatically denunciate war in order to further the pacifist movement.[143]

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[138] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 85.
[139] Moorjani, "Käthe Kollwitz," 1110-1111.
[140] Kollwitz, ed, *The Diary and Letters,* 63.
[141] Moorjani, "Käthe Kollwitz," 1120.
[142] Kollwitz, *The Dairy and Letters of Kaethe Kollwitz,* 146.
[143] McCausland, "Käthe Kollwitz," 24.

This transformation that Kollwitz underwent resulted in new feelings toward Germany, and she decided to build a worthy memorial to her son Peter and all other fallen soldiers that exemplified the way her belief in nationalist sacrifice gave way to a feeling of betrayal. After Peter's death, Kollwitz had a "feeling that we were betrayed then, at the beginning…Peter and millions, many millions of other boys. All betrayed. That is why I cannot be calm. Within me all is upheaval, turmoil" (March 19, 1918).[144] This sense of betrayal and loss led to Kollwitz's complete denunciation of all war. Although she remained a loyal socialist throughout her life, Kollwitz rejected the socialist idea of violent revolution and embraced the notion of peaceful change. Because of her self-proclaimed naiveté, Kollwitz did not fully understand the darker side of warfare, but after two and half years and five million dead, Kollwitz could not find "*anything at all* to justify that" (August 27, 1916).[145] Writing in her diaries, Kollwitz claimed that she was "horrified and shaken by all the hatred in the world…, long[ing] for the kind of socialism that lets people *live*, and find that the earth has seen *enough* of murder, lies, misery…"(October 1920).[146] Kollwitz no longer celebrated violent socialist revolution but called for social transformation through peace.

The best illustration of Kollwitz's transformation from socialist revolutionary to devout pacifist is the memorial to her son Peter (See Figure 10). Killed at the front at Dixmuiden Belgium, Peter had been especially close to his mother, sharing her love and talent for art.[147] His death in 1914 deeply affected Kollwitz, leaving her to question her ideas of nationalist sacrifice. Writing in her diaries, she asks, "Can I affirm the sudden

[144] Kollwitz, *The Diary and Letters*, 88. .
[145] Kollwitz, *The Diary and Letters,* 73.
[146] Hans Kollwitz, ed, *Tagebuchblätter und Briefe* (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 1948), 483.
[147] Comini, *Kollwitz in Context,* 110.

cutting off of a man's life on earth and the possibility that this experience – his death – enriches my life? It seems to me one does not talk like that when one's children die" (August 12, 1916).[148] Despite her inner turmoil and in an attempt to celebrate Peter's life, Kollwitz began a memorial to be placed at his cemetery in Roggevelde Belgium. Over the next years, Kollwitz agonized over the proper way to memorialize her youngest son.

The changes that her memorial underwent reflect the changes that Kollwitz went through during this time period. Kollwitz first envisioned a sculpture that emphasized sacrifice for the Fatherland. She wanted Peter's lifeless body to be on top "*above* the parents…out-stretched, holding [his] hands in answer to the call for sacrifice: 'Here I am'" (December 9, 1914).[149] Then over the next year, Kollwitz shifted this image to depict the mother's sacrifice. In these sketches, the mother "bows far forward and holds out her child in deepest humility."[150] Over the next decade, Kollwitz's views of sacrifice changed drastically, and she no longer depicted an idealized version of death. Instead she shifted the focus of her memorial, producing a symbol for lonely parents grieving for those who died in vain.[151] In the final sculpture, a mother and father kneel on either side of the entrance, allowing visitors to pass between them. In her vision for the sculpture, Kollwitz believed that "perhaps that would be the really beautiful way. The words 'Here lie the finest of Germany's youth' could be cut into the floor between the two figures. That would bring out the tremendous gravity of it" (January 11, 1924).[152] Due to her sense of betrayal by the Fatherland and in order to honor her fallen son, Kollwitz spent

[148] Kollwitz, *The Diary and Letters,* 72 (emphasis in original).
[149] Kollwitz, *The Diary and Letters,* 63.
[150] Kollwitz, *The Diary and Letters,* 64.
[151] Moorjani, "Käthe Kollwitz," 1123.
[152] Kollwitz, *The Diary and Letters,* 109.

seventeen years developing and creating a fitting tribute to Peter and the other young men lost in World War I. Her sculpture of grieving parents effectively illustrates Kollwitz's shift in ideology concerning the war and social revolution. Kollwitz replaced the original idea of Peter as the symbol of all fallen soldiers with an empty space between two grieving parents. By removing the hero of war, Kollwitz poignantly illustrates not only her criticism of sacrifice but also the void left by the deaths of millions of German youth.[153]

This approach varies drastically to other artists of the time who created war memorials. Kollwitz's war memorial contradicts the "cult of the fallen soldier" as described by George Mosse. According to Mosse, death was no longer considered to be "the arrival of the grim reaper, but as tranquil sleep within nature."[154] Most cemeteries for fallen soldiers were uniform in design and developed as shrines of nationalism. Mosse includes the British military cemetery at Vlamertinghe and the German war cemetery at El Alamein as examples of the typical war cemetery design.[155] Both cemeteries lack any ornate decoration or sculptures of humans. The cemeteries are simple and plain. After looking at these typical cemeteries, Kollwitz's memorial at the cemetery in Roggevelde stands in sharp contrast. Unlike the plain and modern look of Vlamertinghe and El Alamein, Kollwitz's sculpture emphasizes the loss of life in war rather than the common emphasis placed on heroism. She focuses on the human response to loss and the mourning parents of the fallen soldiers. Kollwitz's statues are

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[153] Moorjani, "Käthe Kollwitz," 1123.

[154] George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford, 1990), 80.

[155] Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 83-86. See page 83 for a picture of Vlamertinghe and page 86 for a picture of El Alamein. Due to the poor quality of the photos, actual copies are not included in the Figures section of this thesis.

direct contradictions to what was considered normal during this time of creating war memorials and cemeteries.

The Role of Art in Weimar Pacifism: A Critique of Käthe Kollwitz

Despite Kollwitz's artistic contributions to the pacifist cause, some scholars have posited that Kollwitz was not successful in portraying strong, active women. Scholars like Laura Kaplan, Micaela di Leonardo, and particularly Dora Apel claim that Kollwitz was not an influential player in the Weimar pacifist and feminist movements.[156] They conclude that Kollwitz's maternal images reinforced German patriarchal society, that her pacifism was qualified and not absolute, and that her art was merely a political pawn for the Social Democratic Party. Upon further review of the artwork and Kollwitz's diaries, one can effectively challenge these ideas and establish Kollwitz's role in the Weimar feminist-pacifist movement. Although some may critique her work, I argue in this section that Kollwitz, through her art, provided an outlet for German women to participate in public politics, furthering the feminist movement by emphasizing the maternal.

Did Kollwitz's images of motherhood simply reinforce German patriarchy and the passive woman? Claiming that the "Moral Mother" imagery essentially maintained the status quo of separate spheres,[157] scholars such as Micaela di Leonardo and Laura Kaplan suggest that "women who conceptualize their peace praxis under the heading 'woman as caretaker' are reminding others of their femininity, and hence of the need not to respect

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[156] See Apel's, "'Heroes' and 'Whores;' Kaplan's, "Woman as Caretaker;" and Micaela di Leonardo's, "Morals, Mothers, and Militarism: Antimilitarism and Feminist Theory," *Feminist Studies*, 11 (3), Fall 1985, 599-617.

[157] di Leonardo, "Morals, Mothers," 602.

their perspective, as they enter the political sphere."[158] Some scholars mention her 1923 *Krieg* portfolio as presenting "generalized figures of mothers, widows, young volunteers and grieving parents…, portray[ing] working-class women as downtrodden, long-suffering maternal icons."[159] By emphasizing the negative characteristics of working-class women, Kollwitz's artwork – some scholars have posited – continued to reinforce the passive woman submitting to patriarchal authority.

In response to these accusations, other scholars have pointed out that Kollwitz's artwork depicted the reality of working class life and not romanticized images of their experience.[160] According to Elizabeth McCausland, Angela Moorjani, Valerie Sayers, and others, these depictions stress the strength of working-class women, not their submission to patriarchal society. Furthermore, Kollwitz used these images in order to manipulate the private sphere and gain a voice within public pacifist discourse. After a close review of Kollwitz's *Krieg* series, scholars have effectively debunked the notion that Kollwitz's maternal images are passive and weak. Within this series are seven prints – *Das Opfer, Die Freiwilligen, Die Eltern, Die Witwe I, Die Witwe II, Die Mütter,* and *Die Volk* – that emphasize themes of war, sacrifice, mourning, death, and the uselessness of battle. Included in this series is an etching entitled *Die Mütter* (The Mothers, Figure 7) that portrays a group of mothers, tightly joined, actively protecting their children from war and death.[161] The women depicted hold each other tightly while looking out from the circle. The children are underneath the women's strong embrace. Although this series focuses on mourning and the helplessness of war, Kollwitz's women are strong, forming

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[158] Kaplan, "Woman as Caretaker," 169.
[159] Apel, "'Heroes' and 'Whores,'" 381.
[160] McCausland, "Käthe Kollwitz," 23.
[161] McCausland, "Käthe Kollwitz," 24.

a maternal fortress against untimely death.[162] Kollwitz's *Krieg* series is one example of the strong, active women that she portrayed.

Other examples of Kollwitz's maternal imagery that reinforced the active agency of women are *Mother with Child in Arms*, *Tower of Mothers*, and the lithograph *The Seed for the Planting Must Not be Ground*. In these works, Kollwitz successfully reworks an earlier motif of the Pieta (artwork depicting Mary cradling the dead body of Christ after the crucifixion) into the theme of the protective mother embracing her child.[163] Similar to *The Mothers* found in the *Krieg* series, the sculpture *The Tower of Mothers* depicts a group of women, forcefully defending their children from war.[164] Furthermore, Kollwitz's 1942 lithograph, *The Seed for the Planting Must not be Ground*, (Figure 11) is a powerful indictment against war while stressing the strength and importance of women as mothers. According to Kollwitz, this work was especially important to her. Produced as a response to a new call for enlistment, Kollwitz used her favorite poet Goethe as the source for the title. In the drawing, young boys stand around their mother wanting to break loose; however the mother holds them close, forbidding them from joining the war.[165] This lithograph shows an active woman protecting her children with emphasis placed on her strong hands embracing her sons.[166] The mother's head is held up high with alert eyes looking forward while the three boys huddle underneath her. Her body envelopes them almost as if they are in her womb where they will be protected. Kollwitz's goal in portraying these images was to connect to the working class, particularly with working-class women. In order to do this, Kollwitz used images of the

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[162] Moorjani, "Käthe Kollwitz," 1124.
[163] Moorjani, "Käthe Kollwitz," 1124.
[164] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 214.
[165] Kollwitz, Letter to Jeep, January 1942, *The Diary and Letters,* 177. .
[166] Sayers, "Darkness and Light," 90.

everyday Weimar woman, struggling to protect her children and provide for her family. Through these portrayals of strong, active women manipulating the private sphere to gain a voice of protest, working-class women could identify with the feminine perspective portrayed in Kollwitz's work.[167]

During this time period, many pacifist groups in Germany attempted to lure women into the pacifist movement by stressing the notion that peacefulness was inherently feminine and that women's role remained in the home.[168] This argument fails to acknowledge the influence women such as Käthe Kollwitz had within the public realm by manipulating images of the private sphere. New opportunities opened for Kollwitz and other artists who embraced the maternal image in an attempt to spread the pacifist message. The government's reaction to organized pacifism resulted in widespread suppression of the pacifist voice. In order to control the growing pacifist movement, the Weimar government discouraged the formation of any new pacifist groups while heavily censoring those groups that already existed by banning all methods of public discussion.[169] Thus, women such as Kollwitz used images of motherhood to further their pacifist opinions. In order to establish herself as a social protestor opposed to the war, Kollwitz began to use her artwork to maneuver her way through government boundaries. Because of her gender, the government did not view Kollwitz as a threat to the public, allowing her art to go virtually sanction-free.[170] Kollwitz wanted her art to be available to the German masses, depicting true living conditions not esthetically pleasing scenarios. Her aim was to develop images of strong active women fighting for peace and social

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[167] Bachert, "Collecting the Art," 117.
[168] Apel, "'Heroes' and 'Whores,'" 379.
[169] Shand, "Doves Among the Eagles," 104.
[170] Shand, "Doves Among the Eagles," 105.

emancipation for the working class,[171] and because the government did not view these images as politically charged, Kollwitz gained access to public pacifist discourse.

Art and Politics: Was Kollwitz a Political Pawn?

Other critics of Kollwitz's work suggest that her artwork was used as a political tool by the Social Democratic Party [SPD] and that her pacifism was not absolute. For instance, Dora Apel reduces Kollwitz's art to the pacifist voice of the Social Democratic Party, reinforcing the "view of women as primarily maternal." A primary belief held by the Social Democratic Party transferred responsibility of the family from the government back to the home, claiming that women – not the state – had a moral responsibility to protect their sons. Since the SPD held the belief that women served the party and Fatherland best by remaining at home and caring for the family, Kollwitz's emphasis on the maternal woman reiterated this ideal. According to Apel and other scholars, Kollwitz's depictions of motherhood furthered the SPD movement by stressing the passive and motherly nature of women.[172] Scholars have suggested that Kollwitz's pacifism was qualified, stating that Kollwitz did not oppose war just that the younger generation had to fight. According to Apel, Kollwitz did not reject the idea of war but instead was only against the sacrificing of Germany's youth, boys that had not fully lived life.[173] According to these scholars, Kollwitz did not contribute effective anti-war artwork because of her "support for WWI in principle."[174]

In response to these critiques, other scholars such as Josephine Withers and Elizabeth Prelinger claim that Kollwitz was not a political pawn for the SPD. Remaining

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[171] Hinz, "Käthe Kollwitz," 87.
[172] Apel, "'Heroes' and 'Whores,'" 381.
[173] Apel, "'Heroes' and 'Whores,'" 380.
[174] Apel, "'Heroes' and 'Whores,'" 384.

an independent socialist until her death, Kollwitz lent her work to causes she felt most strongly, from pacifism, abortion reform, and welfare reform to the homosexual rights movement.[175] Over the course of her career, Kollwitz produced many works for the SPD, but she also created artwork for other parties and countries beyond Germany. When Austria was plagued by disease and hunger following the First World War, Kollwitz produced posters acknowledging the situation for various aid organizations.[176] Kollwitz also produced an anti-war poster in 1923 for the International Trade Union Congress in Amsterdam as well as posters for the International Worker's Relief Organization (*Germany's Children Are Starving*¸1924) (Figure 12) and the charity group Help by the Artists (*Bread*, 1920) (Figure 13).[177]

Furthermore, Kollwitz's primary contributions were not made to the SPD but to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a woman's organization promoting disarmament formed in 1915.[178] In addition to her charity contributions, Kollwitz also contributed to political parties other than the SPD. One of her most famous woodcuts is a memorial to the slain Communist leader, Karl Liebkneckt, produced shortly after his assassination.[179] Moreover, despite the SPD's progressive views concerning politics and equality, the majority continued to support the idea of the woman as maternal caretaker. The party did adhere to the ideal of community involvement and participation, but women would remain the sole providers of emotional and nurturing support. Because of these standards, Party members did not always accept Kollwitz's artwork that depicted strong women who actively participated in issues of public debate,

[175] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 163/174.
[176] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 164.
[177] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 177.
[178] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 173.
[179] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 162.

and since her subject matter was almost exclusively mother and child motifs, many Party members claimed her influence was merely "feminine."[180] Moreover, because she now completely rejected the concept of socialist revolution, Kollwitz was ideologically at odds with the Social Democratic Party. After careful consideration, Kollwitz appears to have produced artwork for causes of which she felt most strongly not based on political attachments, and although she was a self-proclaimed socialist, she never actually joined a political party, including the SPD. According to Kollwitz, joining a political party meant compromise, and her artwork's political content remained "uncompromising, unequivocal."[181]

Other scholars do not consider Kollwitz's pacifism to be qualified. *The Survivors* (Figure 14), a 1923 poster for the International Trade Union Congress, depicts all people affected by war – men, women, young, old – not just the younger generation.[182] Furthermore, in the *Krieg* series, Kollwitz portrays her total rejection of warfare.[183] Within this series, Kollwitz depicts the effects of war on a variety of people, including mothers, men, parents, and widows. This series differs from her other work because it lacks images of destruction and combat, but instead focuses only on the effects of war from the perspective of those left at home.[184] Also within this series, Kollwitz does not merely portray women as victims. Instead, in the etching *Das Volk*, she depicts the pained faces of men gazing at a woman filled with love and compassion, reinforcing the

[180] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 163.
[181] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 91.
[182] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 176.
[183] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 169.
[184] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 57.

feminist trope of woman as savior.[185] However, the best illustration of Kollwitz's total rejection of war is her poster *Nie Wieder Krieg* of 1924 (Figure 15).

Commissioned by the Central German Youth Day Organization, Kollwitz produced *Nie Wieder Krieg* to commemorate the "annual observance of the beginning of WWI… [in order to] introduce young people to pacifist sentiments."[186] Depicting a young man making the peace sign, this poster is "one of the best known protests against war"[187] and illustrates Kollwitz's complete rejection of war. During the debates concerning the start of World War II, a British Parliament member declared: "There is nothing in the world important enough to justify unleashing another world war." To which Kollwitz wrote in her diaries that she "agree[d] *absolutely! Nothing* in the world" (September 1938).[188] While Kollwitz still advocated social, political, and economic change, she no longer accepted violence as a catalyst for that change. Because of the loss of her son Peter, Kollwitz was preoccupied with the sacrifice of Germany's youth; however, after his death, Kollwitz denounced war of any kind and the sacrifice of any German – young or old, male or female.[189]

Conclusion

Käthe Kollwitz, prominent artist of the Weimar era, manipulated the "natural" imagery of motherhood in order to gain a public voice for the pacifist movement. By critiquing Germany's participation in war within maternal images, Kollwitz effectively

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[185] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 169-171.
[186] Josephine Withers, "No More War: An Art Essay," *Feminist Studies,* 7(1), Spring 1981, 76.
[187] Withers, "No More War," 76.
[188] Kollwitz, *The Diary and Letters,* 125 (emphasis in original).
[189] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 168.

connected the Weimar mother with revolutionary social politics.[190] Although faced with social stigmas surrounding her gender, Kollwitz continued to produce works that challenged the status quo. While visiting an exhibit of her own works, Kollwitz "suddenly realized that they [a museum attendant and a young female painter] were praising her work to the sky. But [the attendant] had no backbone, for when the painter took issue with him, he became more and more timid, and finally said, 'Yes, that's so, of course; women ought to stick to their households'" (Letter to Hans, May 20, 1911).[191] This striking illustration exemplified the sentiments of the time. The painter – who was a woman – acknowledged Kollwitz's talent but still believed her primary concern should be her family and household. Challenging this attitude throughout her professional and personal life, Kollwitz wanted her artwork to show women as strong, active agents not as passive members of patriarchal society.[192] Therefore, the women Kollwitz portrayed were strong, serving as protectors against poverty, war, and social injustice.[193]

By continuing to produce evocative pieces, Kollwitz spent her career illustrating the political power of the maternal. Focusing on female agency, Kollwitz critiqued the nationalistic fervor of sacrifice during war, manipulating the private sphere of motherhood to gain access to public discourse. After the horrors of World War I, Kollwitz did not produce any new works that glorified revolution or war; instead, she focused her artwork on the effects of war on the working class.[194] She believed that pacifism was not just antiwar sentiments but rather a new "idea, the idea of human

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[190] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern,* 151.
[191] Kollwitz, *The Diary and Letters,* 138.
[192] Hinz, "Käthe Kollwitz," 87.
[193] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz,* 190.
[194] Moorjani, *The Aesthetics of Loss and Lessness,* 120.

brotherhood…that would arise and there would be an end of all wars."[195] By producing artwork that emphasized the negative impact of war, Kollwitz felt that her artwork had a purpose "outside itself," acting as a summons for pacifism.[196]

For most of her career, Kollwitz dedicated her artwork to the plight of the working class and a call for peace. By producing works that emphasized the role of women in the fight for social change and pacifism, Kollwitz helped women gain a voice within public discourse. Unlike other artists of the time period, Kollwitz's women were strong, active agents in society, challenging and reforming their worlds. For Kollwitz, motherhood was not a weakness but instead provided powerful imagery acknowledging the negative effects of patriarchal society. Through these images, Kollwitz found a voice for her most passionate cause – pacifism. After Peter's death, Kollwitz spent the remainder of her life drawing attention to the senselessness of war. For Kollwitz, "pacifism simply is not a matter of calm looking on; it is work, hard work."[197]

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[195] Jutta Kollwitz, "The Last Days of Käthe Kollwitz" in *The Diary and Letters of Kaethe Kollwitz,* Hans Kollwitz, ed. Translated by Richard and Clara Winston. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1955), 198-199.

[196] Diary entry in December 1941 in Käthe Kollwitz, *Ich will wirken in dieser Zeit.* (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 1952), 122.

[197] Kollwitz [Letter to Ottilie Kollwitz, February 21, 1944] *The Diary and Letters,* 184.

Conclusion

During the years 1890 through 1914, conflicts over politics, sexuality, and motherhood became increasingly part of public discourse.[198] German feminists stressed the idea of "spiritual" or organized motherhood as the basis for their political demands.[199] By focusing on motherhood, maternalism allowed women as nurturers to occupy new spaces in the public realm for "feminine" occupations (i.e. teachers, nurses, etc).[200] The concept of motherhood allowed reformers to combine very diverse concepts such as abortion and pacifism into a collective political platform.[201] Because of this trend, women in Weimar openly debated female sexuality and the role of motherhood, allowing debates and public opposition particularly towards Paragraph 218 into the male-dominated political sphere.[202] In these instances, motherhood and maternity became symbols of strength and social change.

Maternity and images of motherhood were also very important within the art community. As evident from this thesis, art provided a space where gender identity could be negotiated not simply maintained as the status quo.[203] For instance, Käthe Kollwitz depicted women who were far from being passive bystanders but were active agents of social change even if their methods were subversive.[204] Kollwitz used traditional images of mothers and children to argue against publicly debated topics such as sexuality, war, and poverty.[205] Because she depicted physically active images of women rather than sexual bodies, Kollwitz became one of the first artists to reject the standard model of

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[198] Betterton, *An Intimate Distance*, 3.
[199] Abrams and Harvey, eds, *Gender Relations*, 22.
[200] Herminghouse and Mueller, eds, *Gender and Germanness*, 116.
[201] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough*, 113.
[202] Grossman, *Reforming Sex*, 80.
[203] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough,* 13.
[204] Usborne, *The Politics of the Body,* 24.
[205] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough*, 93.

women as passive, sexual objects.[206] Instead Kollwitz used active women who were still "emotive representations," merging femininity with radical ideas of social change.[207] By focusing on women and women's issues, Kollwitz helped to create new spaces in public discourse for the feminist movement that lasted beyond the Weimar Republic and her own lifetime.

In order to study the artwork and consequences of Kollwitz's art, historians have used many different theoretical models from victimizing women to deconstructing categories. For my research I have found the theory of separate spheres to be useful. The role of the social construct "separate spheres" is to provide a method for historians to understand and analyze the past and to characterize gender relations and power structures that are otherwise unlabeled. This model allows historians to locate women's history within the realm of social and cultural history.[208] The reason for employing the separate spheres theory is that this method allows the scholar to focus on the ways women challenged and manipulated established boundaries.[209] In studying the Weimar period, the boundaries between male and female experience became less obvious over time and allowed small opportunities for women to occupy spaces within the public realm.[210] These women manipulated male-dominated society in order to establish their roles in the community, stressing the importance of motherhood, maternity, and femininity in order to accomplish this feat.[211] The theory of separate spheres proves to be a valid method of studying Kollwitz within the Weimar Republic. By stressing the importance of

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[206] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 105.
[207] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough*, 151.
[208] Kerber, "Separate Spheres," 37-39.
[209] Abrams and Harvey, eds, *Gender Relations*, 19.
[210] Deepwell, *Women Artists,*19.
[211] Gray, *Productive Men,* 4.

motherhood and maternity, Kollwitz provided a unique voice to social debates of the time. By opening up the possibility for women's voice within social reform, Kollwitz played a vital role in the Weimar feminist movement that had lasting effects. During the 1970s drive for legislation to legalize abortion for example, Kollwitz's posters particularly the *Down with the Abortion Paragraph* were reprinted and used again.

As posited by Elizabeth Prelinger, Kollwitz's motivations and artwork are far more problematic and complex than previously acknowledged.[212] Scholars who question Kollwitz's contributions to the art community and the Weimar feminist movement simply because she produced images of mothers fail to recognize the importance of Kollwitz to her own generation and those that followed. By focusing on maternal images, Kollwitz opened up new spaces within the public discourse that allowed women to debate and argue issues such as abortion reform and pacifism. Because of her understanding and empathy for the working class, Kollwitz spent her lifetime producing artwork that would draw attention to the plight of the working class. Through this work, Käthe Kollwitz is now known in all parts of the world as an artist for social change and as "Germany's good conscience in its darkest hours."[213]

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[212] Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 13-14.

[213] Hildegard Bachert, "Collecting the Art of Käthe Kollwitz: A Survey of Collections, Collectors, and Public Response in Germany and the United States, in Elizabeth Prelinger, *Käthe Kollwitz,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 125.

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Appendix: Figures[214]

Figure 1: *End* (in progress), 1897, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden[215]

[214] All images unless otherwise noted from http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/kollwitz_kathe.html.

[215] www.mystudios.com

Figure 2: *Woman with Child in Arms*, 1910, etching

Figure 3: *Mother with Dead Child*, 1905, etching

Figure 4: *Down with the Abortion Paragraph!*, 1924, poster[216]

[216] http://www.dhm.de/lemo/objekte/pict/p62-1296/index.html

Figure 5: *The Mothers*, 1921, pen and brush, Boston Museum of Fine Arts[217]

[217] www.ncf.ca/~ek867/wood_s_lot.html

Figure 6: *Infant Mortality*, 1925, woodcut

Figure 7: *The Riot*, 1897, etching

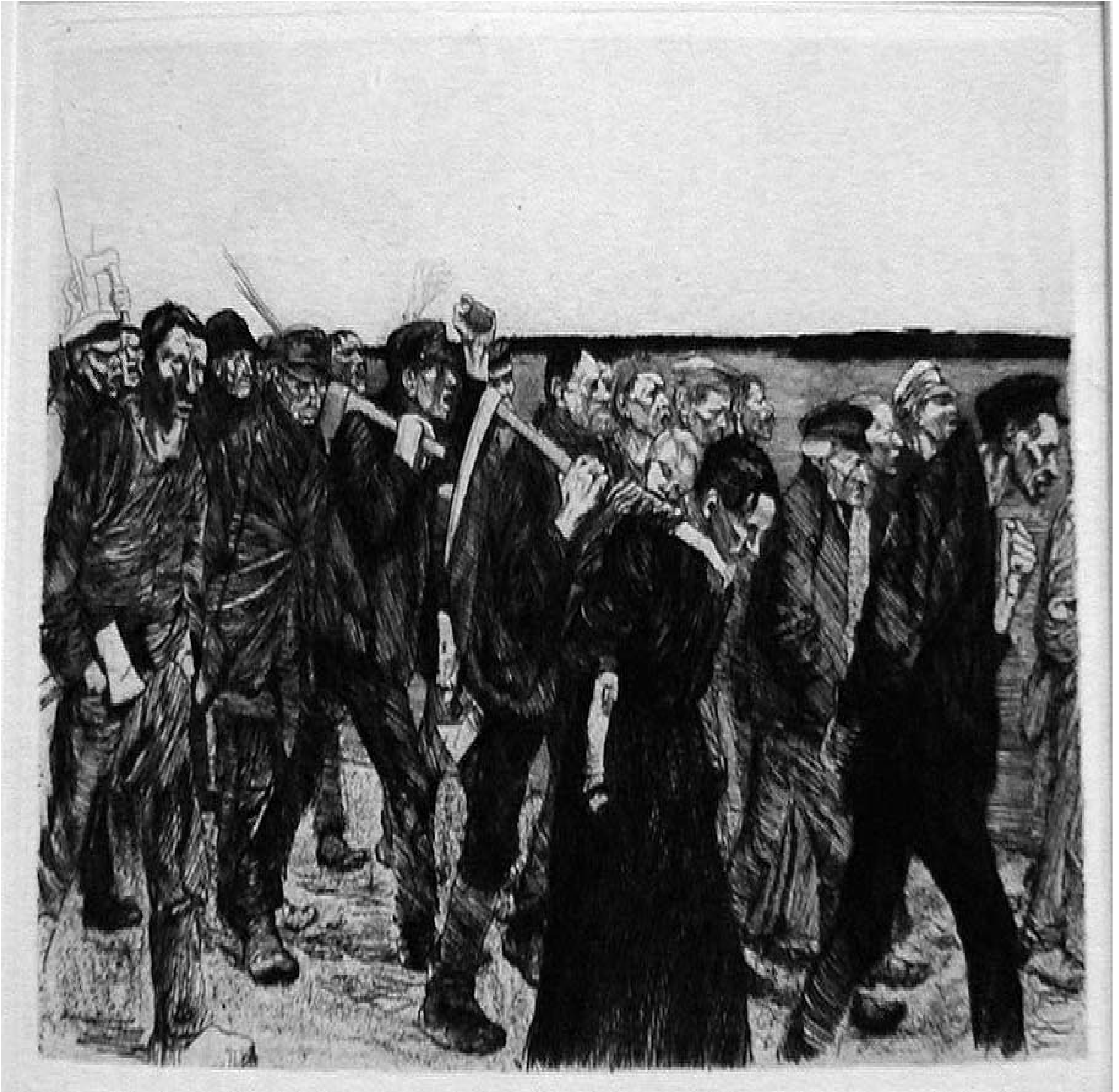

Figure 8: *The March of the Weavers*, 1897, etching

Figure 9*:* *Outbreak*, 1903, etching and drypoint, private collection

Figure 10: *The Mourning Parents*, 1932, sculpture, Roggevelde Cemetery, Belgium

Figure 11: *The Seed for the Planting must not be Sown*, lithograph, 1942

Figure 12: *Germany's Children are Starving*, 1924, lithograph

Figure 13: *Bread!*, 1924, lithograph

Figure 14: *The Survivors*, 1923, drawing

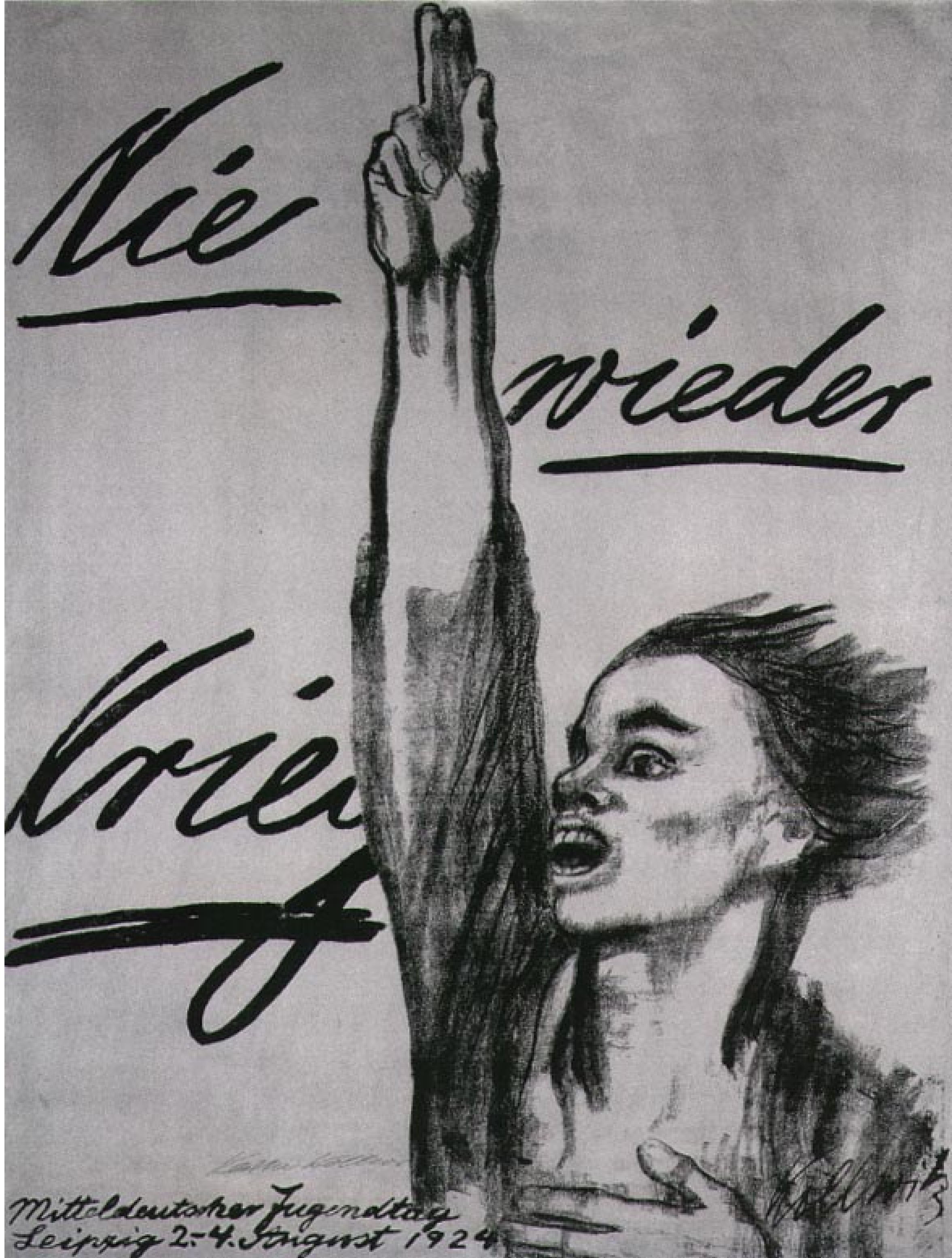

Figure 15: *Nie wieder Krieg*, 1924, lithograph, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.