

FRAGMENTED BODIES AND THE EXPLODED BOUNDARY BETWEEN SELF AND  
OTHER: DISCOURSES OF TRAUMA IN THE VISUAL MEDIA OF EARLY WEIMAR  
GERMANY, 1916-1926

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## ABSTRACT

Silia Kaplan: *Fragmented Bodies and Exploded Boundaries: Discourses of Trauma in the Visual Media of Early Weimar Germany, 1916-1926*  
(Under the direction of Eric Downing)

This study investigates the historical and medial contours of trauma discourses in the aftermath of the First World War. By examining three different visual media – photography, theater, and film – as well as psychiatric and psychoanalytic texts, it presents a cross-section of trauma discourses in early Weimar Germany. The concept of trauma that emerges out of my investigation is heavily influenced by the massive, corporeal damage left in the wake of WWI and ultimately centers on the physical, exploded boundary between self and other. Yet the particular form in which this exploded boundary manifests itself depends upon the medium of representation. Thus, Freud’s postwar theory (itself a medium) visualizes trauma in militaristic, physical terms as a breach in the stimulus shield. Ernst Friedrich’s collection of photographs pictures trauma in the shattered boundary between man and machine (prosthetic, militaristic, and optical); the theater of Ernst Toller and Bertolt Brecht locates trauma in the broken boundary between man and animal (with a particular focus on skin); and the cinema of Wiener, Wegener, and Murnau identifies trauma in the unstable boundary between subject and object, the living and the nonliving (embodied in the cinematic animation of ghosts, vampires, and golems). Although not all of these postwar works thematically represent the horrors of war, the traumatic past manifests itself within the formal techniques of each particular medium, for example, in the techniques of montage, repetition, alienation, and parallel editing. Thus, each thematic and historically specific trauma mentioned above is paralleled by the structural trauma of the medium in which it is represented: the trauma of photography in its replacement of a human body part with a

prosthetic device; the trauma of theater as it transitions towards modern forms of representation based on shock, corporeality, and the grotesque; the trauma of cinema in its animation of the static image and in the modern artist's loss of direct aesthetic agency. Ultimately, my project highlights a complex layering of meaning in these simultaneous engagements with the historical trauma of WWI and the medially specific structural traumas, each of which articulates a differentiated tactility.

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## Introduction: Boundary Crossings and the Traumatized Modern Subject

“The bizarre, involuntary contortions of the war neurotic’s body bespoke, it seemed, the hidden dangers of modern, mechanized warfare. [...] Indeed, the persistent shaking, perhaps the paradigmatic war neurosis symptom, seemed to be the inscription of the resounding, repetitious blasts on the fragile body – patients’ nervous twitching mirrored the rhythm of the ceaseless, distant drum of enemy fire.”  
– Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men* (2009)

The years immediately following the First World War have long been characterized by a lacuna in the artistic representations of the recently experienced horrors of war. Indeed, in his 1929 essay, “Der Erzähler,” Benjamin famously claims that soldiers returned silent from the front and attributes this phenomenon to the shock of modern, mechanized warfare. The world had gone through such rapid changes, he muses, that absolutely nothing remained unchanged save for the clouds and, underneath them, “der winzige, gebrechliche Menschenkörper” (439). While the military made extensive attempts to fortify the body with modern armor and weaponry, and, when it was injured, with the new medical advancements in prosthetic technology, these attempts were ultimately futile. As Benjamin rightly ascertains in his essay on storytelling and modernity, the mechanical shocks of the First World War reverberated through, and inscribed themselves upon, the vulnerable human body – a phenomenon which ultimately resulted in a crisis of subjectivity.

The distinctly modern identity crisis precipitated by the First World War is powerfully and paradigmatically embodied in the image of the *Kriegszitterer*, or war neurotic. One of the first works to identify and fully explore this crisis was Eric Leed’s *No Man’s Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (1979), in which Leed concludes that “the psychic problems

caused by the experience of war often lay in a profound sense of personal discontinuity” (2). In fact, this sense of discontinuity and self-estrangement also plays a key role in the psychoanalytic theories developed by Sigmund Freud in the aftermath of the war. In his attempt to explain the large numbers of war neurotics emerging from the battlefields, Freud initially posited the existence of a psychic split or dissociation between a soldier’s wartime and peacetime self. This model of trauma is eventually rendered more complex in his 1920 essay on the death drive, but the central notion of a ruptured sense of identity remains the same. Indeed, the recent horror of the First World War made it impossible to maintain a model of a stable identity in which the ‘other’ is clearly distinguished from the ‘self’ (as in traditional models of identity which are constructed around a center defined primarily by its periphery, or by that which is being excluded). Thus, the new traumatized subject who emerged in the wake of the First World War is defined by unstable boundaries and a radical breakdown of the divide between self and other.<sup>1</sup>

My project explores this identity crisis and its articulation within a variety of media by investigating the following questions: How do Weimar visual media engage and articulate this crisis of the modern subject precipitated by the First World War? In what way does the historical trauma of war manifest itself in photographic, theatrical, and cinematic works of the early postwar years? And, furthermore, how does the magnitude of this trauma reveal itself on a deeper level within the very structure of these media? While this identity crisis has been discussed quite frequently in studies of the Weimar Republic, my focus on the interplay between media and trauma discourses brings an entirely new perspective to the ongoing

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the radical break with the past caused by the First World War, see Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), Samuel Hynes’ *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (1992), and Allyson Booth’s *Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space between Modernism and the First World War* (1996). Within the German context, see Modris Eksteins’ *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (1989) and Richard Bessel’s *Germany After the First World War* (1993).

dialogue.<sup>2</sup> Recently, film scholars such as Anton Kaes, Patrice Petro, and others have noted the ways in which Weimar film is largely structured by social anxieties, whether they are anxieties about class identity (as in Murnau's *Der letzte Mann*), sexual identity (which, film critic Patrice Petro has argued, are often displaced anxieties about class identity), or ethnic identity (for example in the fear of Eastern Jews in *Der Golem* and *Nosferatu*, among other films). Yet, very little parallel research has been done in the fields of theatre and photography studies, and no comparative studies of the various techniques used to depict these anxieties in different Weimar media has been published to date. All of these social anxieties are responses to the abruptly overturned sense of stable identity in the wake of the Great War; however, they are represented and shaped in radically different ways according to their media-specific limitations and potentials.

Literary critic Helmut Lethen has argued that “moments of ‘social disorganization’ intensify the need for behavioral paradigms that enable distinction of the known from the foreign, the inner from the outer – the distinctions without which identity is not possible” (*Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany* 186). My project challenges this claim through an exploration of the traumatized subject within different media and in both artistic and documentary works of the early Weimar years. My analysis elucidates the way in which these works challenge the distinction between the inner and the outer, and therefore complicate the process of identity construction. By recognizing the border between self and other as highly unstable and permeable, the examined works embrace complexities and ambiguities in the modern subject rather than subscribing to the traditional modes of identity construction. The interdisciplinary and cross-medial nature of my project reveals a broader and more revolutionary understanding of identity during the Weimar years – one that

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<sup>2</sup> On Weimar cultural identity, see Peter Gay's influential *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (1968) and, more recently, Peter Weitz's *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (2007). For a more political and economic viewpoint, see Detlev Peukert's argument about the “crisis of modernity” in *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (1992).

is heavily grounded in the trauma discourses of the period. Rather than insisting upon a single behavioral paradigm for dealing with these distinctions, the cinematic, photographic, and theatrical works explored in the following chapters exhibit a wide variety of innovative techniques to allow for a highly complex and multifaceted understanding of identity and trauma in the post-WWI years.

All of the early Weimar representations of trauma discussed in my dissertation, however, are linked by their intense focus on corporeal physicality. Thus, their more abstract engagements with trauma are simultaneously grounded in the facticity of the First World War. Indeed, the widespread destruction and immense corporeal damage caused by the mechanization of war left an indelible mark on both the population and the cultural imagination. According to one set of statistics, “World War I sent a flood of approximately 80,000 amputees – 24,083 with missing arms and 54,953 with missing legs – streaming back into the German fatherland” (Fineman 88). The fragmented, mutilated, and prostheticized veteran was thus highly visible on the streets of Weimar Germany and would become well-known as the primary subject of Otto Dix’s paintings (for example, his 1920 *Kriegskrippel*) and would appear in countless collages and photomontages of other Dadaists. Yet, as my dissertation will reveal, the fragmented and prostheticized soldier was also a central image in documentary war photographs as well as in theatrical and cinematic works of early Weimar Germany. As such, representations of trauma are inextricably linked with the overwhelming sense of corporeal and physical reality left in the wake of the war. The traumatized modern subject is conceptualized first and foremost as a physical body, and this is revealed in both the psychoanalytic theorizations of Sigmund Freud as well as in the photographic images of war and the fictional narratives of postwar theater and film.

In his groundbreaking work on Renaissance theatre, literary critic Stephen Greenblatt proposes that we examine art within the broader context of the circulation, negotiation, and

exchange of “social energy.” More specifically, he questions how our experiences are molded by different media and within the transformation from one medium to another. “We can ask,” Greenblatt writes, “how collective beliefs and experiences were shaped, moved from one medium to another, concentrated in manageable aesthetic form, offered for consumption” (5). My project makes use of this approach in the study of trauma: by examining a variety of media, I reveal the various forms that trauma takes on in its circuitous wanderings from text, to photography, to theater, and to film. As trauma theorist Roger Lockhurst has noted, “trauma changes shape and meaning as it crosses boundaries; it is constituted out of the controversies generated in these passages” (xx). This dissertation investigates precisely the way in which traumatic experience is narrativized, visualized, circulated, altered, challenged, and reconfigured from one medium to another. Rather than focusing merely on explicit discourses of trauma, then, my aim is to explore the very contours of this historical discourse.

Postmodern trauma theory, which relies heavily on the work of Sigmund Freud, understands traumatic events as moments which are not readily accessible to the conscious mind and which therefore cannot be assimilated into a larger personal narrative. In particular, Cathy Caruth’s work delineates this notion in detail and defines trauma as a memory-trace that can only be experienced belatedly. Literary critic Greg Forster finds this definition particularly valuable in that it aids our recognition of more subtle psychic expressions of trauma such as the repetition compulsion – “those reenactments in the present of psychic events that have not been safely consigned to the past... and that disrupt the unruffled present with flashbacks and terrifying nightmares, intrusive fragments of an unknown past that exceeds the self’s (relatively) coherent and integrated story about itself” (260). Reading these “subtle” expressions of trauma is especially useful in relation to literary criticism, which likewise seeks to understand the “latent” meaning of a text. It is therefore no surprise that Caruth relies heavily on literary readings in order to elucidate her definition of trauma.

However, my project expands upon the work of these theorists by investigating trauma in a variety of media rather than solely in literature: by doing so, my dissertation ultimately reveals the way in which trauma is structured and defined by the very medium in which it is (re)produced.<sup>3</sup>

In the field of art history, Brigid Doherty has recently made insightful connections between the shock and trauma of WWI and the Dadaist technique of photomontage. She claims that “the montage materializations of Berlin dada demand to be understood in relation to the bodily materializations of traumatic psychic shock that characterized the war neuroses” (85). This argument is particularly convincing because the artworks of Dadaists such as George Grosz, Raoul Hausmann, and John Heartfield engage explicitly with the themes of war and mental illness, and intentionally simulate the condition of war neurosis. Moreover, in her analysis Doherty is able to cite George Grosz’s time in a military mental hospital as biographical evidence of the link between his art and his personal experience with war trauma. However, the trauma of Berlin Dada is ultimately located in the very *form* of montage and it is this aspect of Doherty’s argument which is most fascinating and relevant for my own project. For although many photographic, theatrical, and cinematic works of the early Weimar years did not thematically portray the trauma of war, this trauma was nonetheless present in the formal techniques of these works. It is precisely in this respect that my project makes its greatest contribution to the fields of trauma and Weimar studies. By examining both thematic and formal manifestations of trauma in postwar works, I build upon the line of inquiry begun by Doherty. Yet, in my interdisciplinary exploration of diverse

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<sup>3</sup> For foundational texts on literary trauma studies, see Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub’s *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) and Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). A select number of recent works (which I will discuss in my photography chapter) have made efforts to address this gap in trauma studies by examining visual media: see, for example, Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg’s *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity* (2006) and Francis Guerin and Roger Hallas’ *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory, and Visual Culture* (2007).

media, I am able to reach more comprehensive conclusions about various formal techniques of trauma as well as the the medium-specific structure of trauma itself.

Anton Kaes' recent *Shell Shock Cinema* (2010) has likewise made significant progress in recognizing the pervading presence of war trauma in Weimar film – despite the fact that the war itself is often curiously absent in the explicit representations of these films. Kaes insightfully perceives Weimar culture as “shell-shocked” and reads its cinema as repetitions of the original war trauma. In other words, he recognizes the “displacement” of trauma in these films and argues that they must be read “like products of the unconscious, by means of their omissions and silences” (5). In this sense, his approach is not unlike that of Siegfried Kracauer in his seminal 1947 study *Von Caligari zu Hitler*: both read films as a mirror of cultural anxieties, desires, preoccupations, and expectations. Yet Kaes' work differs in a significant respect because it avoids the reductive analysis inherent in Kracauer's teleological approach. *Shell Shock Cinema* examines the reverberations of an actual past rather than the advancements towards an – at that time – unknown and undecided future. Taking Freud's psychoanalytic talking cure as a model, Kaes performs symptomatic readings of the omissions and displacements in Weimar film as a means to locating the unarticulated trauma. While my project at times makes use of this approach to tease out implicit themes of trauma, it ultimately locates trauma in the formal aesthetic techniques that emerged in the aftermath of the war and within the very medium itself.

The organization and development of my argument is as follows. My first chapter begins with a delineation of psychiatric and psychoanalytic discourses of trauma as they emerged during the First World War. Due to the alarming increase in soldiers diagnosed with war neurosis, definitions of trauma were contentiously debated during this time. Whereas the Berlin-based psychiatrist Hermann Oppenheim continued to advocate an organic understanding of traumatic neurosis in which external factors were identified as the cause of

illness, the vast majority of prominent psychiatrists refuted this claim at the annual neuropsychiatric conference in 1916. The presence of military officials during this meeting indicates the pressing nature of these debates and suggests that economic and political factors strongly influenced the discussions at the conference.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Andreas Killen and others have recently argued that these factors unquestionably shaped the almost unanimous conclusion that war neurosis was caused by internal factors such as psychological predispositions and so-called “pension wishes” (which, in turn, meant it would not be compensated by pension and insurance companies). At the international psychoanalytic conference that took place two years later in Budapest, prominent psychoanalysts including Sigmund Freud, Ernst Simmel, and Sandor Ferenczi largely continued this line of argument, albeit with more appreciation for the subtle complexities of the psychological processes of trauma. Here, war neurosis was identified as belonging to a larger group of neuroses characterized by problems of narcissism rooted deep in the patient’s unconscious. Symptoms of war neurosis must be treated as expressions of deeper psychological processes, the psychoanalysts argued, and consequently the patient’s past, disposition, and sexuality must all be taken into account during the treatment.

Yet, as my subsequent close reading of the highly influential *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920) reveals, Freud’s psychoanalytic theory of trauma is ultimately based on a largely physical model of trauma in which psychological processes are visualized in militaristic terms as a foreign invasion of the self. Freud’s concept of trauma, which was radically restructured in the aftermath of the war, posits an exploded boundary at the core of the human subject: in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, he describes trauma as a violent rupture in the stimulus shield which protects, encapsulates, and thus defines the self. When this shield is pierced, the boundaries of the self are exploded, and the demarcations between self and other are violently

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, psychiatric resources at this time were strained and the national pension system was overburdened by the more than 600,000 soldiers diagnosed with neurological disorders by the end of the war (Killen 130).

thrown into question. This distinctly physical model of trauma, which centers on an exploded boundary between self and other, is in many ways replicated and expanded upon in the visual media of the Weimar Republic. Each medium engages this crisis of identity in a different way and contributes its own media-specific definition to contemporary discourses of trauma and identity formation. Photography, film, and theatre all begin to experiment with forms and techniques that not only fragment but radically alter the subject by breaking up a sense of organic unity. This is reflected as much in the form as in the content of each particular work, so that each medium makes its own contribution to the distinctly modern construction of a traumatized subject and ultimately participates in a multifaceted, intermedial discourse of trauma.

Just as Freud's psychoanalytic theories of trauma are visualized in largely physical terms, so too are the representations of trauma in the visual media of the Weimar Republic mapped onto, and articulated through, the physical body. However, the body presented in these various media is no longer the whole, organic human body that appeared in the art and literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; it is a body that has been so severely wounded, prostheticized, fragmented, dissolved, shattered, and destroyed, that it is, at times, no longer recognizable as such. This is explicitly and horrifically visualized by the shocking images of Ernst Friedrich's antiwar book, *Krieg dem Kriege!* (1924), which makes up the core of the second chapter of my dissertation. In this photographic essay, various techniques of collage, juxtaposition, and repetition (all heavily influenced by contemporary printmaking and Dadaist artworks) contribute to a highly complex picture of trauma. Furthermore, the inherent intertextuality of photographs refutes any simplistic reading of individual photographs: although Friedrich has placed war photographs as well as clinical photographs in new contexts, this new interpretation is merely superimposed upon the prior, or latent, texts which continue to persist even as the context is altered. Thus, I argue that *Krieg dem Kriege!* should not merely be read

as a reductive and totalizing antiwar narrative, but must, instead, be appreciated for its intricate engagement with contemporary discourses of trauma and photography. In particular, the photographs of veterans with prosthetic limbs provides a complex look at the nexus of trauma and photography at this important historical juncture: the camera, often theorized as a kind of prosthetic limb replacing either the eye or the hand, turns its lens onto new prosthetic technologies of the body and thus self-reflexively examines the tenuous divide between man and machine in the modern world.<sup>5</sup> In this way, my analysis of *Krieg dem Kriege!* serves as a springboard for examining the broader discourses of trauma and photography in the aftermath of the First World War.

The body also takes center stage in Weimar theater, from Dadaist cabaret evenings to political street performances and Brecht's more formal epic theater, and the third chapter of this dissertation examines the wounded and traumatized body in several postwar dramas. In particular, the grotesque plays a significant role in invoking a sense of trauma and identity crisis in these modern dramas, often casting the unstable boundary between self and other not in mechanistic terms but, rather, in the divide between man and animal. Other characteristics of postwar theater include an emphasis on gesture and physicality, the use of abstract figures such as puppets or dolls, as well as a challenge to the distinction between surface and depth. Although many diverse theatrical styles competed during the postwar years, there were significant cross-overs and continuities in terms of theatrical techniques. Thus, eschewing the often retroactively imposed categorizations of literary criticism, my analysis of Weimar theater highlights specific aesthetic techniques, which, I argue, were fundamentally shaped by the trauma and turmoil of the First World War. Ernst Toller's *Hinkemann* (1924) deals quite explicitly with the trauma of war in its representation of a war cripple: in particular,

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<sup>5</sup> Media theorists Marshall McLuhan and Paul Virilio have written extensively on media as 'extensions of the human body': see, for example, McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) and Virilio's *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (1989). However, as discussed in my photography chapter, many of these ideas had already been formulated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and were expounded upon in the 1930s by Walter Benjamin (whose works are considered highly influential for the field of media studies).

*Hinkemann* depicts a castrated veteran whose largely invisible wound haunts him (much like the mental wounds of war neurosis) throughout the play. His own bodily fragmentation allows him to identify with an injured gold finch and other animals to the extent that Hinkemann's trauma can ultimately be linked with a breakdown between self and other, which is visualized here as the boundary between man and animal. Bertolt Brecht investigates this same theme in the 'alligator skin' of the protagonist of *Trommeln in der Nacht* (1921) and in the disassembly and reassembly of man in his later *Mann ist Mann* (1926). By analyzing the themes of these theatrical works alongside an exploration of the particular form that postwar theater takes on in the aftermath of the war, this chapter simultaneously exposes these works as historical dramas of trauma while simultaneously highlighting the trauma of Weimar theater itself.

The final chapter of this dissertation investigates trauma in Weimar cinema. While cinema shares many characteristics with both photography and theater – in its mechanical nature and narrative temporality, respectively – the exploded boundary between self and other takes on distinct contours in this medium as well. In particular, the movement and animation of images in cinema embodies a particular structural trauma in which the once stable boundary between inanimate objects and animate subjects is startlingly upturned. This crisis is often thematically depicted in Weimar cinema in the forms of golems, ghosts, and vampires. My fourth chapter examines three early Weimar films in order to highlight the historical discourse of trauma manifested in both the thematic content as well as in the structure of cinema itself. Paul Wegener's *Der Golem: wie er in die Welt kam* (1920) depicts a rabbi's creation of the Golem in an attempt to save his people, while simulatenously and self-reflexively portraying the creation and animation of art (and film itself). F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) likewise challenges the boundary between the animate and the inanimate in the ambiguous figure of the vampire, who straddles the very line between life and death.

Finally, Robert Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* (1924) explicitly depicts the trauma of an artist who no longer has direct control over his body and his art. After losing his hands in a train wreck and receiving a corpse's hands as replacements, the concert pianist, Orlac, experiences a *mediated* relationship to his art much like that of the filmmaker himself. In all three of these films, the explicit theme of trauma is complemented by formal techniques, such as cross-cutting, which are inherently violent and traumatic in their manipulation of time and space. Thus, my final chapter pulls together several threads running throughout my dissertation: it underlines once more the various manifestations of the exploded boundary between self and other in the traumatized subject, highlights the new relationship between artist and artwork in modernity, and stresses the presence of trauma in Weimar media on both a thematic and formal level.

As is perhaps clear by now, my attention to both content and medium reveals an intricate relationship between the representation of historical trauma and the structural trauma of the medium itself. Without a doubt, the trauma of the First World War called forth a myriad of responses and each of these responses is shaped by the medium in which it is produced. Yet, the weight of this trauma also asserts itself within the very media of photography, theatre, and film. Thus, photographic images of veterans with prosthetic limbs simultaneously highlight the mechanical nature of the medium of photography and the increasingly fragile divide between man and machine; theatrical representations of the tenuous divide between animality and humanity, in turn, reflect a revolutionary shift in the medium of theater towards the corporeal and the grotesque, and towards a theater of shock and alienation; cinematic depictions of the boundary between the animate and the inanimate,

on the other hand, evoke the structural trauma of cinematic animation and of modern artistic creation more generally.<sup>6</sup>

In his influential work, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra warns against the dangers of conflating loss with absence, or historical trauma with structural trauma. This conflation, he explains, “typically involves the tendency to avoid addressing historical problems including losses, insufficiently specific terms or to enshroud, perhaps even to etherealize, them in a generalized discourse of absence” (48). My intention is to address the historical specificity of WWI while simultaneously recognizing the structural discourses of trauma articulated by the visual media of Weimar Germany. In fact, LaCapra admits that the distinction between historical and structural trauma must be recognized as a “complex, problematic distinction” (47) and should not be understood as a clear-cut binary. Rather, the two types of trauma “interact in a complex way, in any concrete situation” (48). My dissertation examines precisely this complex interaction between historical and structural trauma by examining both the form and content of photographic, theatrical, and cinematic works of the early Weimar years.

Finally, I must return briefly to the modernist thinker whose theories hold a central place in every chapter of my dissertation, both in the analysis of individual artworks as well as in my overall understanding of the interaction between Weimar visual media and historical trauma. Indeed, Walter Benjamin touches upon all of the central themes of my project in his numerous insightful essays: in his analysis of Brecht’s epic theater as a theater of interruption and gesture, his identification of the discovery of the optical unconscious with the invention of photography, his visualization of history as ‘one single catastrophe,’ and in his mourning

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<sup>6</sup> I should note here that, although the visual media examined in this dissertation all predate the First World War, my contention is that they are so fundamentally affected by this historical period that they must be reevaluated and recognized as new media in their own right. Similarly, Freud’s use of militaristic language in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* may not have been entirely new to psychoanalysis (which already included terms such as *Besetzung* in its vocabulary prior to the war); and yet, the magnitude of historical trauma is such that we must recognize a repurposing of Freud’s language in his postwar works.

of the end of storytelling in modernity. *Time* is a key concept in all of his writing – a concept which likewise takes on a foundational role in contemporary trauma studies in its central tenet that the belated nature of traumatic experience results in an inability to properly work through the past, prohibiting a coherent sense of personal identity. However, Benjamin also recognizes the significance of space and the body in modernity – in his examinations of architectural and geographical space (in such works as *Das Passagenwerk* and *Berliner Kindheit um 1900*) as well as in his visualization of the fragile human body lost amidst the maelstrom of modernity (quoted earlier). Unfortunately the centrality of these concepts has been largely cast aside in contemporary trauma theory, which consistently and almost exclusively stresses temporality in its conceptualization of trauma. In contrast, the present study reinserts the body into trauma discourse: my examination of early Weimar visual works reveals, above all, an intense preoccupation with space and the corporeal. All of the early Weimar works examined in this dissertation represent trauma in physical, corporeal terms by means of a self-conscious, foregrounded mediation.

In many ways, Benjamin's theory of modern art and perception echoes throughout this project, particularly his focus on the shocks of technological modernity, the relationship between emergent media and historical circumstances, the trauma of the modern artist and the new role of art exemplified in the medium of cinema. In fact, in *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (1934), Benjamin goes so far as to identify the years during and following the First World War as a 'critical epoch.' During this period, he explains, a demand for new art forms arose – art forms that could represent and convey the shock effects of modernity. Dadaism, Benjamin claims, was precisely such an attempt: "das Kunstwerk [wurde] bei den Dadaisten zu einem Geschoß. Es stieß dem Betrachter zu" (38). In its bullet-like assault on the spectator, Dadaism functions as a forerunner to film – a medium which, for Benjamin, is defined first and foremost by its physical shock effect.

“Kraft seiner technischen Struktur hat der Film die physische Chockwirkung, welche der Dadaismus gleichsam in der moralischen noch verpackt hielt, aus dieser Emballage befreit” (39). This physical shock effect is likened by Benjamin to a warlike assault on the spectator and ultimately produces what he calls “eine taktile Qualität” (38).

Interestingly, Benjamin does not differentiate between the tactile quality of Dadaist artworks and that of film. In this sense, I take Benjamin’s recognition of tactility in modern art a step further by investigating the particular forms of tactility produced in various media, that is, it by highlighting the differentiated tactility in Weimar visual media. Thus my project is first and foremost a comparative project in which I elucidate how media articulate not only trauma but also modernism in unique ways. Indeed, as the following chapters will reveal, tactility and haptic aesthetics play a central role not only in Weimar film but also in Weimar theater and photography: perhaps illustrated most powerfully in Ernst Friedrich’s close-ups of mutilated faces and prosthetic limbs, and in Brecht’s penetrating focus on human skin. Ultimately, my project uncovers a complex layering of meaning within individual media (produced through engagements with both historical and structural trauma) and identifies the medium-specific nature of trauma itself.

As already mentioned, my investigation into trauma discourses in Weimar media has been profoundly shaped by Benjamin’s thought and is, in some sense, an exploration of the very demands placed on modern art by the unprecedented trauma of the First World War. The new artistic techniques of montage, repetition, alienation, interruption, fragmentation, close-ups, and parallel editing can simultaneously be understood as responses to the trauma of war as well as to the resulting change in historical perception. Ultimately, however, my project departs from Benjamin on one very important point: namely, that the immediate postwar years were not at all characterized by silence, but, on the contrary, by an intense and visceral

exploration of trauma structured in large part by emergent media and ultimately resulting in the visualization of a highly complex and severely traumatized modern subject.

## Chapter 1: Repetition, Death, and Freud's Re-evaluation of Trauma in the Aftermath of the First World War

"Our memory repeats to us what we haven't understood." – Paul Valéry

"Whatever in a person's experience is too powerful or horrible for his conscious mind to grasp and work through filters down to the unconscious levels of his psyche. There it lies like a mine, waiting to explode the entire psychic structure. And only the self-protective mechanism [...] prevents permanent disturbance of the psychic balance."  
– Ernst Simmel, 1918 treatise "War Neurosis and Psychic Trauma"

### Introduction: A Crisis of Memory

The quote with which I opened my dissertation deserves closer inspection, particularly in relation to the subject of trauma which lies at the heart of my study. In the aftermath of the First World War, Benjamin claims, soldiers came back silent from the front:

Mit dem Weltkrieg begann ein Vorgang offenkundig zu werden, der seither nicht zum Stillstand gekommen ist. Hatte man nicht bei Kriegsende bemerkt, dass die Leute verstummt aus dem Felde kamen? Nicht reicher – ärmer an mitteilbarer Erfahrung. (439)

Yet, Benjamin is certainly not claiming that soldiers were silent because their time at the front had been mundane or simply not worth narrating; on the contrary, the industrialized warfare and resulting casualties of over 8 million undoubtedly provided plenty of horrific experiences for these soldiers.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the keyword in Benjamin's text is "mitteilbar." These experiences were so shocking that they were entirely *incommunicable*, and here it becomes clear that the phenomenon Benjamin is referring to is that of trauma.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, trauma is often

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<sup>7</sup> In Germany alone, around 2 million soldiers were killed during the war and over 4 million wounded. (Weitz 8)

<sup>8</sup> Trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra would also argue that Benjamin's terminology in describing a loss of *Erfahrung* is indicative of trauma. He purports that Benjamin's work sets up an opposition between two types of

theorized precisely along the lines of a profound incommunicability that resists integration into a larger narrative. Yet, as Freud and later theorists have maintained, trauma inevitably makes itself known in other forms; in particular, it repeatedly resurfaces throughout texts in a belated and often latent form. So while the soldiers of the First World War came back seemingly silent, the invisible wounds of trauma were undoubtedly present and would reveal themselves in the delayed forms of repetition compulsions and fragmented personal narratives – both characteristic of the disorder known as war neurosis or shell shock.

Due to its highly complex and oftentimes ambiguous nature, the concept of trauma has long been the center of heated debates. Modern attempts to define it frequently begin by citing its derivation from the Greek word for “wound” and by mentioning its introduction into the English language by 17th century medical terminology, again as a physical injury. My current discussion is no exception. Because my exploration of trauma focuses on the years during and following the First World War – a time in which physical wounds and bodily injuries were particularly salient – the notion of trauma as wound will repeatedly resurface throughout my dissertation. In fact, I argue that the most well-known trauma theory to come out of this period – that of Sigmund Freud – heavily relies on a physical model of trauma even while it purports to describe a purely psychological process. The above-quoted citation from Benjamin’s “Der Erzähler” likewise underscores that the war brought the fragile, physical body back into center stage. He continues:

Eine Generation, die noch mit der Pferdebahn zur Schule gefahren war, stand unter freiem Himmel in einer Landschaft, in der nichts unverändert geblieben war als die Wolken und unter ihnen, in einem Kraftfeld zerstörender Ströme und Explosionen, der winzige, gebrechliche Menschenkörper. (439)

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experience – that of *Erfahrung*, which can be and is integrated into a larger narrative, and that of *Erlebnis*, which is an “unintegrated experience such as that of shock or trauma” (*History in Transit* 54-55).

Despite all of the so-called progress in terms of warfare, medicine, and the technologization of everyday life, what remains entirely unchanged is the fragility and vulnerability of the human body. Thus it comes as no surprise that the corporeal comes to play such a central role in the various trauma discourses of the postwar years.

The conceptualization of trauma as a physical wound was not a new one in the Weimar Republic. Already in the late 19th century, when traumatic neurosis was first diagnosed (at first under the name ‘railway spine’) as a peculiarly modern ailment associated with technological accidents, it was always treated as an organic condition. That is, although these accident victims did not have a significant physical wound which could explain their symptoms, it was presumed that an organic injury did exist (most likely within the central nervous system).<sup>9</sup> The particular form and extent of this injury was the subject of intense debate, not least because of the significance it had for compensation disputes in a court of law. Unlike ‘mental shock’ which was considered non-organic, ‘nervous shock,’ was considered the product of a physical injury and, therefore, gave the sufferer a legal claim to compensation. In this sense, the medical history of traumatic neurosis cannot be separated from the legal battles that took place in the courtroom. However, no lawyers or doctors at this time questioned the fact that there was an organic (albeit invisible) injury at the root of the disorder. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, traumatic neurosis was understood – at least to some degree – as a kind of physical ‘wound’ and the possibility of it being a purely psychological disorder (such as hysteria or neurasthenia) was not seriously entertained until the First World War.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For example, in his essay *Die traumatische Neurose* (1889), Hermann Oppenheim defined patients with traumatic neuroses as having no “grob-anatomische und ebensowenig mikroskopisch nachweisbare Veränderungen” but nevertheless a “zerebrale funktionelle Störungen, die ihren Sitz aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach in der Großhirnrinde haben und die Psyche sowie die Zentren der Motilität, Sensibilität und Sinnesfunktionen betreffen” (quoted in Schivelbusch 131).

<sup>10</sup> This argument is made by historian Ralph Harrington. See “On the Tracks of Trauma: Railway Spine Reconsidered” in *The Journal of the Society for the Social History of Medicine*, 16.2 (2003).

In tracing the historical construction of traumatic neurosis from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, recent scholarship has emphasized its shared history with the development of the German welfare state. According to Andreas Killen, traumatic neurosis was initially understood as having an external cause until insurance companies, with the support of many psychiatrists, began fighting this, claiming instead that it was a purely psychological ailment. To this end, they aligned it with hysteria, another type of neurosis that was believed to stem from individual predisposition and weakness, and even went so far as to suggest ‘fear neurosis’ as a more accurate term (“From Shock to Schreck” 203). This stance was only strengthened during the First World War when “in response to what they perceived as a crisis of morale and malingering in the ranks, psychiatrists adopted a unified stand against the older picture of traumatic neurosis as a somatic disorder and enthroned a new psychogenic theory of neurosis in its place” (212). In effect, this moved the focus from the battlefield to the soldier’s own mental state or disposition, and allowed insurance companies to deny compensation for traumatic neuroses.

This radical change in the interpretation of traumatic neurosis was an important turning point in the history of psychology. At the beginning of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, Freud himself mentions the significant role that the war played in the acceptance of traumatic neurosis as a psychological, rather than merely an organic, ailment: “Der schreckliche, eben jetzt abgelaufene Krieg hat eine große Anzahl solcher Erkrankungen entstehen lassen und wenigstens der Versuchung ein Ende gesetzt, sie auf organische Schädigung des Nervensystems durch Einwirkung mechanischer Gewalt zurückzuführen” (197). Despite its horrors, Freud asserts, the war has resulted in the final acceptance of traumatic neurosis as a purely psychological disorder – and in the acceptance of psychoanalysis as a means for diagnosing and treating it. Yet, as my current dissertation chapter makes clear, Freud ultimately develops a model of trauma in which the traumatic event is described in the very

physical terms of a breach between the external and internal world. In this sense, the tension between internal and external which plagues early interpretations of traumatic neurosis is not resolved by the precipitating circumstances of the First World War nor by the pressures of the modern welfare state; rather, as Freud's own theory reveals, this tension forms the very cornerstone of trauma itself.

Contemporary examinations of trauma such as those by Cathy Caruth and Roger Lockhurst continue to rely heavily on "metaphors of psychic scars and mental wounds" and we can therefore agree with Roger Lockhurst that "meanings of trauma have stalled somewhere between the physical and the psychical." (3) Indeed, it appears that trauma only emerges precisely in this ambiguous borderland between the physical and the psychical. Echoing Freud's definition of trauma as a breach in the stimulus shield, Lockhurst goes on to describe trauma as "a piercing or breach of a border that puts inside and outside into a strange communication" (3). If trauma is caused by a collapse in the border between the inside and the outside, then distinctions between the physical and the psychical are thrown into question. As will become evident in my analysis of Freud's post-WWI psychoanalytical texts in this chapter, these theories of trauma grapple with this breakdown on both a theoretical and performative level, thus producing a highly complex understanding of the concept.

The current chapter focuses primarily on an examination of trauma theories developed during, and in the years immediately following, the First World War. Beginning with the psychiatric and psychoanalytic debates surrounding war neurosis and ending with an in-depth reading of Freud's well-known exposition on trauma in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, this chapter traces the sociohistorical construction of trauma during the war and into the early years of the Weimar Republic. It therefore serves the purpose of delineating both the historical and theoretical foundations out of which the aesthetics of trauma in Weimar film, theatre, and photography emerge. However, it also recognizes these 'trauma texts' as one type of medial

representation among many. The cross-medial development of a definition of trauma does not follow a unilinear path: rather, as my dissertation reveals, the conceptualization of trauma is shaped precisely by its meandering and morphing from one medium to the next. Aesthetics of trauma develop uniquely within each medium and, yet, certain leitmotifs consistently reappear. The most salient theme which my investigation reveals is that of an exploding, shattering, or disintegrating boundary between self and other, and the current chapter will establish this as a central topic in the theories of trauma developed in Weimar Germany.

### **World War I and the Sociohistorical Construction of War Neurosis**

According to official reports from the German Army Medical Service, 613,047 soldiers were treated in military hospitals between the years of 1914 and 1918 for so-called ‘diseases of the nervous system.’<sup>11</sup> Because this was a new phenomenon and the military did not quite know how to deal with it, war neurosis became a subject of intense debate both during and after the war. At the root of this debate lay the causative origins of the illness, that is, whether war neurosis was an organic illness or a psychological disorder. (In this sense, the debate was an extension of the discussions surrounding ‘railway spine’ in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which also centered on the extent of organic injury involved in traumatic neurosis.) The former explanation was championed by Berlin-based neurologist Hermann Oppenheim and located the cause of neurosis in the war itself: the blasts and explosions of industrialized warfare were thought to cause an organic change to the soldier’s central nervous system.<sup>12</sup> While this point of view was prevalent at the start of the war, it quickly gave way to the

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<sup>11</sup> This statistic is cited in Doris Kaufmann’s “Science as Cultural Practice: Psychiatry in the First World War and Weimar Germany.” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34.1 (1999), 125.

<sup>12</sup> This view is also reflected in the various terms used to describe the condition at the beginning of the war, among them *Granatkontusion*, *Granatexplosionslähmung*, or *Granatfernwirkung*, all of which emphasized the external cause of a mine or grenade explosion. (*Hysterical Men* 61)

interpretation that these hysteria-like symptoms had no physical basis whatsoever and that so-called war neurotics were merely trying to escape the war. Thus, the question of war neurosis ultimately became a question of simulation and malingering. By the end of the war, it was generally agreed that shock could have, at most, a “temporary organic effect on the central nervous system” but if the symptoms appeared to be long-lasting then the victim “lost his status as an organically sick person” and must, instead, be considered a “shock neurotic” and simulator (Kaufmann 134).<sup>13</sup>

As recent scholarship has made clear, this conclusion was largely influenced by social policy legislation, which viewed the increasing numbers of war neurotics first and foremost as a risk. As Andreas Killen has very concisely put it: “Conceived originally as a quintessential malady of technological modernity, [traumatic neurosis] was ultimately reduced to a pseudo-illness, a by-product of accident insurance law” (“From Shock to Schreck” 201). During the course of the war, military psychiatrists such as Ewald Stier came to believe that war neurosis was nothing more than a ‘pension wish’ which needed to be treated swiftly and effectively. Thus they argued that it was critical to dispel the notion that “the illness might become the means of returning home, the determination of psychological disability, or the granting of a pension” (Killen, *Berlin Electropolis* 136). Social insurance policy aggressively took up this interpretation of war neurosis as pension wish because it would otherwise be unable to deal with the masses of *Kriegszitterer* who were filling the

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<sup>13</sup> This was the conclusion reached by prominent psychiatrists during the 8<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Society of German Neurologists and the German Psychiatric Association held in Munich in 1916. I will discuss the proceedings of this conference in further detail below.

hospitals.<sup>14</sup> Essentially, this meant that war neurosis came to be understood not as a somatic disorder but as a psychogenic condition, and was relabeled as ‘war hysteria.’<sup>15</sup>

As such, war neurosis was progressively recast in terms of a psychopathic predisposition and an inherited weakness of the will. According to historian George L. Mosse, 19<sup>th</sup> century constructions of manliness formed an integral part of the modern interpretation of war neurosis, ultimately “transforming it from a battlefield disease to a social indicator” (“Shell-shock” 104). Men who stood in opposition to the ideals of manliness and normalcy, were considered outsiders in society:

Such men were nervous, ill-proportioned, and, above all, constantly in motion. All those placed outside the confines of established society tended to look alike: the Jews, the habitual criminals, the gypsies, homosexuals, and the insane with their 'moveable physiognomy'. The nerves of such outsiders were shattered and their will-power gone. (102)

These characteristics were quickly associated with certain social groups who, in turn, were considered to be especially susceptible to hysteria and war neurosis. Thus soldiers rather than officers were generally linked with traumatic neuroses, a condition which, psychiatrists had begun to claim, were not caused by the war “but by supposedly inferior human material” (Kaufmann 138). These “inferior” soldiers with a hereditary predisposition of a “weak will” were simply unable to deal with the realities of war, to which a healthy, “normal” man could adapt. This argument was extended to a national level when military psychiatrists and other state officials accused these “hysterical soldiers” (largely from the working class) with having betrayed the stronger soldiers who had remained fighting at the front and, thus, were traitors to the entire nation. Soldiers diagnosed with war neuroses were increasingly considered to be

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<sup>14</sup> Killen contextualizes this phenomenon even more broadly in his conclusion: “In disavowing [these nervous disorders], the German medical establishment sought to banish the specter of a neurotically overburdened body politic and to forge in its place a new national community, defended against the shocks of the modernizing process” (218).

<sup>15</sup> For a particularly insightful reading of the ways in which political, economic, and social factors influenced this diagnostic change in the history of psychiatry, see Paul Lerner’s *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930*. This chapter section is heavily indebted to his understanding of the war hysteria/neurosis debate during the war.

malingers and therefore “national enemies who weakened Germany's capacity to revitalize the nation” (Crouthamel 164). Their traumas were ultimately identified as being “inherent in their social class, rather than as actual wounds experienced at the front” (164).

The predominant treatment of war neurosis was, in turn, adjusted in such a way that it focused on the “reconstruction of the presumed ‘weak will’ of the soldier” (Kaufmann 133). Because war neurosis was now fundamentally understood as a ‘disorder of the will,’ it seemed simple enough to treat it by strengthening the will of the soldier so that he could quickly return to the battlefield. In this sense, the treatment paralleled that of 19<sup>th</sup> century hysterics. Indeed, “the shaking, stuttering, ticks and tremors and disorders of sight, hearing and gait that marred the bodies of thousands of men closely paralleled the symptoms of hysteria, a malady once diagnosed almost exclusively in women” (Lerner 83). And since hysteria had traditionally been treated by hypnosis, psychiatrists such as Max Nonne suggested this as an effective treatment for war neurosis. Yet this treatment was not based on the cathartic hypnosis used by psychoanalysts such as Ernst Simmel to discover the repressed sexual traumas deep within a patient’s psyche; rather, Nonne promoted a suggestive model of hypnosis based on compulsion and authoritative control. Its aim was to “restore the patient’s control over his body by exerting [the hypnotist’s] own control over the patient and his ‘pathological’ will” (Lerner 84).

However, the prevailing treatment of war neurosis by way of hypnosis and shock therapy soon received strong criticism. The radical forms of therapy practiced by the Ludwigsburg staff doctor, Fritz Kaufmann, and other military psychiatrists was based on compulsion and aversion techniques with the aim of inflicting enough pain upon patients that they would willingly return to the battlefield. This method, which came to be known as “Kaufmannization,” included such harsh techniques as “electric current, mock operations, or the implantation of a catheter into the larynx for speech disorders... [as well as] isolation

treatment and food deprivation” (Kaufmann 138). However, the use of electrical shock therapy resulted in several military hospital deaths so that the war ministry was eventually forced to admonish doctors using these methods. Furthermore, the high rate of relapse of soldiers who had been sent back to the front after Kaufmann’s single-session therapy treatments compelled military authorities to search for alternate solutions to the problem of war neurosis. Freud and his followers were quick to propose the less aggressive therapeutic form of psychoanalysis as a solution, and the military did indeed send officials to the 1918 psychoanalytic conference in Budapest in order to assess its potential in treating war neurotics. Yet, as Freud himself lamented in his introduction to the conference proceedings, the war ended before the plan to establish psychoanalytic stations within hospitals could be carried out. Still, the turn away from a somatic understanding of traumatic neurosis as well as the inability of psychiatrists to curtail the growing numbers of war neurotics led to an increased interest in psychoanalysis (which, in turn, influenced popular conceptions of trauma). In the following sections I will take a close look at these contemporary constructions of war neurosis by investigating, first, the conference proceedings from both the 1916 psychiatric and neurologic conference in Munich and, second, the 1918 psychoanalytic conference in Budapest. In this way I aim to contextualize my subsequent analysis of Freud’s psychoanalytic theories of trauma.

### **“Neue Namen machen noch keine neuen Krankheitsbilder”: The 1916 Conference of German Psychiatry and Neurology in Munich**

In September 1916, members of the German Psychiatric Association and the Society of German Neurologists convened in Munich for their annual meeting to discuss the diagnosis and treatment of war neurosis. Several high-ranking governmental and military officials were present as well, including two chief staff surgeons, military leaders from the

Saxon and Bavarian Army Corps, and an advisor from the Prussian Ministry of War. The increasing numbers of *Kriegszitterer*, and the perceived threat that they posed to both the nation's morale and its economy, made the topic of trauma both a pertinent and an urgent one.

The prominent neurologist Hermann Oppenheim began the meeting on September 22<sup>nd</sup> with a brief welcome followed by his report on the subject of "Neurosen nach Kriegsverletzungen." His lecture quickly arrives at the main point of his argument that war neurosis is always caused by an external trauma:

Selbst wenn es sicher wäre, dass das Trauma nur die auslösende Ursache bildet, während der Keim dieser Störungen im Individuum schlummernd vorhanden ist, wäre das Leiden selbst ohne das Trauma gegenstandslos, erst dieses verleiht ihm Wirklichkeit. (Oppenheim 6)

As such, he insists that traumatic neurosis must be recognized as being distinct from hysteria and neurasthenia, which are caused by internal factors. Oppenheim continues with the controversial claim that external trauma can and often does cause a physical change in the nervous system of the subject: "Es unterliegt für mich keinen Zweifel, dass der Schreck und die rohe Gewalt der körperlichen Verletzung dieselben Funktionsstörungen im zentralen Nervensystem hervorrufen können" (6). Whereas the violence of a bodily injury is externally visible, however, the injury resulting from fright is not; yet, Oppenheim maintains, both produce an organic disruption in the central nervous system. While the actual internal changes in the nervous system cannot be entirely understood, Oppenheim surmises that a powerful stimulus (an external traumatic event) causes a 'wave' that moves through the nervous system and results in subtle, imperceptible damage: "die rohe Gewalt des Traumas [erzeugt] eine Erschütterungswelle... die in das Zentralorgan dringt und hier eine Veränderung im Sinne der lokalen Kommotion oder Diaschisis hervorbringt" (9). It must be noted that this model of trauma, despite its stress on organic change, bears an uncanny resemblance to Freud's visualization of trauma as a breach in the stimulus shield.

As proof of the physical changes caused by external trauma, Oppenheim cites the high body temperatures of his patients, which he claims are 6 to 8 degrees higher than average, in addition to increased pulses, localized disturbances in bones and nails, and loss of reflexes in limbs (none of which are to be found in patients of hysteria). Whereas he admits that some localized types of *Zittern* may be simulated or influenced by the psyche, in the majority of cases he observed “handelt es sich aber um einen allgemeinen Tremor, oft mit Beteiligung des Respirationmuskeln, der Gaumenmuskeln, des Platysma, usw.” (30-31). In these cases all therapeutic attempts failed. He includes a number of photographs of his patients who have lost reflexes in their limbs and compares them with analogous physical injuries, that is, with “organischen Lähmungen” (29). Finally, he concludes that these characteristics simply do not fall under the diagnostic category of hysteria: “Das sind Eigenheiten, die bislang den hysterischen Symptomen niemals zugeschrieben sind und die der Theorie von dem Wesen der Hysterie schnurstracks zuwiderlaufen” (23). With this, Oppenheim tries to counter the claims of his opponents that war neurotics are nothing more than war hysterics.

Oppenheim also spends a significant part of his talk responding to other criticism from his colleagues. In particular, the fact that war neurosis rarely manifested itself in prisoner of war camps had been used as proof of the ‘pension wish’ and simulation of war neurotics. Oppenheim admits that he visited several camps and neurosis is rarely to be found under those circumstances. However, he cautions against jumping to conclusions. The soldiers in these camps, he suggests, are generally recruited from mobile troops and so it could be assumed that very weak soldiers have already been weeded out (as is evidenced by the war neurotics in military hospitals who never even made it to the front). In addition, the analysis of soldiers in prisoner of war camps can, for practical reasons, never be as thorough as in military hospitals and as such it may be difficult to accurately diagnose them.

Ultimately, Oppenheim is not able to give a conclusive answer in response to the prisoner of

war question. In his final speech, however, he makes his own final critique, telling his colleagues that he is simply shocked by how little they appreciate the enormous impact of the war and the damage it has caused beyond the visible, physical injuries of soldiers.

In the second conference lecture, Max Nonne, the prominent neurologist from Hamburg, exclaims emphatically that the topic of “Neurosen nach Kriegsverletzungen” ought to be renamed “Neurosen nach Kriegsschädigung” (37). More than anything, he argues, this war has shown us that the consequences of physical injury are often connected to psychological influences and individual constitution. This, of course, refers to the notion that war neurotics already had a weak constitution and a particular psychic predisposition before even encountering the trauma of war. Thus, Nonne argues, this condition must be treated in the same manner as the psychogenic disorders of hysteria and neurasthenia. He mentions that we now understand “dass die seelischen Zustände abnorm leicht in körperliche Symptome sich projizieren” (44) and for this reason, he explains, we must read the physical symptoms of war neurosis (such as mutism, tremors, tics, convulsions and paralysis) as nothing more than physical manifestations of the internal psyche. Adumbrating a central element of Freudian psychoanalysis, Nonne argues that the war seems to produce a form of hysteria which is called into action by (otherwise latent) defensive mechanisms: “Die spezielle Färbung der Kriegsschädigungen ruft jene Form der Hysterie hervor, die die jedem Individuum angeborenen, bisher latent gewesenen Abwehrmechanismen hervorruft” (47). However, Nonne concludes that the neurotic cases produced by the war do not in any *fundamental* way differ from previously known cases of hysteria and must therefore be interpreted accordingly.

In short, Nonne claims that ‘war neurosis’ is not a new disorder; rather, these patients should be diagnosed and treated in the same manner as the already well-known neurotic forms of hysteria and neurasthenia. Rather than placing emphasis on the accident or trauma of the war injury, the therapist should acknowledge the individual characteristics of the

patient which have resulted in the manifestation of a neurosis (i.e. the patient's predisposition). The most conclusive evidence of this, Nonne explains, lies in the success of the hypnotic cure. Because war neurotics can be cured through means of hypnotic suggestion, we must accept once and for all that this illness has no somatic-organic basis: "Organische Veränderungen irgendwelcher Art liegen den Symptombildern nicht zugrunde" (104). For this reason, the diagnosis must remain the same as in times of peace: "die Prognose der im Kriege erworbenen Neurosen ist an sich dieselbe wie in Friedenszeiten" (104). And, in turn, the prescribed therapeutic treatment must be "dieselbe, wie sie sonst geübt wird" – that is, patients should be treated with the suggestive hypnosis which he himself has been using to successfully cure neurotic soldiers (104). In order to underscore his argument, Nonne brings several soldiers onto the stage in order to hypnotize them and cure them of their stutters and paralyses. This crowning performance confirms for the audience the fact that these soldiers are hysterics who can be cured by the simple means of hypnosis.

The psychiatrist Robert Gaupp reinforces Nonne's arguments: he begins by defining in detail the different forms of neuroses, exclaiming again that there is no distinct form of war neurosis. Gaupp focuses more intensely than Nonne on the fact that the cause of war neurosis is located within the abnormal psyches of patients and gives evidence of this as follows. First, he points to the rising number of war neurotics as 'weaker men' are drafted to the front. Second, although there are no official statistics, his own experiences in military hospitals have confirmed the fact that the development of war neurosis depends upon the soldier's social and ethnic background. Gaupp mentions that the Slavs seem to have higher rates of war neurosis than the Germans, and that his prewar experience with Poles also revealed a higher rate of hysteria. He even comments on the differences within Germany: "Das ruhigere Temperament des Norddeutschen scheint widerstandsfähiger als das des erregbareren Süddeutschen und Rheinländers" (120). Furthermore, whereas young and uneducated soldiers

tend to display monosymptomatic manifestations of war neurosis, educated soldiers are more likely to exhibit polymorphous and mixed forms.

However, Gaupp continues, there are also individual differences which determine the likelihood of a soldier's susceptibility to neurosis. Unsurprisingly, he maintains that strong and healthy men are more likely to be able to withstand the shocks of industrialized warfare.<sup>16</sup> Thus, it must be the case that war neurosis primarily springs from internal disposition and that most soldiers diagnosed with neurosis can be described as inherently weak and fragile; in short, Gaupp explains, these soldiers were "labile und gemütsweiche, von Natur ängstliche Psychopathen" even before the start of the war. For this reason he suggests a reformulation of the central question of war neurosis: "Gibt die seelische Struktur des erkrankten Neurotikers die Erklärung dafür, dass eine Schädlichkeit, die gleich ihm Tausende und Hunderttausende trifft, gerade ihn krank macht, während sie die anderen verschont...?" (127). His answer, of course, is a resounding yes. Most war neurotics have not experienced worse circumstances than their comrades who remain healthy; this proves "dass die Bedingungen ihres Erkrankens in erster Linie in ihnen selbst lagen" (128). The cause of the war neurosis, Gaupp concludes, lies solely in the particular psychic disposition of the neurotic.

When the Munich conference and its intense debates drew to a close, the verdict was clear: Oppenheim and his concept of traumatic neurosis had been categorically rejected by the psychiatric community. Lerner attributes this outcome largely to the politically charged atmosphere of the war years and especially the "pension neurosis scare": "The mere thought of hordes of pension-collecting workers and soldiers sapping Germany's precarious reserves made the discussion impossibly fraught with political implication" (83-84). Indeed, this debate was seen by many as a "patriotic battle" because of the belief that Germany's military

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<sup>16</sup> "Hunderttausendfach mögen in nächster Nähe unserer Krieger Granaten platzen, Zehntausende werden verschüttet und nur mühsam wieder ausgegraben, aber die elastische Natur des gesunden Mannes, der die Notwendigkeit des Aushaltens im Kriege bejaht, raft sich immer wieder rasch empor..." (Gaupp 143).

and economic strength was at stake. The question of war neurosis was recast as a question of social insurance and compensation to the extent that psychiatrists and neurologists felt it was their duty to protect the state from an inevitable proliferation of war neurotics and financial drain. Because Oppenheim stood alone in his convictions, the debate took on a highly personal tone and Nonne would later suggest that Oppenheim's subsequent decline and death was a result of the "traumatic effects of the trauma debate" (Lerner 79).

### **Trauma and the Unconscious Processes of the Psyche: The 1918 Psychoanalytic Conference in Budapest**

"Ich behandle keine Kranken, dessen Träume ich nicht kenne." – Ernst Simmel, *Zur Psychoanalyse der Kriegsneurosen*

Exactly two years later, the Fifth International Psychoanalytic Conference was held in Budapest and, unsurprisingly, all speakers embraced the psychogenic interpretations of traumatic neurosis which had ultimately prevailed at the psychiatric conference in Munich. In the opening talk of the conference, Sándor Ferenczi devotes a great amount of space to reviewing the arguments made by these psychiatrists and neurologists in order to indicate the importance of turning to psychoanalysis as a means to fully understand, and ultimately treat, war neuroses. In fact, Ferenczi argues that neurologists had already been leaning towards psychoanalytic understandings of traumatic neurosis in 1916 even if they had yet to recognize this fact. Ultimately, all of the papers in the 1918 conference proceedings support Freudian psychoanalysis as the only correct interpretation and treatment of war neuroses.

The Hungarian psychoanalyst, Sándor Ferenczi, began his talk by briefly summarizing recent developments in the ongoing research on war neurosis. He is quick to belittle the "bisher geläufige organisch-mechanistische Erklärung" which had been stubbornly defended by Hermann Oppenheim and a few other psychiatrists. This interpretation, Ferenczi argues, has completely failed because there is no proof of organic

changes in war neurotics: “Das Material, das Oppenheim zur Stütze seiner Anschauungen produzierte, war keineswegs geeignet, seine abstrusen Theorien zu stützen” (12). There was, in fact, no material basis to traumatic neurosis, Ferenczi explains, and Oppenheim had merely come up with “hochtrabende, aber über das Wesen nichtsaussagende Namen” such that his work was ultimately nothing more than what Gaupp had called “Hirnmythologie” (11-12). In contrast, the psychiatrist Adolf Strümpell, who had been one of the first and strongest opponents of this purely organic-mechanistic interpretation, had accurately identified that there were clear, psychic factors which determined whether or not a subject would succumb to traumatic neurosis: “Er machte die richtige Beobachtung, dass bei Eisenbahnkatastrophen etc. zumeist solche Personen schwer an Neurose erkranken, die ein Interesse daran haben eine durch das Trauma verursachte Schädigung nachweisen zu können” (13). Specifically, Strümpell argues that those victims who fell ill were the ones who were hoping for a pension or wanted to file an accident insurance claim. If, on the other hand, there was no possibility for securing a pension or claim, that is, there was no *interest* in remaining sick, then there were generally no lasting nervous consequences to be found in the victims. Put simply, Strümpell claimed that traumatic neuroses always developed “sekundär, rein psychogen, [und] aus Begehrungsvorstellungen” (13). This notion led to the idea of the *Rentenkampfhysterie* which was also carried over to the First World War and ultimately meant that patients were treated as nothing more than malingerers. While Ferenczi praises Strümpell for his recognition of the condition as purely psychogenic, he cautions that this interpretation does not fully appreciate the complexity and difficulty of treating war neurosis..

As proof of the purely psychogenic character of war neurosis, Ferenczi reiterates several of the arguments made at the 1916 psychiatric conference in Munich. First of all, he mentions the lack of war neurotics in prisoner of war camps, which, he explains, is due to the

fact that these prisoners have no interest in remaining sick (since there is no chance of compensation or even sympathy in the camps). Second, Ferenczi refers to the disproportion between the magnitude of trauma and its results on the nervous system: “Schwere Neurosen entstehen nach minimalen Erschütterungen, während gerade die mit großer Erschütterung einhergehenden schweren Verwundungen zumeist ohne nervösen Folgen bleiben” (15). Third, he indicates the frequent temporal delay before the onset of symptoms as evidence for the psychogenic character of war neurosis. If, Ferenczi asserts, the injury were indeed mechanical, then the effect would be strongest immediately after the traumatic event; but since, in many cases, the symptoms only appear once the soldier has left the battlefield and at times only once he is forced to return to the fighting, this is clearly not the case. Finally, Ferenczi refers to the fact that war neurotics have been successfully treated by the method of suggestive hypnosis developed by Max Nonne: because of his success, the possibility of even a molecular disruption in the nervous system must be excluded since “eine Störung, die durch psychischen Einfluss zurecht gerückt werden konnte, kann selber nicht anders als psychisch gewesen sein” (16).

In support of the psychoanalytic approach for treating traumatic neurosis, Ferenczi cites the writings of German neurologists on the subject. He argues that well-known psychiatrists and neurologists have themselves borrowed the language of the psychoanalytic theories of Breuer and Freud (which were also influenced by Charcot). For example, Robert Gaupp, he claims, made use of a Freudian postulation when he described war neurosis “als eine Flucht vor psychischen Konflikten in die Krankheit” and emphasized the effects of the unconscious on consciousness (18). Ferenczi also cites Bonheuffer as having accepted psychoanalysis when he delineated traumatic symptoms as “psychoneurotische Verankerungen, Sejunktionserscheinungen, durch die unter dem Einflusse schwerster Emotion erfolgte Abspaltung des Affekts vom Vorstellungsinhalt ermöglicht wird” (18).

Ultimately, we are told, even Strümpell's explanation of war neurosis as the psychogenic wish of hysteria is merely a repetition of the psychoanalytic axiom that all neurotic symptoms are expressions of unconscious wishes.

Thus, Ferenczi asserts, psychoanalysis has already had significant influence on psychiatrists' interpretations of war neuroses. In fact, Nonne had even explicitly recognized this when he said that the war had revealed interesting illuminations and confirmations of Freud's work on the unconscious. However, Nonne had also gone on to say that Freud's insistence upon the sexual foundation of hysteria had been entirely disproven by the war. Ferenczi counters this by explaining the definition of sexuality in psychoanalysis as including not only emotional feelings for the opposite sex but also towards friends and towards oneself. War neuroses, he explains, belong to a larger group of neuroses at the root of which lies a problem of narcissism or self-love. The symptoms of depression, terror, anxiousness and irritability can all be traced back to an increased sensitivity of the ego ("gesteigerte Ichempfindlichkeit") which, in turn, often deteriorates into a kind of infantile narcissism. Thus, the "Gesamtpersönlichkeit der meisten Traumatiker entspricht also der eines infolge Erschreckens verängstigten, sich verzärtelnden, hemmunglosen, schlimmen Kindes" (28). This brings Ferenczi to the conclusion that the interpretation of war neurosis as a mere pension wish, as theorized by Strümpell, is insufficient because it only recognizes the secondary gains: "das primäre Krankheitsmotiv ist das Vergnügen selbst, im sicheren Hort der einstmal ungerne verlassenen kindlichen Situation zu verbleiben" (28).

In the following lecture, Karl Abraham confirms this link between sexuality and neurosis by detailing his own experiences with traumatic neuroses both before and after the war. He argues that, whereas neurologists only consider the reactions of the ego impulses by examining the manifest expressions of the neurosis, psychoanalysis deals with the deeper unconscious and sexual factors that lie at the root of the illness. His own investigations, he

asserts, indicate that the wish for a pension and a weak predisposition cannot explain the war neuroses which do, in fact, have a sexual aetiology. Abraham begins by citing his prewar work with a young girl who had been in a minor tram accident at the same time that she found herself “in einem ernsten erotischen Konflikt” (31). The symptoms she suffered were thought to have been caused by the accident when, in reality, they were a result of the erotic conflict. According to Abraham, his investigation of war neurotics confirmed this connection: “Das Trauma wirkt auf die Sexualität vieler Personen in dem Sinne, dass es den Anstoß zu einer regressiven Veränderung gibt, welche dem Narzissmus zustrebt” (32). Because it does not affect all soldiers, it must be acknowledged that the individual disposition plays a significant role; psychoanalysis, however, can define this disposition much more accurately than the field of neurology had thus far been able to do. Ultimately, he explains, war neurotics had already been “labile Menschen, und zwar besonders hinsichtlich ihrer Sexualität” (33) even before the traumatic event. Their libidinal fixations had kept them in the developmental stage of narcissism so that they could not suppress their narcissism as is required by soldiers in war. Often these people had previously only been able to function under the narcissistic illusion of immortality and, when an explosion or physical wound suddenly destroyed this belief, a sense of powerlessness, and eventually neurosis, sets in. Abraham concludes his talk by promoting psychoanalytic treatment as the only possible solution for the ‘masses of neurotic disorders’ produced by the war.

In the third lecture of the conference proceedings, the Berlin-based psychoanalyst Ernst Simmel describes the psychoanalytic treatment of war neurotics, and bases his arguments upon his own recent work in military hospitals. Simply put, Simmel understands war neurosis as being a consequence of the “Inkongruenz des Kriegserlebnisses und der psychischen Bereitschaft des Erkrankten” (43) and thus echoes Freud’s own interpretation of the condition. Indeed, he praises Freud for his findings regarding hysteria which have

likewise informed psychoanalytic explanations of war neurosis: in particular, his conclusion that all physical symptoms are manifestations of underlying psychological symptoms. “Der Körper ist das Instrument der Seele,” Simmel claims, “auf dem sie ihr Unbewusstes in plastischem und mimischem Ausdruck in Erscheinung treten lässt” (43). Thus, the symptoms of war neurotics are the expression of deeper processes within the psyche of the patient which are – often but not always – connected with the patient’s ‘psychosexual constellation.’ For this reason, a thorough psychoanalytic analysis frequently leads into “das Wurzelgewirr infantiler Sexualität” (44). But in every case, sexuality plays a role in war neurosis in so far as it deals with the most primitive instinct of self-preservation (“Selbsterhaltungstrieb”). Simmel suggests that the compulsory discipline along with the physical and psychic exhaustion of war result in ‘undischarged mental material’ and thus an ‘obstructed personality.’ This ultimately leads to a splitting of the personality which, in turn, manifests itself physically in war neurosis.<sup>17</sup> The physical manifestation of war neurosis is not only a process of self-preservation, he maintains, but also signifies the start of the healing process in its ability to force the previously unaware patient into recognition of his condition.

Having thus delineated his understanding of war neurosis and its deeper psychic causes, Simmel explains the psychoanalytic therapy treatment. Hypnosis, which forms the core of the proposed treatment, allows the therapist to understand the unconscious processes that had taken place at the moment of traumatic impact. (The assumption here is that consciousness flees when reality is too horrible to be tolerated and thus the patient himself would be unaware of what he had experienced.) Simmel fervently criticizes the suggestive model of hypnosis advocated by Nonne, claiming that it takes advantage of the patient’s state

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<sup>17</sup> “Da im Innern die Verbindung zwischen Bewußtem und Unbewußtem durch die starke Wand des Widerstandes unterbrochen ist, wird der Umweg über die äußeren, körperlichen Bahnen nötig, um so den harmonischen Zusammenschluß der Persönlichkeit wieder herzustellen.” (46)

of suggestibility and ultimately worsens rather than cures the illness.<sup>18</sup> First and foremost, Simmel argues, the patient must be made aware of the actual cause of his illness so that he can (with the help of his therapist) regain harmony and control over his will power:

Die Krönung unserer Behandlung besteht in der Heranziehung des selbsttätigen Mitwirkens des Neurotikers, der, von seiner Affektstauung befreit, nun im Zusammenhange mit sich selbst, auf Grund seines erweiterten geistigen Blickfeldes, für seine Willenstätigkeit einen erweiterten Spielraum hat. (47)

Both hypnosis and dreams can be used to help the war neurotic relive and bring to consciousness the original cause of his neurosis. Simmel gives several examples, among them a soldier who had a paralyzed arm because, as it turned out, his slight gunshot wound had felt to him, at the moment of impact, as if his arm were being torn off; a soldier whose eyes were constantly turned upwards and to the left because this was where he had perceived the danger of falling tree trunks and bursting shells; and a soldier with a severe speech disturbance who was suddenly cured when he could finally express his feelings of anxiety and rage through shouting and raving. Simmel concludes that most patients can be cured by reintroducing the lost memory to their consciousness and allowing for sufficient affective discharge (“Affektentladung”).<sup>19</sup>

While there are clear differences between the psychiatric and psychoanalytic debates on the subject of war neurosis, there are undeniable convergences as well. All were in agreement that the cause of neurosis is psychogenic and not organic, and that the proper mode of treatment is hypnosis. (However, the specific type of hypnotic treatment differs greatly, as Ferenczi and Simmel repeatedly stress.) In many ways, the psychoanalysts pick up

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<sup>18</sup> Here Simmel repeats the necessity of acknowledging the deeper psychic processes which are present in the development of war neurosis. Even the so-called pension neurosis, he explains, is in actuality an ‘inferiority neurosis’: the patient believes he has not been sufficiently valued for his military achievements and hopes that a wound or illness will give him the recognition that he deserves.

<sup>19</sup> In fact, Simmel mentions that in his experience this affective discharge often reveals repressed rage towards military superiors. He believes that the way in which soldiers are forced to submit and accept their individual insignificance within the military leads to the restriction of their ego, a primary cause of neurosis. It is precisely for this reason that traumatic neurosis is found most often in soldiers rather than in officers.

where the psychiatrists leave off. After resolutely confirming the psychological nature of war neurosis, German psychiatrists and neurologists stop short of theorizing the actual psychic processes involved in trauma. The focus of their discussions repeatedly comes back to the body and the physical manifestations of neuroses. The psychoanalysts, unsurprisingly, leave the body behind and begin theorizing in detail the inner workings of the psyche and, in particular, the relationship between the present trauma and the patient's past, disposition, and sexuality. Quite surprisingly, however, Freud's eventual theorization of trauma in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* radically departs from the conceptions of traumatic neurosis (or trauma-induced hysteria) presented by the majority of psychiatrists and by all of the psychoanalysts at these historic conferences. Instead, it is Oppenheim's organic model of trauma in which shocks penetrate the subject in the form of a wave – a model which is vehemently rejected by psychiatrists and psychoanalysts alike – which in many ways prefigures Freud's visualization of trauma in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* as a physical breach of the stimulus shield. This 'wave' of trauma, which moves throughout the body causing damage to the nerves, is paralleled in Freud's model by the concept of binding and unbinding.

Ultimately, Freud's theory moves away from the historical construction of trauma which emerged in the above-mentioned conferences and towards a more structural engagement with trauma. While he mentions the victims of war neurosis at the start of his essay, this serves as a mere rhetorical strategy for embarking upon a highly speculative and theoretical examination of the traumatized modern subject. However, as the following analysis will illustrate, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* can itself be read as a traumatized response to the war, and, indeed, Freud's theory ultimately appears to stem from a deeply personal trauma – one that repeatedly surfaces throughout the text. In this sense, Freud's theory, which on the surface seems entirely removed from the historical reality of the First World War, actually nears the historical trauma of war to a much greater extent than the historical texts of

the 1916 and 1918 conferences. Indeed, Freud's theory of trauma, which blurs the boundaries between inside and outside in its visualization of a breach in the stimulus shield, reproduces the established historical terms of the debate (internal versus external) and is, furthermore, linguistically grounded in the historical specificity of the First World War in its extensive use of militaristic vocabulary. The particular impact of the historical moment of war reveals itself in a unique manner in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*: not by way of the external pressures of accident insurance laws, as was the case at the psychiatric congress of 1916, but by the internal pressures of trauma itself.

### **Doppelgängers and the *Ichkonflikt* of War Neurosis**

Before beginning my close reading of Freud's *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, I would like to briefly examine his notion of trauma as "Ichkonflikt," which played a central role in his theorization of trauma during the years of the First World War. In *Jenseits*, this *Ichkonflikt* is further developed and imagined to be the result of a traumatic encounter between the internal and external worlds of the subject – an encounter that is visualized in militaristic terms as a boundary breach. Finally, I will analyze Freud's theory as a traumatized response to the war and, towards the end of the chapter, take a look at Weimar trauma theories within the larger development of trauma theory throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In Freud's introduction to the psychoanalytic conference proceedings published in 1919 under the title *Zur Psychoanalyse der Kriegsneurosen*, he defines war neurosis as the following: "Die Kriegsneurosen sind, soweit sie sich durch besondere Eigenheiten von den banalen Neurosen der Friedenszeit unterscheiden, aufzufassen als traumatische Neurosen, die durch einen *Ichkonflikt* ermöglicht oder begünstigt worden." (5, my italics) Unlike the cases of neurosis that were observed before the war, traumatic neurosis is defined by Freud primarily as a conflict of the self. This concept of a divided, conflicted, or shattered self

resurfaces throughout my exploration of trauma in the films, photographs, and theatrical works of the early Weimar Years. I will therefore devote the following pages to a close, textual analysis of Freud's understanding of this *Ichkonflikt* in relation to the war neuroses of the First World War. This model of trauma is particularly significant in the trauma aesthetics of Weimar film and, as my analysis shows, the theoretical and filmic definitions of trauma heavily influence one another.

Freud further delineates the *Ichkonflikt* by describing it explicitly as the perceived threat of a *Doppelgänger* (or the wartime self) towards the real self (the peacetime self):

Er spielt sich zwischen dem alten friedlichen und dem neuen Kriegerischen Ich des Soldaten ab, und wird akut, sobald dem Friedens-Ich vor Augen gerückt wird, wie sehr es Gefahr läuft, durch die Wagnisse seines neugebildeten parasitischen Doppelgängers ums Leben gebracht zu werden. (5)

According to Freud, the struggle between the wartime and peacetime self becomes urgent precisely at that point when the soldier becomes aware of the existence of a *Doppelgänger* who poses a threat to his own life. Of course, the idea of a threatening *Doppelgänger* was not a new one: in fact, it had recently been portrayed cinematically in Hanns Heinz Ewers' 1913 film, *Der Student von Prag*, in which a poor student sells his mirror image – an act that ultimately leads him to his own untimely death. However, the theme becomes even more pertinent after the First World War and makes an appearance in countless numbers of Weimar films, including Wiene's masterpiece *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920) and Lang's equally provocative *Metropolis* (1927).

In 1919 Freud also published his essay, *Das Unheimliche*, in which he not only cites many literary examples of the uncanny but also discusses Otto Rank's 1914 study, *Der Doppelgänger*, as well as the film which inspired Rank to write his comprehensive study of the double – *Der Student von Prag*. In this postwar essay, Freud describes the *Doppelgänger* first and foremost as a 'harbinger of death.' Yet, another aspect of the *Doppelgänger* comes to light during his discussion: namely, the *Doppelgänger* as harbinger of the forgotten *past*.

According to Freud, the Doppelgänger is originally conceived as a claim to immortality or “eine Versicherung gegen den Untergang des Ichs” (309). Once this stage of primary narcissism has been left behind, the Doppelgänger has to take on a new meaning to survive. Ironically, this means that the Doppelgänger progresses from ‘immortal soul’ to ‘harbinger of death.’ His uncanniness stems directly from his having belonged to an earlier time in our lives: “Der Charakter des Unheimlichen kann doch nur daher rühren, dass der Doppelgänger eine den überwundenen seelischen Urzeiten angehörige Bildung ist, die damals allerdings einen freundlicheren Sinn hatte. ” (310-11) The Doppelgänger reminds us of the past – and, often, a past that we no longer want to remember. Once admired and idealized, the Doppelgänger is now an uncontrollable resurfacing of our past and therefore becomes a threat, or a “Schreckbild.” In this sense, the Doppelgänger might be described as the embodiment of Freud’s notion of the ‘return of the repressed’ and is also related to the *Wiederholungszwang* which is at the heart of Freud’s trauma theory in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*.<sup>20</sup>

Freud further expands upon this definition of the Doppelgänger by recognizing it as a projection of the self. Because our conscience allows us to observe and even criticize the self, he claims, we are able to ‘censor’ ourselves. This censored material is pushed away from the self and ascribed instead to the Doppelgänger:

Im Ich bildet sich langsam eine besondere Instanz heraus, welche sich dem übrigen Ich entgegenstellen kann, die der Selbstbeobachtung und Selbstkritik dient, die Arbeit der psychischen Zensur leistet und unserem Bewußtsein als ‘Gewissen’ bekannt wird. [...] Die Tatsache, dass eine solche Instanz vorhanden ist, *welche das übrige Ich wie ein Objekt behandeln kann*, also dass der Mensch der Selbstbeobachtung fähig ist, macht es möglich, die alte Doppelgängervorstellung mit neuem Inhalt zu erfüllen... (310, my italics)

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<sup>20</sup> In *Das Unheimliche*, Freud ultimately argues that anything related to the repetition compulsion is perceived as uncanny: “Wir sind durch alle vorstehenden Erörterungen darauf vorbereitet, dass dasjenige als unheimlich verspürt werden wird, was an diesen inneren Wiederholungszwang mahnen kann“ (313). Since trauma always manifests itself in a repetition compulsion, it has clear ties with Freud’s concept of the uncanny.

According to Freud, the Doppelgänger is thus an embodiment of those parts of the self which we choose to reject and which are therefore viewed as *object* rather than subject. In other words, the Doppelgänger is formed by the relegation of censored or repressed material *outside* of the perceived self. Understanding the *Ichkonflikt* in war neuroses as the threat of a Doppelgänger – as the external threat of rejected parts of the self – has fascinating implications. Most simply, we can say that it places the boundary between subject and object, or self and other, into central focus. This notion forms the very foundation of Freud's trauma theory and it is precisely this exploded boundary which my dissertation locates at the crux of both artistic and documentary explorations of trauma in the Weimar Republic.

In Freud's introduction to *Zur Psychoanalyse der Kriegsneurosen*, he concludes that both war neurosis and the traumatic neuroses diagnosed before the war are caused by a threat to the ego. The key difference, however, lies in the fact that war neuroses are a result of an *internal* rather than external threat: "Bei den Kriegsneurosen sei das Gefürchtete, zum Unterschied von der reinen traumatischen Neurose und in Annäherung der Übertragungsneurosen, doch ein innerer Feind" (7). This quote again reiterates Freud's claim that an internal *Ichkonflikt* lies at the root of war neurosis. However, our close reading of select passages in *Das Unheimliche* has clarified our understanding of this inner enemy: it is, in fact, an enemy that is neither external nor entirely internal. The split between two different parts of the self, and the projection of one of these parts onto the external world, makes a simple analysis of this 'inner enemy' impossible. It throws traditional boundaries and stable concepts of identity into question, and does so to such an extent that the exploration of subjectivity in Weimar media is constituted primarily by contradictions and paradoxes. In fact, Freud continues theorizing the traumatized subject in his subsequent work and ultimately proposes that the individual is fundamentally composed of two contradictory and opposing forces, the life and death instincts. The following section summarizes these writings

and sets up my close reading of Freud's trauma theory as a traumatized response to the First World War.

### ***Jenseits des Lustprinzips: Trauma as a Breach in the Stimulus Shield***

Shortly after writing *Das Unheimliche* and his introduction to *Zur Psychoanalyse der Kriegsneurosen*, Freud begins a longer treatise on trauma and war – the highly influential and often cited *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920). Here, Freud attempts to make sense of the puzzling relationship between the dreams of war neuroses and the pleasure principle which he had already championed in his earlier works. The essay begins with a brief mention of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century railway accidents and other mechanical “Erschütterungen” which often produced the highly debated disorder that came to be known as traumatic neurosis. Railway accidents played a central role in solidifying a connection between shock and modernity in the popular imagination, and it is therefore no surprise that Freud begins his discussion of war trauma with a nod to what might be considered its precursor.<sup>21</sup> Prior to Oppenheim's coining of the term ‘traumatic neurosis’ in 1889, the victims of railway accident were diagnosed with ‘railway spine’ – a peculiarly modern ailment that, many would argue, was a late 19<sup>th</sup> century precursor to shell shock. Indeed, Wolfgang Schivelbusch and others have argued that the debates surrounding railway spine played a central role in paving the way towards the non-organic understanding of traumatic neurosis that developed during the First World War.

Freud's analysis of war neurosis begins, however, with the innocent games of a child and the unconscious dreams of patients, before leading into a more detailed discussion of the “Wiederholungszwang” which will form the cornerstone of his trauma theory. Dreams, Freud claims, are the best way to investigate “[die] seelischen Tiefenvorgänge” (198) of an

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<sup>21</sup> In fact, the war itself had popularly been compared with a derailed train: “The war, with its ‘rationalized slaughter,’ came to be imagined as an immense runaway locomotive, with dreadful consequences for body and mind” (Killen, *Berlin Electropolis* 130).

individual. Thus he finds it extremely significant that, in their dreams, patients of traumatic neuroses continually relive the occurrence of their accidents. Departing from the theories put forth by Ferenczi and Abraham, Freud asserts that this phenomenon cannot be justifiably ascribed to the pleasure principle since there is nothing pleasurable or wish-fulfilling about reliving a traumatic event. The compulsion to repeatedly return to the original trauma, to the “krankmachende Situation,” must therefore be examined more closely. What Freud finds particularly fascinating about this phenomenon is not merely the content of the dreams, but the fact that the patient awakes from these dreams with fright – and is thus repeatedly brought into a situation, “aus der er mit neuem Schrecken erwacht” (198). For this reason, Freud also calls the disorder ‘fright neurosis.’ Because the accident victim (or soldier) was caught off-guard by the traumatic event, he did not experience the anxiety that would have protected him from the trauma. According to Freud, *Angst* (anxiety) “bezeichnet einen gewissen Zustand wie Erwartung der Gefahr und Vorbereitung auf dieselbe, mag sie auch eine unbekannte sein,” whereas *Schreck* (fright) “benennt den Zustand, in den man gerät, wenn man in Gefahr kommt, ohne auf sie vorbereitet zu sein” (198). So, while *Angst* denotes a kind of preparedness and therefore does not lead to the development of a neurosis, the elements of shock and surprise inherent in the state of *Schreck* inevitably do.

Next, Freud turns to what he calls a more “normal” activity by examining the mental processes behind the game of a child. Although this appears to be a sudden change in topic, its relevance to the dreams of trauma victims will soon become clear. The game described by Freud involves small objects being thrown across the room, accompanied by a loud “o-o-o” sound which Freud interprets as *fort* (away). When the child is given a toy attached to a string, however, it turns into a game of disappearance and return (*fort – da*) and Freud takes this as confirmation of his interpretation of the game:

Es war im Zusammenhang mit der großen kulturellen Leistung des Kindes, mit dem von ihm zustande gebrachten Triebverzicht (Verzicht auf Triebbefriedigung), das

Fortgehen der Mutter ohne Sträuben zu gestatten. Es entschädigte sich gleichsam dafür, indem es dasselbe Verschwinden und Wiederkommen mit den ihm erreichbaren Gegenständen selbst in Szene setzte. (201)

The child's reenactment of his mother's departure seems strange since it certainly cannot be considered a pleasurable experience (in particular because the game generally stresses *fort* rather than *da*). How, then, can this game be reconciled with the pleasure principle? For Freud, the answer lies in the child's *passive* role in his mother's departure which is turned into an *active* role in his own game of throwing objects away. By playing fort-da, the child "bringt sich nun in eine aktive Rolle, indem es dasselbe, trotzdem es unlustvoll war, als Spiel wiederholt" (201). So, while both the dreams of trauma patients and the fort-da game of a child consist of repeating unpleasant – in fact, traumatic – events, they might be explained in their retrospective attempts at mastering the past. The soldier was traumatized because of his lack of anxiety and preparedness; his dreams bring him back to precisely this moment until he can reenact it without fright and therefore protect himself from the trauma. The child similarly throws his favorite toys away until he can finally be master of his own life and no longer suffer as passive victim in the departure of his loved ones.

Having established that trauma manifests itself in a repetition compulsion, Freud sets out to explain its relationship to the pleasure principle. For the fact remains that the repeated events cannot be described as pleasurable – neither in the first place nor in their repetition. Most of Freud's examples in this section refer to the 'infantile sexual lives' of his patients. However, he claims that a repetition compulsion can at times also be found in the lives of "normal" people – in the man who is continuously betrayed by his friends or in the woman who repeatedly enters into relationships that end in the same way. After some deliberation, Freud concludes that the compulsion to repeat is a primeval instinct that is so strong it overrides the pleasure principle:

Angesichts solcher Beobachtungen aus dem Verhalten in der Übertragung und aus dem Schicksal der Menschen werden wir den Mut zur Annahme finden, dass es im

Seelenleben wirklich einen Wiederholungszwang gibt, der sich *über das Lustprinzip hinaussetzt*. (208, my italics)

This repetition compulsion is often misunderstood as some sort of ‘demonic fate’ when it appears to operate independent of a person’s actions, for example in the case of the woman who marries three times and each time loses her husband to a fatal illness. Perhaps the most well-known example that Freud cites here is the story of Tancred, the hero of the romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*, who accidentally kills his beloved only to unknowingly wound her again when he slashes with his sword at a tree and hears her voice cry out in pain. This story is paradigmatic of the way in which trauma manifests itself in a repetition compulsion – in the unconscious reenactment of an event that cannot be relegated to the past. It thus plays a central role in Cathy Caruth’s trauma theory, which understands trauma as the belated impact of an event that can never be fully known or understood.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, Freud’s discussion of the repetition compulsion leads him to the conclusion that an inner death drive persistently pushes us towards an earlier state. The fact that soldiers are compelled to relive the horrors of war in their dreams cannot be ascribed to the pleasure principle because this phenomenon is in the service of another principle. What lies ‘beyond the pleasure principle,’ Freud claims, is the “innenwohnender Drang zur Wiederherstellung eines früheren Zustandes” (223). Because this drive pushes us towards an earlier state and because the earliest state of an organism is always an inorganic one, Freud labels it the ‘death instinct.’ This leads him to the conclusion: “Das Ziel alles Lebens ist der Tod” (223). To declare that the goal of all life is death is quite a powerful statement – though perhaps not very surprising in 1920, only two years following the most destructive war in

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<sup>22</sup> According to Caruth, the story of Tancred “represents traumatic experience not only as the enigma of a human agent’s repeated and unknowing acts but also as the enigma of the otherness of a human voice that cries out from the wound, a voice that witnesses a truth that Tancred himself cannot fully know” (*Unclaimed Experience* 3). I will elaborate on Caruth’s interpretation of Freud in the last section of this chapter.

history.<sup>23</sup> Freud labels this instinct the ‘death’ instinct primarily because he understands it as a drive towards an inorganic state. However, it must be noted that for many soldiers diagnosed with war neurosis, the moment of their trauma was, in fact, a near-death experience. I will discuss Freud’s idea of the death instinct in more detail in the following section, but first I would like to delineate the physical model of trauma that makes up a significant portion of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. As already mentioned, this physical model leads Freud away from the psychological model of trauma propounded by his psychoanalytic peers and towards those psychiatrists who insisted on the significance of the war itself in their theories of trauma.

In the fourth section of his essay, Freud presents his readers with a visualization of the human body and the processes which are set into motion by the occurrence of a traumatic event. According to Freud’s model, the outermost layer of an organism serves as a stimulus shield that protects the interior from all external stimuli.<sup>24</sup> Freud describes the formation of this stimulus shield as a natural development in the life of an organism: “Stellen wir uns den lebenden Organismus in seiner größtmöglichen Vereinfachung als undifferenziertes Bläschen reizbarer Substanz vor; dann ist seine der Außenwelt zugekehrte Oberfläche durch ihre Lage selbst differenziert und dient als reizaufnehmendes Organ” (211). Although the outer layer starts off no different from the rest of the organism, its proximity to the external world quickly brings about its differentiation. This is because it necessarily deals with the “Anprall der äußeren Reize” and therefore becomes the organ whose job it is to receive these stimuli – “[das] reizaufnehmendes Organ.” The organism has therefore developed from an undifferentiated mass into a multi-layered entity in which different processes take place in

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<sup>23</sup> Some scholars have also noted that the death of Freud’s daughter, Sophie, in 1920 may have influenced this argument. See, for example, Peter Gay’s *Freud: A Life for Our Time*.

<sup>24</sup> The idea that the modern individual is continually assaulted with stimuli from the external world was not a new one: among other theorists, Georg Simmel wrote extensively on sensory overload in the industrialized world in his influential essay “Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben” (1903).

different organs. The outer layer, or crust, is optimally constructed for dealing with external stimuli: “Es bildete sich so eine Rinde, die endlich durch die Reizwirkung so durchgebrannt ist, dass sie der Reizaufnahme die günstigsten Verhältnisse entgegenbringt und einer weiteren Modifikation nicht fähig ist” (211). Freud’s visualization of the outer layer of a human body as a battle zone between the internal and external world is striking in light of the recent war. In particular, his description of a layer entirely burnt through by the onslaught of external stimuli echoes the images of WWI battlegrounds in which the entire landscape – the earth’s crust – has been scorched.



Not only does Freud claim that the outer layer is completely ‘burnt through,’ but he goes so far as to say that this layer can no longer be considered organic. Because the organism is suspended “inmitten einer mit den stärksten Energien geladenen Außenwelt,” it would be quickly destroyed if it weren’t for the protection of the stimulus shield. However, in order to fend off the attack of external stimuli, the stimulus shield has to be burnt to the extent that it nears inorganic matter:

[Das Organismus] bekommt ihn [den Reizschutz] dadurch, dass seine äußerste Oberfläche die dem Lebenden zukommende Struktur aufgibt, gewissermaßen anorganisch wird und nun als eine besondere Hülle oder Membran reizabhaltend wirkt... (212)

Here, Freud challenges a clear-cut boundary between organic and inorganic matter, and suggests a more complex relationship between these ordinarily contradictory states. The outer

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<sup>25</sup> Deutsches Historisches Museum. [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_image.cfm?image\\_id=2131](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2131)

membrane serves as a buffer zone between organic and inorganic matter, and to do so it must take on elements of both.

But what does all of this have to do with trauma? According to Freud, the stimulus shield sometimes fails and an external stimulus pierces through the outer layer. “Solche Erregungen von außen, die stark genug sind, den Reizschutz zu durchbrechen, heissen wir *traumatische*” (214). Trauma, then, is a result of a rupture in the boundary between interior and exterior. It is the external world abruptly and violently piercing the protective fabric and invading the internal world of the subject. Of all the artistic works examined in my dissertation, this concept is perhaps portrayed most compellingly in the early theatrical works of Bertolt Brecht in which human skin is depicted as a fragile and ultimately unstable boundary between the self and the other. While Freud’s speculative theoretical model is not quite as poetic, it certainly also relies on visual imagery as it paints a physical model of the psychological impact of trauma. By positing trauma as a breach in the stimulus shield, Freud locates the significance of trauma in the interplay between the interior and exterior world, or between the self and the other. Even more importantly, it complicates the very notion of a clear-cut divide between the self and other, as well as between organic and inorganic matter, and this will prove crucial to my own reading of trauma in the photography, theater, and cinema of the early postwar years.

Freud’s explanation of trauma, however, does not end here. Once external stimuli have successfully penetrated the boundary of the organism, he tells us, the real work begins. All of the invading stimuli must now be bound and properly disposed of:

Die Überschwemmung des seelischen Apparates mit großen Reizmengen ist nicht mehr hintanzuhalten; es ergibt sich vielmehr eine andere Aufgabe, den Reiz zu bewältigen, die hereingebrochenen Reizmengen psychisch zu binden, um sie dann der Erledigung zuzuführen. (214-15)

The consequence of this “invasion” is that an excess of cathectic energy is released in the attempt to successfully bind the assaulting stimuli. Fright and anxiety prepare the system

through hypercathexis, but those who are not prepared through feelings of anxiety will be unable to bind the “ankommenden Erregungsmengen,” and thus end up with traumatic neurosis.<sup>26</sup> The binary terms binding and unbinding are indisputably central to Freud’s postwar theory and have significant implications for his understanding of the relationship between self and other.<sup>27</sup> Ruth Leys has argued that, for Freud, the traumatic experience is *fundamentally* structured by a simultaneous binding and unbinding of the ego. According to Freud’s *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, trauma consists of *both* a fragmentation of the ego via a violent breach in the protective shield *and* a subsequent binding via cathexis of the invading material. In other words, it is structured by a dialectic of unbinding and binding, and bears witness to a collision of self and other in which the other is ultimately incorporated into the self.

The process of mastering stimuli that have broken through the stimulus shield by way of binding suggests an ‘incorporative’ model of trauma in which the invading material is taken up by the organism and assimilated into the self. This has significant parallels with Freud’s concept of identification. According to Laplanche and Pontalis’ *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, identification in psychoanalysis is “a psychological process whereby *the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other* and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides” (205, my italics). Incorporation, they continue, is a mode of identification in which “the mental process is experienced and symbolized as a

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<sup>26</sup> As Freud explains in the beginning of his essay, the dreams of trauma patients attempt to master the stimulus retrospectively precisely by cultivating the sense of anxiety which was missing at the original moment of trauma. However, Freud’s concept of anxiety is highly contradictory and Ruth Leys has perceptively noted that Freud characterizes it alternately as both cure and cause of psychic trauma (28).

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that these terms have a long and complex history in Freud’s works; my understanding is based primarily on Freud’s postwar works and, in particular, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. See Edward Erwin’s *The Freud Encyclopedia* for various definitions.

*bodily* one (ingesting, devouring, keeping something inside oneself, etc.)” (207, my italics).<sup>28</sup>

The process of binding and assimilating stimuli described by Freud can certainly be understood as a type of “Einverleibung”: his visualization of the human organism vis-à-vis the external world largely centers on the process of taking something into the “Leib” (body). In effect, the modern subject is visualized here not as a stable, self-contained entity but as a highly mutable organism that takes up and absorbs parts of its environment.

As mentioned in my introduction, the First World War led to a crisis of subjectivity – one that was largely visualized in physical terms during the Weimar years. Freud’s claim that incorporative binding is a fundamental aspect of the traumatic experience has significant implications not only for his theory of trauma but also, more broadly, for his understanding of identity and the subject. Following literary critic Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen’s analysis in *The Freudian Subject*, Leys argues that identification is necessarily ‘prehistoric,’ that is, it precedes any object-subject distinction and therefore cannot be consciously recalled. This assertion is based on Freud’s 1921 essay, *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse*, in which he describes identification as “[die] früheste Äußerung einer Gefühlsbindung an eine andere Person” and, in fact, denotes it as a part of the “Vorgeschichte des Ödipuskomplexes” (66). According to Borch-Jacobsen, this text defines identification as “a process that is formative of the ego,” and one which must therefore be unconscious. Identification, he claims, “exceeds all chronology: having taken place ‘before’ the ego, it has never *presented* itself to the ego, it has never constituted a historical, datable, rememberable event” (178). Leys perceptively grasps the implications of this statement for Freud’s trauma theory. For, if the subject comes into being with this ‘primary identification’ already in place, it can never be recalled but only relived – in precisely the same way that trauma patients can never narrate, but are compelled

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<sup>28</sup> In his 1917 essay “Trauer und Melancholie,” Freud refers to incorporation as cannibalistic: “[Das Ich] möchte sich dieses Objekt einverleiben, und zwar der oralen oder kannibalischen Phase der Libidoentwicklung entsprechend auf dem Wege des Fressens” (180).

to perpetually repeat, the moment of original trauma. Accordingly, Leys asks: “What if - as Freud suggests – trauma is understood to consist in *imitative or mimetic identification* itself, which is the say in ‘the subject’s *originary* ‘invasion’ or alteration?” (32). In other words, she proposes that we understand Freud’s conception of trauma as the “archetrauma of identification.” From this point of view, “the traumatic ‘event’ is redefined as that which, precisely because it triggers the ‘trauma’ of emotional identification, strictly speaking cannot be described as an event since it does not occur on the basis of a subject-object distinction” (33). Indeed, the boundary breach and subsequent binding described by Freud echoes the process of incorporative identification described in his other texts, and thus might be viewed as a repetition of the earlier ‘prehistoric’ identification of which the subject cannot be consciously aware. Interestingly, the German term for unbinding – *Entbindung* – also means to give birth and, in fact, the *Entbindung* caused by trauma simultaneously ‘gives birth’ to a new subject via incorporation of the other. Trauma thus denotes a crisis of identity, a radically altered relationship between self and other, and the re-birth of the subject.

In conclusion, Freud’s *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* posits trauma as more than merely the *Ichkonflikt* described in *Zur Psychoanalyse der Kriegsneurosen* by understanding it fundamentally as a breach in the boundary between self and other. It is not a conflict of the ego but, as Ruth Leys defines it, a complete shattering of the “unity and identity of the ego” (29). This fragmented identity makes way for the formation of a new subject through binding and incorporation of the external world. Thus, Freud produces a physical model of trauma in which the ‘other’ is taken in through the body’s permeable boundary and incorporated into the ‘self’ resulting in the birth of the traumatized subject. Ultimately, all of the works discussed in my dissertation are visualizations of Freud’s ‘breach in the protective shield’ and the ensuing identity crisis: the prosthetic limbs in Ernst Friedrich’s book of World War I photographs, the skin in Bertolt Brecht’s early theatrical works, and the *Doppelgänger*s in

Weimar cinema. Just as all of these works were profoundly shaped by the horrors of the First World War, so too can Freud's work be read as a traumatized response to these events (even as it aims to objectively theorize and analyze them). The following section investigates *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* in this light.

### **Repression, Repetition, and Zauderrythmus: Reading Freud's Trauma Theory as a Traumatized Response to War**

Theory is a genre that aims to retroactively explain and control past phenomena, but in the case of trauma, this attempt appears to be futile. It is a concept fraught with ambiguity and contradiction precisely because the phenomenon it describes comprises a temporal fragmentation that cannot be consciously understood by the subject. Freud's work might thus be understood as a performance of trauma in which the psychoanalyst's theorization of trauma functions as a kind of talking cure and the original moment of trauma – in this case the First World War – lurks throughout the text but can never be consciously grasped. By examining the repressed elements, hesitations, and recurrent themes in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* we can begin to apprehend the complexities of Freud's trauma theory while simultaneously revealing both the limits and potential of this particular medium in grappling with trauma.

Freud's *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* performs a traumatized response to war and does so on both a thematic and linguistic level. Linguistically, Freud's explanation of trauma relies heavily on militaristic terms, and a subtext of war is implicit throughout the essay. Thematically, trauma is performed in the constant resurfacing of Freud's earlier theories even as he insists on leaving them behind. His libidinal theory cannot explain war neurosis and yet this theory stubbornly resurfaces throughout his discussion. One could go so far as to say that the libidinal theory continuously punctures the text, thus prohibiting a seamless, coherent

narrative from forming. Instead, Freud's past repeatedly disrupts the text, making it appear fragmentary and disjointed – much like trauma itself.

If we were to view Freud's *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* as a traumatized response, we would expect that the moment of trauma reveals itself latently and unconsciously in the text. And, indeed, for a text that sets out to examine and explain war neuroses, the actual trauma of war is never explicitly discussed. Although the text begins with a brief nod to the dreams of war neurotics, these patients are rarely mentioned again nor are any of their other symptoms described throughout his long essay. The war itself is entirely left out of the essay: in fact, the word "Krieg" appears exactly twice in the entire text. The first time is at the beginning of the essay when Freud sets up his discussion by referring to the drastic influx in cases of traumatic neurosis due to "der schreckliche, eben jetzt abgelaufene Krieg" (197). The second time Freud uses the word "Krieg" is during his discussion of the fort-da game. The war is mentioned entirely incidentally as the faraway place of absent fathers: "Man hatte [dem Kind] damals erzählt, der abwesende Vater befinde sich im Krieg, und es vermisste den Vater gar nicht, sondern gab die deutlichsten Anzeichen von sich, dass es im Alleinbesitz der Mutter nicht gestört werden wolle" (201-202). Both the father and the war are associated with 'fort' rather than 'da' and are positioned at the periphery of the child's world. Similarly, the war is not really 'da' in Freud's essay but lurks in its textual shadows.

Not only is the war aligned here with absence, but Freud also suggests that the child actually wishes to keep the war and his father at bay so that he may have sole possession of his mother. The fort-da game is used to exemplify the return of the repressed in the form of a repetition compulsion and the elements being repressed here are unmistakably the father and the war. However, the game also indicates the centrality of identification and, more generally, the relationship between self and other in the experience of trauma (which I already elaborated upon in the last section of this chapter). According to Freud's interpretation, the

child's game is a reenactment of the mother's coming and going. Since the child has no control over the traumatic departure of his mother, he invents this game of throwing away his toys in order to gain control and mastery of the situation. Thus at the heart of this game lies the child's attachment to his mother (and father). Derrida's essay "To Speculate – On Freud" acknowledges the centrality of relationships in Freud's model and highlights both the relationship of Freud to his grandson and his daughter as well as the relationship of the child to his mother and father. Interestingly, Freud himself never explicitly reveals the fact that the child mentioned is his grandson, nor does he mention the death of his daughter, Sophie, except in a short and matter-of-fact footnote: "Als das Kind fünfdreiviertel Jahre alt war, starb die Mutter" (202). It is quite astounding that, in an essay on the so-called death drive, death itself is footnoted and repressed.<sup>29</sup>

According to Derrida, Freud instead adopts an objective tone of voice with which to narrate the story in order to identify himself as scientific observer of the 'experiment.' Derrida's essay is an insightful reading of Freud's text *as text* and thus brings much of the essay's latent content to the forefront. He views Freud as a dramatist who busily sets the stage for the story in which he must also play a part: "I see him rushing and worried, like a dramatist or director who has a part in the play. Staging it, *he hurries*: to have everything controlled, everything in order, before going off to change for his part" (238). According to Derrida, the "peremptory authoritarianism, unexplained decisions, interrupted speeches, unanswered questions" of Freud's text indicate a kind of hurried attempt at narrating and, in this way, controlling the recounted events. Thus, through a close textual analysis, Derrida locates an anxious need for *control* at the heart of Freud's writing and it is precisely this notion that I would like to elaborate upon. For it is clear that Freud could not control the events as they unfolded in actuality: he could not control his grandson's "disturbing habit" as

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<sup>29</sup> In Derrida's eloquent words: "This is Sophie. The daughter of Freud and mother of Ernst whose death soon will toll in the text. Very softly, in a strange note added afterward" (236).

he calls it nor could he explain why the child did not simply pull the toy behind him like a train.<sup>30</sup> But above all else he could not control the death of his daughter Sophie. It is noteworthy – in light of the subject matter – that death is not only absent, footnoted, and repressed in Freud’s text but that his language betrays a need to hurry and regain control. The language in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* thus reveals an attempt to gain mastery over the past: I have also already mentioned that the genre of theory is engaged in precisely the same work. Thus, the language and, indeed, the very genre of the essay is acting out the phenomenon which it is purporting to explain. The need to gain retroactive control over the past – which is revealed in the dreams of trauma patients and in the games of children – is also reflected in the medium itself.

Control is sometimes gained through distancing oneself and it is therefore particularly significant that an explanation of the relationship between the writer and the characters is blatantly left out: just as the child pushes away his toys (and with them his father and the war), so too does Freud seem to distance himself from his grandchild and his recently deceased daughter.

The father is absent. He is far away. That is, since one must always specify, one of the two fathers: the father of a little boy who is so serious that his play consists not in playing with his toys but in distancing them, playing only at their distantiation. (Derrida 241)

The character of the ‘father’ is far away; yet it must be pointed out that Freud, as father of Sophie, is also curiously absent in the narrative. Perhaps this reflects a feeling of guilt on the part of the author for having been too absent (*fort*) as a father or perhaps it is Freud’s way of dealing with the death of his daughter by distancing himself emotionally. In any case, it is not only the child who ‘plays at distantiation’ here, but Freud as well. This act of pushing things (such as undesirable memories) away takes place on a larger scale in the repression of the

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<sup>30</sup> “Das Kind hatte eine Holzspule, die mit einem Bindfaden umwickelt war. Es fiel ihm nie ein, sie zum Beispiel am Boden hinter sich herzuziehen, also Wagen mit ihr zu spielen, sondern es warf die am Faden gehaltene Spule mit großem Geschick über den Rand seines verhängten Bettchens, so dass sie darin verschwand...” (200).

horrors of the First World War. However, these repressed memories resurface, in Freudian fashion, in the form of a repetition compulsion. The war thus reveals itself in the militaristic language of the essay which echoes the many war reports that filled the newspapers in the years preceding the publication of *Jenseits*.

Although the word “Krieg” very rarely makes an appearance, the entire essay is impregnated with war terminology and metaphors, most notably in Freud’s militaristic visualization of the functioning of the human organism. In his explanation of the development of the stimulus shield, Freud begins by viewing the organism in its most basic state as an organism suspended in the midst of an energy-filled external world:

Dieses Stückchen lebender Substanz schwebt inmitten einer mit den stärksten Energien geladenen Außenwelt und würde von den Reizwirkungen derselben erschlagen werden, wenn es nicht mit einem Reizschutz versehen wäre. (212)

This image of a fragile human organism surrounded and assaulted by ‘powerful energies’ is clearly echoed in the quote by Walter Benjamin cited at the beginning of this chapter.

According to Benjamin, the breakable human body exists not only in an external world of powerful energies but, more particularly “in einem Kraftfeld zerstörender Ströme und Explosionen” (439). Benjamin thus more forcibly evokes the subject matter which also serves as a significant subtext throughout Freud’s theoretical speculations: the battlefield. Freud explains the existence of a protective stimulus shield whereas Benjamin alludes to the technological ‘shields’ of modern warfare: yet, ultimately, both Benjamin’s technological and Freud’s corporeal shield are futile in protecting the fragile organism from the shocks and horrors of the First World War.

The subtext of war comes into sharper focus when Freud elaborates upon the consequences of a breach in the stimulus shield. Trauma, he explains, causes a drastic disruption in the functioning of the organism: “Ein Vorkommnis wie das äußere Trauma wird gewiß eine großartige Störung im Energiebetrieb des Organismus hervorrufen und alle

Abwehrmittel in Bewegung setzen” (214). All defensive mechanisms must be put into motion in order to defend the organism against the invasion of external stimuli – in much the same way that a defensive strategy must be implemented during a surprise military attack. The vocabulary Freud uses in describing the psychological development of trauma is undeniably influenced by the language of warfare. He continues:

Von allen Seiten her wird die Besetzungsenergie aufgeboden, um in der Umgebung der Einbruchsstelle entsprechend hohe Energiebesetzungen zu schaffen. Es wird eine große ‘Gegenbesetzung’ hergestellt, zu deren Gunsten alle anderen psychischen Systeme verarmen, so dass eine ausgedehnte Lähmung oder Herabsetzung der sonstigen psychischen Leistung erfolgt. (215)

The boundary breach is treated as a surprise military attack that has resulted in a penetration of the front lines. The organism is now in a state of emergency and acts swiftly and effectively in order to respond to the attack: cathectic energy is mobilized from every side and other psychic systems are temporarily weakened in order to deal with the infringement. (It should be noted that Freud’s use of the word “Gegenbesetzung” evokes a sense of military urgency which the English translation “anti-cathexis” fails to convey.<sup>31</sup>)

A glance at official military reports, which were published in German newspapers throughout the war, reveals a similarly urgent and pointed vocabulary. For example, on July 18, 1918, the *Freiburger Tagblatt* reported:

Zwischen Aisne und Marne ist die Schlacht von neuem *entbrannt*. Der Franzose hat dort seine lang erwartete *Gegenoffensive* begonnen. Durch *Verwendung stärkster Geschwader und Panzerkraftwagen* gelang es ihm zunächst, *überraschend an einzelnen Stellen* in unsere vordersten Infanterie- und Artillerielinien *einzubrechen und unsere Linien zurückzudrücken*.<sup>32</sup> (my italics)

Of course, Freud talks of a *Gegenbesetzung* rather than a *Gegenoffensive*, but an occupation is also the result of an offensive military strategy. Military troops are often described as a

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<sup>31</sup> Peter Gay has also criticized this poor translation and its inability to properly convey the meaning of *Besetzung* – “a word from common German speech rich in suggestive meanings, among them ‘occupation’ (by troops) and ‘charge’ (of electricity)” (465).

<sup>32</sup> *Freiburger Tagblatt*, Nr. 198, 18. Juli 1918. Quoted in “Offizielle Berichterstattung von der Front II (1918).” [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=805](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=805)

single mass in their movements and actions, and a comparison with Freud's model of a single organism is thus not entirely unwarranted. A military enemy attempts to break the lines – that is, to pierce the outer layer of the mass – just as an external stimuli breaks through Freud's protective shield. In this particular example, the enemy has made use of the strongest armored forces as well as the element of surprise in order to break through the defensive lines. It has forced itself through the lines between Aisne and Marne just as foreign elements push themselves through the stimulus shield during a breach of the ego. And, indeed, it is likewise only a surprise attack (a lack of preparation denoted in fright rather than anxiety) of the strongest external stimuli which is able to breach the stimulus shield in Freud's model.

The language of Freud's theory thus betrays its own trauma through a repetition compulsion. By appropriating the language of war, the essay acts out a repetition of the past which it simultaneously tries to repress. In a similar manner (but on a thematic level), Freud's earlier libidinal theories repeatedly resurface throughout the text, eventually subsuming the newly formed concept of the death drive. Robert Jay Lifton has described this act as Freud putting his own protective shield in place in order to ward off “the potentially transforming influence of death on theory” (quoted in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 129). As my analysis has shown, however, death nevertheless pierces Freud's protective shield and has a profound impact on his theory. In fact, it seems that the trauma of the First World War has turned Freud's *theory* of trauma into a simultaneous *performance* of trauma and thus develops not only a new language but complicates the very genre of theory. *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* performs the very subject it purports to explain and thus constructs a dialectic between medium and content with the result that a highly intricate and complex model of trauma is produced.

Not willing to give up on his earlier theories of sexuality, Freud devotes the last part of his essay to reconciling his new theory of the death instinct with his previous theories of

the sexual instincts. He examines the relationship of the newly discovered death drive, or what he calls the ego instincts, and the sexual instincts, “die eigentlichen Lebenstrieb” (225). Ultimately, Freud understands man as a fundamentally divided being composed of two opposing forces: the ego instincts which “exercise pressure towards death” and the sexual instincts which work towards a “prolongation of life.” This has clear parallels with his notion of the Doppelgänger which is also a construct of oppositions with its original representation of ‘immortal soul’ and its subsequent signification as ‘harbinger of death.’ At the core of an organism, Freud claims, is a “Zauderrythmus,” which simultaneously pushes it backward and forward:

Die eine Triebgruppe stürmt nach vorwärts, um das Endziel des Lebens möglichst bald zu erreichen, die andere schnell an einer gewissen Stelle dieses Weges zurück, um ihn von einem bestimmten Punkt an nochmals zu machen und so die Dauer des Weges zu verlängern. (*Jenseits* 206)

This vacillating rhythm, which storms forwards and backwards (another example of Freud’s language being inflected with war imagery), leaves the organism continuously suspended between life and death. It constitutes an internal conflict and, here, Freud’s model of trauma serves as a metaphor for the condition in which all modern subjects find themselves. During the Weimar years, trauma and shock are often viewed as pervasive conditions of modern, industrialized society, and Freud’s theories are no exception. Man is portrayed by Freud as a fundamentally divided being plagued by external assaults and internal strife; identity is radically destabilized via the broken boundary between self and other.

In its back and forth movement, Freud’s fort-da game exemplifies a kind of vacillating rhythm that is paradigmatic of trauma. This is the same rhythm which, I would argue, is replicated in the entire essay: in Freud’s attempt to move ‘beyond’ the pleasure principle while simultaneously and repeatedly affirming its supremacy; in his alternating stance between philosophical speculation and scientific observation; in the “Zauderrythmus” which, Freud claims in the last part of his essay, reveals itself in every organism as a result of

the backward and forward movement caused by opposing instincts; and in the oscillation between what Ruth Leys calls the mimetic and antimimetic tendencies of trauma (which I will outline in the following section).

### **Contemporary Trauma Studies and the Implications of my Project**

In concluding this chapter, I would like to draw a brief sketch of current debates in trauma studies in order to identify my own contribution within the field. Contemporary trauma theory has tended to center on the topic of narration and representation of trauma. Cathy Caruth, one of the central figures in cultural trauma theory as it has developed since the early 1990s, argues that trauma is to be understood first and foremost as a crisis of representation. Trauma, she maintains, can be most generally described as “the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” (91). Because the shocking event cannot be immediately grasped, it can only be known in its belated form of repetitive seeing. Thus, a trauma narrative does not “simply represent the violence of a collision but also conveys the impact of its very incomprehensibility” (6), and a history of trauma is a “history that can only be grasped in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence” (18). For Caruth, these facts define trauma as a crisis of knowledge, history, and representation; in other words, the traumatic experience can never be immediately known and therefore cannot be represented. Yet, there is a simultaneous need for trauma to be narrated despite its impossibility and, ultimately, she argues that the language of trauma may constitute a “new mode of reading and of listening” (9).

In contrast to my own project, Caruth limits her investigations to literary and psychoanalytic texts. She examines the intersections of literature and psychoanalysis because both grapple with the tasks of narrating and witnessing, and both are interested “in the

complex relation between knowing and not knowing” (3) which forms the very crux of trauma. Thus she insightfully explores tropes and figures of trauma in the psychoanalytic texts of Freud and Lacan, as well as in de Manian readings of Kant and Kleist. Interestingly, she does carry out an analysis of the 1959 French film, *Hiroshima mon amour*, but does not remove her literary lens in the process: her analysis focuses solely on the film’s narrative and thematic content, for the most part eschewing the fact that this is an entirely different medium and thus limiting the complexities of its possible interpretations. In fact, Caruth never raises the question of medial representation in her work, performing instead a very literal reading of texts. As such, her analysis reveals several fascinating and recurring themes in the literature of trauma – those of falling, awakening, and burning, among others – but is not able to consider the impact of different media on our understanding of trauma.

Caruth’s trauma theory has been heavily critiqued by Ruth Leys in *Trauma: A Genealogy* for what she sees as a possible conflation of victim and perpetrator, as well as its unavoidable entrapment in the dueling paradigms of mimetic and antimimetic trauma. As already mentioned in the previous section, Leys locates two conflicting modes of thought in Freud’s writing on trauma – a deeply rooted contradiction that he (along with all other theorists of trauma) is unable to successfully resolve. On the one hand, Freud understands trauma in terms of mimetic identification. This is exemplified by the model of hypnosis in which the hypnotized subject repeats without knowing and thus comes into being as a mere “echo or duplicate of the other” (Borch-Jakobsen quoted in Leys 39). On the other hand, however, Freud proposes the model of the so-called talking cure in which the subject is able to distance himself from the trauma and bring it to consciousness via narration. Whereas the former model views trauma as an internal and unconscious identification, the latter refers to trauma as an external event experienced by an already constituted subject. According to Leys,

Freud's turn away from the mimetic paradigm of hypnotic suggestibility towards an antimimetic diegesis of trauma (the talking cure) is marked by ambivalence and doubt:

This is especially evident in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety*, the last of his metapsychological essays, where [...] even as the traumatic neuroses of war were systematically linked to the economics of unbinding and the death drive, they were simultaneously construed in terms of the theory of childhood psychosexual desire and the mechanism of repression from which they had been ostensibly released. (25)

Freud is unable to resolve these conflicting modes of thought, according to Leys, precisely because they are structural of trauma.

Leys furthermore argues that the oscillation between mimetic and antimimetic paradigms of trauma, which is indicative of Freud's work, continues to shape conceptualizations of trauma throughout the century. She claims that "the concept of trauma has been structured historically in such a way as simultaneously to invite resolution along the lines of antimimetic repudiation of the mimetic dimension and to resist it" (40). In support of this claim, Leys examines trauma texts from the earliest to the most recent years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: from psychologist Morton Prince's early study of multiple personality, and the works of Freud's contemporaries Pierre Janet, Abram Kardiner and Sandor Ferenczi, to the recent works of neurobiologist Bessel van der Kolk and literary critic Cathy Caruth. Ultimately, Leys concludes that "current debates over trauma are fated to end in an impasse" (305) and that trauma theory "will continue to be subject to the alternations and contradictions inherent in the mimetic-antimimetic structure" (307). While Leys' genealogy of trauma is extensive in scope and insightful in its unearthing of structural tendencies within theorizations of trauma, it does limit itself to explicit studies of trauma and to a single medium. My own project investigates trauma theory as it emerges within a specific historical moment but is simultaneously broader in scope for its exploration of trauma within several different media.

Indeed, my project confirms that the antimimetic approach was present in the 1920s: all examined works attempt to represent trauma in some way or other and in this sense they align themselves with the ‘antimimetic diegesis of trauma’ in which the traumatic experience can both be observed and represented. In fact, this view informs important interpretations of Weimar cinema, such as Anton Kaes’ reading of *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* as one long talking cure on the part of the protagonist. However, the most fascinating implications of my project arises from the mimetic discourses of trauma which I have outlined in detail in my close reading of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* and which, I would argue, hold a foundational place in the construction of the modern subject through Weimar visual media. By reading Freud’s trauma theory as a traumatized response, I reveal the way in which a *performance* of trauma in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* contributes greatly to the complexity of the essay and the sense of trauma conveyed. The hesitations, repetitions, and absences of *Jenseits* are as much a part of Freud’s trauma theory as the carefully formulated hypotheses, claims, and speculations. In a footnote, Caruth herself has suggested that “the impact of trauma... is transmitted in psychoanalytic theory not only because traumatic experience has there been explained or fully understood but also because *the encounter with trauma has transformed and estranged the very language of psychoanalytic writing*” (116n, my italics). She continues: “The language of trauma does not simply originate in a theoretical knowledge that stands outside of trauma but may emerge equally from within its very experience.” (116n) Indeed, I would argue that Freud’s essay is most powerful for its emergence *within* trauma rather than for (its attempt at) the objective description of an external trauma. His theory arises out of its own trauma and this is, perhaps, the only possible way of theorizing such an ambiguous concept.

Robert Jay Lifton has observed that “the impact of the traumas of World War I on Freud and his movement has hardly been recorded” (quoted in *Trauma: Explorations in*

*Memory* 129). To be sure, Freud's *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* and its re-evaluation of trauma is a product of the First World War and I hope that my chapter has illustrated this in various ways. The death instinct, perhaps the most obvious example, is by no means the only sign of the profound impact of war on psychoanalysis and trauma theory in particular. The very language of Freud's essay bears witness and performs trauma to the extent that his theory struggles against, and ultimately resists, its own textual boundaries.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

Crucial to all of Freud's oeuvre, literary critic Harold Bloom has observed, are what he calls "frontier concepts"—that is, concepts which involve "demands made across the frontier between inwardness and outwardness" (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 114). This aptly describes the concept of trauma itself and points to the difficulties inherent in its theorization: as a frontier concept, trauma not only straddles the boundary between inwardness and outwardness but also throws this very boundary into question. Originally formulated to indicate a physical wound, the concept of trauma was the subject of intense 19<sup>th</sup> century debates that culminated in the problem of war neurosis during the First World War. These debates centered on the somatic versus psychogenic origins of trauma and thus ultimately attempted to make sense of the relationship between the body and psyche. Throughout this chapter, I have revealed the ways in which trauma is deeply linked with the destruction of a real or imagined boundary between the internal and external world. In particular, my analysis of Freud's post-WWI theory uncovered several significant themes centering on this explosion of boundaries, all of which are repeatedly taken up in the photographic, theatrical, and filmic works discussed in the following chapters. First, the theme of an *Ichkonflikt*, or a split ego, which is also linked to the idea of the *Doppelgänger*. Second, the visualization of trauma as a breach (i.e. a wound) in the protective shield. And third, the binary terms binding and unbinding which form an incorporative model of trauma

related to that of identification. Ultimately, I have suggested that we understand the traumatic experience as encompassing a kind of re-birth of the subject in which the formerly stable boundary between self and other has been thrown into question. As such, two paradigms of the traumatized subject become central: the incorporated other and the projected self. The paradigm of incorporated other plays an important part of Freud's visualization of trauma as a "Durchbruch des Reizschutzes," as I've illustrated in this chapter, and will reappear in Ernst Friedrich's photographs of soldiers with prosthetic limbs as well as in Bertolt Brecht's theatrical depiction of a soldier returning home with alligator skin. The paradigm of projected self emerges out of Freud's conviction that the splitting of a soldier's ego results in the appearance of a Doppelgänger and, perhaps unsurprisingly, is taken up again and again in the projected images of Weimar cinema's depiction of vampires, somnambulists, and golems.

## Chapter 2: Prosthetic Extensions: Photography, Trauma and the Boundary between Man and Machine in Ernst Friedrich's *Krieg dem Kriege!*

### Introduction: Trauma and Photography

“Eine große aber ziemlich angemessene Analogie dieses supponierten Verhältnisses der bewußten Tätigkeit zur unbewußten bietet das Gebiet der gewöhnlichen Photographie. Das erste Stadium der Photographie ist das Negativ; jedes photographische Bild muss den ‘Negativprozeß’ durchmachen, und einige dieser Negative, die in der Prüfung gut bestanden haben, werden zu dem ‘Positivprozeß’ zugelassen, der mit dem Bilde endigt.”  
– Freud, “Einige Bemerkungen über den Begriff des Unbewußten in der Psychoanalyse” (1912)

In his introduction to the 1930 anthology *Das Antlitz des Weltkrieges: Fronterlebnisse deutscher Soldaten*, Ernst Jünger reflects on the role of photographs in documenting the history of the First World War:

Neben den Mündungen der Gewehre und Geschosse waren Tag für Tag die optischen Linsen auf das Kampfgebiet gerichtet; sie bewahrten als die Instrumente eines technischen Bewusstseins das Bild dieser verwüsteten Landschaften auf, von denen die Welt des Friedens bereits seit langem wieder Besitz ergriffen hat. Es ist auf diese Weise ein Schatz von Bildern entstanden, der sich auf mannigfaltige Weise zusammensetzen lässt, und der nicht nur die Erinnerung des Kämpfers sondern auch der Vorstellungskraft dessen, der an dieser Welt nicht teilhaben konnte, eine wertvolle Hilfe erteilen wird. (“Krieg und Lichtbild” 9-10)

The countless numbers of photographs taken at the front, Jünger claims, capture and convey the experience of war to both soldiers and the general public. Yet he simultaneously declares that these photographs can be ‘endlessly recombined,’ thus suggesting that the meanings of these images are neither static nor immutable. Indeed, just as the ravaged landscapes of war are gradually repossessed by the world of peacetime, photographs can be perpetually reappropriated and given new meaning in different contexts. They can serve as an ‘aid to the imagination’ but must therefore also submit to the whims of imagination, and to the manifold

interpretations and reconstructions of the past. In short, and even while purporting to present his readers with a factual history of the First World War, Jünger acknowledges the difficulty and complexity of reading photographs as historical documents.

Jünger's quote also alludes to several other themes of this chapter including the popularization of photography and the 'visual turn' in the 1920s as well as the effects of emergent technologies on historical perception. While histories of photography generally begin in 1839 with Louis Daguerre's invention of the daguerreotype, it is in the earliest decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that photography was popularized to such an extent that it became a crucial part of the cultural imagination. George Eastman's newly developed "Kodak" camera went on the market in 1888 with the promise that now everyone could become a photographer<sup>33</sup> and, indeed, the First World War was the first European war in which amateur photography played a significant role in the contemporary perception and historical record of the events of the war.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the influx of illustrated newspapers and the incorporation of photographs into the rapidly growing business of advertising resulted in a dramatic proliferation of images in the 1920s, which in turn influenced the heated debates surrounding shell shock and trauma during the same time period. In some sense, then, both photography and the modern conceptualization of trauma reached a crucial juncture at precisely the same point in history. And, indeed, one cannot be properly understood without its complement: photography has often been theorized by Benjamin and others as an essentially traumatic medium, whereas trauma is conceptualized most powerfully by way of photographic metaphors – in terms of belated development, concealed images, repetitive reproductions, and so on.

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<sup>33</sup> The Kodak camera, which was the first to use film instead of the previously used bulky photographic plates, was advertised with the catchy slogan: "You press the button. We do the rest."

<sup>34</sup> The Crimean War was the first to be photographed by an officially appointed war photographer (Roger Fenton). For more on the history of war photography, see *The Camera at War: A History of War Photography from 1849 to the Present*. For an examination of amateur photography during the First World War, see "So wird bei uns der Krieg geführt": *Amateurfotografie im ersten Weltkrieg*.

Due to the widespread damage of mechanized warfare, the rise in visual culture also coincided with a rise in visibly injured veterans and prosthetics. Thousands of veterans were supplied with prosthetic limbs with the intention that they would successfully re-enter the workforce and contribute to the productive output of an increasingly industrialized society. Or, as one critic has put it, “a new type of being obediently marched from the western front to the production front – *Ecce Homo prostheticus*” (Fineman 88). This ‘new being’ embodied the increasingly unstable boundary between man and machine, the contours of which the First World War had slowly begun to erode. Now, this “organic-technological hybrid” (Biro 1), was not only visible in the streets of Weimar Germany, but was also featured in the rapidly disseminating visual culture of illustrated magazines, photographs, and artworks. The historical coincidence of photography and prosthetics thus results in a unique case of self-reflexive representations of trauma: the prosthetic devices of war veterans are represented by the prosthetic device of the camera. More generally speaking, the trauma of war is viewed through the trauma of photography.

In the following chapter I examine this relationship between trauma and photography, and explore not only the ways in which photographs of the First World War represent trauma thematically but also the manner in which the medium of photography itself structures and produces a medium-specific discourse of trauma. The core of my analysis will center on Ernst Friedrich’s 1924 photographic essay, *Krieg dem Kriege!*, which comprises photographs from a variety of sources including private albums, medical journals, and newspapers (although the sources are largely unspecified). I argue that the interaction among images as well as the dialectic between the book’s content and the medium of photography itself produces a highly complex discourse of trauma. Thus, in contrast to other studies examining Friedrich’s work, my project avoids the reductive conclusion of a totalizing narrative of pacifism. It is my contention that the techniques of collage, repetition, and fragmentation all

contribute to the complexities and tensions of *Krieg dem Kriege!*. Furthermore, by recognizing the multi-layered meanings of photographs, my analysis engages an archaeological reading of individual photographs while simultaneously reflecting on the medium of photography itself. Ultimately, I conclude that the traumatic content of Friedrich's book is replicated by the medium: not only do the mutilated faces of war veterans tear down the borders between internal and external – between the body and the world – but photography itself also explodes these very same boundaries. Trauma is thus located in the images of wounded bodies as well as in the wound that photography inflicts on aesthetic representation with its new claim to having direct contact with reality.

### **Visuality and Contemporary Trauma Studies**

Trauma has long been conceptualized in visual terms and, yet, it is only recently that theorists have really begun to examine the intersections between trauma and visuality. Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg's anthology titled *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity* (1997) addresses precisely this absence within the field of trauma studies and makes use of the methodological tools of an art historical approach in order to reveal "trauma's elusiveness as a visible subject" (x). Each of the essays in the volume investigates "the simultaneous presence and absence of trauma as a structuring subject of representation" (x). In contrast, Allan Meek's very recent book titled *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, Images* (2010) takes a more political approach and argues that the majority of recent trauma studies have failed to examine the large role of visual media in shaping our understanding of history and memory: "In contrast to these theorists [he] argue[s] that a collective identification with trauma is a feature of a society in which visual media define much of our relation to the past" (8). In another anthology, *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture* (2007), Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas address the relation between trauma and visuality

by focusing specifically on the agency of images and the ability of visual images to serve as witnesses to a traumatic past. However, none of these books explores the relationship between trauma and photography on a theoretical level in which the medium of photography itself is recognized as producing trauma by exploding the boundaries between representation and reality. My examination of early war photographs as critical engagements with the thematic and structural implications of trauma therefore contributes a new perspective to these debates.

Film critic Lutz Koepnick has also reflected on the topic of trauma and visuality in a recent article titled “Photographs and Memories.” Here, Koepnick discusses the theoretical differences between digital and analog photography, and suggests that contemporary, digital photographs may be better able to represent a traumatic past than older, analog photographs. He argues that while emulsion-based photography was understood in modernist thinking as a “prosthetic viewing device,” i.e. as an artificial eye (or hand) that serves as an extension and improvement of the human body, digital photography has increasingly taught us to reconceptualize photography as independent from an embodied observer, turning photography into a purely technological process. Thus he claims:

Instead of administering painful shocks to the flow of time, computer-aided images invite the producer to infinite processes of modification... and instead of dispensing mnemonic shudders, digital images enable the viewer to reframe the past from various angles and thereby move beyond the tombs of photographic memory. (100)

In other words, by transforming the relationship between a photograph and temporality, digital images might be able to depict a traumatic past without confining it to a fixed and comprehensible narrative. According to Koepnick, whereas analog photography may not be capable of working through trauma (due to its inherent ‘mark of trauma’ and indebtedness to ‘the scopic regime of central perspective’) digital photography can imbue an image with ‘a sense of transitoriness and indeterminacy’ that allows trauma to be appropriately represented from multiple perspectives and thus worked through.

However, I wish to suggest that aesthetic techniques developed in the 1920s (in addition to the particular aesthetics of the medium of photography itself) contributed precisely to such a pluralization of perspectives and introduced new possibilities for representing trauma. In particular, aesthetic techniques of fragmentation, repetition, appropriation, juxtaposition, and collage contributed to, rather than impeded, a complex understanding of temporality and indeterminacy in photography. The current chapter will explore these complexities in the work of Ernst Friedrich's *Krieg dem Kriege!* by analyzing both the interplay among images as well as the tensions between word and image in this early example of a photographic essay. My approach intentionally stresses the intertextuality of photographs by conducting close readings of individual photographs against the backdrop of larger cultural and historical discourses. According to art critic Victor Burgin:

The 'photographic text', like any other, is the site of a complex 'intertextuality', an overlapping series of previous texts 'taken for granted' at a particular cultural and historical conjuncture. These prior texts, those presupposed by the photograph, are autonomous; they serve a role in the actual text but do not appear in it, they are latent to the manifest text and may only be read across it 'symptomatically'... (131)

By teasing out the "prior" and "latent" texts of each individual photograph, I wish to explore not only the layered meanings of single photographs but also the structural complexities of the medium of photography itself. Thus, my analysis of Ernst Friedrich's *Krieg dem Kriege!* serves as a springboard from which I explore and reflect upon the intersecting discourses of trauma and photography as they developed in the aftermath of the First World War. I will begin with a brief introduction to the history of war photography and a review of the new mode of reading precipitated by the so-called visual turn in Weimar Germany before embarking on a detailed investigation of Ernst Friedrich's photographic essay and its engagement with discourses of trauma in the aftermath of the First World War.

## World War I in the History of War Photography

Although the first European war to be photographed was the Crimean War (1853 – 1856), the First World War holds a particularly significant place in the history of war photography due to its participation in a radical shift of aesthetic representation in photography. Early war photography was generally limited to depictions of sweeping landscapes and static portraits of individual soldiers or officers. In the Crimean War, Roger Fenton was given the job of official photographer on the British side and came back with photographs of extensive landscapes and battle scenes. These images were in many ways similar to the sketches and paintings that had traditionally been used – and continued to be used, for example, by the *London Illustrated* which incorporated Constantin Guys' sketches into their updates on the war – in order to communicate war scenes to the greater public. In his article “Emptying the Gaze: Framing Violence through the Viewfinder,” cultural historian Bernd Hüppauf argues that early war photographs romanticized the battlefield:

Pictorial conventions of representing a battlefield were so strong that, in contradistinction to the ‘graphic’ verbal representations of the horror of the battlefield and extremely poor conditions at this distant front, photography created picturesque, rather than brutal or repulsive, images. (20)

Because these war photographs were generally taken from a great distance, they tended to produce a rather innocuous and even picturesque image of war.<sup>35</sup> Instead of penetrating reality, then, these photographs created an anaesthetic aesthetics which might be compared with that of 19<sup>th</sup> century landscape paintings. In fact, since the photographer was not able to rearrange elements of the image according to his imagination, these photographic representations might have been even less exciting than their painted counterparts: in other words, “to a public used to the conventional fantasies of romantic battle painters, these

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<sup>35</sup> In his book, *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War*, Ulrich Keller has even suggested that these picturesque images were due to an intentionally aestheticized nature of the war itself: “There is a good deal of evidence,” he argues, “that the military events were methodically organized and conducted *as* spectacles to be seen from privileged viewpoints and calling for quasi-artistic connoisseurship of the various sights” (4).

photographs seemed dull” (Newhall 83-84).



Figure 1. View from Guard's Hill. (Roger Fenton, 1855)

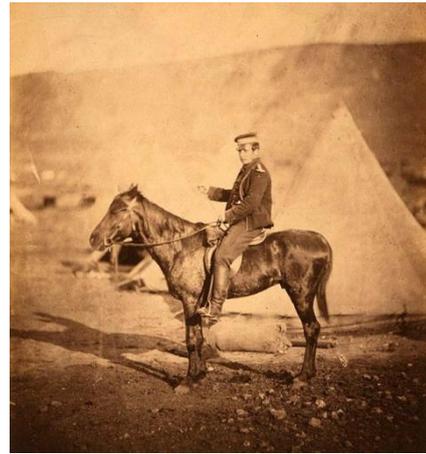


Figure 2. Major Henry Morris. (Roger Fenton, 1855)

The reason for this anaesthetic aesthetics in early war photography has as much to do with cultural expectations as with technological limitations. The bulky camera equipment that photographers were forced to carry around with them, in addition to the long exposure times of early cameras, largely hindered any attempts at spontaneous representations of war.<sup>36</sup> During the First World War, however, many of these technological restrictions were lifted thanks to the invention of celluloid film and the inexpensive “box cameras” from Kodak:

Der Rollfilm und die Kleinbildkamera lösten seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg zunehmend die umständliche und kostenaufwändige Plattentechnologie ab. Ein neuer ‘fotografischer Blick’ auf die Welt wurde Bestandteil der Alltagskultur. Unterhalb des professionellen Bildjournalismus entwickelte sich eine demokratische Kultur der visuellen Kommunikation der Betroffenen. Soldaten machten sich ihr eigenes Bild der Realität, entwickelten ihre Aufnahmen auf Fotopapier im Postkartenformat und sandten diese mit Kommentaren Versen an Angehörige und Freunde... (Paul 17-18).

This democratization of photography resulting from the technological developments by Kodak naturally led to a broader spectrum of war photographs as well as an increase in the

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<sup>36</sup> The photographic equipment used by Roger Fenton during the Crimean War required an entire wagon for transportation. The same goes for the American Civil War: photographers, including Mathew Brady, Alexander Gardner, and Timothy O’Sullivan, all carried their extensive equipment and darkrooms by wagon. However, these Civil War photographs were significantly more shocking in content – perhaps due to the fact that they had not been hired as ‘official photographers’ and thus felt no obligation to depict the war in a positive light (as was the case with Roger Fenton). Yet, cultural expectations and the aesthetics of photography were also beginning to change during this time. See Bernd Hüppauf for more on the emergence of photographic representations of industrialized warfare beginning with the Civil War but culminating in World War I.

circulation and exchange of photographs. Many soldiers sent home postcards of their own photographs while others assembled private photo albums so that an alternative source of visual information exists in addition to the countless images in illustrated newspapers and journals of the time.

According to Christine Brocks' extensive study of WWI postcards, 28.7 billion postal items were sent in between the home and war front during the years 1914 to 1918; out of these, approximately one fourth were picture postcards (29). These postcards included not only postcards created by professional photographers (often staged in a studio far from the battlefield) but also the photographs taken by amateur photographers at the front. The subjects of these photographic postcards vary from group portraits of soldiers in the trenches to the *Liebespostkarten* of a soldier embracing his lover underneath a caption such as "Kriegers Abschied" or "In Treue fest" (76-77). In her analysis of more than 5,000 postcards, Brock finds that the actual violence of industrialized warfare is largely avoided or mitigated in these images. This general disavowal of violence, however, likely reflects the particular nature of the genre of picture postcards more so than it does the medium of photography. In fact, in her conclusion, Brock asserts that after 1918 a fundamental change occurred in the photography of the First World War: "Durch Auswahl, Zusammenstellung und Kommentierung erhielten die im Krieg aufgenommenen Fotos eine neue ästhetische Qualität" (251). In other words, this 'new aesthetic quality' emerges in conjunction with the pioneering approaches to the layout and organization of photographs in illustrated magazines, Dadaist photomontages, and new genres such as the photo essay.

While many of these picture postcards were created by amateur photographers, the vast majority were produced as part of the German *Kriegspropaganda*. The German government appointed 19 official photographers to document the war and, although most of these photographers are unknown today, quite a few of their photographs have survived

thanks to their extensive publications in newspapers, journals, and books. Many of these official photographs were autochromes and, because they were the only pictures taken in color during the war, were considered at the time to be the “Wirklichkeitsbilder,” or real images, of the First World War. However, all of these color photographs were taken by photographers whose job it was to mitigate the portrayal of the brutality of trench warfare and who were specifically forbidden to depict the gruesome deaths or injuries of German soldiers. New censorship laws played a significant role in the publication of photographic images during the war and in early Weimar Germany.<sup>37</sup> (And, indeed, by restricting the release of shocking or traumatic war photographs, these laws indirectly acknowledged the traumatic force of the medium of photography.)

In contrast, private photograph albums could not be censored and recent studies of WWI photography have thus paid special attention to private albums and photograph collections in order to examine the war from an “uncensored” perspective. According to historian Petra Bopp, these private chronicles and photograph albums greatly contributed to the collective memory of the First World War:

Zu den wenigen professionellen offiziell eingesetzten Fotografen kam die Heerschar der Amateurfotografen und Knipser, die mit ihren millionenfachen Aufnahmen bis heute das Bild vom Ersten Weltkrieg definieren. Schon während des Krieges, aber vor allem in den 1920er Jahren, erschienen zahlreiche Chroniken und Bildbände, die mit Fotografien der Soldaten die visuellen Erinnerungsmuster prägten. (165)

In fact, these private photographs undoubtedly played a role in Ernst Friedrich’s collection of photographs, although his book unfortunately does not reveal any specific sources. He does, however, make an appeal to his readers to send in their own “Kriegsphotographien, Kriegsberichte, Befehle, Aussprüche, etc., damit das seit Jahren gesammelte Material recht vollständig wird und das von mir gegründete International Anti-Kriegsmuseum immermehr ergänzt wird” (245) and in this way reveals how many of the images in *Krieg dem Kriege!*

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<sup>37</sup> The Bild- und Filmamt was established in 1917 to regulate the publication of war photographs in Germany. See Gerhard Paul’s *Bilder des Krieges – Krieg der Bilder: Die Visualisierung des modernen Krieges* for more on censorship of photography during WWI.

had likely been collected.

### **New Modes of Reading in the Age of *Bildjournalismus*, Dadaism, and the Photo Essay**

Friedrich drew on a variety of sources for his photographs and his collection therefore includes not only private photographs but also many images from newspaper publications and even medical records. As my analysis will make clear, this is also reflected in the overall organization of the book, which owes much to the rapidly developing “Bildjournalismus” of the 1920s. *Krieg dem Kriege!* is not structured as a photograph album but, instead, resembles the printmaking of early illustrated newspapers such as the *Berliner Illustrirte*. It is largely due to the rapid technological developments of the camera in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as the proliferation of these illustrated newspapers that historian Anton Holzer has remarked that “der Erste Weltkrieg ist der erste Krieg, der vor allem in Bildern erinnert wird” (60). For, although these newspapers were still centered largely on text-based reports of the war, the visual image quickly permeated and forced itself into the center of these publications. Indeed, the influx of amateur photography during the First World War was “followed by the emergence and popular success of picture magazines [and this] was a success intertwined with the growth of motion pictures, radio, advertising, and national political propaganda” (Griffin 123-24). The development of this new visual culture and the rapid proliferation of images during these years has led to a general perception of the 1920s as “the beginning of the new age of visual communication” (Uecker 469). During this time, still and moving images gained a central place in the cultural imagination as well as in the collective memory of the recent war.

Still, the image of war passed on to subsequent generations is not a simple development. According to Holzer, the memory of war is formed by a complex and highly political process:

Die Erinnerung an den Krieg ist das Ergebnis komplexer politischer Prozesse, die die Erzählung filtern und verdichten, ergänzen, aber auch zensurieren. Das überlieferte Bild des Krieges ist ein Konstrukt, das mehr als andere Bilder der Vergangenheit geformt ist von den Interessen der jeweiligen Gegenwart. (58)

Examining contemporary newspapers thus provides an interesting and informative source for better understanding this process of forming a collective image of the past. However, I would suggest that the very structure and layout of these newspapers provides a similarly informative glance into the political and cultural process of remembering a war as does the content itself. My analysis of *Krieg dem Kriege!* therefore devotes considerable attention to comparing its overall aesthetics and layout with those of contemporary printmaking and the Dadaist artworks which so famously critiqued them.

One particularly interesting issue of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* published on December 2, 1924, contains a review of the last 10 years, focusing on the war and the technological developments that had penetrated the core of society since its start. Along with a collage of photographs is a short text by Kurt Pinthus. In it he describes the “barrage of monstrosities” of the past years which have shaken everyone’s nerves and radically transformed society in a mere decade: “Welch ein Trommelfeuer von bisher ungeahnten Ungeheurlichkeiten prasselt seit einem Jahrzehnt auf unsere Nerven nieder! Trotz sicherlich erhöhter Reizbarkeit sind durch diese täglichen Sensationen unsere Nerven trainiert und abgehärtet wie die Mukulatur eines Borers gegen die schärfsten Schläge” (*BIZ*, 28.3.25, Nr. 9). In many ways, this text mirrors the writings of both Freud and Benjamin: Freud in its visualization of the frequent attacks of stimuli that individuals must parry in modernity, and Benjamin in its observation that the modern city and technological media trains its citizens against these very attacks. These changes in society and, in particular, the constant assault on our nerves are attributed largely to the technologization of everyday life. Pinthus’ text continues:

Wer heute zwischen dreißig und vierzig Jahre alt ist, hat noch gesehen, wie die

ersten elektrischen Bahnen zu fahren begonnen, hat die ersten Autos erblickt, hat die jahrtausendlang für unmöglich gehaltene Eroberung der Luft in rascher Folge mitgemacht, hat die sich rapid übersteigernden Schnelligkeitsrekorde all dieser Entfernungsüberwinder, Eisenbahnen, Riesendampfer, Luftschiffe, Aeroplane miterlebt... Wie ungeheuer hat sich der Bewußtseinskreis jedes einzelnen erweitert durch die Erschließung der Erdoberfläche und die neuen Mitteilungsmöglichkeiten: Schnellpresse, Kino, Radio, Grammophon, Funktelegraphie. (*BIZ*, 28.3.25, Nr. 9)

Not only has technology permeated everyday life, Pinthus explains, but it has also changed the very perception and awareness of one's surroundings. The speed of everyday life has been radically increased while the world as a whole has been drastically diminished. While these descriptions of life are not necessarily a negative portrayal of modernity, the images surrounding these words are certainly rather dismal and foreboding, and do not prompt readers to respond positively to the question with which Pinthus ends his text: "Was haben wir noch zu erwarten, zu erleben? Vermögen wir uns noch zu wundern?"



Figure 3. Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung. 28.3.1925. Nr. 9.

Furthermore, this article displays an interesting dynamic between word and image, which is similarly employed in Ernst Friedrich's *Krieg dem Kriege!*: not only do the images interact with each other to form a particular and meaningful constellation, but the text simultaneously interacts with the images in order to further contribute to the intended message. As Christopher Magilow has noted in his recent work on Weimar photography, "the

presence of photographs in print media demanded that audiences learn to read the pages in front of them in new ways” (7). Indeed, the collage-like layout of these new media encouraged readers to jump from one image to another rather than forcing one particular chronological reading of the article. In this way, illustrated magazines and newspapers of the Weimar Republic produced an entirely new mode of reading, one which is mirrored by the new mode of perception brought on by the medium of photography itself (as theorized by Benjamin and others).

The new genre of the photo essay exemplifies this mode of reading. While photo essays are generally associated with the later years of the Weimar Republic, I see Friedrich’s *Krieg dem Kriege!* as an important forerunner. Matthias Uecker has asserted that “the serial ‘Nebeneinander’ of images which had initially been pioneered in the illustrated press was transformed into something new in the large-scale book publications of the late 1920s” (471). Yet his definition of the photo-essay as presenting “large numbers of pictures not as isolated images, but as a coherent series” (471) can certainly be applied to Friedrich’s work as well. Restricting the definition of the genre a bit more, Michael Jennings describes the photo essay, or photo book, as “a work that presented a sequence of photographs as an argument – rather than around a theme or object” (24).<sup>38</sup> In fact, the sequence of photographs in *Krieg dem Kriege!* is organized in such a way as to set up a pacifist argument about the horrors of the recently ended war. According to the same critic, photographic essays function through an “interplay between sequences of images” as well as through “radical disruptions of these sequences” (39) and, in this way, they develop further the new mode of reading which originated in the illustrated magazines and newspapers of the early 1920s. As my analysis will demonstrate, Friedrich’s book relies heavily on this new type of reading in its interplay

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<sup>38</sup> It is with these definitions in mind that I refer to Friedrich’s book as a photographic essay, although it is incontestable that the genre does not become fully established until the late 1920s with such publications as Albert Renger-Patzsch’s *Die Welt ist schön* (1928), Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold’s *Foto-Auge* (1928), August Sander’s *Antlitz der Zeit* (1929), and many others.

among images as well as in its use of repetition and disruption.

### **Ernst Friedrich's Photo Essay and an Archaeological Approach to Reading Photographs**

Ernst Friedrich's *Krieg dem Kriege!* was published ten years after the outbreak of the First World War: within months it sold its first 70,000 copies and by 1930 it had gone through ten editions and had been translated into 40 different languages. Yet, despite this fact, it has received very little attention in contemporary studies of the Weimar Republic: while *Krieg dem Kriege!* is often briefly mentioned in relation to the pacifist movement of the interwar period and the history of war photography, almost no sustained analysis of its individual photographs, of its particular contribution to the new genre of the photo-essay, nor of its interaction with contemporary discursive regimes exist to date.<sup>39</sup> One of the few articles that conducts a lengthy critique of Friedrich's work is Dora Apel's "Cultural Battlegrounds: Weimar Photographic Narratives of War" in which she compares the visual strategies of pacifist and patriotic war narratives. Ultimately, she argues that "the political weakness of pacifist representation made possible its subordination to heroic imagery... [while] patriotic constructions were able to successfully remilitarize Germany, in visual terms, in preparation for a new historical catastrophe" (50). Dora's analysis examines the narrative construction of *Krieg dem Kriege!* and locates its ultimate failure in its reliance on a universalizing narrative in which all subjects are victims without agency and without historical specificity. But, while perceptively recognizing the various ideologies promoted in Friedrich's work, the article fails to explore the aesthetic complexities of the antiwar narrative which I delineate in this chapter. By taking a closer look at the individual photographs as well as the overall organization and layout of *Krieg dem Kriege!*, I identify several aesthetic techniques which participate in post-

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<sup>39</sup> Among others, Susan Sontag (*Regarding the Pain of Others*), Anton Holzer (*Das Lächeln der Henker*), Bernd Hüppauf ("Emptying the Gaze"), Ulrich Bernd (*Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch*) briefly mention Friedrich's antiwar narrative in their respective works.

WWI trauma discourses. My analysis investigates three aesthetic aspects of Friedrich's work—collage, repetition, and bodily fragmentation – all of which are implicated in dominant medical, psychoanalytic, artistic and political discourses of trauma in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

My analysis of Ernst Friedrich's photo essay recognizes the complex layering of meaning in all photographs but, in particular, in those that capture a traumatic past. Although World War I photographs are presented here within the confines of a totalizing narrative – an anti-war narrative – I argue that the complex relationship among images and between text and image belies the possibility of a single interpretation and ultimate solution. According to Bernd Hüppauf's article "Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation," pacifist and heroic imagery in the Weimar Republic contributed to a discourse that obscured the reality of war by creating an imaginary narrative of the recent past. Photographs, however, are not so easily fixed within one particular narrative and I argue that the images in Friedrich's book reveal more than their necessarily reductive captions suggest. My project will take a closer look at these photographs in order to expose the alternate meanings which these images convey about war and trauma.

In her well-known work, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag claims that "each photograph is only a fragment, its moral and emotional weight depends on where it is inserted... [and therefore] a photograph changes according to the context in which it is seen" (105-106). While I agree with Sontag and countless other critics that the meaning of a photograph varies depending on its context, I would argue that even the insertion into a specific context or a distinct narrative does not necessarily fasten a single meaning onto the photograph. In fact, an individual photograph may become so deeply implicated in a specific context that it is no longer able to entirely shed this layer of meaning and therefore takes on multifaceted connotations when it is inserted into a new context. So, although many World War I photographs were placed into totalizing visual narratives that promoted a particular

ideological reading, this did not necessarily preclude alternate readings. In her examination of Weimar war photography, Apel argues that “the very availability of a massive number of photographs and their widespread use suggested that the war could be pictured as a sequential progression, and historical narration became ‘a matter of appealing to the silent authority of the archive, of unobtrusively linking incontestable documents in a seamless account’” (51). However, in light of the proliferation of illustrated newspapers and the rapid increase in photographic advertising during the early years of the Weimar Republic, it cannot simply be assumed that these visual narratives would have been viewed as “incontestable.” Kracauer’s and Benjamin’s writings on photography as well as the highly critical works of the Dadaists would all suggest otherwise. Friedrich often pairs photographs with ironic captions and places images with opposing meanings side by side, thus (inadvertently) encouraging his viewers to take a critical stance to the images of war they encounter – and, by doing so, he belies his own claim to present an objective, “gemein-naturgetreues Bild des Krieges” (8). For this reason I would argue that, although Friedrich attempts to portray a factual and incontestable narrative of violence and war, he ultimately forces his audience to question the images they see and even to read photographs critically. In this manner, my argument radically departs from Apel and other critics who insist on analyzing Friedrich’s book within the bounds of a single, explicit narrative. All photographs resist assimilation into singular narratives and the images in Friedrich’s *Krieg dem Kriege!* are no exception.

Following a brief delineation of the theoretical framework of my argument, my analysis of *Krieg dem Kriege!* begins with a discussion of the fragmented, prothetized body and its role in dominant aesthetic and political discourses of the Weimar Republic. Bodily fragmentation is a central theme in Friedrich’s book and is constructed primarily through the use of clinical photographs of soldiers with mutilated faces and prosthetic limbs. It therefore exemplifies Friedrich’s strategy of appropriating photographs from one context and inserting

them into his own ideological narrative, which results in the superimposition of new meaning.<sup>40</sup> This appropriation, coupled with the use of juxtaposition and irony, is a conscious strategy employed by Friedrich in order to oppose the totalizing narrative of patriotism against which he positions his own narrative. (Simultaneously, and because the medium of photography is itself complicit in the prostheticization of man, this section of the chapter also leads to a broader reflection on the interrelated discourses of trauma and photography – one which emerges directly out of *Krieg dem Kriege!* despite the fact that Friedrich was most likely unconscious of this subtext in his book.) The reappropriation of photographs is also central to the aesthetic technique of collage which, as I will argue in the subsequent section, participates in a radical reconfiguration of time-space perception in modernity. The employment of an aesthetic technique which inherently rejects a chronological and progressive sense of time also challenges the construction of a totalizing narrative and, in this way, collage creates a structural tension within Friedrich's antiwar narrative. Furthermore, the repetition of images in *Krieg dem Kriege!*, which I examine in the last section of my analysis, can be read as an acting out of trauma in the form of a repetition compulsion – a technique which even more stubbornly denies the narrative its desire for closure. Thus, the aesthetic techniques (consciously or unconsciously) employed in Friedrich's work ultimately unravel the fabric of the totalizing narrative which it seeks to construct.

### **Theoretical Framework: Benjamin on Photography and Aesthetic Representation**

Walter Benjamin's *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (1936) provides a fruitful theoretical ground for better understanding the new form of aesthetic representation made possible by the medium of photography. In his comparison of

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<sup>40</sup> This new meaning, however, is only an added layer in the archaeology of the photograph and my discussion of the fragmented body in these medical photographs will acknowledge the continued existence of a deeply rooted medical gaze.

the cameraman with a surgeon, Benjamin highlights the act of penetration inherent in photography as well as the newly diminished distance between artist and reality: “Der Chirurg [sowie der Kameramann]... vermindert die Distanz zu dem Behandelten sehr indem er in dessen Inneres dringt” (32). Unlike the painter who keeps his subject at a distance and thus preserves the wholeness and unity of the subject, the cameraman penetrates the very fabric of reality. By denying the natural distance from the body preserved in traditional forms of art, this penetration results in a highly fragmented point of view:

Der Maler beobachtet in seiner Arbeit eine natürliche Distanz zum Gegebenen, der Kameramann dagegen dringt tief ins Gewebe der Gegebenheit ein. Die Bilder, die beide davontragen, sind ungeheuer verschieden. Das des Malers ist ein totales, das des Kameramanns ein vielfältig zerstückeltes, dessen Teile sich nach einem neuen Gesetze zusammen finden. (32)

Whereas the painter creates a distanced and aestheticized representation of reality, the photographer or filmmaker penetrates the very boundaries of reality by plunging directly into it, fragmenting it, and ultimately reassembling these fragments to create a new mode of representation altogether. In other words, the “vielfältig zerstückeltes” image of the cameraman is created through the reassembling of various fragments of reality. In this sense, a single photograph might be compared with a kind of collage in which pieces and fragments are placed together in order to form a seeming whole. This is not only a traumatic process but also one in which the very boundaries between the aesthetic and the real are blown apart: reality is violently fragmented, indeed it is wounded, before it can be re-constructed into a new unified whole.

Yet this unified whole is an illusion. Photography claims to have direct access to reality, but, as Benjamin perceptively recognizes, the photographed image is nothing more than a reconstructed whole. In order to create this illusion of a unified whole, reality is first wounded, and it is in this moment that the very boundaries between the aesthetic and the real are blown apart. The violence committed in the act of photographing radically transforms the

relationship between the aesthetic and the real by creating images “nach einem neuen Gesetze.” In other words, photography creates an entirely new mode of perception, one that Benjamin refers to as the “optical unconscious.” As I will discuss further in my analysis of bodily fragmentation in *Krieg dem Kriege!*, Friedrich’s close-up images of horrifically mutilated faces symbolize this explosion of boundaries in both trauma and the medium of photography: just as photography explodes the boundaries between the aesthetic and the real, trauma tears apart the boundaries between the psychic and the physical, the inner and the outer, the self and the world.

It must also be noted that Benjamin’s comparison of the photographer with the surgeon takes on added meaning in the context of *Krieg dem Kriege!*. As has already been mentioned, several of the images in Friedrich’s photo essay are medical photographs. Even more significantly, though, these images of facial mutilation shockingly expose “das Innere” much in the same way as occurs during the surgical act. Thus, it is not only the act of photographing which can be compared with the act of surgery here, but also the final result of both processes: a fragmented and shockingly exposed human body.<sup>41</sup>

However, Benjamin’s comparison between the cameraman and the surgeon ends here, for, while the surgeon has direct access to his patient by way of his own hands, the cameraman is submitted to an indirect, mechanized relationship with his subject. In other words, the act of photographing is ultimately one that *lacks* bodily involvement. According to Benjamin, the camera frees the hands from the act of artistic production for the first time in history: “Mit der Photographie war die Hand im Process bildlicher Reproduktion zum ersten Mal von den wichtigsten künstlerischen Obliegenheiten entlastet, welche nunmehr dem ins Objektiv blickenden Auge allein zufielen” (10-11). Thus, photography builds a prosthetic

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<sup>41</sup> Susan Sontag describes Friedrich’s images of facial wounds as “heartrending [and] stomach-turning” (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 15) and in this way also ascribes a physical component to the *viewing* of Friedrich’s photographs. In other words, it seems that the wounded bodies in *Krieg dem Kriege!* are also wounding to the viewers of these photographs.

relationship between the photographer and reality in which a body part is replaced by a visual prosthetic device. This is the second kind of wounding inherent to the medium of photography. Not only is reality itself wounded and reassembled under a new law, but the artist himself is wounded by the camera, which takes away his direct aesthetic agency by replacing his hand with a mechanical device. This wound caused by the very medium of photography takes on a significant role in the current chapter's analysis of Friedrich's photo essay (and will reappear in my last chapter on Weimar film).

### Man versus Machine: Trauma, Photography, and the Prostheticized Body

“Dix, resolute and technically well-equipped, kicks his foot into the swollen belly of this era, this mere persiflage of an era, forces it to confess its wicked villainy, and depicts its inhabitants candidly, their crafty faces smirking in scabbled-together grimaces...” – Carl Eisenstein (“Otto Dix” in *Das Kunstblatt*)

“Ich bin eine Maschine, an der der Manometer entzwei ist!” (Georg Grosz “Kaffeehaus”)

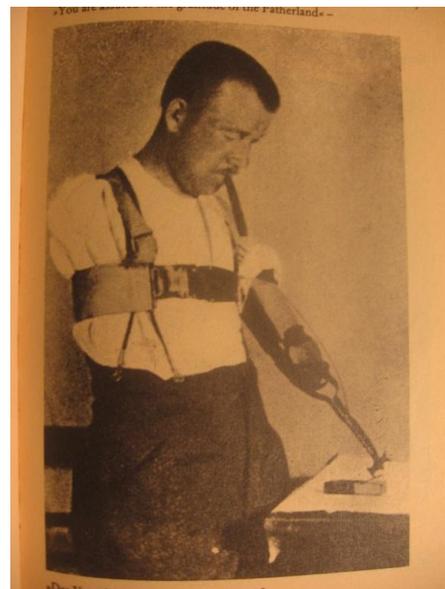
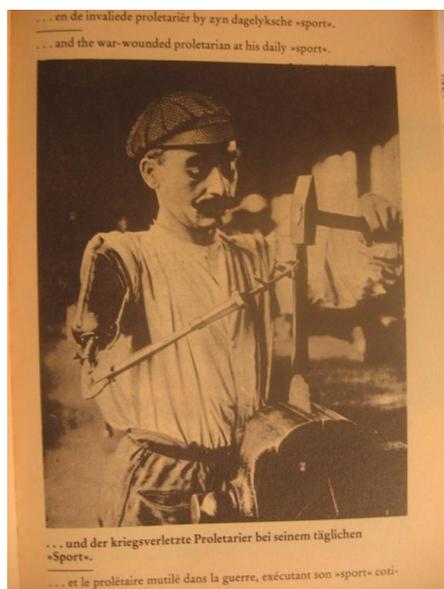


Figure 4. “der kriegsverletzte Proletarier.” (Freidrich, 197). Figure 5. “Des Vaterlandes Dank.” (Friedrich, 203).

The central theme of the fragmented and prostheticized body in *Krieg dem Kriege!* strikingly conveys the mirroring of content and medium in Friedrich's photography book. The series of clinical photographs depicting close-ups of mutilated faces serve as the symbolic convergence of two crucial discourses which structure the book – trauma and photography. For, as I will discuss in this section of my chapter, these images poignantly portray the breakdown in boundaries which defines trauma: namely, the breakdown between the internal and external world. Simultaneously, however, these photographs represent the breakdown of boundaries precipitated by the medium of photography itself: the collapse of a traditional distinction between the real and the aesthetic. This collapse is intimately linked to an increasingly prosthetized relationship with the real, in which the camera serves as an extension of the human body. By examining the themes of bodily mutilation and fragmentation, man versus machine, and prosthesis in *Krieg dem Kriege!*, my analysis foregrounds the way in which trauma formally manifests itself in the medium of photography and highlights the deeply intertwined relationship between these two discourses in the aftermath of the First World War.

The central role of the fragmented body in Ernst Friedrich's narrative comes as no surprise considering its pacifist ideology. Yet, the book's particular portrayal of corporeal fragmentation must also be understood against the backdrop of dominant political and aesthetic trends of the 1920s. Immediately following the Great War, the Dadaists published their manifesto which claimed that "die höchste Kunst wird diejenige sein... die ihre Glieder immer wieder unter dem Stoß des letzten Tages zusammensucht" (quoted in Huelsenbeck's *Dada: eine literarische Dokumentation*). The 1924 manifesto of the Surrealists similarly centered on dismemberment in the central image of a "man cut in two by the window" (quoted in Lyford 53). The bodily fragmentation of war cripples, amputees, and veterans with facial mutilations were not only a focal point in artworks, however: the First World War

produced such a large number of injured soldiers that they were a visible presence in the everyday life of the Weimar Republic. According to literary critic Kate Elswit:

World War I's legacy included a massive scale of real and visible bodily injury; the statistics that report an 8 percent population decline from Germany's pre- to post-war populations, with another 6.4 percent wounded [...] mean that one in every sixteen citizens who might be encountered on a German street in 1919 would be not only a veteran, but a veteran who had suffered some form of physical injury, like the ones so memorably documented in Otto Dix's 1920 painting *Die Skatspieler*. (390)

On a similar note, Hannah Arendt has claimed that during the 1920s "George Grosz's cartoons [of dismembered bodies] seemed to us not satires but realistic reportage: we knew those types; they were all around us" (quoted in Gay 70). The theme of bodily dismemberment and fragmentation was thus a very relevant and urgent one in Weimar Germany: Friedrich's audience would already have encountered firsthand the horrific results of the war. Yet what is the particular significance and impact of the images in *Krieg dem Kriege!* and how does this photographic essay challenge and participate in contemporary trauma discourses? How, in contradistinction to the drawings of Dix and Grosz, are these images fundamentally structured by the very medium in which they are produced?

Immediately following the section of juxtaposing photographs mentioned earlier, Friedrich's narrative continues with a series of photographs focused on the role of technology and the theme of man vs. machine during the First World War. In the middle of this series is a photograph (Figure 4) which depicts two dead soldiers with a military tank and is accompanied by the caption "Menschliche Ueberreste eines zusammengeschoenen Panzerwagens" (73). One of the young soldiers has fallen out of the car while the other one seems to be reaching outside with one hand, almost as if he is unwillingly being held prisoner within the belly of the large steel beast. The metal bolts and plates of the military tank frame the dead body which still lies inside; yet this part of the photograph is so dark and blurry that it is difficult to decipher the outlines of the soldier and, more significantly, the separation

between soldier and tank – that is, between man and machine. The conceptualization of technology as the body’s armour was a common trope in the rhetoric of right-wing politics immediately following the war, particularly in the works of Ernst Jünger who proclaimed “technology is our uniform” and must be “intertwined with our nerves” in order to form a “second, colder consciousness” (quoted in Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* 155). The caption underneath this specific photograph also links the human body with the military tank by its use of the genitive – the phrase “menschliche Ueberreste eines Panzerwagens” seems to imply that the human remnants belong to, or are a part of, the military tank itself. Both visual and verbal elements of this page thus comment on the merging of technology and bodies in the mechanized warfare of WWI. However, along with Ernst Friedrich’s use of irony, the tragedy of a young boy’s death, which is so provocatively depicted in the image, discredits the right-wing argument that technology can offer any protection for the ‘tiny, fragile human body’ in the midst of war.



Figure 6. “Menschliche Ueberreste.” (Friedrich 73).

This theme of man versus machine becomes increasingly explicit in subsequent photographs. One of the last photographs in the book is a particularly shocking image of two heads of Spanish soldiers which have been cut off and placed onto the ends of bayonets (Figure 5). The photograph is so bizarre that it immediately calls to mind one of the Dadaist photomontages, which often involved the cutting and pasting of a human body part onto an

animal, machine, or other object.<sup>42</sup> Hal Foster examines a very similar theme in one of Max Ernst's sketches titled "Self-Constructed Little Machine," which, he argues, represents man as a photographic or militaristic 'gun':

Self-Constructed Little Machine suggests that, under the shocks of industrial war and capitalist exchange the male body has become an instrumental camera or gun. Paradoxically, however, this very instrumentality renders it dysfunctional as a body image, and this dysfunctionality points to the psychic resonance here. For the collage intimates an autistic system: this 'self-constructed little machine' evokes a protective shield or an armoured body of a schizophrenic sort – a machinic substitute for a damaged ego that only debilitates this ego all the more. (*Prosthetic Gods* 168-69)

The photograph of Spanish soldiers whose heads have been "abgeschlagen and aufgespießt" (237) likewise comments on the dysfunctionality of the substitution of machine for body part: although no blood is visible and the heads are held at eye-level along with the rest of the soldiers, one of the heads is tilted sideways thus betraying its uselessness. On the opposite page is a photograph of a skull that has been placed on top of a cross in a churchyard and this image powerfully reinforces the fragmentation and dysfunctionality of the new technologized body. Thus, these photographs serve as a critique of modern technology and, in particular, the use of technology in constructing armour or replacing individual body parts with prosthetic limbs.

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<sup>42</sup> See, for example Max Ernst's *Untitled* (1920) photomontage of human arms and hands pasted onto a war plane, or Hannah Höch's *Das schöne Mädchen* (1919-1920), which features a decapitated woman with a large lightbulb pasted above her neck. Matthew Biro's insightful discussion of the cyborg in Weimar culture also examines several Dadaist photomontages which produce an "uneasy continuity between organic and mechanical function" ("The New Man as Cyborg" 79).

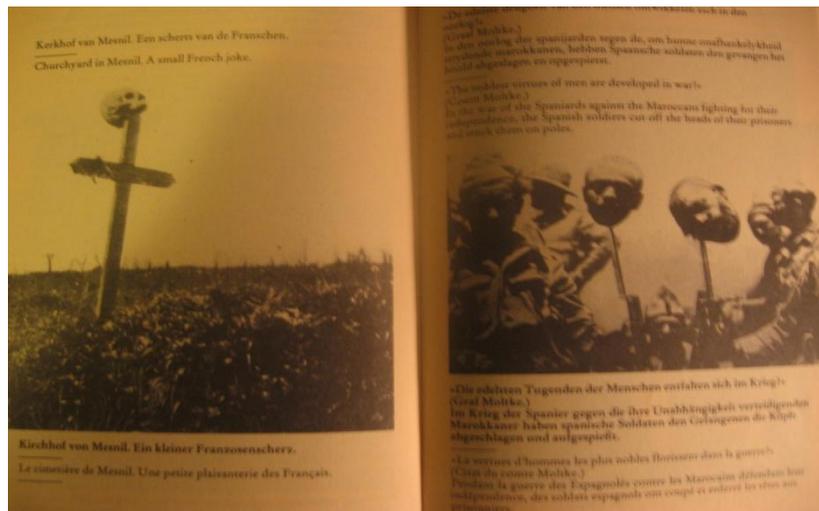


Figure 7. “Die edelsten Tugenden der Menschen entfalten sich im Krieg” (Friedrich 237).

The large numbers of mutilated and amputated soldiers that came out of the First World War led to rapid developments in the fields of medicine and prosthetics.<sup>43</sup> On the cover page of Ernst Friedrich’s *Krieg dem Kriege!* is a soldier with gas mask and gun accompanied by the caption “Das ‘Ebenbild Gottes’ mit Gasmasken”: this photograph, viewed in conjunction with the explicit images of amputees and horrifying close-ups of mutilated faces which puncture Friedrich’s narrative, expands upon the theme of body versus machine by more explicitly referencing the rise of prosthetics and artificial limb-replacements during and after the war. According to Kate Elswit, “the scale of visible rehabilitation in this period assisted in the reconceptualization of bodies, as evident in the prosthetic appendages worn by amputees returning from war to be reintegrated into society” (390). While bodies may have been reconceptualized in terms of their functional value and new prosthetic technologies

<sup>43</sup> According to historian Wolfgang Eckart, these developments already began in the first year of the war and reactions to the large number of amputees were varied: “In early 1915, prior to the huge battles of material in the west, the number of mutilated soldiers, according to estimations by Konrad Biesalski, a doctor of orthopedics, amounted to 30,000. Reactions back home were as different as the physical distortions themselves. There was a boom in the design and production of orthopaedic prosthetics (among them the so-called ‘Sauerbrucharm’) and of plastic surgery. There was the half-hearted attempt to secure the Kriegskrüppel (disabled war veterans) and their families financially, and there was the attempt to remove disfigured and ugly bodies from the peaceful street scenes of the cities as well as from the minds, the Entkrüppelung” (193).

hailed for their ability to put back together any war-torn body, Ernst Friedrich's narrative is critical of any such technological "advancements." In fact, his gruesome images of mutilated faces are most often accompanied by captions recalling the number of surgeries each particular patient had undergone, thus emphasizing the lack of success of medical advancements in the face of the Great War. The ambivalent role of prosthetic appendages in the Weimar Republic is therefore highlighted in *Krieg dem Kriege!*: while these appendages "extended the capacity of human function," they simultaneously pointed to "the place at which the function not only of the amputee but of all humans ceased or potentially ceased" (Elswit 392).

Interestingly, Friedrich does not explore his own reliance on technology in the creation of his antiwar narrative: the camera, immediately following its invention in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, was viewed by many as an aid to the human eye and, thus, a technological extension of the human body. According to Robert Silverman in his article "The Stereoscope and Photographic Depiction in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century," the notion that "the camera has become an eye" was no casual metaphor; rather, "for students of stereophotography, the camera as eye... became a potent leading principle" (738). Art critic Rosalind Krauss also compares the camera to human perception and states that "camera-seeing is an extraordinary extension of normal vision, one that supplements the deficiencies of the naked eye. The camera covers and arms this nakedness, it acts as a kind of prosthesis, enlarging the capacity of the human body" (116). In these theories of vision and photography, the camera thus constructs a prosthetic relationship to the real, one in which the imperfect human eye is replaced by an artificial, mechanical eye.

As already mentioned, Walter Benjamin's theories of perception have similarly examined the camera as a prosthetic body part. In his essay *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, Benjamin views the camera as a replacement for

the hand, i.e. as a technological device which relieves the hand of its previous function. In both of these theories of photography, then, the camera serves as a prosthetic limb; the original human body part, whether it is the eye or the hand, no longer seems to be sufficient and is replaced by a mechanized prosthetic device. This process of substituting technology for specific functions of the body inflicts a wound upon the modern subject in that the human body is no longer a complete and autonomous whole but, rather, a technologized and prostheticized assembly of parts. Ernst Friedrich's reliance on photographs in constructing his antiwar narrative therefore belies a complicity in the very process of technologization and prostheticization which he seeks to critique.

In light of these conceptualizations of the camera as prosthetic device, it becomes apparent that a certain level of self-reflexivity exists – if not for Friedrich then for his viewers – in many of the photographs in *Krieg dem Kriege!*. In these photographs, the camera documents itself in such a way that, when we read these images, we are simultaneously reading about the medium of photography. In other words, these photographs witness the representation of one prosthetic extension (the prosthetic limbs of WWI veterans) by another (the camera). In a sense, these images bear witness to a kind of prostheticized dialogue. Interestingly, the photographs of prosthetic limbs in Friedrich's narratives immediately precede the close-ups of facial mutilations and thus a triangulation is set up between the prosthetic limb, the camera, and the self. In the process of taking photographs, an individual is distanced from reality in the sense that s/he is only accessing it by way of a mechanized, prosthetic extension of the body; however, when taking photographs of a prosthetic limb, the self is doubly alienated – not only from reality but also from its own body, which is now turned into an image that is entirely disconnected from the self. These photographs poignantly express the

fact that the prosthetic limb, while improving certain functions of the body, simultaneously and persistently points to the weakness of the human body. In other words, the prosthetic disrupts the boundary between self and other but at the same time reinforces this boundary – it extends but also limits the self. The theme of prosthesis is thus paralleled in both the content and the medium of Friedrich’s work – in the photographs which explicitly reference the rise of prosthetics and limb replacements in the aftermath of the war as well as in the medium of photography itself which is similarly conceptualized as a prosthetic device. With this in mind, I will now examine the representation of trauma in Friedrich’s photographs of mutilated faces, which again reveals a kind of doubling of medial and thematic discourses in *Krieg dem Kriege!*.

### **“The True Face of War”: Facial Mutilation and the Fragmented Self**

A closer look at the images of facial mutilation in *Krieg dem Kriege!* reveals a complex discourse of trauma that is simultaneously reflected in the medium of photography itself. According to historian Bernd Ulrich, Ernst Friedrich’s clinical close-ups of mutilated faces would not have been the first time that the public was exposed to these types of photographs: “Bereits während des Weltkriegs waren solche Fotos vor das Auge des Lesers gekommen und keinesfalls nur in medizinischen Fachzeitschriften” (117). Much literature had also already been published on these “Menschen ohne Gesichte” in the newspapers and periodicals of the postwar period. In 1920, the politician and journal editor Erich Kuttner described in gruesome detail one of his encounters with a mutilated veteran:

In das kleine Geschäftszimmer tritt ein Mann, der quer über die Mitte des Gesichts eine Binde trägt. Er nimmt sie ab und ich starre in ein kreisförmiges Loch von der Größe eines Handtellers, das von der Nasenwurzel bis zum Unterkiefer reicht. Das rechte Auge ist zerstört, das linke halb geschlossen. Während ich mit dem Mann rede, sehe ich das ganze Innere seiner Mundhöhle offen vor mir liegen: Kehlkopf-, Speiseröhre, Luftröhre wie bei einem anatomischen Präparat. [...] Einstweilen hat der Mann seine achtzehnte

Operation überstanden. Aber das ist noch kein Rekord. Bald darauf lerne ich Leute mit 30 und 36 überstandenen Operationen kennen. (quoted in Ulrich 117)

Kuttner's description perfectly matches the photographic close-ups published in Friedrich's book and stresses exactly the same aspect of these mutilated faces: namely, the gaping wound that has left the interior of the body utterly exposed. Trauma (originating from the Greek word, *trauma*, which means "wound" and refers to a physical injury)<sup>44</sup> is manifested here in its physical form and strikingly portrays the breakdown of boundaries between inner and outer by which it is characterized. In his essay, "Wound Culture," Mark Seltzer has argued that "the borderline concept of the trauma" is defined by the "breakdown between the psychical and the bodily... between private and public registers... and between inner and outer" (11). I would argue that the clinical photographs of mutilated faces in *Krieg dem Kriege!* represent precisely this breakdown – the same breakdown in boundaries which, Walter Benjamin argues, is inherent to the medium of photography.

Thus, the "borderline concept of trauma" is represented here at both the thematic and the formal level: the photography of trauma mirrors the trauma of photography. Roland Barthes has perceptively commented that "the photograph is the advent of myself as other, a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity," and in this manner recognizes the fundamental fragmentation and traumatic experience that photography poses for the modern individual. As mentioned in my first chapter, dissociation, or a splitting of the ego, is posited as the basic condition of traumatic neurosis by Freud and many of his colleagues. Ernst Friedrich's close-ups bring us face to face with this fundamental fragmentation and dissociation by portraying images in which the borders between inner and outer, between self and world, have been violently torn down. The facial mutilation in these photographs physically represents the fundamental breakdown of boundaries which lies at the heart of

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<sup>44</sup> See Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* for more on the relationship between trauma and wound.

both the discourses of trauma and photography. Thus, these close-ups of World War I veterans in Friedrich's work not only serve as the materialization of a traumatic past, but also as a symbolization of trauma itself: they depict the physical wounds of war in shocking detail and simultaneously symbolize the very breakdown of boundaries that defines trauma and structures photography.

Not only do these close-ups force us to stare trauma in the face, so to speak, but they also implicate the viewer in a hierarchical configuration of the gaze: for even though Friedrich has appropriated and recontextualized these photographs, the medical gaze which structured the production of these photographs subsists even in the new context of an antiwar narrative. According to Apel, there is no doubt that these photographs, with their detailed captions concerning the number of operations each respective individual has undergone, were acquired from veterans' hospitals. Furthermore, she argues that "the process of photographing disfigured faces – the tight close-ups, neutral backgrounds, subjection to an unreturnable gaze, intense scrutiny of face and features – produces an intimate observation in which a passive subject is made to submit to a dominant gaze" (58-61). As a result of the medical power play inherent in these photographs, the viewer is placed into a position in which the bodies and faces of soldiers become no more than objects to be coldly scrutinized. In this way, Friedrich's narrative of universal victimhood begins to break down: the particular aesthetics of these individual photographs are so intimately linked with a clinical gaze that they impose a distance between viewer and image. It becomes clear here that each individual photograph in *Krieg dem Kriege!* possesses its own archaeology of meanings: the various contexts through which the photograph has been passed or within which it was constructed have all left their imprint on the image so that it can no longer be understood simply by

examining its current position in a narrative.<sup>45</sup> It is from this complex history of superimposed meanings that Friedrich's images of facial mutilation speak to his viewers about the multifaceted discourse of trauma as well as about the medium of photography itself.

If we apply the previously-mentioned model of a triangulation between the self, the prosthetic limb, and the camera to these images of mutilated faces, we find an even more complex interaction between trauma and photography. Whereas in previous photographs the camera conveyed a certain level of self-reflexivity by photographing prosthetic limbs, in these images the camera has turned around to examine the self and exposes a gaping wound. In these photographs, no prosthetic limb is visible. It is as if the camera – itself a prosthetic extension of the self – has suddenly turned towards the self and catches it in an exposed and unprotected state. These shocking facial close-ups, which are constructed by way of a radically different aesthetics from all of the other photographs in the book, expose the self without any technology and without any prosthetics (i.e. without even the camera behind which it could hide up to this point). The faces, which have been violently torn apart by modern warfare, emerge from a black and highly abstract background without any explanation, not even a setting which might give a clue regarding how one should read these horrific pictures. This, then, is where trauma – as a violent explosion of boundaries – is manifested both physically and symbolically: it is here in these images that we see the lack to which the prosthetic limb implicitly points but cannot explicitly articulate. If prosthesis is meant to serve as a kind of bridge between the self and the world, trauma represents precisely the failure of this attempted reconstruction of an intact boundary between the two, and the photographs of Friedrich's "true visage of war" convey this failure intricately and meaningfully.

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<sup>45</sup> Indeed, this contradiction in the very medium of representation is paralleled by the contradiction of Friedrich's reliance on a prosthetic device (the camera) in constructing an argument against prosthetics (in veterans).

Photography deals a double-handed wound: on the one hand, it inflicts a wound upon the modern subject who is prostheticized by an improved and mechanized body part, and, on the other hand, photography wounds aesthetic representation itself in that it forces upon it a radically new relationship with the real. These two wounds are clearly interrelated for if the camera wounds the modern subject by creating a new prosthetic relationship to reality, it similarly wounds representation by constructing a mechanized relationship – one in which representation is produced through “automatism, by removing the human agent from the act of reproduction” (Cavell 23). In the medium of photography, aesthetic representation is forced to rely directly upon the real; it touches the real in a way that traditional forms of aesthetic representation had never done. By producing aesthetic representation by way of a mechanized and automatized prosthetic limb, photography creates a distance between the self and the world. Yet, as Benjamin and others have noted, photography simultaneously brings us closer to reality than ever before: unlike the painter, the photographer is able to penetrate “tief ins Gewebe der Gegebenheit ein” (*Das Kunstwerk* 32) in such a way as to expose “das Innere” (as Friedrich’s close-ups of mutilated faces exemplify). The tensions between inner and outer, fragment and whole, and self and world conveyed by the poignant images in *Krieg dem Kriege!* reinforce the broader tensions of Friedrich’s narrative which I will discuss in my analysis of the book’s layout and organization. In particular, the aesthetic techniques of collage and repetition are crucial in striking a balance between the two opposing forces of fragmentation and totalizing narrative which structure *Krieg dem Kriege!*, and the next sections of my chapter will therefore examine these elements of the book in more detail.

## Exploded Space and Temporality in the Aesthetic Techniques of Juxtaposition, Collage, and Montage

“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world...” – W. B. Yeats (*The Second Coming*)

Perhaps the most visible aesthetic trope employed in Friedrich’s photographic narrative is juxtaposition: both the juxtaposition of official, patriotic images with the shocking images presented by Friedrich as the unofficial “reality” of war, and the general juxtaposition of photographs with ironic verbal commentary. Immediately following the opening section, which depicts toy soldiers and children’s books, the reader is faced with a series of iconographically opposing photographs placed side by side. The photograph on the left is clean and clear, consisting of geometric patterns and, in particular, vertical lines. These are clean-cut images of well-dressed soldiers, often marching but always standing upright, with the result of a clearly vertical and upward-sweeping motion. The photograph on the right is chaotic and messy, characterized largely by diagonal and often horizontal lines. In these images we see bodies piled on top of each other, grass already beginning to grow over them, and collapsed wooden structures that unmistakably allude to the destructive properties of modern technology.

A quick glance at the patriotic photographs depicted in this series reveals a typical iconography of modern militarism: young soldiers in uniform march through the streets, decorated officers smile into the camera, the general hands out decorations to a group of heroic soldiers. All of these carefully selected photographs reflect militarism, nationalism, and hierarchy through geometrical figures and vertical lines that create an upward movement within the image. Thus, the patriotic photograph on page 60 of Friedrich’s book (Fig. 9) might be compared with Marsden Hartley’s 1913 painting, *The Warrior* (Fig. 8), and many other artworks of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which depict militarism by way of abstract, geometrical compositions. These images participate in the dominant aesthetic of nationalistic visual imagery that emerged in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were influenced by

utopian avant-garde movements such as futurism and vorticism, but they also reach farther back to the religious iconography of the Byzantine Empire. Friedrich's selection of patriotic photographs strongly reflect these traditions while at the same time discrediting them as illusions through the use of ironic commentary and, particularly forcefully, with the juxtaposed image of "reality" on the opposing page.

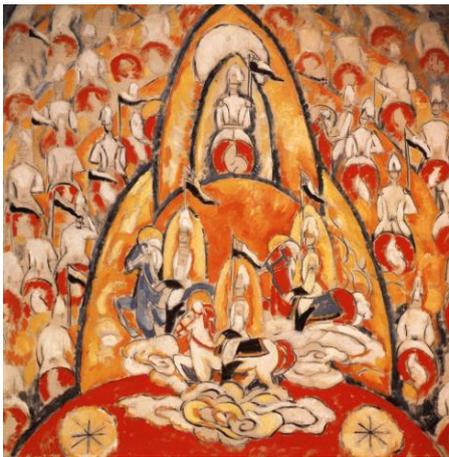


Figure 8. *The Warrior*. Marsden Hartley, 1913.



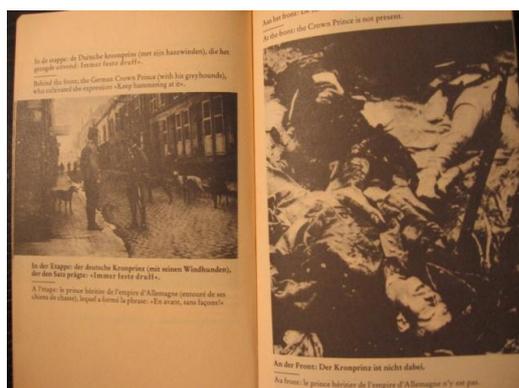
Figure 9. "Der Hohenzoller." *Krieg dem Kriege!* (60).

One such juxtaposition displays a photograph of soldiers triumphantly marching through the cities in August of 1914 alongside a photograph depicting a dark, chaotic pile of soldiers' corpses. The photograph on the left is characterized by light and movement whereas the one on the right is dark and static. The caption under the photograph on the left reads "Aus den Augusttagen 1914. Begeistert... wofür?..." and continues under the photograph on the right "...für das 'Feld der Ehre.'" (52-53). A few pages later a similar juxtaposition of photographs shows clean and well-dressed officers marching on the left while another pile of rotting corpses lies in darkness on the right. The patriotic photograph on the left, like one of many which appeared in illustrated newspapers during the war, was clearly taken with the intention of representing glory, pride and honor. Yet Friedrich has altered the meaning of the photograph by placing it into a series of juxtaposed photographs and by giving it an ironic

caption: “Kaiser Wilhelm II, von Gottes Gnaden, kommt von der Besichtigung des Schlachtfeldes. (Damit sein königlicher Fuß nicht vom blutgetränkten Boden beschmutzt wird, ist für ihn extra ein Holzsteg gebaut.)” (58). This parenthetical statement serves as an ironic counterpart to the otherwise sober, explanatory caption of the photograph which readers might also have encountered as a caption in a newspaper or history journal. In this way, Friedrich simultaneously portrays both the official, censored narrative of the war as well as his own unofficial, pacifist interpretation of the photograph, thus reinforcing the fact that the meaning of a photograph changes in different contexts and that all photographs inherently consist of a plurality of meanings.

The next two photographs continue the aesthetic technique of juxtaposition. Again the photograph on the left-hand page depicts men in uniform, but this time they are men of nobility, one of them the crown prince. The upright figures and urban buildings in the background repeat the vertical lines from the previous photograph, perhaps to an even greater degree. Here, however, the vertical lines of the figures in the foreground are slightly muted by the purebred dogs surrounding the crown prince (which are reminiscent of 18<sup>th</sup> century British paintings of nobility embarking on their fox hunting expeditions in the countryside) and by the slowly receding lines of the street which recall the triumphant perspectivalism of Renaissance paintings. As in previous pages of this series, the image on the right violently overturns these traditional iconographies by zooming in on another pile of corpses in the battlefield. In the foreground, a face, upside down and with a mouth half open, emerges out of the dark chaos of dead bodies. The rest of the image is almost indecipherable: its lack of

geometric and clearly defined lines stands in such stark contrast to the highly aestheticized image on the left that the two photographs can scarcely be



identified as products of the same medium.<sup>46</sup> In a sense, these images violate the very boundary of photographs as aesthetic objects.

Friedrich's strategy of juxtaposing aesthetic with non-aesthetic photographs reveals much about the book's aesthetics of trauma and its participation in prominent visual strategies of 1920s artworks, printmaking, and propaganda. In particular, the newly emergent techniques of collage and photomontage provide a significant point of departure for understanding the socio-political and artistic discourses out of which *Krieg dem Kriege!* emerged. After the introduction of collage in cubist artworks of the prewar era, the Dadaists took up the art of collage and eventually applied it to the medium of photography in their innovative technique of photomontage. While this new artistic practice might be viewed as emerging out of the 19<sup>th</sup> century composite photograph and other early experimental photography, the particular act of cutting and pasting images (and the inherent act of violent fragmentation which defines this procedure) is specific to the photomontage. Because of the violent rupture caused by the First World War in almost all facets of everyday life and, even more fundamentally, in the ideological fabric of society, photomontage can be said to aesthetically represent historical developments of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup>

At their core, the techniques of collage and montage are quite simply the juxtaposition of diverse elements: they are fundamentally based on the act of bringing into spatial

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<sup>46</sup> In fact, all of the photographs on the right-hand side of the page in this section of Friedrich's narrative are so dark and blurry that they seem more akin to expressionist paintings than to the clean photographs on the left-hand side of the page. It is difficult to know the reasons for this difference but it is likely that the patriotic photographs were taken by professional photographers while the images of dead soldiers were taken by amateur photographers.

<sup>47</sup> According to art historian Carl-Albrecht Haenlein, the very origins of collage and photomontage lie in "der Verfall eines von einer zentralen Idee zusammengehaltenen einheitlichen Weltbildes zugunsten eines pluralistischen, heterogen zusammengesetzten und nicht mehr in allen seinen Teilen zu erfassenden und zu überschauenden Bildes von Welt, das unserem Bewusstsein heute seine Vorstellungsinhalte vermittelt" (10). See his work *Dada: Photographie und Photocollage* for more on this subject.

proximity temporally separate objects or events.<sup>48</sup> Friedrich's visual narrative, though it is largely made up of entire photographs placed side by side, exhibits this key element and thus participates in the prominent aesthetic techniques of contemporary printmaking. Furthermore, the technique itself conveys meaning beyond Friedrich's intentional juxtaposition of official with unofficial photographs: as Germanist Patrizia McBride notes, there is a "productive double-coding engendered by montage, which lies in the ability of the assembled fragments to point back to the contexts out of which they were extracted as though they were affected by an incurable semantic cross-eyedness" (253). This "cross-eyedness" was consciously used by the Dadaists in the construction of their collages, assemblages, and photomontages. As one critic has put it, Dada art "promoted strategies of representation that defamiliarized everyday objects and pushed their communities to question the structure and nature of the everyday world" (Biro 109). Collage and montage thus gained new meaning with the advent of Dadaism and other avant-garde movements, and Friedrich's use of these techniques were inevitably implicated in this new aesthetics of trauma.

In fact, Friedrich would undoubtedly have been familiar with the collages and photomontages of Dadaists for, although he may not have attended the first "Dada-Messe" (1920) personally, the event was highly publicized in Germany and abroad: according to art historian Brigid Doherty, the Dadaists had "hired a professional photographer from one of Berlin's most prominent agencies to document the show's opening, and photographs of the Dada Fair were in fact reproduced in illustrated weeklies as far away as Amsterdam, Milan, Rome, and Boston" ("Introduction to the First International Dada Fair" 94). Indeed, Dadaist Raoul Hausmann has himself commented on the widespread awareness of Dadaist aesthetic techniques in the early 1920s:

Die meisten der DADAistischen Manifeste waren in Avantgarde-Zeitschriften

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<sup>48</sup> The terms montage and collage are often used interchangeably, although montage is more strongly linked with the modern technologies of photography and film. It is also used in describing modern techniques of literature and theater, and thus plays a central role in my entire dissertation.

und nur selten als Flugblätter erschienen, sie hatten trotzdem einen Einfluß nicht nur auf die Intellektuellen, sondern auch auf die Masse, denn zahlreiche Tageszeitungen brachten ironische oder entrüstete Besprechungen darüber. Außerdem dienten die Soireen und Matineen DADA, zusammen mit den Ausstellungen, zu wütenden Angriffen auf die augenscheinliche künstlerische 'Wertlosigkeit' DADAs. Das Publikum war also bis in weite Schichten unterrichtet. (148)

The Dadaists had begun publishing their first montages as early as 1917 with their weekly newspaper "Neue Jugend" and continued to do so with the four issues of "Der Dada" published from 1919 to 1920.<sup>49</sup> As Hausmann's statement makes clear, however, the general public was made aware of this new artistic technique regardless of how many of these weekly newspapers were sold. In the new 'age of information' the scandalous antics and experimentations of the Dadaists quickly pierced the social fabric of the Weimar Republic through the very medium which they sought to critique.

Although the layout of Friedrich's book is relatively orderly and contained in contrast to the artistic endeavors of Dadaists such as Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch, it nonetheless reflects elements of popular illustrated newspapers which the Dadaist montages in turn adopted and manipulated. Already the opening of *Krieg dem Kriege!* looks more like a newspaper article than the preface to a book: its varying typography, emphatic statements, and verbal repetition is deliberately designed to catch the reader's attention – much like a newspaper headline. In fact, precisely the same characteristics which art historian Hanne Bergius notes in her assessment of early Dadaist montages can be applied to Friedrich's work: "Die werbwirksame Typographie, die dynamisch angelegte Bild/Wort-Zusammensetzung und das variationsreiche Layout wirkten plakativ" (18). As Friedrich's readers continue to turn through the first few pages of *Krieg dem Kriege!*, they are confronted with a variety of images of children's toys, posters, book covers, and even a poem

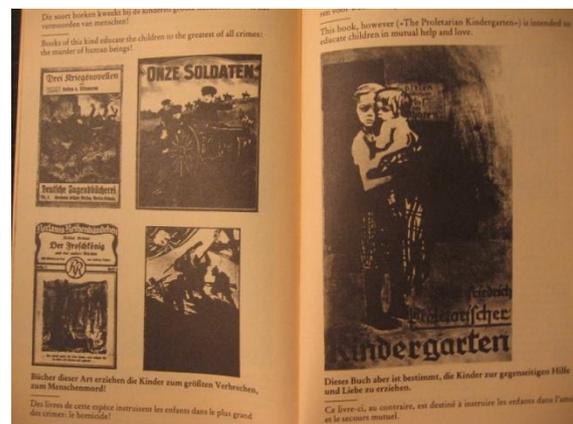
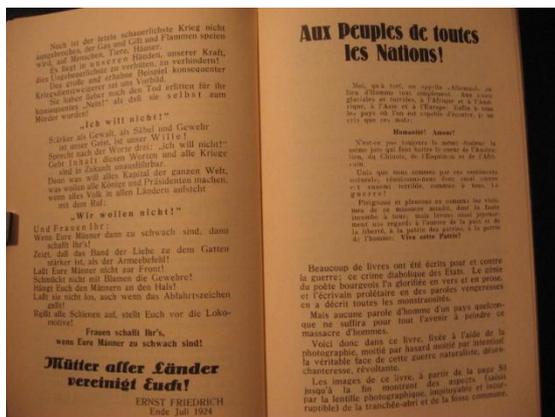
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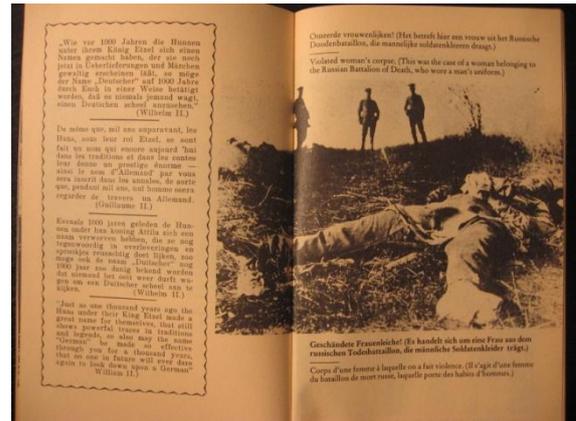
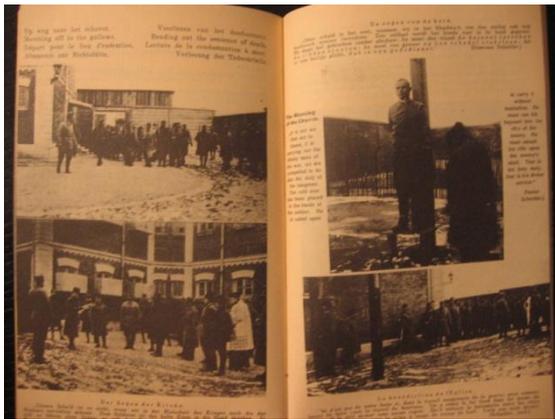
<sup>49</sup> See Hanne Bergius' work on Berlin Dada for more on the early newspaper publications of the Dadaists. "Die Zeitschrift 'Neue Jugend' wurde das erste Zeugnis dadaistischer Montagearbeit" (18).

copied out of a children's book. This conglomeration of images encourages the reader to scan each page, jumping from one element on the page to another (just as the juxtaposition of text and images of newspapers had taught its readers to do). Thus, the layout of the book creates a dynamic reading experience similar to the one produced by early Dada publications:

Farbe, Schriftart und Schriftgröße der Buchstaben, der Worte und Texte waren so offensiv montiert, dass sie das Lesen beeinflussten; Signale wie Kreise und Balken erhöhten die Lesegeschwindigkeit... [aber] gebremst war die Lesegeschwindigkeit wiederum durch gleichförmig angeordnete Zweispaltigkeit von zusammenhängenden Texten. Die Mischung aus Werbung und Text, aus Schrift und Bild strukturierte überraschend die Zeit des Lesens – eine Erfahrung, die bisher die Straße mit ihren verschiedenen semiotischen Elementen hervorrief. (Bergius 18)

The increasingly central role of photography in journalism and the media industry not only influenced the Dadaists' critical experimentation with photomontage, but also penetrated the very core of society by redefining the way in which information was conveyed and the past was remembered. Ernst Friedrich's antiwar narrative undeniably participates in these aesthetic and historical changes in the postwar era as is evidenced by his use of typography, drawings and paintings, poems and historical proclamations and, of course, photography.





Indeed, the aesthetic practices of collage and photomontage are intimately linked with the emergence of a new kind of perception in modernity. Historian Eric Leed has observed that the First World War was central in this perceptual shift:

...the deterioration of the visual field experienced by many in trench warfare removed those visual markers that allow an observer to direct his attention to what comes first and what later... The constriction of vision eliminated most of those signs that allow individuals to collectively order their experience in terms of problems to be solved in some kind of rational sequence... (130-31)

Yet how, one might ask, is this deterioration of vision possible in light of the rapid development of the visual technologies of the camera? Is it not paradoxical that, despite these technological advancements, vision becomes radically constricted rather than improved? A closer look at Leed's statement, however, reveals that it is not vision per se which deteriorates but rather the ability of individuals to "collectively order their experiences... in some kind of rational sequence." In this sense, photography's ability to freeze a moment and remove it from its chronological placement in time is profoundly implicated in this modern crisis in perception. Furthermore, collage emerges as an artistic practice which parallels and simultaneously helps define a new mode of perception in which history is no longer bound by the concepts of progress and chronology.

Benjamin's notion of the constellation also serves as a useful parallel here. Literary critic Michael Rothberg describes the constellation as "a sort of montage in which diverse elements are brought together through the act of writing... [and which is] meant to emphasize

the importance of representation in the interpretation of history” (10). Similar to the performance of collage, Benjamin’s constellations juxtapose different elements in order to reveal the fact that history is always constructed from one particular moment in time and cannot be viewed as objective, self-evident, or progressive. “The concept of the constellation... offers an alternative to the periodizing discourse of modern history and opens up the possibility of thinking through the overlapping of historical moments...” (Rothberg 11). As I argued above, collage also ruptures the “periodizing discourse” and progressive understanding of history by emphasizing the interrelatedness of different historical or temporal moments. For this reason it works particularly well as an aesthetic technique for representing trauma, which Cathy Caruth defines as the “belatedness of historical experience” (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 8).<sup>50</sup> By allowing temporally disparate elements to be placed side by side, collage reflects the primary principle of latency as well as the resulting dissolution of a chronological sense of time that defines trauma. In fact, collage might even be understood as exploded traces of the past as art historian Leah Dickermann has argued in her analysis of Kurt Schwitter’s *Merz* collages: basing her argument on Freud’s conception of trauma as a breach in the protective shield, Dickermann reads collage as the physical manifestation of a breached consciousness which presents “in materialized form the fracturing of history and memory by catastrophe” (121).

Rather than merely reflecting this fundamental transition in modern perception and subjectivity, however, collage can also be understood as *performing* trauma by inducing a shock effect in its viewer. In his new book *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories and Images*, Allan Meek has noted that the construction of “images into a montage creates the shock effect Benjamin saw as a defining experience of modernity and of modernist aesthetics” (30). Art historian Brigid Doherty has similarly argued that Berlin Dada simulated

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<sup>50</sup> Of course, photographs are always belated in the sense that they are only developed at a later date in time. The technique of collage thus adds a complementary sense of belatedness to the one already existing in individual photographs.

the “physical and psychical symptoms of shock... by employing the technique of montage” (“See: we are all neurasthenics!” 90). If montage is understood as embodying a shock effect that is in turn transferred to its viewer, then Friedrich’s employment of this technique must be analyzed in comparison with dominant conceptions of shock and trauma in the aftermath of the First World War. One of the single most significant symptoms of trauma, according to Freud and others, is the repetition compulsion, and I will therefore devote the final section of my analysis to an examination of the function and effects of repetition in *Krieg dem Kriege!*.

### **Acting Out or Working Through: Repetition in *Krieg dem Kriege!***

“Our memory repeats to us what we haven’t understood. Repetition is addressed to incomprehension.” – Paul Valéry (“Commentaires de Charmes”)

“Trauma is, at least in part, an extreme expression of the mimetic compulsion – a photography at the level of the subject.” – Mark Seltzer (“Wound Culture”)

One of the most obvious strategies in Friedrich’s antiwar narrative is the repetition of photographs. While his collection of war photographs is organized into subsections based on particular themes (hangings, technology, corpses, cemeteries, etc.), it essentially consists of the repetition of one horrific war photograph after the other (with the exception of the patriotic photographs that are quickly dismissed by their ironic captions and juxtaposition). This repetition, however, stands in stark contrast to the overall layout and organization of the book which strives towards a coherent narrative: by beginning with marching soldiers and ending with cemeteries, Friedrich attempts to construct a chronological and comprehensive narrative of the First World War. This last section of my analysis of *Krieg dem Kriege!* will therefore look more closely at specific instances of repetition in Friedrich’s book in order to examine the complex interaction between this compulsion to repeat and the narrative’s inherent drive towards closure.

Throughout his recent work on trauma and history, Dominick LaCapra has emphasized the dangers of conflating structural trauma with historical trauma. Whereas historical trauma is based on a single and particular historical event (and therefore bears the potential of being ‘worked through’), structural trauma is the result of a transhistorical absence which is continually acted out but can never be worked through. One way of avoiding the conflation of historical loss with transhistorical absence, LaCapra suggests, is to “historicize and problematize certain forms of desire, such as the desire for redemption and totality” (“Trauma, Absence, Loss” 722). The conversion of absence into loss generally gives rise to totalizing narratives or myths such as the Oedipal myth or the Christian myth of the Fall. Thus, the tendency to mythologize a specific, historical loss must always be treated with suspicion because it likely conflates transhistorical absence with historical loss. It seems clear that this is precisely what patriotic, postwar narratives of the Weimar Republic sought to do: by constructing totalizing narratives that glorified the recent past in what historian George Mosse has called the “myth of the war experience,” this form of patriotism turned historical loss into a transhistorical myth of redemption. According to LaCapra, this conflation often ends in the projection of blame on to others – the Weimar Republic being a case in point. “In converting absence into loss, one assumes that there was (or at least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security, or identity which others have ruined, polluted, or contaminated and thus made ‘us’ lose” (“Trauma, Absence, Loss” 707). Rather than accepting anxiety and refusing ultimate solutions, these totalizing narratives result in the dangerous projection of blame on to others in order to preserve an imaginary notion of the self and, in particular, a past unity (or in this case glorification) of the self.

Whereas Ernst Friedrich’s narrative clearly does not glorify the First World War, it does construct a totalizing narrative in which political and religious institutions are blamed for the destruction of an original whole or past unity. By addressing his preface to “Menschen

aller Länder,” Friedrich sets up a universalizing narrative that accuses “das Kapital” as being the international cause of war. He cites Plato as having stated that “Alle Kriege entstehen nur um den Besitz von Geld” and in this way directs his narrative against all war, denying any historical specificity of the First World War. It is this universalizing of suffering that Apel identifies as the demise of Friedrich’s pacifism: “The weakness of pacifism lies precisely in the humanist representation of war participants as universal subjects/victims with no historical specificity or agency. The viewer gains no larger sense of the political dynamics or greater social dimensions of the cataclysmic event that is presented as a timeless, placeless War” (83). Yet, the particular aesthetics that Friedrich employs are so deeply intertwined with contemporary printmaking and artistic techniques that his work is in some sense very much grounded in a specific historical context. I would like to suggest that it is precisely these aesthetic techniques which undermine the explicit project of a totalizing narrative as it is presented in Friedrich’s book. In this sense, *Krieg dem Kriege!* can be understood as ultimately maintaining the tension between acting out and working through, and thus avoiding the creation of a redemptive narrative that treats a historical loss as a transhistorical absence.

Along with the general repetition of war images discussed above there exists another, perhaps less apparent, repetition in Friedrich’s book: in several instances, the reader of *Krieg dem Kriege!* is confronted with an image that repeats exactly the same scene as the previous photograph (albeit from a slightly different angle or distance). For example, pages 112 and 113 present the same officers standing at the rim of a trench filled with corpses. Again on pages 117 and 118 there is a repetition of another corpse-filled trench but this time the second photograph is a close-up of the corpses. In both of these instances of repetition, enough of an angle-difference exists so that it is not immediately obvious that we are looking at the same scene. In the second example it is only a large wooden board, the snow, and a recognizable

corpse that expose the repetition. However, as Friedrich's narrative moves closer towards its end, these repetitions become more and more frequent and the two images that are repeated become increasingly alike so that the final set of repeated images are almost exactly the same. This is quite interesting considering the overall structure of the book which, in some sense, attempts to construct a traditional plot with a beginning, middle, and end: the narrative begins with depictions of young soldiers marching off to war as well as some clean, respectable images of decorated officers; it continues with increasingly horrifying pictures of mutilated bodies, piles of corpses in trenches, hangings, destroyed landscapes, amputees, and patients of failed facial surgeries; and eventually, it finishes the story with images of gravestones and cemeteries. How, then, do the above-mentioned sets of repeated images interact with the narrative as a whole? Do they reveal a kind of repetition compulsion? Can repetition in Friedrich's book be read as an attempt to retroactively prepare for the shocks of the First World War? How does the complex interaction between narrative and repetition reflect a kind of acting out or working through of trauma?

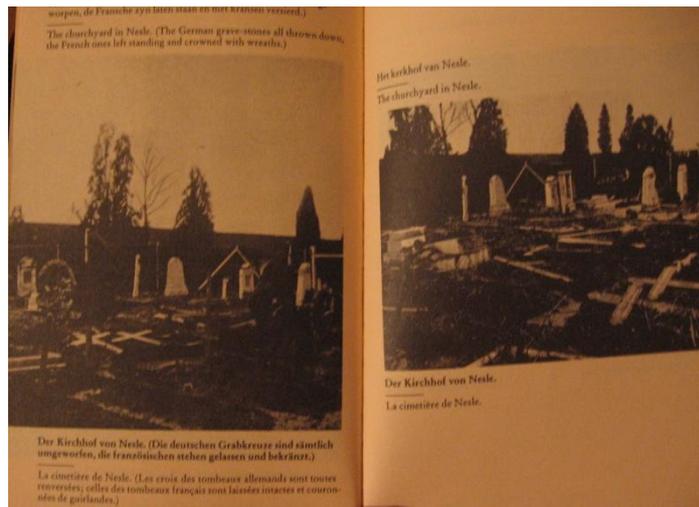
In his analysis of Andy Warhol's postmodern artworks, Hal Foster investigates the use of repetition as a production of, and defence against, trauma. Whereas Roland Barthes locates what he calls the *punctum* of photographs in particular details of content, Foster argues that the *punctum* in Warhol "works less through content than through technique, especially through... the slipping and streaking, blanching and blanking, repeating and coloring of the images" (134). These techniques are understood as causing a more fundamental shock to the viewer than that caused by the shocking content of the images. Similarly, the photographs in Ernst Friedrich's narrative might be shocking in their content (and, indeed, become increasingly shocking throughout the book) but it is the repetition and the slight 'popping' in these repetitions that produce a traumatic effect in the viewer. For example, the image on page 112 depicts a few officers who are about to throw a corpse into the trench below; the

image on the following page differs only as a result of the camera having been angled slightly to the right so that the entire corpse-filled trench is suddenly visible. Again, on pages 117 and 118 the reader is shown the same image twice except that the second zooms in on the pile of corpses so that individual bodies can be identified. The photographs of a hanging on pages 144 and 145 initially appear to be the exact same images save for a slight underexposure in the photograph on the right: yet, a closer look reveals that the second photograph was taken seconds later when all three men have been hung. By forcing readers to re-examine these repeated images and especially the ‘pops’ that differentiate them, *Krieg dem Kriege!* performs a repetition compulsion that continuously imposes an experience of shock onto the reader.<sup>51</sup>

At the end of Friedrich’s pacifist narrative is a series of cemetery photographs: especially interesting here is that an image of one particular cemetery is repeated three times in a row. The first of these images is a close-up of a few select gravestones and clearly visible behind them is a gaping hole in the makeshift fence that surrounds the cemetery – another symbol for the traumatic breakdown in boundaries caused by the First World War. The following two images, however, are almost exact copies of each other and portray the same, rather uninteresting, cemetery scene. Besides the fact that many of the gravestones have been destroyed (German grave stones according to Friedrich), this scene seems rather inoffensive and even dull compared with many of the shocking photographs incorporated into the narrative thus far. Why repeat this image three times in a row?

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<sup>51</sup> Marianne Hirsch has likewise theorized that the repetition of World War II photographs can “retraumatize, making distant viewers into surrogate victims” (“Surviving Images” 8). This argument is aimed at later generations who view the repetitive barrage of images left over from a traumatic historical event. Hirsch believes that the repetition of photographs produces the effect of trauma for the second generation such that they are able to identify with the repetition compulsion experienced by the actual survivors and contemporary witnesses of the trauma. A similar argument could be made for Friedrich’s photographs and the viewers who did not witness the horrors of the battlefield firsthand.



I would like to suggest that the stubborn repetition of photographs in Friedrich’s book simultaneously interrupts and challenges the narrative’s inherent strive towards closure. In his article titled “History Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” Eric Santner contrasts mourning with what he calls narrative fetishism. Both are responses to a traumatic past but whereas the former is aligned with working through, the latter is paralleled with the notion of acting out: narrative fetishism is defined as “the construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called that narrative into being in the first place” (144). Thus, narrative is conceptualized here as a strategy that seeks to avoid mourning by simulating a condition of wholeness or intactness. Mourning, on the other hand, is “a process of elaborating and integrating the reality of loss or traumatic shock by remembering and *repeating* it in symbolically and dialogically mediated doses” (144, my italics). While Friedrich’s book may strive towards the construction of wholeness in the form of a totalizing narrative, its persistent repetition of images produces shocks in the reader and therefore integrates the “reality of loss or traumatic shock” into its narrative. In this way, *Krieg dem Kriege!* avoids falling into a form of narrative fetishism; instead it strikes a delicate balance between acting out and working through. Whether repetition in Friedrich’s book is employed consciously or presents itself unconsciously, it plays a critical role in maintaining the tensions between mourning and narrative fetishism.

## Chapter Conclusion

Ultimately, *Krieg dem Kriege!* is a work fraught with tensions: the tension between inside and outside manifested continually in the image of the wound; the tension between fragment and whole, or between repetition and progress, which reveals itself in the compulsive repetition of similar images and the simultaneous attempt to organize these images into a cohesive narrative moving from marching soldiers to cemeteries; and, last but not least, the constant tension between word and image which aesthetically structures the entire book. It cannot be denied that Friedrich tries to construct an illusory notion of past unity and organic whole in relation to the human body. Furthermore, his book upholds many ideological myths and his captions often appear reductive rather than reflective. Ultimately, however, *Krieg dem Kriege!* cannot be merely read as fetishistic, totalizing narrative because its aesthetic techniques uphold a powerful tension between acting out and working through. Its collage-like layout, meta-reflective subject matter, and performance of a repetition compulsion, as well as the inherent resistance of photographs to a single narrative, allow the work to transcend the reductive totalizing narrative that it purportedly seeks to construct.

The theme of man versus machine, explicitly depicted in the images of soldiers falling out of tanks as well as in the photographs of veterans with prosthetic limbs, becomes meta-reflective in light of modernist conceptions of the camera as prosthetic device. The images in Ernst Friedrich's anti-war photo essay represent Freud's notion of trauma as a breach in the stimulus shield by literally displaying the ruptured boundaries of mutilated soldiers – ruptures that modern technology can neither prevent nor cure. It comes, perhaps, as no surprise that the mechanical medium of photography centers its lens on the limits of technology nor that its engagement in a repetition compulsion reveals itself in the mechanical repetition of very nearly identical images. Weimar theatre, on the other hand, examines the same exploded

boundary between self and other but does so within its own medium-specific contours. Thus, as the following chapter will illustrate, the theatrical works of the immediate postwar years focus in particular on the physical presence of bodies on stage and on the animalistic (rather than mechanical) nature of humanity. As it develops new techniques for representing the traumatized modern subject, Weimar theatre also begins to exploit the natural tensions between stage and spectator, challenging the concept of the fourth wall and producing a sense of alienation in its audiences. Thus a uniquely modern theatre develops – one that, I wish to suggest, emerges directly out of the trauma of the First World War.

### **Chapter 3: Dramas of Trauma and the Trauma of Drama: Animal-Human Boundaries in the Works of Ernst Toller and Bertolt Brecht**

#### **Introduction: The Magic Theater**

“Heute nacht von vier Uhr an magisches Theater – nur für Verrückte – Eintritt kostet den Verstand.” With this enigmatic sentence, readers of Hermann Hesse’s *Der Steppenwolf* are drawn into one of the most bizarre and memorable scenes in modern literature. Hesse’s magic theater, a place which transforms time into space, is a horseshoe-shaped corridor filled with numerous doors containing various moments and fragments of the protagonist’s life. This collage-like layout of Harry Haller’s life is reflected in the very form of Hesse’s novel – a highly fragmentary literary collage in which characters come and go, layers of fantasy and reality are superimposed upon one another, and a complex image of one man’s troubled soul is rendered visible through a stubbornly anti-chronological portrait of his life. Although Hermann Hesse’s 1927 novel makes very few references to the First World War, its most prominent themes are inextricably bound to the sense of identity crisis, loss, and desperation that are characteristic of the years of turmoil following the war. In fact, the novel mirrors theatrical techniques developed in the aftermath of the war, particularly new modes of representing human subjectivity as fragmented rather than unified, as abstract rather than concrete. When Harry looks into a mirror before entering the magic theater, he sees the dissolution of his own self into a myriad number of different selves:

Ich sah, einen winzigen Moment lang, den mir bekannten Harry, nur mit einem ungewöhnlich gutgelaunten, hellen, lachenden Gesicht. Aber kaum, dass ich ihn erkannt hatte, fiel er auseinander, löste sich eine zweite Figur von ihm ab, eine dritte, eine zehnte, eine zwanzigste, und der ganze Riesenspiegel war voll von lauter Harrys oder Harry-Stücken, zahllosen Harrys, deren jeden ich nur einen blitzhaften Moment erblickte und erkannte. (229)

Hesse's incisive portrayal of a modern identity crisis parallels several themes that pervade the historical trajectory of drama in the aftermath of the First World War: first, the instability and uncertainty of individual identity in the face of modern industrialization and technologization of everyday life; second, the turn to irony, satire, and the grotesque as means for exploring this identity crisis (represented here by the laughing face of Harry's mirror image); and last, the dissolution and fragmentation of the self which psychoanalytic theorists of trauma tirelessly struggled to explain and which dramatists persistently tried to represent – often by turning to new experimental techniques in doing so. Harry's magic theater is a theater of trauma in which identity must be (re)constructed out of the pieces and fragments of his existence.

Beginning with the extemporaneous Dadaist street performances, which primarily intended to shock audiences, and ending with Brecht's epic theatre, which brought shock and trauma into a more controlled space of reflection, the years between 1916 and 1926 form a fascinating and pivotal period of transition in the history of German drama. My chapter examines the complex relationship between historical trauma and drama in this period by analyzing a number of plays by Ernst Toller and Bertolt Brecht within the broader context of postwar discourses of trauma. It traces the influence of the First World War on early avant-garde theatrical practices up through the more formalized techniques of Brecht's epic theater. I am primarily interested in the following questions: First, how does trauma manifest itself in postwar drama and how do these very dramas participate in the shaping of trauma discourses in the early years of the Weimar Republic? And, second, in what way does trauma become not only a thematic focus of Weimar theatre but also a structural principal of modern drama more generally? While trauma has often been recognized as a defining element in Dadaist performances and manifestations, it has not been examined in relation to later theatrical practices of the Weimar years. Yet, the early street performances and literary cabarets of the

Dadaists, the impromptu political performances of revolutionary directors such as Erwin Piscator, the new theatrical techniques of Expressionist dramas, and the radical abstractness of early Bauhaus performances all contributed significantly to the subsequent development of a modern theory of drama in the form of Brecht's epic theatre. I would like to suggest that whereas early postwar theater and street performances act out trauma in a raw and uncontrolled manner, almost a decade passes before it becomes fully theorized and controlled in the form of a theatre of alienation – a theatre which advocates above all controlled reflection and negotiation between the audience and the stage. My project follows the transitional period of postwar theatre in which drama has not yet donned a protective armor, and before the outlining of a dramaturgical theory begins to retroactively control and frame the dramas of the Weimar Republic. Thus, although an analysis of Brecht's plays will form a significant part of this chapter, I have chosen to examine only his earliest works – dramas which are perhaps less tightly woven than his later works, thus providing more frequent glimpses at the struggle with shock and trauma out of which they developed. I begin with a short sketch of dramas written in the aftermath of the war, focusing on significant themes and highlighting their ties to contemporary trauma discourses. The second section outlines more specifically the trajectory of shock and trauma as it develops during this transitional phase of modern drama. Finally, I launch into my close readings of Toller's *Die Wandlung* (1919) and *Hinkemann* (1924), and Brecht's *Trommeln in der Nacht* (1921) and *Mann ist Mann* (1926) in order to reveal the significance of trauma in both the form and content of these works.

### **A Brief Sketch of Dramas Written in the Aftermath of the First World War**

Published immediately following the end of the First World War, Karl Kraus's magnum opus, *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* (1918/1919), grapples with many of the same concerns that I have identified in Ernst Friedrich's *Krieg dem Kriege!*. It seeks to

expose the absurdity of war through irony, repetition, and collage, while simultaneously challenging traditional genre boundaries. In fact, the 800-page play consisting of no less than 259 scenes is essentially (and intentionally) unperformable. As explained in Kraus's preface to his satirical portrayal of the end of the world, this *Unspielbarkeit* is related directly to the trauma of the First World War:

Die Aufführung des Dramas, dessen Umfang nach irdischem Zeitmaß etwa zehn Abende umfassen würde, ist einem Marstheater zugehört. Theatergänger dieser Welt vermöchten ihm nicht standzuhalten. Denn es ist Blut von ihrem Blute und der Inhalt ist von dem Inhalt der unwirklichen, undenkbaren, keinem wachen Sinn erreichbaren, *keiner Erinnerung zugänglichen* und nur in blutigem Traum verwahrten Jahre, da Operettenfiguren die Tragödie der Menschheit spielten. (15, my italics)

Thus, the play is unperformable according to Kraus not only because of its extraordinary length but because it depicts a historical reality that is inaccessible to memory and incomprehensible to consciousness. The traumatic event referred to in this passage is, of course, the First World War and, indeed, Kraus' work is an attempt to represent the unrepresentable, to portray the trauma of war. Both the content and the form of *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* work together to achieve this aim: trauma is present in the play's disjunction between language and meaning, the challenge to boundaries between fact and fiction, the fast-paced montage sequences, and the repetition of images which might be understood as enacting Freud's notion of trauma as a breach of stimuli. Kraus's aim is to represent a traumatic and incommunicable past, one that he claims audiences in this world will be unable to bear because it too accurately portrays the unfolding of history in recent years. The aesthetic techniques employed to achieve this representation center on collage and repetition, both of which are deeply implicated in contemporary discourses of trauma.

In the preface to *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit*, Kraus claims – much like Ernst Friedrich in his introduction to *Krieg dem Kriege!* – that all of the events depicted in this work actually occurred in reality: “Die unwahrscheinlichsten Taten, die hier gemeldet

werden, sind wirkliche geschehen; ich habe gemalt, was sie nur taten” (15). Yet, this statement is instantly challenged by the subsequent claim that “die grellsten Erfindungen sind Zitate,” and thus throws into question the entire project of 19<sup>th</sup> century historicism and its goal of reporting history ‘wie es eigentlich gewesen.’ By equating citations with inventions, Kraus points to the adaptability and mutability of citations and challenges the boundary between fact and fiction more generally. In fact, one scholar has argued that Kraus’s use of citations can be read as an intervention into history itself, as an “intervention into the temporal process, the activation of a past in the present: citing as *inciting*” (Gelley 25-26). Walter Benjamin also recognized this potential in Kraus’s work and compares his citations with tools that open up new physical spaces in order to convey new meaning – much like a photomontage which is produced by way of cutting, reshuffling, and pasting in order to construct a space of alternate meaning out of our pasts. Benjamin claims: “the citations in [Kraus’s] *Die Fackel* are more than documentary proof: they are props with which the quoter unmask himself mimetically” (quoted in Gelly 25). In other words, citation, or mimesis more generally, is a tool which simultaneously masks (by way of assuming another’s ideas, words, images) and unmasks (by implicitly pointing to the very act of masking in the process of mimesis). Kraus’s employment of citation as a strategic aesthetic technique might therefore be compared with Friedrich’s use of collage in *Krieg dem Kriege!*: in both cases, a dialectic of fragment and whole, past and present, fiction and reality is used to construct alternate meanings and thus critical views of history. Both techniques are influenced and structured by contemporary trauma discourses and the collapse of traditional conceptions of temporality and spatiality.

Along with these central themes of war and trauma, *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* also elaborates more generally on the crisis in communication which was identified by many writers at the turn of the century – a crisis which was subsequently compounded by the

horrific experience of the First World War. More specifically, Karl Kraus contributes to an ongoing discussion largely initiated by Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Chandos Brief* (1902) and elaborated upon in the same author's postwar 1921 drama *Der Schwierige*.<sup>52</sup> Hans Karl, the protagonist of Hofmannsthal's play, has returned home after fighting on the front, and suddenly finds that he is unable to communicate meaningfully with his relatives and acquaintances. He comments repeatedly on the inability of language to accurately express reality and pointedly articulates his dislike for the modern communication device known as the telephone ("diese indiskrete Maschine"). With this last comment, Hans Karl indicates not only a specifically modern breakdown in communication but also locates the problem in the realm of *verbal* communication. As one critic has suggested, there are two forms of communication represented in Hofmannsthal's play: one that is "intentional and verbal... [as well as] highly unreliable" and another one which is "spontaneous and nonverbal... [and] proves capable of expressing innermost feelings" (Heine 408). This second, nonverbal form of communication is clearly privileged in *Der Schwierige* as is evidenced by Hans Karl's fascination with a particular clown at the circus – a clown who communicates solely in gestures and whose performance Hans Karl prefers to intellectual conversation because there is "simple truth in what he does." Gestures, facial expressions, and, more generally, physicality is thus posited as a more truthful mode of communication than language.

Harold Segel's recent work, *Body Ascendent: Modernism and the Physical Imperative*, similarly claims that the modernist obsession with physicality arose out of the disillusion of language as capable of communication. "The dethroning of language," he claims, "had wide ramifications for the verbal arts... [especially] in the drama, [in which] gesture and silence were given equal billing with dialogue" (2). Segel begins his study of

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<sup>52</sup> Significant differences exist, however, between the crises depicted in the prewar *Chandos Brief* and the postwar *Der Schwierige*. At least one critic has articulated this difference by describing the former crisis in language as a "poetic problem" and the latter a "social one" (Guidry 306).

what he terms the “physical imperative” by examining emergent theatrical forms at the turn of the 20th century, focusing in particular on pantomime and dance, both of which heightened the focus on the body. Well-known playwrights such as Hofmannsthal, Strindberg, Schnitzler, Wedekind and many others all contributed to this upswing in dance and pantomime as a central element of theatre. As my chapter will delineate, the widespread trauma of the First World War caused a significant shift in this already-established preoccupation with the body. Meaning becomes increasingly removed from the metaphysical and linguistic realm, and placed instead in the realm of the physical. The trauma of seeing bodies blown apart and missing limbs being replaced with prosthetics seems to have further stripped language of its power and forced metaphors to be rerouted through the body. A kind of myopic vision develops in which the physical body becomes the first and foremost carrier of meaning. Thus, my chapter reveals how theatrical techniques in the aftermath of the war become increasingly focused on corporeality; yet this fascination with the body is simultaneously a fascination with the *lacks* and *absences* of the body. In the aftermath of the war, *gesture* takes on an especially significant role and does so because it isolates quotable movements through interruption and pauses, thus bringing *absence* back into the portrayal of bodies and attitudes on the stage.

Ernst Toller’s dramas are no exception to this increasing focus on the body and physicality in the dramas of the Weimar Republic. In an early work titled *Die Maschinenstürmer* (1922), the workers of a factory want to destroy their working machines primarily out of a fear of physical fragmentation. The machine is described as a horrible animal that tears people apart and transforms individuals into nothing more than a single body part, the rest being left to atrophy:

Wie eine Höllenzange packt euch der Dämon Dampf... Reißt euch das Herze aus dem Leib... Und sägt und sägt und sägt in Stücke den lebendigen Körper. Du Charles wirst Bein: Du trittst... Du trittst... Du trittst dein ganzes Leben... Und deine Arme werden schlaff, Die Augen werden blind, der Rücken krumm... Du

Georges wirst Hand und knüpfst... und knüpfst... und knüpfst... Und deine Ohren werden taub... Dein Hirn verdorrt... Dein Blut gerinnt... (140)

In this scene, Albert vividly describes the dangers of accepting the machines into their factories – their coworker Charles, he explains, will be reduced to no more than a leg, whereas Georges to nothing but an arm. In Toller's estimation then, bodily fragmentation, even more so than unemployment and financial hardships, was the most frightening aspect of industrialization in 19th-century England. This portrayal of the Luddite movement in England is clearly one that is viewed through the cultural and historical circumstances of the author's own time – a period in which the widespread mutilation and amputations caused by the First World War were everywhere to be seen. Toller's *Hinkemann* (1924) is even more preoccupied with bodily mutilation and fragmentation: its protagonist has been castrated in the war and his greatest fear is for people to find out that he is "gar kein Mann mehr" (17). Here the fear of physical fragmentation is explicitly linked with the First World War (as if it took several years of distance before the horrors of the war could really be acknowledged).

While perhaps not focusing as explicitly on the body and physicality, Franz Werfel's 1920 play, *Spiegelmensch*, also examines the borders of the mind/body split and engages the theme of the *Doppelgänger* in order to examine the construction and fragility of human identity. The protagonist Thamal has decided to escape himself and his banal, everyday existence by joining a monastery in the mountains. The abbot warns him that he cannot simply run from himself and, indeed, that very night Thamal is forced to undergo an arduous fight with his own mirror image, or *Spiegelmensch*. This depiction of a human being split in two is paralleled in the concept of dissociation which played a central role in psychoanalytic trauma discourses during and after the First World War.. As already mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, Sigmund Freud and his colleagues at the International Psychoanalytic Congress in Budapest described war neurosis as a conflict between two selves, indeed, between the self and a kind of *Doppelgänger*:

Die Kriegsneurosen sind... traumatische Neurosen, die durch einen *Ichkonflikt* ermöglicht oder begünstigt worden sind. [...] Er spielt sich zwischen dem alten friedlichen und dem neuen kriegesischen Ich des Soldaten ab, und wird akut, sobald dem Friedens-Ich vor Augen gerückt wird, wie sehr es Gefahr läuft, durch die Wagnisse seines neugebildeten parasitischen Doppelgängers ums Leben gebracht zu werden. (*Zur Psychoanalyse der Kriegsneurosen* 5)

Similarly, it is Thamal's fear of his own mirror image which causes him to shoot at the mirror in an attempt to rid himself of his *Doppelgänger*, but by doing so, inadvertently frees him.

“Hier vor mir steht ein Delinquent,” Thamal declares as he stares into the mirror, “Und wird sogleich begraben. Ich wage einen starken Streich, Entzweizuhaun den Alexanderknoten.”

Thamal clearly experiences an “Ichkonflikt” when he sees his *Doppelgänger* in the mirror, and therefore decides to make a swift end of this predicament by simply and drastically severing the Gordian knot – in this case with the shot of a pistol.

Reinhard Goering's *Seeschlacht* (1917) is also worth mentioning in relation to contemporary debates on human subjectivity and is one of the few plays to deal thematically with war. It depicts the single evening of a battle at sea. Yet, the actual events of the battle are almost entirely ignored; rather, the play takes place in a room below deck in which the sailors are waiting anxiously for what will inevitably come. In fact, the entire, single-act play contains very little action and centers instead on various conversations between the soldiers in which they express their worries, fears, desires, and life philosophies. The play opens with a soldier claiming to see a sign in the sky – “ein Zeichen, ob wir sie treffen und wies ausgeht” (5) – and continues with the sailors heatedly debating the question of fate versus freedom. Two sailors in particular, “der erste Matrose” and “der fünfte Matrose,” engage in a long discussion about their role in this war. The fifth sailor can be described as a pacifist who criticizes the circumstances in which the authorities have placed them and argues that each man makes his own fate, whereas the first sailor believes in greater powers and unquestioningly leaves his fate in their hands. In fact, he professes that people are no more than marionettes whose fates have already been written: “Puppen sind wir doch all” (22). As

the battle begins, the sailors' statements takes a turn from the metaphysical to the purely physical: hunger, nerves, sight, and the body all begin to play a central role as the bombing begins. In fact, when the first sailor looks through the porthole and sees the enemy approaching, he yells "Augen, o meine Augen!" (38) and when the third sailor is about to die his comments are entirely focused on his physical body: "Öl über mein Haupt! ... Binden vor meine Augen!" (48). Even the fifth sailor, the self-proclaimed pacifist and revolutionary, exclaims enthusiastically as he lies dying at the end of the scene: "Blut! Blut! Darin allein liegt Wahres" (51). In this way, Goering's drama poignantly depicts the inevitable turn from philosophical questions about life to the immediate fear of bodily dissolution and fragmentation in the face of war.

Another literary response to the trauma of the First World War and its resulting crisis in communication is the use of irony and satire. Kraus's *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* is certainly one such example but many other dramas in the postwar period employed this technique as well. Ernst Barlach's *Die echten Sedemunds* (1920) is a bizarre, expressionist play about the false pretensions and lack of sincerity in the bourgeois world. It takes place in various settings including a fairground, a beergarden, a graveyard and a chapel, and consists of a series of episodes without spatial unity (much like Georg Kaiser's *Von morgens bis mitternachts*). During much of the play, the town is searching for a lion that has supposedly escaped from the fair (but had, in fact, already died that morning). Grude is the character leading this expedition despite the fact that he already knows about the lion's death: ironically, he is the most "genuine" character although he is purportedly insane and has only been released from the insane asylum in order to attend a funeral. The play itself is filled with grotesque scenes and one irony after the other. According to theater critic Silvija Jestrovic:

the grotesque, blurring the line between realism and fantasy, the familiar and the strange, identity and otherness, creates a self-enclosed world that cannot turn back to restore the comforting order of the everyday. [...] In modernism the grotesque becomes a true defamiliarization device, since it does not exist merely for its own

sake, but to play out the dichotomy between illusion and reality, self and otherness. The modernist sense of grotesque invokes an identity crisis estranging the idea of the world and reality as stable and logical categories. (90)

Thus, the use of the grotesque in modern drama can be understood as evoking a sense of identity crisis and trauma in the audience. The world can no longer be recognized in terms of the stable categories that lend a convenient but illusory sense of security to the spectators. A sudden breakdown in boundaries between self and other, between the exterior and the interior, causes a traumatic reaction in the viewers. In this sense, the grotesque complicates traditional models of theater spectatorship in which the audience simply identifies with the characters on stage: instead, spectators experience a sense of alienation while simultaneously trying to identify with the characters. In Barlach's *Die echten Sedemunds* even the characters are shocked by the grotesqueness of their lives, and, while his father symbolically leads a procession of villagers to hell, the young Sedemund eventually admits himself to an insane asylum.

So far I have identified the following themes in early postwar theatre: a fascination with clowns, physicality, and nonverbal communication; depictions of Doppelgänger and identity crises in which the border between self and other is questioned; a turn from the metaphysical to the physical; and the use of irony and the grotesque, which often highlights the boundary between the animal and human realm. In short, there appears to be a movement from the linguistic to the physical in which the body becomes the new site of metaphor and meaning. All of these themes are intimately connected to the traumatic experience of the First World War and are poignant reflections of the contemporary debates surrounding modern subjectivity and trauma. In the following section, however, I'd like to turn the focus away from thematic analyses to an examination of the deeper structures and forms that make up the medium of modern drama. In following a trajectory of drama from 1916 to 1926, I delineate

the significant but, until now, unacknowledged impact of trauma on Brecht's theatre of alienation and, thus, on modern drama more generally.

### **From Shock to Alienation: Transitions in Drama between 1916 and 1926**

“The history of the theater is the history of the transfiguration of the human form.” – Oskar Schlemmer (1925)

While the specific start and end dates of artistic movements are often difficult to pinpoint, it is generally agreed that German Expressionism begins before the First World War and ends shortly thereafter. According to literary critic Michael Patterson, the beginnings of German Expressionist drama lie in Reinhard Sorge's *Der Bettler* (1912) and end with the publication of Ernst Toller's *Die Maschinenstürmer* (1921); however, he argues that the theatrical *style* of German Expressionism has its origins in “the premiere of Hasenclever's *Der Sohn* in 1916 and is largely exhausted by 1923” (48). In other words, the actual *performance* of expressionism is not realized until well into the First World War. The post-expressionist movements of the “Neue Sachlichkeit” and Brecht's epic theater did not fully develop until the late 1920s and early 1930s, making the early 1920s a fascinating period of transition in the art and literary world. Brecht's first formulation of *Verfremdung* was not published until 1935, yet even his earliest plays contain elements of what would eventually be called his epic theater. While the distancing mechanisms in these plays are not quite as explicit as in, for example, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, they are present nonetheless. I would argue, in particular, that an element such as the grotesque in Brecht's early work might be read as a technique which simultaneously attracts and distances the spectator and, in this sense, functions not unlike the distancing techniques developed in Brecht's later works. However, the grotesque also plays a central role in Expressionist drama and is therefore an important indicator of the continuities and crossovers between the early and later theatrical styles of the Weimar Republic.

Since my project examines the interaction between drama and trauma in the aftermath of the First World War and because this was a period of transition between artistic movements, it is not particularly useful to focus on the externally imposed divisions and categorizations of literary history. Instead, I will focus on specific aesthetic techniques which may have been embraced by one or many dramaturgical styles but all of which were produced during, and were thus fundamentally shaped by, the years immediately following WWI. Thus, this chapter will analyze several distancing (or alienating) mechanisms employed in the dramas of this time period: namely, the employment of the grotesque, the construction of a new modern subjectivity through the use of abstract figures such as dolls and puppets, and an emphasis on gesture and physicality which challenges the traditionally-upheld distinction between surface and depth. I would like to emphasize, though, that the trauma discourses which I am locating in the artworks and culture of the postwar years did not emerge overnight nor did they develop in a vacuum. Quite to the contrary, these trauma discourses were already forming in the early 1900s (in fact, already began with industrialization and the development of the modern railway) and merely culminated in the First World War. For this reason it is not surprising that the Futurist Manifesto was already written in 1909 for example, or that a suspicion of language, and the development of a new modern subjectivity – one deeply intertwined with the rise of technology in everyday life – were already present as an undercurrent in the culture of prewar Europe. However, the trauma of the First World War *did* have a crucial impact on these trends and caused a significant shift which, in the theatrical world, is revealed first and foremost in the structural changes to the very medium of theatre.

Towards the end of the war, radical forms of performance art emerged and led to the development of new theatrical techniques as well as an entire restructuring of modern German theatre. In February of 1916, Hugo Ball and a few other Dadaists founded the

Cabaret Voltaire, a literary cabaret which featured various forms of experimental dance, music, and poetry readings. These performances went on for several months and were a kind of laboratory for artistic experimentation; in fact, these cabaret productions were so radical and shocking that the audience often attacked the stage in the middle of the performance. During the following years, Dada spread to other cities, most notably Paris, New York, and Berlin, in which artists such as Richard Huelsenbeck, Raoul Hausmann, George Grosz, and John Heartfield continued to experiment zealously with various forms of visual and performance arts. Perhaps the most original new technique to develop out of the Berlin Dadaists was the photomontage. According to Brigid Doherty, “the montage materializations of Berlin dada demand to be understood in relation to the bodily materializations of traumatic psychic shock that characterized the war neuroses” (“See: we are all Neurasthenics” 85) and I would like to extend this argument to dada manifestations and performance art. While very few records of the Berlin Dada performances remain, it is clear from the few articles, memoirs, and brochures that have survived that these productions were aimed at both shocking and provoking their audiences. In 1918, at the *Graphisches Kabinett* in Berlin, Richard Huelsenbeck gave a reading of what would be published a couple of years later as the “First Dada-Speech in Germany” and, according to Huelsenbeck’s own memoir, his entire audience was outraged by the provocative nature of his performance:

Horror! An invalid with a wooden leg got up and the audience rose to their feet and accompanied his exit with applause... The audience not merely rose to their feet but moved toward the rostrum in order to hurl themselves at me. But as is usual in such situations (I went through many like it in my Dada time), public fury was checked by a kind of awe. (quoted in Mel Gordon, “A History of Performance (1918-1920)” 115)

The sense of awe produced in the audience may very well have been due to the unusual sound poems that Huelsenbeck recited or the obscene dance and pantomime performance that Grosz staged in between these readings; yet it was certainly also the provocative statements

about war and the intentionally vulgar conceptualization of the body on stage which produced feelings of shock, horror, and awe in the audience of this first “Dada-soiree.”

Art historical scholarship has already established that disfigurement, fragmentation, and trauma were central features of Dada manifestations and performance art. For example, Stanton Garner’s recent article on Tristan Tzara’s 1921 play, *Gas Heart*, elaborates upon its engagement with the “wider sociopolitical concerns with issues of disfigurement, defacement, and fragmentation” as well as its reliance on “a biomedical discursive and representational field that lends additional meaning to Tzara’s aesthetics of disruption and fragmentation” (508). Art critic Hal Foster has likewise written extensively on the traumatized body in Dada performances and he suggests that at the very core of each of these performances lies the “traumatic mime.” By way of mimetic adaptation, Foster claims, “the Dadaist assumes the dire conditions of his time – the armoring of the military body, the fragmenting of the industrial worker, the commodifying of the capitalist subject – and inflates them through hyperbole or ‘hypertrophy’ (another Dadaist term)” (“Dada Mime” 169). In other words, Dadaist manifestations and cabaret performances directly engage medical, psychoanalytic and social discourses of the body by mimetically assuming the traumatized body on stage.

The Bauhaus theatre of the early and mid-1920s likewise placed the human body at the center of its experimental productions and developed its own strategies for challenging contemporary discourses on modern subjectivity. The use of dolls and puppets in representing human subjectivity was especially popular in Bauhaus productions. According to art historian Juliet Koss,

Bauhaus performances recreated the human body – literally and symbolically, onstage and off – in the shape of the doll, its childlike simplicity combining a comforting and seemingly animate charm with an unnerving absence of human personality. Bauhaus dolls of various kinds maintained a playful ambivalence in the face of shifting models of subjectivity... (724)

The employment of dolls as well as masked figures, pantomime, and dance created abstract and geometric representations of human subjectivity, and simultaneously indicated the artificiality of the theater. Especially significant here is the fact that these dolls and abstract figures allowed for a certain amount of empathy and identification while simultaneously creating a sense of alienation and distance on the part of the audience. Thus, these techniques opened up a space of reflection in which the spectators were forced to negotiate the relationship between the self and the other. The stage was used to provoke the spectator and force him into an active role of questioning dominant conceptions of human subjectivity. In 1924, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy wrote that “in today’s theater, stage and spectator are separated too much from each other, divided too much into active and passive” (quoted in Koss 740) and the Bauhaus theatre made significant progress in addressing this problem. In fact, several Bauhaus stages were designed solely with the intention of producing a new relationship of mutual exchange between the stage and the audience, thus serving as an important parallel to the development of what would soon be called “epic theatre.”

Bauhaus and Dada were not the only ones to experiment with new forms of performance art, however, and Erwin Piscator’s early attempts at developing a political theatre are also worth mentioning here. Piscator, who would later collaborate extensively with Bertolt Brecht and had a crucial influence on the young playwright, began his radical experimentations with theatre immediately following his arrival in Berlin. In 1920 he founded his “proletarian theater” which put on productions in various public spaces including beer-halls and on the streets of working-class neighborhoods. Because of spatial and practical limitations as well as the desire for a rudimentary theatrical style, these performances were often impromptu in their methods of production, which lent itself well to a participatory collaboration between audience and theatre troupe. The intentionally agitatory and unscripted plays were performed in such a way as to allow for collective adaptation. Piscator’s

proletarian theater was also supported by several members of Berlin Dada, including John Heartfield and George Grosz, and it is therefore not surprising that his productions were often based on provocation and agitation. Furthermore, Piscator would later collaborate with the Bauhaus movement's founder, Walter Gropius, in an attempt to design a theater adapted to the particular needs of modern theatre. Thus it quickly becomes clear how the new forms of agitatory, participatory, provocative, and shock-inducing techniques of these avant-garde theatres influences not only each other but also later developments in modern theatre including Brecht's theatre of alienation.

However, after this initial period of shock and trauma-inducing performances, the dramaturgical theories and applied theatrical techniques began to move towards a more subtle process of negotiating trauma. This is conveyed in Brecht's dramaturgy by his coining of the term *Verfremdung*, which denotes a process rather than a condition with its use of the prefix 'ver.' Alienating techniques are employed here in a manner that makes the events on stage simultaneously familiar and strange, encourages empathy and alienation, and tries to engender active reflection and a kind of working through on the part of the spectator. These techniques are used after the war to challenge the division between self and other, as well as between reality and fiction. The spectator is forced to examine the permeable boundaries of these constructs, which had previously been taken for granted and viewed as inherently fixed and rigid.

Thus the transformation of the theatre in the early 1920s is primarily a transformation in the aesthetics of reception. And, perhaps most importantly, this new aesthetics of reception is predicated upon an embodied spectator. All avant-garde performances in the aftermath of the war – Hugo Ball's *Cabaret Voltaire* and the Dadaists' performances, the public performances of the Futurists, the postwar Expressionist theatre and especially that of Ernst Toller, and the political theatre of Piscator and Brecht – reinstate a sense of embodiment, a

corporeal presence, on the part of the spectator. Many of these performances encouraged direct participation while others engendered conscious reflection in response to the events taking place on stage.<sup>53</sup> One way to produce this sense of physical and corporeal presence is through the element of shock. As Brigid Doherty has argued, the Dadaists used photomontage in order to induce shock and trauma in people, and I have shown that many of the unscripted and avant-garde theatrical performances of the immediate postwar years had precisely this goal. The trauma of war was performed in a raw and uncontrolled manner which was directly transferred to audiences. However, as time progressed, this trauma was shaped and molded into a more manageable form: that of the theatre of alienation.

Already in the early 1920s, Bertolt Brecht and other playwrights began calling for a “new theater,” claiming that traditional forms of theater were no longer able to represent the contemporary, post-WWI world: “Die alte Form des Dramas ermöglicht es nicht, die Welt so darzustellen, wie wir sie heute sehen. Der für uns typische Ablauf eines Menschenschicksals kann in der jetzigen dramatischen Form nicht gezeigt werden” (“Über eine neue Dramatik” 238). The radical transformation that had taken place in society due to the recent traumatic past must be paralleled on the stage, Brecht argues. Yet, it is not primarily on the stage that Brecht’s fundamental restructuring of the theater takes place but, rather, in the space of reception. The theater of estrangement is one which relies on a certain level of reflection and response in the audience and therefore fosters a space of negotiation between the actors and the spectators. In this sense, one could say that the avant-garde theater of the early 20th century embodies a breakdown in the traditional boundaries between text and reader or, in this case, between performance and audience which parallels the breakdown in boundaries characteristic of trauma. In fact, *Verfremdung* or alienation is a term which perhaps best

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<sup>53</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte has argued that a fundamental shift from text to performance took place in the avant-garde theatre of the 1920s. “The transformation of the theater into a ritual, a festival, and other genres of cultural performances shifted the dominance from the referential to the performative function. Thus the center of interest pivoted on the action of the audience, that is, its transformation into participants, into performers.”

conveys the tumultuous experience of the First World War: an event which was so entirely removed from the everyday life as it had been previously experienced that it was difficult if not impossible to reconcile the two.

The concept of splitting or dissociation of the self, which Freud and his colleagues described in relation to war neurosis, serves as an interesting point of departure for examining the relationship between Brecht's theater of alienation and discourses of trauma in the aftermath of the war. How does Brecht's theater model a complex process of negotiation between identification and estrangement, between self and other, in a way that parallels contemporary discourses of trauma? What does an analysis of Brechtian theater from the perspective of trauma studies contribute to an understanding of Brecht's works and avant-garde theater of the 1920s more generally? What might it contribute to contemporary trauma studies and the argument that representing trauma is impossible? Brecht's model of theater relies on an open process of negotiation between performance and audience; in other words, it provides an in-between space in which complex issues like trauma can be negotiated and worked through. Precisely by turning the spotlight on to the medium of drama itself, Brecht reveals both the possibility of a drama of trauma (a drama that 'represents' trauma) while also indicating the trauma inherent in drama (the necessary suspension of belief and disbelief, the simultaneous reaction of empathy and alienation, etc. that is always required on the part of the spectator).

An analysis that recognizes the very medium of theater as being essentially traumatic is particularly relevant for the avant-garde theater of the 1920s. The aesthetics of this theater – whether it is Expressionist, Futurist, Russian, or Brechtian theater – foregrounds theatricality first and foremost and conveys its message by the very act of breaking, rather than constructing, the illusion of the stage. According to Silvija Jestrovic:

Avant-garde art tends to depart radically from mimetic principles and generate meaning, not as content but as form – through composition and montage. This

practice of abolishing the form and content dichotomy, which prompted Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky to conclude that form is content, points out that aesthetic form is no longer considered to be a vehicle of meaning but is meaning itself. (9)

In order to locate trauma in the avant-garde theater of the Weimar Republic, it is necessary, then, to examine the specific form and technique of drama rather than merely analyzing the content of a play. Despite the detailed stage descriptions given by many playwrights during this time, however, many of these techniques cannot be found in the text of the drama. As avant-garde theater generally stressed the visual over the verbal, many of its defining characteristics and aesthetic techniques can only be comprehended in the actual performance of the drama. For this reason, we must also turn to documents outside of the text such as photographs, reviews, theater programs, and so on in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the performance and the space of negotiation created between the drama and the audience.

In his essay “Was ist das epische Theater?” Benjamin compares Brecht’s theater with a film strip, both of which portray a halting and interrupted form of temporality: “das epische Theater rückt, den Bildern des Filmstreifens vergleichbar, in Stößen vor” (*Versuche über Brecht* 29). The epic theater, Benjamin argues, produces a rupture of traditional modes of temporality and, in this sense, performs a function similar to that of the modern cinema. The songs, gesture-based acting, and posters and captions (*Beschriftungen*) of epic theater are all designed to interrupt the illusion of a continuous temporality so as to produce a shock-effect in the viewer. Thus Benjamin continues, “seine Grundform ist die des Chocks, mit dem die einzelnen, wohl abgehobenen Situationen des Stücks aufeinandertreffen” (29). Shock lies at the foundations of epic theater in that it isolates situations by interrupting the flow of time and then juxtaposing the very situations that have just been torn apart. Again, this is a strategy very similar to that of (photo)montage in which temporally disparate elements are brought into spatial proximity. There is an implicit violence taking place here, one that

produces a response of shock on the part of the audience. In fact, Alfred Döblin has described epic narrative in such a way that the art of montage immediately comes to mind: “Epik könne man im Gegensatz zur Dramatik sozusagen mit der Schere in einzelne Stücke schneiden” (quoted in Jameson 43). Furthermore, Benjamin’s comparison between epic theatre and film is particularly revealing in light of his conception of film as a “training mechanism” for the shocks of modernity. Just as a film strip consists of cuts and jumps from one image to another, epic theatre isolates situations or gestures in order to juxtapose them, highlighting similarities of temporally disparate moments but also emphasizing the collective features of what was traditionally understood as individual expression. A new relationship between fragment and whole is constructed.

According to Benjamin, interruption of temporality lies at the foundation of epic theatre: “Der retardierende Charakter der Unterbrechung, der episodische Charakter der Umrahmung sind es, welche das gestische Theater zu einem epischen machen” (*Versuche über Brecht* 10). Both the gestural acting techniques and the episodic character of the performance contribute to the character of temporal delay or belatedness which defines epic theatre. Interruptions, pauses, and caesuras thus form the basis of Brecht’s theatre of alienation and play a central role in the aesthetics of reception which call for active reflection and involvement on the part of the spectator. These empty spaces in the performance give the spectator time to analyze and interpret the actions on stage; moreover, the interruptions offer a space for the spectators to insert themselves into the narrative. Avant-garde theatre director Erwin Piscator has been said to have jokingly claimed that his stage designer, John Heartfield, was the real inventor of epic theatre and explained his assertion with the following story:

In the early days of the Proletarian Theatre, Heartfield arrived almost half an hour late for a performance, carrying with him a freshly-painted backdrop. He interrupted the piece, Karl Wittfogel’s *Die Krüppel*, and demanded to be allowed to hang his backdrop on the stage. A discussion between Piscator, Heartfield and the spectators

ensued, until it was finally agreed to put the backdrop in place, and the performance began afresh. (Patterson 131)

In this narrative, Heartfield's belatedness triggers a heated debate and, most importantly, a negotiation between spectators and text. It is especially interesting to note that John Heartfield, a Dadaist who created many trauma-inducing photomontages in the aftermath of the war, symbolically represents trauma in this biographical anecdote: not only is his arrival belated but it also results in the exploded boundary between text and spectator, or self and other.

In its defining characteristic of interruption, epic theatre brings both belatedness and shock to the fore and thus engages on a fundamental level with the cultural paradigm of trauma. According to Benjamin, Brecht's epic theatre disrupts the linear flow of time to produce what he calls a "dialectics at a standstill." By focusing on *Gestus*, Brecht's theatre breaks behaviors and attitudes into the smallest elements – those elements which expose both the essence of man and the relationship between the individual and the collective.

Die Geste demonstriert die soziale Bedeutung und Anwendbarkeit der Dialektik. [...] Immanent dialektisches Verhalten ist es, was im Zustand – als Abdruck menschlicher Gebärden, Handlungen und Worte – blitzartig klargelegt wird. Der Zustand, den das epische Theater aufdeckt, ist die Dialektik im Stillstand. (*Versuche über Brecht* 20)

Thus, by freezing (or even framing) a particular gesture, Brecht's theatre creates a dialectic in which the social or collective undertones of individual actions are brought to light. The physical body is portrayed here as the core of human subjectivity: exteriority is presented as the deepest form of individual subjectivity precisely because it is, in fact, a social construction.<sup>54</sup> The following section will therefore examine the role of the body in modern

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<sup>54</sup> Helmut Lethen argues that this emphasis on exteriority and physical gesture is a sign of a "shame culture": "In a culture based on shame, 'perceived being' (Pierre Bourdieu) predominates over other possible constructions of existence. Interior signs refer back to where they are grounded in the body; feelings are expressed through physical gestures. By causing the self to appear as the object of others' perceptions, 'shame documents itself through the body'" (*Cool Conduct* 16). Regarding postwar German thought, he argues that the "exaggerated affirmation of a culture of exteriority, rooted in shame, could not nullify the effects of a persisting internalized culture of guilt" (15).

theatre and delineate the role that trauma played in the reconceptualization of human subjectivity after the First World War.

### **“Wie aufgezogene Maschinen”: Traumatized Subjects in Toller’s *Die Wandlung* (1919) and *Hinkemann* (1924)**

Ernst Toller’s early dramas, *Die Wandlung* (1919), *Masse Mensch* (1919/1920), and *Die Maschinenstürmer* (1922), are often highly expressionistic in their montage-like sequencing and the tendency to blur the boundary between dream and reality. In fact, the stage directions in *Die Wandlung* suggest performing certain scenes (or “Bilder”) as “schattenhaft wirklich, in innerlicher Traumferne” (12) and in this way highlight the subjective experience and inner life of the characters. On the other hand, however, Toller’s use of distancing devices such as prologues or epilogues encourages the viewer to take into account the wider political causes and implications of these subjective experiences. For example, *Die Wandlung* includes a highly abstract “Vorspiel, das auch als Nachspiel gedacht werden kann” (13). It consists of a dialogue between “der Kriegstod” and “der Friedenstod” in which the figure of war death tries to display his greater power by calling the skeletons out of their military graves and having them march with their crosses as weapons. When the Kriegstod orders his soldiers to take their heads and roll them on the ground, Friedenstod breaks out in laughter and accuses Kriegstod of hypocrisy: “Sie spielen sich als Sieger auf/ und sind geschlagen - / Der Krieg hat Sie geschlagen” (15). This scene serves as a scathing commentary on war and advocates a political reading, rather than merely encouraging sympathetic identification with the characters of the play.

Furthermore, this prologue introduces the amputations of war and bodily fragmentation as a central part of modern subjectivity. When the Kriegstod commands his army of skeletons to remove their heads and roll them on the floor, he not only produces a

ridiculous image of military discipline and drilling, but also constructs a model of subjectivity in which body parts are mere appendages that can be removed and replaced at will. In other words, the human subject is presented here as something that can be disassembled and reassembled. This motif is continued in the rest of *Die Wandlung* and epitomized in the sixth image – one of the play’s most startling and disheartening scenes. A professor lectures on the advancements of medical science and proudly asserts their capability of keeping pace with the advancements in military technology. He calls for his “Musterexemplare” to be brought before the audience:

Wie aufgezogene Maschinen schreiten von irgendwo sieben nackte Krüppel. Ihre Körper bestehen aus Rümpfen. Arme und Beine fehlen. Statt ihrer bemerkt man künstliche schwarze Arme und Beine, die sich automatisch schlenkernd bewegen. In Reih und Glied marschieren sie vor die Leinwand. (30)

The cripples in this scene are portrayed as machines rather than people; their artificial arms and legs move mechanically and automatically as they march across the stage. While this play is largely expressionistic in its montage sequencing and dream-like qualities, this scene’s representation of a mechanic and artificially constructed human figure simultaneously recalls the abstract dance theatre of the Bauhaus and the cut-and-paste photomontages of Berlin Dada. The trauma of war is manifested again as a physical wound in the body of the cripples – a wound that is both absence (of flesh) and presence (of prosthesis) – and as a new model of subjectivity in which the individual can be disassembled and reassembled as needed.

A similar model is presented in Toller’s *Masse Mensch* in which modern technology is purported to transform an entire body into a single limb. In the final scene when Albert becomes possessed by the machine he reiterates what will happen as a result of the new technology in the factories: “Es leitet ein grausames Uhrwerk die Menschen / In freudlosem Takte... / Ticktack der Morgen, ticktack der Mittag... ticktack der Abend... / Einer ist Arm, einer ist Bein... einer ist Hirn...” (140). The rhythmic language in this speech seems to

mimic the mechanization of industrial life, and the long spaces in between phrases underscores the fragmented nature of modern subjectivity. As will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, Brecht takes this concept of the fragmented and reconfigurable subject even farther in *Mann ist Mann* – a play in which the protagonist is “ummontiert... wie ein Auto” (202).

Out of Ernst Toller’s plays, his 1924 *Hinkemann* deals perhaps most explicitly with the traumatic aftermath of the First World War: it portrays the tortured life of a crippled war veteran, a man who is “gar kein Mann mehr” (17) because the war left him castrated. Thus, he is the ultimate figure of emasculation - not only metaphorically but literally as well. The fact that Hinkemann’s wound is not visible to the world means that it can easily be read as a metaphor for all of the invisible wounds caused by the destruction of the First World War – namely, the psychological wounds which were at the center of so many intense and controversial discussions following the war. His traumatized state is further revealed through his use of language: he often speaks incoherently and stutteringly, and is entirely unable to communicate his feelings to his wife. This inability to construct a coherent narrative, to assemble his memories into a unified and chronological story, betrays his traumatic past and his failure to work through it. Thus, Toller’s drama can be read as the portrait of a man who attempts, but is ultimately unable, to work through his traumatized past.

As in many other postwar dramas, the relationship between trauma and the body plays a central role in *Hinkemann*. This play is first and foremost about bodily mutilation as is quickly revealed in the opening scene in which Hinkemann stares in shock at a small bird in his hand and tells his wife the following story: “eine Mutter blendet mit rotglühender Stricknadel ihrem Distelfinken die Augen, weil so ein Zeitungsblatt geschrieben hat, blinde Vögel singen besser...” (195-96). His fervent compassion for the little goldfinch is explained when asks “Wie haben sie uns zugerichtet, dich und mich” (196). Hinkemann identifies with

the goldfinch because they have both been mutilated – he has been castrated and his little friend has been blinded (which, interestingly, is equated with castration in Freud’s psychoanalytic theories). A moment later, Hinkemann takes the bird and throws it against the wall in order to give it “ein Schicksal, das gütiger ist als meines” (196). In fact, Hinkemann’s identification with animals throughout the entire play might be read as a probing of the borders that define us as human. Now that his body is no longer an ‘organic whole’ but is punctured by absence and lack, he is portrayed as straddling the boundary between the human and animal realms.

Ironically, Hinkemann finds a job at a fairground as “der deutsche Held!... die deutsche Kraft! Der Liebling der eleganten Damenwelt!” (208), and here he is unexpectedly presented as the epitome of strength and masculinity. Yet, even at this other extreme, he is continually compared with an animal. In this context, Hinkemann is described as a “deutscher Bärenmensch! Frißt Ratten und Mäuse bei lebendigem Leibe vor Augen des verehrten Publikums!” (208). According to one critic, this scene should be read as a political metaphor advocating Toller’s antiwar stance: “The capitalist state creates propaganda in favor of war as a means of gaining manhood through conquest. In fact, however, the opposite is true. Young men are robbed of their human potential by being reduced to beasts killing other beasts for the capitalists’ profit, not their own.” (Cafferty 49). I would argue, though, that this scene is more than political commentary; it is not merely capitalism and militarism which are being questioned here, but also the construction of modern identity more generally. Toller’s play portrays the struggle of living up to traditional conceptions of identity in a fragmented, modern world. It presents the illusion of projecting a unified and organic subjectivity in the aftermath of a war which mutilated and fragmented the human body to such a degree that traditional modes of subjectivity (here traditional conceptions of masculinity) can no longer be upheld.

In the fourth scene, Hinkemann goes to the local pub to get rid of the taste of animal blood in his throat, and joins a conversation about politics with several other workers. When Paul Grosshahn enters and exposes Hinkemann in front of everyone by calling him a eunuch and a fake, Hinkemann tells them: “Worte habt ihr, schöne Worte, heilige Worte, vom ewigen Glück. Die Worte sind gut für gesunde Menschen! Ihr seht eure Grenzen nicht...”

(225-26) According to Hinkemann, his healthy friends are unaware of their boundaries. Just as traditional conceptions of identity focused on the interior rather than that which has been relegated to the exterior, so do Hinkemann’s friends live their lives with the illusion that they are organic wholes, unaware of the permeable boundaries that form their identities.

Hinkemann, on the other hand, lives his life with a gaping hole, an absence, that continually reminds him of the thin and fragile boundary between himself and everything ‘other.’ It is perhaps for this reason that, unlike all the other characters, he can feel such empathy and compassion for the animal world: the injured gold finch is as much a part of him as the rats and mice that he is forced to eat at the fairgrounds. Hinkemann’s mutilated body has left not only a gaping wound but has also shattered any notions of a self-contained and organic identity in which he had previously believed.

This pub scene depicts a political discussion among the workers; yet, the central problem really centers on an identity crisis. Hinkemann repeatedly questions what place an amputated veteran can have in their imagined future society, and how a person can possibly find happiness again after he has suffered from the traumatic wounds of the First World War. In fact, anxieties about traditional models of subjectivity were widespread in the Weimar Republic. Film critic Richard McCormick has written extensively about a crisis of male subjectivity in Weimar culture which reveals itself in many well-known Weimar films:

The anxieties depicted so elaborately in the dream sequence [of Pabst’s *Geheimnisse der Seele*] are explicit references to the so-called crisis of male subjectivity so evident in Weimar cinema, and Weimar culture in general. I have referred in another article to that crisis as a ‘discourse of castration,’ a somewhat hyperbolic term that seems

especially appropriate for this film... In Weimar cinema this male crisis tends to be depicted in order to displace fears about the loss of social autonomy into the sexual realm. (“Private Anxieties/Public Projections” 10)

What McCormick terms a “discourse of castration” can justifiably be applied to Toller’s drama, which performs both a literal castration and a metaphorical castration to traditional conceptions of identity.

Whereas Toller’s *Die Maschinenstürmer* depicts bodily fragmentation as a horrific but temporary phenomenon, *Hinkemann* accepts this state of fragmentation as inevitable and irreversible. The central concern is no longer a single body taking over the function of the whole but, rather, a gaping wound or absence that tears at the very fabric of the subject’s identity such that it can no longer function as a unified whole. In Bertolt Brecht’s works, this fabric will be represented primarily by skin – alligator skin, shark skin, yellow skin, African skin – and becomes a central metaphor in almost every one of his early plays. The next section of this chapter will therefore examine discourses of the body and identity in Brecht’s *Trommeln in der Nacht*, identifying the drama’s varied references to skin as a defining metaphor for the traumatized, modern subject. Whereas Toller’s plays make frequent use of expressionist techniques in order to delineate temporality as subjective while blurring the boundaries between dream and reality, Brecht’s plays will engage more structurally with discourses of trauma as dissociation and as a breakdown between self and other.

### **“Krokodilhaut”: The Boundary between Self and Other in Brecht’s *Trommeln in der Nacht* (1922)**

Brecht’s *Trommeln in der Nacht* incorporates many expressionist elements and, in fact, the drama is set to play “in einer Novembarnacht von der Abend- bis zur Frühdämmerung,” thus replicating the temporal time span of Georg Kaiser’s well-known expressionist drama *Von morgens bis mitternachts*. However, it quickly becomes clear that

Brecht's early drama also contains many of the distancing features that the playwright expounds upon later in his explicit formulations of epic theater. Most obvious, perhaps, is the use of stage signs and posters which forces spectators to actively reflect upon the events taking place upon the stage. The stage directions for *Trommeln in der Nacht* suggest hanging two signs in the theater: one of them states "Jeder Mann ist der Beste in seiner Haut" and in this way immediately reveals the significance of the physical body and corporeality in the play. Even more interesting, however, is the fact that the body part mentioned in this quotation is not just any body part but a *boundary* between the interior and exterior of the body. A dichotomy between the physical and psychological is brought to the fore in this seemingly simple sentence. And, in fact, the more one reads it, the more one becomes aware of the complexities of the quote: the skin is conveyed here as a shell which contains the individual and, yet, the idea that a man is "der Beste" in his skin seems to imply that this is not a rigid boundary – rather, the self is placed in tension with the physical body. In light of the bodily mutilation and amputations caused by the First World War, this allusion to the permeability and destructibility of corporeal boundaries is especially interesting: the skin as an effective boundary between the self and other is startlingly thrown into question.

Brecht's dramaturgy, as well as much of the avant-garde theater of the 1920s, produces a new mode of subjectivity that highlights surface, physicality, and externality. It has often been observed that modern literature moves away from the interiorization of the bourgeois world with its emphasis on the private sphere and the interior spaces of the living room and so on; instead, physiognomy, gesture, and posture become the dominant modes of representing a radical exteriorization of the world. In this sense, Brecht's works are paradigmatic of modern drama in that he develops *Gestus* as a primary mode of acting technique. *Gestus* is exemplified in plays such as *Mann ist Mann* in which the protagonist is reassembled (*ummontiert*) by taking on a new posture (*Haltung*), thus representing human

subjectivity as exteriority. However, this turn in literary depictions of human subjectivity does not deny interiority altogether: rather, the surface becomes increasingly understood as depth. According to literary critic Rainer Nägele, in modern literature “skin-deep is the deepest human depth. Anything ‘deeper’ than the skin is as foreign and ‘exterior’ as the surrounding world [...] The skin alone allows for the experience of ‘depth’ and closeness, while at the same time it marks an inexorable limit. It is the most remarkable caesura we know.” (150). Thus, the opening quotation of *Trommeln in der Nacht* indicates the significance of skin as a central bodily organ, one which is both surface and depth, and which therefore collapses the distinction between externality and internality.

The second stage sign described by the stage directions exemplifies a crucial aspect of Brecht’s dramaturgical theories of the late 20s and early 30s: the sign says “Glotzt nicht so romantisch.” Written more than a decade before Brecht’s essay “Verfremdungseffekte in der Chinesischen Schauspielkunst” (1935), this play epitomizes the concept of *Verfremdung* in its direct address to the viewers which pleads for a rational, rather than an empathic or “romantic,” response to the events on stage and thus attempts to create a sense of alienation in the viewer. The protagonist, Andreas Kragler, repeats this phrase in a final monologue in which he explicitly points to the artificiality and theatricality of the theatre:

Ich hab’s bis zum Hals... Es ist gewöhnliches Theater. Es sind Bretter und ein Papiermond und dahinter die Fleischbank, die allein ist leibhaftig [...] Das Geschrei ist alles vorbei, morgen früh, aber ich liege im Bett morgen früh und vielfältige mich, dass ich nicht aussterbe. Glotzt nicht so romantisch! Ihr Wucherer! (228)

By pointing out the artificiality of the stage setting in his reference to the paper moon and the boards which make up the stage design, Kragler attempts to invalidate any feelings of empathic identification on the part of the audience. Although Kragler is back together with his beloved, he tells his viewers not to misunderstand this as a romantic ending: he is going to bed with Anna in order to reproduce, not for love.

Yet I would argue that, just as in Brecht's later plays, the drama still leaves ample room for empathic identification. *Trommeln in der Nacht* portrays an emotionally-charged narrative in which the protagonist returns home from war only to find his beloved engaged to another man, and, in the aftermath of the First World War, this would not have been an unfamiliar story. In fact, a large number of these *Heimkehrdramen* were produced in the aftermath of the war, among them Ernst Toller's *Hinkemann* and *Die Wandlung*. Thus, one can imagine that spectators would have easily identified with the characters on stage and become emotionally involved in the plot. It is precisely for this reason that Kragler has to yell "Glottz nicht so romantisch" – a message which is directed both at the Spartacist revolutionaries in the play as well as towards the audience watching the performance. In fact, I would argue that the entire play centers on a tension between the form and content: whereas the plot often invites empathic identification, the form continuously interrupts this identification by simultaneously producing a sense of alienation. Thus, Brecht's theater does not entirely reject empathic identification, but, rather, counterbalances it with the use of a distancing *Verfremdungseffekt*. Silvja Jestrovic has made a similar observation, and argues that Brecht's plays require "that the audience be simultaneously distanced from the art work and drawn into it even more strongly in order to complete its meaning" (6).<sup>55</sup> In this sense, Brecht's theatre is first and foremost about a process of negotiation. My analysis of *Trommeln in der Nacht* highlights the various tensions which structure the work, particularly the tension between empathy and alienation, and examines these in relation to contemporary conceptions of trauma.

The play begins with several tensions in place: first, the geographic tension between Africa and Berlin highlighted by the stage sign "Afrika" which hangs above an ordinary-

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<sup>55</sup> Reinhold Grimm has also made this observation and commented that many earlier critics misinterpreted "Brecht's juxtaposition [of emotion and reason] as being an absolute opposition. Invariably, they have overlooked a footnote that decreed, clearly and unequivocally, that the distinction between emotion and reason did not signify an absolute opposition but just a shift of emphasis (Gewichtsverschiebung)." (Mews (ed.), *Bertolt Brecht Reference Companion* 37)

looking Berlin apartment. This sign also indicates the broader tension between presence and absence which reappears throughout the play. Although Kragler is absent in the opening scene, he is also persistently present in the form of a photograph and in the thoughts and conversations of the family. Herr and Frau Balicke continually try to confirm his absence by describing him as a corpse, or as “begraben und verfault” (178). Murk, Anna’s new fiancé, does the same by declaring “der muss raus aus das Geschäft! Keinen kalten Mann im Bett zwischen uns!” (181). By repeatedly announcing Kragler’s absence, the characters simultaneously ensure that he has a strong presence. Similarly, the mysterious “Afrika” sign which sets the scene performs an alienating function in that it evokes false expectations in the audience. Despite the apparent absence of Africa, however, it is also simultaneously present in the language used throughout this scene: Balicke asks “Muss es ein Neger sein?” and compares Anna’s eyes with those of a crocodile. Likewise, he compares her love for Kragler “mit der Affenliebe” (185), thus continually using figures of speech which bring Africa to mind.

Throughout this opening scene, Kragler is referred to solely as a physical body with a particular emphasis on the appearance of his face, but he is never recognized as a human subject with an internal life of his own. Most of the time he is merely described as a decayed corpse. Once he arrives back in Berlin, he tries to re-establish his existence by declaring “mein Name ist Kragler”; yet Frau Balicke refuses to acknowledge him. She stares speechlessly at him without responding to any of his attempts at a dialogue. Interestingly, even Kragler’s monologue does little to help establish him as a living human being: “Melde gehorsamst: habe mich in Algier als *Gespens*t etabliert. Aber jetzt hat der *Leichnam* mörderisch Appetit. Ich könnte Würmer fressen!” (186-87, my italics). By echoing the very language used to describe his absence earlier in the scene (as a ghost, as a corpse, as buried underground with the worms), Kragler seemingly contradicts his own presence. In this sense,

Frau Balicke's lack of response is justified: she is confronted with a ghost rather than a human being, and is therefore unable to enter into dialogue with him.

In the following scene, the characters continue to describe Kragler as anything but human; in fact, the entire play is permeated with animal metaphors and ultimately questions the distinction between the human and the animal. In the beginning of the second act, Babusch describes Kragler as a wolf from Africa, yet, at various times, he is also described as a hyena, a fish, and a pig. One of the more dominant metaphors is that of the crocodile and this is used most often in reference to Kragler's skin: he is described as a "krokodilhäuterne Liebhaber aus Afrika" (203). Early on, he also describes himself as having "Haut wie ein Hai, schwarz" which is a clear contrast with the look of his skin before he left for war – described as "Milch und Äpfel." The shark and the crocodile are both non-native animals to Germany and are intimately tied to notions of the exotic or the 'other.' In this sense, Kragler is unmistakably coded as 'other' through his skin.

The focus on Kragler's skin is especially significant in relation to the drama's construction of subjectivity. At one point during their argument, Murk asks "Soll ich mich verkriechen, weil du die afrikanische Haut umhast?" (201) and in this way points to Kragler's otherness and, interestingly, refers to skin as something that one wears as if it were an article of clothing (note the use of the verb *umhaben* rather than simply *haben*).<sup>56</sup> This clearly relates back to the *Beschriftung* mentioned in the stage directions which likewise implies an alterability or adaptability of the skin one wears. At the same time, however, it seems that the skin is intimately linked to one's self and, in particular, one's experiences. When Kragler comes back from Africa, his face and skin have been transformed by these experiences. In order to explain that he has come back to life, he tells Anna: "Jetzt bin ich kein Gespenst mehr. Siehst du mein Gesicht wieder? Ist es wie eine Krokodilhaut? [...] Ich bin im salzigen

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<sup>56</sup> Brecht's *Im Dickicht der Städte* (1924) likewise makes use of the skin as a metaphor and often refers to it as something that can be put on or removed just like clothing.

Wasser gewesen” (194). According to Konrad Feilchenfeldt, this crocodile metaphor is a reference to Alexander von Humboldt’s *Ansichten der Natur* as well as Raabe’s *Abu Telfan* in which alligators are said to dig themselves into the mud to dry (*im Schlamm eintrocknen*) and only emerge again in the rainy season: “In diesem schönen Buch [...] wird geschildert, wie irgendwo in Mittel- oder Südamerika, an irgendeinem großen Strome die Alligatoren während des heißen Sommers im Schlamm eintrocknen, und erst in der Regensaison von neuem erwachen...” (39). Similarly, Kragler, who is alternately described as a dried date or as a wet alligator, has recently emerged from a deep sleep of death. Kragler’s skin openly reflects the fact that he has just arrived from Africa and, in fact, he *is* his skin: there is no characterization of Kragler that goes ‘deeper’ than his skin during the course of the play. Yet, Kragler’s character is perhaps the most complex character in *Trommeln in der Nacht* – he certainly has more depth than Murk and Anna’s father, both of whom are too concerned with their bourgeois values to recognize the vital truth in Kragler’s statements. In this sense, Kragler’s skin *is* his depth; one could say that he wears his experiences, or his self, on his skin.

Another interesting indicator of Kragler’s “otherness” is the movement of bodily fluids mentioned continuously throughout the drama. Whereas the father is often described as sweating profusely and therefore needing to change his shirt, Kragler explains that he is unable to understand anything because his head is filled with sweat. “Es ist alles wie weggewischt in meinem Kopf,” declares the recently returned soldier, “ich habe nur mehr Schweiss drin, ich verstehe nicht mehr gut” (192). The fact that everything in his head has been washed away because it is flooded by sweat also calls to mind Freud’s conception of trauma in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* in which trauma is described as ‘a flooding of the psychic apparatus’ by large masses of stimuli. In Julia Kristeva’s essay on abjection, the process of expelling bodily fluids is associated with the necessary expulsion of the abject in order to

remain the subject or “I” (*Powers of Horror: an essay on abjection*). Kragler’s inability to rid himself of his bodily fluids might then be understood as an inability to establish himself as a subject.<sup>57</sup> Thus, he stands in contrast to Balicke and Murk both of whom are often described in the stage directions as drying off their sweat: “[er] trocknet den Schweiß ab” (182). Furthermore, Kragler is not recognized as a human being until he does start expelling bodily fluids: “Ich bin wie ein altes Tier zu dir gekommen. *Stille*. Ich habe eine Haut wie ein Hai, Schwarz. *Stille*. Und ich bin gewesen wie Milch und Blut. *Stille*. Und dann blute ich immerfort, es läuft einfach fort von mir...” (193). At this point, when Kragler describes the blood that is flowing out of him, Anna suddenly recognizes him for the first time. She yells “Andree!” and thus finally acknowledges Kragler as the man who he claims to be. Thus, Kragler undergoes a kind of transformation in which he starts off as a ghost or corpse, then is described as an animal, and finally is recognized as a subject (albeit only by Anna since Balicke and Murk continue with their attempts to deny his existence).

Examining the boundaries between the animal and the human is also central in discourses of trauma following the First World War. Ferenczi’s 1916 essay on war neurosis, for example, explicitly compares a person experiencing psychic shock with someone in the earliest stages of human development on both an ontogenic and phylogenetic scale:

Die Folge eines solchen psychischen Schocks kann sehr gut die neurotische Regression gewesen sein, d.h. der Rückfall in eine (phyllo- und ontogenetisch) längst überwundene Entwicklungsstufe. .. Die Stufe nun, auf die diese zwei Neurotiker regredierte, scheint das infantile Stadium des ersten Lebensjahres zu sein, einer Zeit, in der sie noch nicht ordentlich gehen und stehen konnten. Wir wissen, dass dieses Stadium auch ein phylogenetisches Vorbild hat, ist doch der aufrechte Gang ein ziemlich später Erwerb unserer Vorfahren in der Säugetierklasse. (“Über zwei Typen der Kriegshysterie” 73)

Trauma is presented here as a condition which causes a regression to an animal-like state and, in this sense, contributes to a blurring of the boundary between human and animal. Brecht’s

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<sup>57</sup> According to one critic, Kragler’s association with fluids marks him as feminine and other. See Hedwig Fraunhofer’s article “The Fascist Brecht? The Rhetoric of Alterity in *Drums in the Night*” in *Brecht Yearbook/Das Brecht-Jahrbuch*, 22 (1997): 356-73.

*Trommeln in der Nacht* engages and contributes to this discourse of trauma through its unique use of the grotesque as a means of challenging the boundary between the human and the animal.

The grotesque portrait of the protagonist in *Trommeln in der Nacht* clearly complicates the borders between the human and the animal, but it also challenges the boundary between life and death, as well as between fiction and reality. One of Balicke's monologues brings all of these themes to the fore: "Affenkomödie!" he yells after Kragler's exit from the Picadilly bar. "Wollten Sie Fleisch haben? Das ist keine Fleischauktion! Pakken Sie Ihren roten Monde in und singen Sie Ihren Schimpansen vor. Was gehen mich Ihre Dattelbäume an. Sie sind überhaupt nur aus einem Roman. Wo haben Sie Ihren Geburtsschein?" (203). Several boundaries are challenged in this quotation. First, the boundary between flesh and spirit, or externality and internality, is highlighted once again. Second, the border between fact and fiction is called into question by the symbolism of the red moon. The moon, which is linked with romanticism and fiction throughout the play, is also associated with Africa in Balicke's monologue. By accusing Kragler of coming out of a novel, Balicke continues to deny his existence and even goes so far as to ask for his birth certificate as proof. Kragler is no more than fiction, he claims, and has come here to reclaim his flesh, his bodily existence. However, as I have already made clear, the binary of life and death is too reductive for Kragler's character; by embodying both self and other, both animal and human, he challenges the very boundaries between these constructs and complicates the conception of human subjectivity in the aftermath of the First World War.

According to Benjamin, epic theater removes the abyss that separates the audience from the stage. Just as Ernst Friedrich's close-ups of facial mutilation depicted an exploded boundary between the internal and external world and between the real and the aesthetic, Brecht's theatre similarly tears down a boundary, namely the fourth wall, and thus the

division between the stage and the audience. But it also aims to make the familiar strange and, in this way, tears down the boundary between reality and fiction. In fact, Benjamin describes the abyss of traditional theater as separating “die Spieler vom Publikum wie die Toten von den Lebendigen” (quoted in *Versuche über Brecht* 30). By removing this abyss, epic theater contributes to the conceptualization of a permeable boundary between the realms of audience and stage, the dead and the living. Brecht’s protagonist, Andreas Kragler, who is alternately described as a corpse or a ghost throughout the play, symbolizes this blurring of boundaries between the dead and the living. According to one critic, Kragler is “associated with water and putrefaction, the blurring of the borderline between living and dead matter, between solid matter and dissolution” (Fraunhofer 366). Thus, the refusal to subscribe to traditional boundaries, as it is embodied in the figure of Kragler, constructs a radically new conception of human subjectivity. It is the traumatized subject who can no longer be understood in terms of simplistic divisions of internal and external, or self and other.

Not only does the figure of the grotesque challenge and rearticulate the modern subject, but the central concept of temporality and, in particular, belatedness further questions traditional conceptions of the subject in Brecht’s early works. In fact, a new articulation of history introduced by Freud and expounded upon by Benjamin is often staged in Brecht’s works. According to Rainer Nagele,

the work of Freud and Benjamin articulates another history in a double sense. It is different from the linear time and continuity of historicism; but it is another history also in the more radical sense that it is indelibly marked and affected, even effected, by an unassimilable otherness, that we might call, with Lacan, the Other. (76)

This ‘unassimilable otherness’ is the constant intrusion and inescapable presence of Africa, the exotic, the swamp, the animal kingdom and especially the alligator in Brecht’s figure of Kragler. In this sense, the grotesque not only questions the physical and psychological boundaries of the human subject, but also contributes to a fundamental reconfiguration of the subject’s relationship to time and history. Bertolt Brecht’s 1926 *Mann ist Mann* similarly

constructs a new modern identity by reconfiguring the subject's relationship to time but does so more explicitly than in his earlier works. Here a man is reassembled and given a new personality as well as a new past, and a new future.

**“ein Mensch [wird] wie ein Auto ummontiert”: The Body in *Mann ist Mann* (1926)**

“Modernism is the radical subversion of the poetics of wholeness by the poetics of the caesura.” (Rainer Nägele 162)

As Brigid Doherty has argued in her dissertation on Berlin Dada and trauma, the subject of Dadaist photomontages was a “specifically modern body transformed by industrialized war, rationalized work, and metropolitan life” which the Dadaists then tore violently apart and “reassembled as though on an assembly line” (*Berlin Dada* xxv). The avant-garde theatre of the Weimar Republic likewise takes the modern body as its subject and uses it to construct a radically transformed conception of human subjectivity. Dolls, puppets, masks, and abstract figures all play an important role in this new formulation of modern subjectivity. In Brecht's theatre the human body is employed in various ways to question and challenge the limits of human subjectivity: this is done, as already mentioned, through negotiating the boundaries between animals and humans in the form of the grotesque as well as through the gestural acting techniques which pronounce surface and externality as subjectivity (in contrast to the interiorization of the bourgeois theatre). The earliest of Brecht's dramas which he explicitly associates with epic theatre, *Mann ist Mann* (1926), performs trauma in a manner similar to that of Dadaist photomontages. In fact, the protagonist is said to be disassembled and reassembled (*ummontiert*) during the course of the play, and the interlude (*Zwischenspruch*) by the Widow Leokadja Begbik describes exactly this process:

Herr Bertolt Brecht behauptet: Mann ist Mann.

Und das ist etwas, was jeder behaupten kann.  
Aber Herr Bertolt Brecht beweist auch dann  
Das man mit einem Menschen beliebig viel machen kann.  
Hier wird heute abend ein Mensch wie ein Auto ummontiert  
Ohne dass er irgend etwas dabei verliert. (202-203)

The representation of the human body in *Mann ist Mann* and in the Dadaist artworks of the immediate postwar years thus mirror each other in an uncanny way. However, in Brecht's play the *Ummontierung* of the protagonist is performed "ohne dass er irgend etwas dabei verliert" and this is a crucial difference in the approach taken by Brecht's theatre of alienation as opposed to that of the Dadaist photomontages. The subject is no more than his surface and thus does not lose anything by being disassembled and reassembled as someone else.

In *Mann ist Mann*, adaptability is viewed as something positive and desirable. When Galy Gay repeats the name that the other soldiers have given him – Jeraiah Jip – the soldier Polly comments: "Es ist angenehm, gebildete Leute zu treffen, die sich in jeder Lage zu benehmen wissen" (107). Thus, in Brecht's drama it is not the soul-searching, self-exploratory journey of the *Bildungsroman* which makes an educated man; rather, it is the quality of being able to adapt to new situations that make an individual 'gebildet' in the modern world. One of the other soldiers questions the ease with which Galy Gay has taken on his new persona: "Es ist schon ekelhaft, wenn ein Mammut, nur weil man ihm ein paar Flintenläufe unter die Nase halt, sich lieber in eine Laus verwandelt, als dass er sich anständig zu seinen Vätern versammelt" (151). But Uria quickly responds with "nein, das ist ein Beweis von Lebenskraft" (152) thus again confirming Galy Gay's adaptability as a positive trait, even a trait that conveys strength of will.

Perhaps most interesting, though, is the metaphor of taking on new skin which appears again in Brecht's work. "So einer verwandelt sich ganz von selber," exclaims Polly, "Wenn ihr den in einen Tümpel schmeißt, dann wachsen ihm in 2 Tagen zwischen den Fingern Schwimmhäute." (17) This metaphor immediately brings to mind Brecht's

employment of the grotesque in Brecht's *Trommeln in der Nacht* and the permeability of boundaries between the animal and the human, the self and the other. In fact, Galy Gay is also repeatedly compared with an animal: in the opening scene his wife says he is "wie ein Elefant, der das schwerfälligste Tier der Tierwelt ist" (95) and in the final scene the other soldiers call after him with "Lauf nicht so schnell, Jippie! Das kommt davon, weil du ein Herz hast wie ein Löwe" (152). Thus, Galy Gay's transformation was so successful that he is no longer the slow, lumbering elephant from the first scene, but is now a fast-paced lion. Just as if he had changed from one animal into another, Galy Gay has truly become Jeraiah Jip. It is no longer merely the skin that has changed like Kragler's skin in *Trommeln in der Nacht*; in *Mann ist Mann* we are confronted with the transformation of one person into another. This occurs so easily because it is only Galy Gay's outer appearance and behavior which needs to be adapted: in Brecht's play surface *is* depth, and thus, as soon as the surface has altered, so has the entire person.

According to Elswit, "the war established that bodies could be deconstructed... further enabling what might be seen as a progressive desanctification, after which bodies were no longer set apart by their intrinsically whole nature but were entirely alterable by human means" (390). This desanctification of the human body is largely brought on by the new developments in medical technology and, in particular, by the advancements and popularization of prosthetic technology. This discourse of the human body as alterable and adaptable is reflected in the Dadaist photomontages but also, as I have shown in this chapter, in the early post-WWI theatrical performances that experimented with new techniques for representing the human figure as abstract and fragmented. Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung* portrays the mutilated and crippled war veterans who have been fitted with new body parts, thus reducing each limb to no more than the sum of its functions. Bertolt Brecht's *Mann ist Mann*, on the other hand, takes this notion even farther by representing the disassembly and

reassembly of a healthy and normally functioning individual. The modern subject is no longer a single, cohesive, and organic whole; rather, the s/he is an alterable, adaptable, and exchangeable body that can be assembled into various individuals depending on the external circumstances.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

Although the body is not portrayed as a stable or permanent entity in early Weimar theatre, it is identified as a powerful site of resistance. As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the increased focus on the body and physicality in 1920s theater is related to the crisis of language which began around 1900 and continues well into the Weimar years (as, for example, in Hofmannsthal's 1921 play "Der Schwierige"). Silence thus becomes a significant trope in the dramatic works of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the form of pauses and caesuras. However, in the aftermath of the First World War, this increasing suspicion of language takes a decidedly physical turn: rather than merely making use of silence as a site of resistance to language, theatrical productions of the postwar years dramatically highlight physicality and gesture. Thus, the body itself becomes a site of resistance – resistance not only to traditional (and now inadequate) forms of communication, but also to the concept of the bourgeois subject with its focus on interiority. The trauma of modernity has exploded the boundaries of the subject in such a way that "interiority" can no longer suffice as a model for understanding human subjectivity. Thus, mirroring Freud's turn to physicality in his postwar conception of trauma as a breach between inside and outside, Weimar avant-garde theater complicates and challenges the boundary between interiority and exteriority through its representations of animality, skin, surface, physicality, and the reassembled body. As the next chapter will illustrate, Weimar cinema picks up on many of

these themes but ultimately develops its own medium-specific vocabulary for representing this exploded boundary between self and other.

## **Chapter 4: Animating Trauma: Exploring the Boundary between Animate Subjects and Inanimate Objects in the Cinematic Works of Paul Wegener, Robert Wiene, and F. W. Murnau**

### **Introduction: Moving Pictures and the “Aesthetic of Astonishment”**

Hans Richter's 1927 short film, *Vormittagsspuk*, depicts a world in which inanimate objects unexpectedly come to life: hats fly into the sky like birds, suit ties unravel and perform a rebellious dance, revolvers stubbornly jump out of hands only to twist and clone themselves on the floor. While this work could be viewed as a lighthearted and comical depiction of everyday objects in rebellion, it is also a serious reflection on a particular moment in history in which the boundary between inanimate objects and animate subjects has been suddenly and shockingly thrown into question. Indeed, the revolvers explicitly allude to the historical violence and trauma of the First World War, which persists as a subtext throughout the short film. In one scene, a human body is superimposed over a shooting target; the head slowly becomes detached and begins turning in circles above the body. A quick editing cut switches from this disturbing scene to a close-up of the revolver, which is depicted here as a mechanical device with a will of its own. In fact, most of the framing and editing work of the film alludes to the inherent dangers of modernization and the technologization of everyday life. The entire film is regularly interrupted by the close-up of a clock, indicating the ceaseless ticking of minutes and seconds which has become such an inescapable part of modern life. When the camera does turn its lens on human figures, they not only seem lost and confused but also frequently appear to be more mechanical than the objects surrounding them: the row of men stroking their beards, the men in suits crawling in a

line across the lawn, the men marching forwards and backwards, as well as the man repeatedly climbing up and down a ladder. The abstract images of bodies breaking apart, each body part floating off into a separate direction, powerfully allude to the horror and trauma of the First World War. Yet, it is ultimately the depiction of the *movement* and *life* of inanimate objects which most poignantly conveys the confusion and terror of the postwar years in this avant-garde short film, and the semblance of a returned order at the end of the film is merely an illusion.

Not surprisingly, the animation of inanimate things plays a central role in early film discourse. Tom Gunning's analysis of early cinema as the emergence of an "aesthetic of astonishment," for example, is clearly linked to the significance of film as a medium of animation: "It is too infrequently pointed out," he argues, "that in the earliest Lumière exhibitions the films were initially presented as frozen unmoving images, projections of still photographs. Then, flaunting a mastery of visual showmanship, the projector began cranking and the image moved" (118). In fact, it was the effect of this still image being transformed into a moving image that created a sense of astonishment in the viewers (and not, as is often believed, the fear that a real train was heading towards them). In other words, the astonishment is directed at the potential of this new medium as an animator, rather than at the semblance of reality that the audience perceived in the projected image. Anton Kaes and Thomas Levin make a similar argument:

In silent film, things and places gained a life of their own, the distorted facades, the crooked little side streets, the labyrinthine halls and corridors play 'a role.' [...] As in the romantic horror novel, the scene of action was anthropomorphized; through extreme stylization, windows, walls and roofs appeared to be animated, lending dynamic expression to the protagonist's emotional state. (139)

This anthropomorphizing of things is directly related to the *animation* of things; through movement, previously inanimate objects are brought to life. In this way, cinema blurs the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate, or between subjects and objects. In fact,

Francesco Caseti has taken this argument one step further by claiming that cinema “encourages a fusion between subject and object” (*The Eye of a Century* 166) and it is precisely this altered relationship between subject and object which I will explore in my chapter on the trauma of Weimar cinema.

This chapter carries out a cultural analysis of Weimar cinema in order to better understand the complex interaction between individual filmic works and the broader discourses of trauma and cinema in the early 1920s. In this sense, my approach to film is very much in line with Kaes’ suggestion that scholars “reposition film as part of the cultural productivity of a period – not as a mirror of social norms (as in traditional social history) but as a complex appropriation of the world and as a specific interpretation of experience” (251). Stefan Andriopoulos’ recent work, *Possessed: Hypnotic Crimes, Corporate Fiction, and the Invention of Cinema*, makes use of this approach by examining the “reciprocal exchange of discursive elements” related to hypnosis, crime, and film discourses at the turn of the century: “Instead of simply subscribing to the theories and conceptions inherent in medical, legal, and literary texts from around 1900, “ he explains, “this book engages in a semiotic and historicist analysis of these discourses, simultaneously linking the textual representations of hypnotic and corporate agency to the concurrent emergence of cinema” (7). My chapter on Weimar cinema embraces this methodological approach by combining close-readings of individual films with a cultural history of the medium itself and examining the reciprocal exchanges between film and contemporary discourses of trauma, shell shock, and psychoanalysis. In particular, my analysis centers on the theme of animating the inanimate, which played a central role in a significantly large number of Weimar films. While an exploration of the boundary between the animate and the inanimate is not exclusively found in the medium of cinema nor in the period immediately following the First World War, I would like to suggest that it is foregrounded in Weimar cinema due to the recent historical trauma of the war and

the resulting preoccupation with trauma in contemporary political, social, and psychoanalytic discourses.

Weimar cinema has long been identified with its use of mysterious and oftentimes frightening leitmotifs such as those of the Doppelgänger, hypnotism, somnambulism, apparitions and sorcery. Lotte Eisner's classic study, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*, ascribes a historical cause to these motifs, arguing that they "flourished in the face of death on the battlefields" of the First World War while simultaneously tracing their obsession with mysticism and magic back to German Romanticism: "The hecatombs of young men fallen in the flower of their youth seemed to nourish the grim nostalgia of the survivors. And the ghosts which had haunted the German Romantics revived, like the shades of Hades after draughts of blood" (9). Siegfried Kracauer's study, *Von Caligari zu Hitler*, on the other hand, examines many of these same themes in relation to what he calls a particularly German propensity towards totalitarianism. Thus, Kracauer analyzes films of the interwar years in order to explain the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Nazism and the Third Reich, positing a teleological model of history in which cinema is a manifestation of the "collective psychology" of a people inevitably heading towards a disastrous future. While there are clearly problems with this approach, the study can be admired for its groundbreaking use of film as an indicator not only of historical and political circumstances but also of the psychological underpinnings of a particular society. Eisner's study was similarly innovative in its investigation of the aesthetic influences that produced German Expressionist cinema and in its recognition of the continuities between different artistic movements and across varying media.

However, more recent film studies such as Anton Kaes's *Shell Shock Cinema* (2010) have begun to note the significant role that the trauma of the First World War played in Weimar cinema, thus reversing the point of view found in Kracauer's work which reads

history from a “catastrophic endpoint” and therefore “diminishes the contradictory fullness of the discrete historical moment” (5). Instead, *Shell Shock Cinema* argues that the cinematic works of the Weimar period are “haunted by the memory of a war whose traumatic outcome was never officially acknowledged” and his thorough examination of these films reveals above all a “wounded nation in post-traumatic shock” (2). Kaes ultimately views trauma as a defining part of the historical unconscious of the Weimar Republic and insightfully analyzes key films in which this trauma abruptly resurfaces. Because trauma is understood as an unconscious force present in these films, Kaes must read Weimar cinema symptomatically: “By examining what films implied but did not articulate,” he explains, “we maybe be able to apprehend the forces that generated a cinema of shell shock” (6). In other words, films are interpreted by way of their omissions and by the implications of these absences in the same way that Freud’s psychoanalytic case studies highlight repressed desires rather than visible actions as the key to a patient’s psyche. My project, in contrast to Kaes’, does not so much look at symptomatic omissions in order to identify the effects of WWI on Weimar Cinema but, rather, elucidates the intersections between the medium of cinema and theories of trauma within a particular historical moment, thus moving the point of focus from thematic to formal aspects of film. So, while I do understand trauma as an essential part of Weimar cinema, I examine its reverberations not merely in the themes and narratives of particular filmic productions, but, more importantly, in the very medium of cinema as it developed in the aftermath of the war. How did cinematic techniques develop in response to the trauma of the First World War? How are thematic representations of shock, terror, hallucination, and ghostly doubles paralleled, challenged, or complicated on a more formal level and by the medium of film itself? Which boundaries are exploded in the cinematic medium in order to reflect the trauma of this historical period?

Cinema, the third visual medium which my project examines, has clear parallels and overlaps with both drama and photography. As a medium that depicts bodies moving through time and space, it nears drama in its capacity for narrative development over time and in its inclination towards corporeality. Film might also be viewed as a restoration of the movement and flow of temporality that photography brought to a standstill in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, like photography, it brings with it a claim of direct access to reality and in this sense moves away from drama and the theater. The filtering of a narrative through a mechanical device establishes a new corporeality which distinguishes itself radically from the corporeality developed in Weimar drama. The radical alternation between distance (long shots) and proximity (close-ups) produces a new aesthetic of the body: in cinema, the body is fragmented directly by technology, thus replicating, to a certain extent, the experience of war. Similarly, flashbacks and other editing techniques mimic the trauma of war in their radical breakdown of linear temporality so that cinema can be understood as a kind of repetition and performance of this particular historical trauma. The close-up, viewed by many as *the* cinematic shot par excellence, radically fragments the body by forcing a kind of near-sightedness onto the viewer. In this sense it represents a mode of vision that severely limits the perceptual field of the viewer to a single body part or feature. Yet, the close-up simultaneously expands the perceptual field of the viewer by bringing previously invisible elements into view. In his discussion of a newly developed “optical unconscious,” Benjamin cites the close-up as a significant factor in the collective broadening of our perceptual capabilities:

Indem der Film durch Großaufnahmen aus ihrem Inventar, durch Betonung versteckter Details an den uns geläufigen Requisiten, durch Erforschung banaler Milieus unter der genialen Führung des Objektivs, auf der einen Seite die Einsicht in die Zwangsläufigkeiten vermehrt, von denen unser Dasein regiert wird, kommt er auf der anderen Seite dazu, eines ungeheuren und ungeahnten Spielraums uns zu versichern! Unsere Kneipen und Großstadtstraßen, unsere Büros und möblierten Zimmer, unsere Bahnhöfe und Fabriken schienen uns hoffnungslos einzuschließen. Da kam der Film und hat diese Kerkerwelt mit dem Dynamit der Zehntelsekunden

gesprengt, so dass wir nun zwischen ihren weitverstreuten Trümmern gelassen abenteuerliche Reisen unternehmen. (*Das Kunstwerk* 35-36)

In this passage, Benjamin recognizes a necessary, initial violence that allows for the development of what he terms the optical unconscious. In fact, his description of a dynamite explosion leaving widespread debris in its wake echoes the massive destruction caused by the First World War. However, the violent tremor caused by the tenth of a second interval which transforms photographs into a film strip also makes possible an entirely new mode of perception: one that allows for an ‘adventurous’ journey through the newfound spaces in between the ruins. This new mode of perception frees objects from their original contexts and, as the following discussion will make clear, produces a profoundly altered relationship between object and subject.

During the course of my analysis of Weimar drama and photography, a distinct model of trauma emerged: in both of these media, the central theme of trauma emerges as a challenge to the divide between self and other. Whereas Weimar drama explores the broken boundary between animality and humanity, Weimar photography focuses on the broken boundary separating man and machine. As is befitting of each respective medium, drama’s engagement with trauma centers on the corporeal, whereas photography’s representation of trauma centers on the mechanical. Cinema incorporates both of these aspects and this will likewise be reflected in its representation of, and participation in, contemporary trauma discourses. Thus, trauma in Weimar cinema – just as in Weimar drama and photography – primarily manifests itself within the framework of an exploded boundary between self and other. Cinema, however, develops a particular language to do so and brings its lens to center on one distinctive paradigm of this exploded boundary: namely, on the boundary between the animate and the inanimate. Here, in the unstable borders between subject and object, or life and death, Weimar cinema locates the trauma of war and develops a new vocabulary of the uncanny in order to convey and explore the effects of a recent, historical trauma. In the

following section I will sketch a brief review of key Weimar films from 1919 to 1927 before elaborating upon relevant discourses of trauma and cinema and finally beginning my own in-depth analysis of three critical filmic works: Paul Wegener's *Der Golem: wie er in die Welt kam* (1920), F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), and Robert Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* (1924).

### **Trauma, Hypnotism and Cinema: A Brief Review of Early Weimar Films**

*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1919), arguably the most well-known film to come out of the Weimar period, needs no introduction. Its central themes of death, hypnosis, deception, somnambulism, murder, and madness in many ways embody the very essence of Weimar cinema. Yet only recently have these themes been investigated in direct relation to the trauma of a war that ended only months before the release of Wiene's masterpiece. In his perceptive reading of *Dr. Caligari*, Anton Kaes illuminates the fact that the entire film can be read as a "talking cure" in which the protagonist tells his own story in order to work through the trauma of his past. One could also argue, though, that the story of a somnambulist who murders people while under the spell of a hypnotist might be understood in relation to the multitude of soldiers who were recently forced to kill under the pretext of nationalism. In addition, both hypnotism and somnambulism represent the kind of in-between states that I have already identified as being central to discourses of trauma and the breakdown in the traditionally upheld boundary between subject and object. When Caligari advertises his exhibition at the fairground, he boasts: "Before your eyes, Cesare will rise from the rigor of death." The somnambulist is thus portrayed as challenging the boundary between both life and death, and subject and object, which my subsequent film analyses will further elucidate.

Premiered in the same year as *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, Robert Reinert's 1920 *Nerven* makes more explicit references to the recent trauma of the First World War. In fact, the entire film is based on the premise that "the nerves of the world are sick" and the

fragmentary nature of the film purposefully creates a disorienting effect meant to cinematically reflect this collective malady. The deeply scarred society which suffers from shattered nerves is thus portrayed in Reinert's film on both a thematic and formal level. The film begins with a moving prologue in which cross-cutting creates an explicit link between the war and home front. This dramatic "Vorspiel" begins with a close-up of an older woman as she suddenly looks up into the distance. An intertitle explains: "Mother, a thousand miles from the homeland your son is dying." The subsequent shot depicts a highly stylized image of dead soldiers, piled on top of each other at the base of a dead tree. Especially prominent are the hands of these corpses, which appear to be emerging out of the pile as if desperately reaching out for help. The entire image is static and more closely resembles a photograph or a painting than a scene in a film. An immediate cut back to the mother makes an explicit connection between the two: she intuitively knows that her son is dying at the front, and what follows is a dramatic back-and-forth between the dying son and the wailing mother. This cinematic technique of bringing geographically isolated events into contact with one another plays a substantial role in the representation of trauma throughout Weimar cinema, and I will elaborate upon it further throughout this chapter.<sup>58</sup>

Although not focused on the unsettling themes of death, hypnotism, or ghostly doubles which were so prominent in early Weimar films, Murnau's 1924 *Der letzte Mann* also centers on the subject of trauma. It is the story of both a personal trauma, in the form of a hotel porter who is demoted to a bathroom attendant, and a collective trauma, in the film's portrayal of a larger generational conflict in which the older generation is traumatically rendered useless and cast aside. According to Sabine Hake, *Der letzte Mann* portrays a crisis of masculinity which became especially tangible in the older generation: "By embodying experiences of disorientation and disempowerment, [the actor Emil Jannings] came to stand

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<sup>58</sup> For a perceptive analysis of the themes of trauma, madness and hallucination in Reinert's film, see Barbara Hale's essay "Unsettling Nerves: Investigating War Trauma in Robert Reinert's *Nerven* (1919)."

in for the affective dilemmas of an entire generation confronted with the inherent violence behind the process of modernization” (Isenberg 118-19). The trauma that the protagonist experiences when he loses his job as hotel porter is first and foremost a trauma of disempowerment. The new social mobility of the Weimar Republic resulted in unstable class and gender identities which in turn triggered a sense of loss and confusion, particularly on the part of the older generation. The innovative camerawork in Murnau’s *Der letzte Mann* is especially successful in conveying this sense of loss via its free-moving camera, which smoothly cuts through boundaries as if they never existed: for example, when the porter is notified of his demotion, the camera captures the initial moments of this event through a large glass door, but when it comes to the actual moment of trauma, it moves abruptly and swiftly forward, traversing through the glass and ending with a medium-shot of the porter’s upper body as he reads the dreadful notification. In this way, the camera is able to depict the story from multiple perspectives – from both an objective, all-knowing gaze, to a subjective and sympathetic view of the character – and ultimately makes a profound contribution to the cinematic representation of trauma.

Fritz Lang’s *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (1921) also explores the theme of unstable identities in the aftermath of the First World War but does so within the context of crime, power, and hypnosis. In fact, the opening scene depicts a fanning out of identity cards from which Mabuse chooses his next disguise. Throughout the narrative, Mabuse uses seduction and hypnosis in order to manipulate others into identifying with him and doing his bidding. As one critic has pointed out, this is based on a strongly gendered incorporative model of identification: Mabuse’s hypnotic gaze “divests his male victims of their will and self-control and re-constitutes them according to his intention and desire – he feminizes them” (Hall 388). On the other hand, his female victims, as models of receptive identification, are already “mere shell[s] to be filled and possessed by male desire” (387). Thus, Lang’s film claims that

all subjects – male and female – can potentially be subdued into objects and incorporated by another. Identity, and the boundary between self and other, is thus portrayed as fundamentally unstable in Lang's *Dr. Mabuse*. While the trauma of war is not explicitly discussed, it poignantly and critically investigates the repercussions of war in its portrayal of crime, technology, and identity in the young Weimar Republic.

All of Fritz Lang's films can be viewed as explorations of the subject of trauma in relation to modernity and grapple with complex depictions of the modern subject. His early *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* portrays the mutability of identity, as already discussed, and does so within the context of an overtly technologized and industrialized modernity. According to Tom Gunning: "Lang creates an image of the new empty and standardized modernity, based on uniform measurement and systematic interrelation... [by employing the technologies of] the pocket watch, the railway, and the telephone, all interacting with the cinematic device of parallel editing" (95). Indeed, Lang's critique of the technologization of everyday life is acutely aware of its own technical medium. In his 1927 *Metropolis*, a robot is transformed with a "dazzling display of both scientific and cinematic magic, [and] a replica is created with the enormous help of machines, electricity, and chemistry – the very elements that are also needed to create a lifelike image on photographic film" (Kaes, "City, Cinema, Modernity" 175). In this sense, the storyline is not dissimilar from Wegener's *Der Golem* and Anton Kaes has already noted that the inventor Rotwang is "reminiscent in both dress and demeanor of Rabbi Löw in Paul Wegener's film *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam*" (180). But the artificial machine created in *Metropolis* does not only embody technology but also another significant theme of Weimar cinema: namely, that of the *Doppelgänger*. In fact, Andreas Huyssen has argued that "doubling, mirroring, and projecting not only constitute the technological makeup of this film, but they lie at the very core of the psychic and visual processes that underlie its narrative" (224). As already discussed in my first chapter, the

Doppelgänger functions as an embodiment of trauma and the resulting explosion of the boundary between self and other.

Fritz Lang's *Der müde Tod* (1919) explicitly explores the trauma of death – an especially salient topic in the aftermath of the Great War – but does so within the boundaries of a love story. The core of Lang's film is made up by the stories of three flickering candles, each one representing the life of a lover who the protagonist must save. The first story takes place in the Middle East, the second in Renaissance Italy, and the third in China. In this respect, the film, making almost no explicit references to the recent horrors of the war (besides the soldiers and war cripples who appear as ghosts in a cemetery), might be read as fantastical and escapist. However, I would argue that the film depicts a working through of trauma and engages subtly but powerfully with the intense confrontation of death and suffering that was brought on by the First World War. The three stories depicted in the film are essentially repetitions or reenactments of the film's 'original' trauma narrative in which the protagonist loses her lover to death. Thus, she repeatedly acts out the same experience in what Freud termed a repetition compulsion. According to Freud, traumatic events often reveal themselves in dreams in which the original trauma is repeatedly acted out: thus, the three stories of the flickering lights in *Der müde Tod* might be read as a compulsive repetition of the original trauma in which the young woman loses her fiancé to death. Understood in this way, the film bears remarkable significance in relation to the recent horrors of the Great War: in fact, the film enacts the process of working through trauma by way of repetition in dreams.

Like *Der müde Tod*, Paul Leni's *Das Wachsfigurenkabinett* (1924) depicts several stories in exotic places and uses an overarching narrative to depict multiple shorter narratives within a single film. It opens with a young author who reads an advertisement by the local waxworks museum, the owner of which is searching for a writer to tell imaginative tales

about its wax figures. When the author goes to apply for the job, the owner and his daughter immediately sit the writer down at a table and move aside a wax arm to give him room. They apologize, explaining that Harun al Raschid's arm has fallen off. This broken limb becomes the catalyst for the writer's first story. Paul Leni's *Wachsfigurenkabinett* investigates the boundary of the animate and inanimate through the use of wax figures, which come to life through fictional tales or, more precisely, through cinematic animation. Harun al Raschid's missing arm leads to a tale that hints at both the widespread bodily mutilation caused by the First World War as well as the scientific attempts to restore the body to an original whole. Cinema, which animates bodies and therefore contributes to the illusion of an organic and unified subject, simultaneously fragments the body through its cutting, splicing, and editing techniques, thus undermining this illusion at the same time that it is produced. In this sense, the fascination with bodily fragmentation in Weimar cinema is not so much focused on the lack that amputated limbs have left on the body or even the mechanical parts that attempt to replace these absences, but, rather, on the violently removed body parts that transition from 'self' to 'other.' As will be illuminated in the next section of this chapter, Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* explores precisely this same theme but makes use of innovative editing techniques and framing devices in order to challenge and complicate the subject of bodily trauma.

The exotic landscapes of these films might be understood as escapist fantasies at a time of instability and loss; yet, this preoccupation with distant lands is also an exploration of the 'other' and serves as a penetrating inquiry into the relationship between self and other. During the Weimar Republic, a large number of popular films were produced including historical costume dramas by directors such as Ernst Lubitsch and Joe May, along with comedies, mystery films, ersatz-Westerns, and adventure thrillers. Along with other film critics who have recently turned their attention away from canonical expressionist films and towards these popular Weimar blockbusters, Christian Rogowski argues that these works are

worth examining as products of modern mass culture and should be appreciated on their own terms. In an analysis of Joe May's spectacular, epic fantasy-adventure *Das indische Grabmal* (1921), Rogowski asserts that "in all its outlandish splendor and improbability the film speaks to the cravings of a German mass audience in a situation of profound disorientation, from the motif of being buried alive (a reality for many soldiers in the trench warfare) to the necessity of overcoming vengefulness (the widespread resentment toward what was seen as an unfair and cruel national humiliation in the wake of Germany's defeat)" (74). Despite their exotic subject matter, then, these films are undoubtedly products of the early post-WWI years and the instability, uncertainty, and loss that pervaded this time period. Furthermore, the largely varying subject matter of these popular films helps to refute the simplistic claim made by Siegfried Kracauer's *Von Caligari zu Hitler*, in which he views film as a mirror of the German identity and essentializes this identity based on a select number of Weimar art films taken to be representative of the thousands of films produced during this period.<sup>59</sup> My project also contests this viewpoint by revealing an acute awareness of the complexities of modern subjectivity, trauma and identity in Weimar cinema. In the following section I outline the theoretical underpinnings of these cinematic explorations by making use of Walter Benjamin's (and Miriam Hansen's) discussions on film, perception, and the aura of artworks.

### **The Aura of Cinema: Animating Objects through the Bestowal of a Gaze**

Walter Benjamin spent years theorizing the new perception brought on by the technologies of the camera. In his understanding, visual perception is not merely biological but socially conditioned as well. As art critic Joel Snyder puts it, Benjamin "sees an ongoing adjustment between human perception and works of visual art – one that finds a reciprocal

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<sup>59</sup> In the year immediately following the First World War, 470 films were produced and in 1920 this number rose to no less than 510 films (Rogowski, *The Many Faces* 4).

relationship between an evolving mode of perceiving and the new mode of depiction” (59). In the industrialized world, this new mode of artistic depiction involves a radically altered relationship between the artist’s body and the creation of the artwork. Benjamin perceives this change concretely in the way in which the camera renders the hand useless and places all artistic function into the eye: “mit der Photographie war die Hand im Prozess bildlicher Reproduktion zum ersten Mal von den wichtigsten kuenstlerischen Obliegenheiten entlastet, welche nunmehr dem ins Objektiv blickenden Auge allein zufließen” (*Das Kunstwerk* 10-11). Analogously, in the new mode of industrial production, the work traditionally done by hand is now replaced by the work of machines. The workers who operate these machines not only have a changed relationship with the finished product, but their entire perception of the material world is altered. Or, from another perspective, “technical production brings about technically informed perception that, in turn, engenders technical depiction or reproduction” (Snyder 160). The camera is especially adept at capturing the particular reality of the Weimar Republic because its mode of depiction is technical and therefore mirrors the newly formed technical perception brought about by industrialized modernity. The work of artistic depiction is now no longer performed by the *hand* but by the *eye* and, within the context of my chapter, this is significant in two respects: first, the reach of the hand is limited in scope whereas the eye can perceive objects at much greater distances; and second, the eye can perceive – and with the help of the camera depict – movement (and the passing of time). These two characteristics are captured by Benjamin’s notion of aura which I will now elaborate upon in preparation of my close readings of three Weimar films, one of which very appropriately features a renegade hand.

In his explanation of the revolutionary change in perception and the parallel change in the production of art, Benjamin centers on what he calls the ‘decay of aura’ in the industrialized modern world: because reproduced objects are detached from the sphere of

tradition within which artworks had heretofore always been created, they lose their dependence on ritual and are appreciated instead for their ‘exhibition value.’ And because photographs and films can be endlessly reproduced, the notion of an ‘original’ is likewise called into question. Even if a first production is taken to be the original, it inevitably loses its authority among the many copies which can now be rapidly disseminated with modern techniques of reproduction. Thus, what becomes important is not the ritual value, in which the artwork is created by hand within the context of tradition (whether it is magical or religious), but now in the ‘age of mechanical reproduction,’ the artwork is “emanzipiert... von seinem parasitaeren Dasein am Ritual” (*Das Kunstwerk* 17) and becomes significant in light of its increasing exhibition value. Of course, what lies at the heart of exhibition is not the hand but the eye: this new value of art places the emphasis away from its creation and towards its (visual) reception by the masses.

How, then, does cinema deal with the traumatic loss of the hand and, with it, the loss of direct aesthetic agency? The young medium replicates and embodies the new mode of perception which is simultaneously developing in the technologized and industrialized everyday life of modernity. According to Benjamin, the new mode of mechanical production not only changes the environment but also the organization of our perception. The camera has the ability to “confirm and inform the evolving perception of reality” (Snyder 168) of which people are slowly becoming aware. As Benjamin so eloquently puts it, the film explodes our everyday prison-world so that we can travel among its ruins and debris: and as a result, this new medium reveals “völlig neue Strukturbildungen der Materie” (*Das Kunstwerk* 36) which had heretofore been invisible.<sup>60</sup> The experience of walking down the street, for example, is

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<sup>60</sup> Benjamin’s aura is also closely linked to his concept of the mimetic faculty, which I discussed in my chapter on Weimar theater, as well as to his concept of the optical unconscious, which plays a central role in my discussion of Weimar photography. In fact, Miriam Hansen understands these concepts as ‘secularized and modernized’ counterparts to aura itself. All of these terms can be encapsulated under the umbrella term of aura, which Benjamin theorizes as “part of his effort to reimagine (something like) experience under the conditions of technologically mediated culture” (Hansen, “Benjamin’s Aura” 339).

familiar to everyone and yet the camera is able to illuminate it in an entirely different light: “Hier greift die Kamera mit ihren Hilfsmitteln, ihrem Stürzen und Steigen, ihrem Unterbrechen und Isolieren, ihrem Dehnen und Rafften des Ablaufs, ihrem Vergrössern und ihrem Verkleinern ein” (36). Film brings us face to face with an entirely different world than the one perceived (and artistically depicted) in the past. A different kind of nature reveals itself to the camera, Benjamin claims. It introduces us to the “Optisch-Unbewussten.” This, then, is precisely where cinema regains its aesthetic agency: in its revolutionary role as affirmer, conveyer, and embodiment of modern perception.

However, this is not to say that the transition towards this new role of art was simple and unproblematic. Indeed, the loss of the hand – the loss of a body part – must be understood first and foremost as traumatic. Benjamin’s decay of aura is also a deterioration in the traditional relationship between body and art, or more broadly between the body and the external world. The traumatic effects of industrialization upon the worker have been extensively theorized (in particular by Marx); yet little has been said of the parallel trauma which took place on a medial level in the realm of the arts. Indeed, this trauma is taken up, replayed, and extensively investigated by the cinematic medium not only in its revolutionary embodiment of the new perception theorized by Benjamin but also in the various aesthetic techniques which are developed during this time and the large number of thematic depictions of trauma in Weimar film. Whereas the earlier invention of photography officially ‘freed the hand,’ it is not until the invention of cinema – and with it, the (re)introduction of movement and time – that this medial trauma can be fully acknowledged and played out. Indeed, trauma always manifests itself in a belated manner, and this case is no exception: it took close to 50 years for this initial trauma to resurface with the invention of film, a medium which is intimately linked with temporality itself (in particular, the development of a narrative over

time) and can therefore depict trauma in all of its deferred, disjunctive, and paradoxical splendor.

As early as 1931, in a short essay titled “Kleine Geschichte der Photographie,” Benjamin defines aura as a “sonderbares Gespinst von Raum und Zeit: einmalige Erscheinung einer Ferne, so nah sie sein mag” (57). The interplay between distance and proximity take center stage here: indeed, looking through a viewfinder seems to bring the distance closer and make it more tangible, while the final product – a photograph or celluloid film strip – places distant objects right in front of our eyes. Even more relevant in relation to Benjamin’s aura is the cinematic juxtaposition of long shots with close-ups: cutting and editing provide the means for placing these two disparate viewpoints side by side in a way that captures an entirely new mode of perception. On the other hand, the appearance of a distance might also refer to a temporal rather than a spatial distance.<sup>61</sup> In this regard as well, cinema finds unique modes of depiction with techniques such as stop motion and time-lapse photography, which disrupt traditional notions of a fixed and chronological advancement of time.

While this notion of aura is clearly applicable to the medium of cinema – a medium which radically reconfigures the relationship between distance and proximity, and even explodes reality into a “vielfältig zerstückeltes [Bild], dessen Teile sich nach einem neuen Gesetze zusammen finden” (32) – I would like to turn my discussion towards Benjamin’s later conception of aura. Benjamin’s 1939 essay “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire” refines his definition of aura in the following manner: “die Aura einer Erscheinung erfahren, heißt, sie mit dem Vermögen belehnen, den Blick aufzuschlagen” (646). Here, aura is related, not only to the disruption of traditional conceptions of time and space, but also to a newly awakened gaze. According to film critic Miriam Hansen, the structure of auratic experience is

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<sup>61</sup> In fact, Miriam Hansen insists that the ‘unique distance’ to which Benjamin refers does indeed have a temporal dimension and primarily one that is linked with the “register of the unconscious” as evidenced by his comparison with Proust’s *mémoire involontaire* (“Benjamin’s Aura” 342).

“that of investing the phenomenon we experience with the ability to return the gaze” (“Benjamin and Cinema” 311). Aura, in this definition, is primarily about the bestowal of a gaze and a projection of subjectivity onto a phenomenon or object. It is produced by the momentary transformation of an object into a subject, or by the animation of an inanimate object, by way of investing it with the ability to look back.

A cinematic projection might likewise be viewed as an inanimate object that is not only suddenly animated, but also bestowed with a gaze. This is most explicitly clear in the frequent close-ups of piercing eyes which can be found throughout the early cinema of the Weimar Republic: Dr. Mabuse’s hypnotizing eyes might be the most well-known example that comes to mind, but many other well-known Weimar films including *Dr. Caligari*, *Orlacs Hände*, and *Der Golem* contain central scenes in which the eyes are dramatically illuminated and appear to gaze directly at the audience. In fact, the very first thing that the Golem does when he opens his eyes is to stare towards the camera as if directly acknowledging the audience and asserting a claim to subjectivity. Although he was a simple clay sculpture just moments ago, he is now an animated subject with a gaze of his own. Of course, this image of piercing eyes staring out of cinematic projections is also related to discourses of hypnotism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Stefan Andriopoulos, among numerous other critics, has discussed the relationship between early cinema and discourses of hypnotism at the turn of the century: “Early theories of film described the new medium itself as exerting an irresistible hypnotic influence over its spellbound audience” (4). The belief that a cinematic projection might have the power to hypnotize its audience by bringing them into a “spellbound” state further complicates the boundary between subjects and objects; for, if the Golem or Cesare might be described as becoming subjects through their acquisition of a gaze, the audience might be described as increasingly objectified, in the sense that their own will power and thus subjectivity is stripped away via the hypnotic effects of these cinematic gazes.

The relation of Benjamin's of aura to the concept of trauma becomes evident when it is understood as an encounter between the self and the other. The bestowal of a gaze not only challenges the boundary between subject and object, but also creates a "potentially destabilizing encounter with otherness" which throws traditional hierarchies into question (Hansen, "Benjamin and Cinema" 311). Auratic perception reverses the usual power structure so that something "other" claims ownership to us, rather than the other way around. Miriam Hansen explains that, while this configuration of "the seer seen" is not a new one, it is highly significant in its rearticulation of traditional conceptions of vision:

In the most general sense, it suggests a type of vision that exceeds and destabilizes traditional scientific, practical, and representation conceptions of vision, along with linear notions of time and space and clear-cut, hierarchical distinctions between subject and object. In this mode of vision, the gaze of the object, however familiar, is experienced by the subject as other and prior, strange and heteronomous. Whether conceptualized in terms of a constitutive lack, split, or loss, this other gaze in turn confronts the subject with a fundamental strangeness within and of the self. ("Benjamin's Aura" 345)

Just as psychoanalytic discussions of war neurosis centered on an internal conflict (in Freud's words, between the war-ego and the peacetime-ego), Benjamin's concept of aura indicates a mode of vision that reveals the ceaseless presence of the other within the self. A turn to this model of perception in the aftermath of the First World War is inextricably bound to discourses of trauma: the breakdown in boundaries between subject and object, or self and other, as well as the rejection of a linear temporality are defining elements of trauma, and, as this chapter will argue, play a central role in early Weimar cinema's engagement with trauma.<sup>62</sup> Benjamin's notion of aura is particularly relevant for my analysis of trauma in the Weimar Republic because of its concern with the return of a gaze, or with the transformation of an object into a subject. Similarly, cinema bestows objects with a gaze insofar as it isolates

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<sup>62</sup> Earlier examples of this bestowal of a gaze onto an otherwise inanimate object include Rainer Maria Rilke's *Dinggedichte*, as for example in his "Archaischer Torso Apollos" in which the ancient sculpture looks back at its viewer: "Aber sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt, sich hält und glänzt." However, I argue that this blurring of boundaries between subject and object becomes intensified in the wake of WWI.

and thus frees an object from its original spatial context – in the form of a close-up, for example, or in its insertion into an entirely new context via techniques of cutting and editing.

In my analysis of Weimar drama, the traumatic vibrations of WWI were identified in the intense focus on skin as boundary between self and other; in film, the lens likewise centers on surfaces and, by zooming in on individual body parts, powerfully confirms the fragmented nature of the self and refuses any semblance of an organic, unified whole. The permeability between self and other is extended to the most radical form of other – the inanimate. Weimar cinema explores the shattered boundary between life and death, between subject and object: it does so in its investigations of somnambulism, hypnotism, ghostly doubles, as well as in its depictions of the general loss of control over one's own body or body part. However, cinema not only animates but simultaneously also objectifies: it subjectifies objects but also objectifies subjects by turning them into two-dimensional images on a projected screen. In this sense, the cinematic medium bilaterally challenges the illusion of a stable boundary between the animate and the inanimate.

In the following section I analyze three key cinematic works, each of which explores this boundary in a unique and insightful manner: Robert Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* (1924), Paul Wegener's *Der Golem: wie er in die Welt kam* (1920), and F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922). Robert Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* depicts the trauma of an artist by way of a highly expressive gestural vocabulary which manifests itself in Orlac's hands. The cinematic medium structures this exploration of trauma as a physical conflict between the animate and the inanimate (most obviously exemplified in the form of Orlac's animated hands alongside his oftentimes inanimate body), underneath which lie deeper implications of agency and impotence, and of the precarious divide between subjects and objects. While most often examined through the lens of German-Jewish identity between the world wars, Wegener's *Der Golem* is also worth

investigating in terms of its meta-cinematic commentary on the animation of the inanimate.<sup>63</sup> As the Golem takes his first step after awakening, his halting and jerking movements mimic the very nature of early cinematic projections. But, in case the film's self-reflexivity is not yet evident, a central scene reveals the rabbi's second supernatural creation: not only is this creation an actual cinematic projection, but one which explicitly depicts a trauma, namely the original trauma of the exiled and indefinitely wandering Jews. Murnau's *Nosferatu* likewise challenges the boundary between the animate and the inanimate, first and foremost in the ambiguous figure of the vampire. *Nosferatu*'s embodiment of both human and non-human characteristics, as well as his animal-like features and his deviant sexuality, are continuously emphasized in the cinematic technique of cross-cutting and in the careful framing of close-up shots. Both the content and form of Murnau's *Nosferatu* thus contributes to the construction of an elusive figure who straddles the border between the animate and inanimate world. All three of these early Weimar films are highly self-reflexive, ultimately exploring and revealing not only a particular historical trauma but also the *medial* trauma of cinema itself.

### **Fragmentation, Possession, and Renegade Body Parts in Robert Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* (1924)**

While close-ups often zoom in on the face (or a particular facial feature) of a character, they focus by no means exclusively on this highly expressive body part. In fact, many Weimar films turn the photographic lens onto limbs or other extremities, thus reflecting the sudden, postwar preoccupation with body parts that had heretofore been insignificant in cinematic works. Robert Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* (1924) is a fascinating study on perhaps the most expressive body part alongside the face: namely, the hands. According to Lucia Ruprecht, "the hand is part of the physical organism whose materiality is suddenly brought

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<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the fact that Wegener's 1920 *Der Golem* is the third cinematic production of the Jewish legend of the Golem testifies to the intrinsic and enduring link between the story of mystical animation of a clay sculpture and the medium of cinema itself.

back into consciousness by the camera's enlargement" (266). And, indeed, the camerawork of cinematographer Günther Krampf undeniably brings the materiality of the hand into sharp focus. When the renowned pianist, Paul Orlac (played by Conrad Veidt), loses his hands in a tragic railway accident, the doctor decides to replace them with the hands of a recently executed criminal. Orlac is unaware of this as he awakes out of his coma, and yet, he immediately senses that something is wrong. His hands appear to have a will of their own and he finds himself helplessly following them in their seemingly pathological drive towards murder and crime. Thus, a central conflict quickly emerges in this depiction of one man's trauma – yet unlike in Weimar drama or photography, this conflict is not between the self and a machine or between the human and the animal world, but between the self and an estranged body part. As the film images below convey, Orlac's hands are often framed in such a way that they seem to grow increasingly larger and eventually fill up the entire frame to the point of eclipsing Orlac himself (figures 1-6). In a subsequent scene (figures 7-12), the hands are not enlarged by a close-up but, rather, are brought into focus by their incessant movement which stands in stark contrast to the immobility of every other object in the frame (including the rest of Orlac's body). The cinematic medium thus makes possible the exploration of a newly exploded boundary, manifested here in the animation and stubborn insubordination of Orlac's hands. The loss of the hand, which Benjamin theorizes in his artwork essay, is depicted candidly and poignantly here: the artist, Orlac, has lost the direct connection of his hands to his art and has thus been alienated from both his body and his work. In its portrayal of the trauma of artistic production, this is a thematization of film itself – a medium which has similarly experienced the loss of the hand and therefore its direct aesthetic agency.



Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Orlacs hands lead him to the piano where the dagger is hidden.



Figures 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Orlacs hands reach for the dagger against his will.

Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* sets up this modern artistic trauma by beginning with a succinct depiction of the transition from the pre-industrial, bourgeois world into industrialized modernity. It is a transition from hand-written letters to typewritten newspapers, from private apartments to public halls, from the written to the visual, from old art forms to new art forms. In the opening scene, Orlac's wife lies in bed and reads a handwritten letter she has just received: "Liebste! Noch eine Nacht und ein Tag und dann bin

ich wieder bei Dir.” After she dramatically brings the letter to her chest and stares emotionally at the ceiling, the camera cuts to a printed newspaper article, which reads “Letztes Konzert von Paul Orlac: Paul Orlac ist heute nicht nur der große Virtuose, sondern auch gleichzeitig der größte Künstler des Klaviers.” Not surprisingly, the letter conveys the news of his pending arrival in a personal manner whereas the newspaper does so in a factual, public announcement. But it is ultimately the *genre* and not the thematic subtleties which are highlighted in Wiene’s film. The two modes of communication are juxtaposed and contrasted, one as a remnant of the bourgeois world and the other as the new written medium of the masses. Yet ultimately these two forms of communication are subsumed under the new visual medium of film: the shock and trauma of the loss of Orlac’s hands cannot be conveyed by words alone and thus the written word gives way to the filmic image. It should also be noted that the transition from bourgeois letters to modern newspapers has a parallel in the visual art world: namely the turn from sculpture and painting to the modern mass media of photography and film. Both are marked by a loss of the hand and the triumph of the mechanical, as well as a focus from the individual to the masses (and, as Benjamin would argue, from contemplation to distraction). This theme is highlighted in later scenes and will bring the process of artistic production to the center of this trauma narrative.

The exterior spaces of the industrialized modern world are furthermore contrasted with the bourgeois sphere of interiority: and this divide between private and public spaces is quickly torn asunder by the new filmic medium. In particular, the editing technique of cross-cutting is used to juxtapose these conflicting spaces and to create suspense before culminating in the train accident. As Orlac’s wife is eagerly getting ready for her husband’s arrival, quick alternating shots of a train racing through the countryside pierce the peaceful tranquility of the home. These alternating shots leading up to the railway accident become increasingly fast-paced in anticipation and foreboding of the tragedy to come. Tension builds

up throughout this sequence as the contrast between private and public space is intensified (note even the reversed lighting in figures 13 and 14). In its visual juxtaposition of two geographically disparate events, cross-cutting (*Parallelmontage* in German) serves a function similar to that of collage and photomontage: it elicits a particular response from the viewer which is generally one of shock or surprise. In this particular scene, the privacy and safety of the home is punctured repeatedly by the dangers of technology and public spaces (represented by the train speeding through the countryside), and thus dramatically ruptures the private sanctity of the home. This is no longer the world of safe, bourgeois interiors but a modern, industrial, and increasingly technologized world in which time not only speeds up but geographical space is diminished, and the distinction between private and public space rapidly deteriorates.



Figures 13 and 14. Private and public spaces are contrasted.

The train continues hurling itself through the countryside, tearing down old boundaries and ending in utter destruction. Upon hearing of the accident, Orlac's wife rushes to the scene and is brought face to face with the horrors of the train wreck: injured people are hastily carried away on stretchers in the foreground of the destroyed train. The scene of the train wreck in *Orlacs Hände* undeniably references the devastation of the First World War in its dramatic portrayal of smoke, fire, shock, death, injury, and loss. It alludes to the war in its fragmentary depiction of mechanical catastrophe and the technologization of everyday life

gone awry. The smoke and fire which covers most of the scene, along with the piles of injured bodies that bear witness to the horrific dangers of modern technology, unmistakably recall the turmoil of the recent war. This long and rather drawn-out scene takes on the role of ‘original trauma’ in Wiene’s film. From this point on, Orlac’s world is turned upside down: just like a soldier returning home from the First World War, he feels alienated from his body, his wife, and his art.



This self-alienation is a defining characteristic of war neurosis as I have already elucidated in my analysis of Freud’s postwar psychoanalytic theories. Thus, although Wiene’s film does not explicitly reference the First World War, its central themes are inextricably bound to the trauma of war. The themes of bodily injury and death are immediately brought to the fore in the central scene of the train accident, and the subject of absent body parts and prosthetic limbs is likewise a central concern. When the doctor tells Orlac’s wife that he is unable to save her husband’s hands, she desperately reaches her arms out to him and cries: “Save his hands... his hands are his life... his hands are more than his life...” The human subject in Wiene’s film is thus identified primarily as a physical body and Orlac, in particular, is equated with his hands. The doctor shrugs helplessly but suddenly sees the car carrying the body of a recently executed criminal, and decides he might be able to do something after all. In the following scene, Orlac’s body is entirely covered by bandages

when the doctor walks in and says to the wife: “We want to give your husband back to you... in part at least.” While he is referring to the fact that they will only unwrap his face for now, this statement has an alternate meaning as well: Orlac will never be entirely himself again since his hands have been replaced by another’s. His body is no longer a single, organic entity, but a composite of self and other. This breach in the protective boundary of the self is a physical manifestation of the trauma that Freud described years earlier as a “Durchbrechung des Reizschutzes.” However, in this case, it is not an absence in the self, nor is it a mechanical prosthetic or animal ‘other’ intruding on the self; rather, the body part of another human being – and not a living human being, but the hand of a corpse – has become inextricably bound to the self. Thus, the self can no longer be simply defined by distinguishing it from everything ‘other.’

This theme of self-alienation is paralleled by the simultaneous trauma of Orlac’s inability to play the piano, by the lost connection with his art. When the doctor first unwraps Orlac’s hands as a response to his plea to find out “what kind of secret [his bandages] are hiding,” Orlac anxiously leans forward. In the background is a female statue who also leans forward slightly, mimicking Orlac’s posture. The similarity in their postures might lead us to read the presence of the female statue as signaling Orlac’s increasing femininity and passivity – the loss of his hands as equated with the loss of his manhood.<sup>64</sup> Yet, even more significantly, this statue before which we see Orlac’s shaky hands slowly begin to move for the first time also alludes to the tale of Pygmalion and, more generally, to the animation of

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<sup>64</sup> Although she doesn’t explicitly mention the statue, Anjeana Hans makes precisely such an argument regarding male anxieties in *Orlacs Hände*. Hans argues: “Wiene’s *Orlacs Hände* is thus much more than a simple horror film, for it depicts the manner in which the experience of the First World War and the changed social and cultural norms and hierarchies of the postwar period struck at the foundation of notions of male identity and subjectivity, and represents the difficulties faced by men and women as they renegotiated gender hierarchies and identities in Germany after the First World War” (113). See her recent article, “‘These Hands are not my Hands’: Masculinity in Crisis in Wiene’s *Orlacs Hände*” in *The Many Faces of Weimar Cinema* for more.

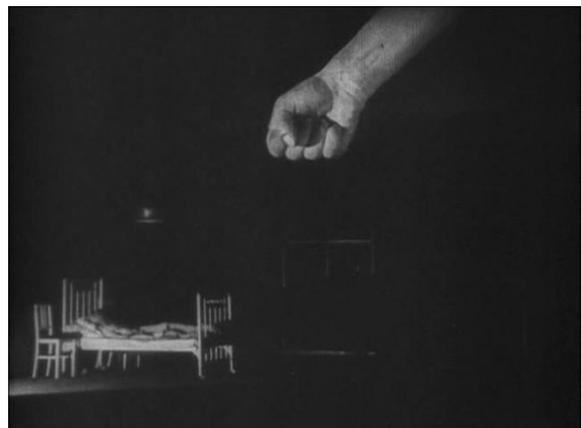
the inanimate.<sup>65</sup> Only weeks before, Orlac had practically been a corpse and, indeed, his new hands were appropriated from the body of a corpse. These previously inanimate hands are now coming to life again and the statue watching over this scene is a reminder of the Pygmalionesque characteristics of both the corpse's hands and the medium of film itself. Furthermore, the statue points to an earlier art form – sculpture – which Benjamin himself mentions in his artwork essay in contrast to the new medium of film. Whereas both sculpture and music require the hand in creating works of art, film does not. In this modern medium, the artist's body has been alienated from the artwork itself.

Only a few scenes later, a similar statue reappears in Orlac's living room – only this time it is a life-sized statue and serves as witness to his feeble attempts at controlling the hands that have taken on a life of their own. As his hands lead him towards the piano, the classical female statue stands to the left, slightly turned towards Orlac as if watching his struggle. Again, the contentious boundary between inanimate objects and animate subjects is thrown into the spotlight here. Yet the perfectly formed body of the statue also alludes to another central topic of Weimar popular culture: *Körperkultur*. Weimar body culture greatly admired the culture of the Ancient Greeks for their attention to beauty, strength, and athleticism. Among other works, Wilhelm Prager's *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* (1925) engages this theme and film critic Michael Cowan has argued that the film presents body culture as the answer to “modernity's neurasthenic dilemma” (233). I would suggest further that this popular trend is directly related to the nostalgia for an organic, unified self; the desire to return to an “original” human body culture can be understood as an attempt to erase the recent horrors of war and their resulting destabilization of identity and subjectivity. By insisting upon the bodily fragmentation of the modern subject, *Orlacs Hände*, in contrast, willfully refuses to deny the recent trauma of the war.

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<sup>65</sup> In fact, one literary critic has already identified cinema as the “privileged space of the Pygmalionesque” in its embodiment of “the longstanding desire for the animation of the inanimate” (Bloom 292).

Indeed, the fragmentation of the body plays an increasingly central role throughout the course of Wiene's film. When Orlac wakes up after his surgery, he looks up and sees a head staring at him through the glass in the door: "There... that head... isn't he looking at my hands? He is laughing!" During his last night in the hospital, Orlac dreams that a giant head is looming over his bed and then fades into a giant fist which slowly begins coming down onto his bed. Images of fragmented body parts were not uncommon in the films produced after the First World War and, as I've already discussed, cinema is a medium especially well-suited to this sort of work via close-ups, framing, and editing. Orlac's anxiety about his hands is clearly related to a general anxiety about missing limbs and the violent fragmentation of the body as a consequence of the recent war. The detached, floating head that appears in Orlac's dream, as well as the large fist that seems to be coming down on top of his body, is a manifestation of this general anxiety. Individual body parts begin to take on unusual proportions and, most significantly, a will of their own. This is depicted through the distortion of traditional conceptions of space – something which the new medium of cinema is particularly adept at doing. These scenes of looming fists and giant heads in *Orlacs Hände* are not unlike the radical images in Richter's short film, *Vormittagsspuk*, in which everyday objects begin to take control and rebel against the traditional order of things.



In fact, what Wiene's film emphatically highlights is not only a fear of losing body parts but, even more so, a great anxiety regarding *loss of control* over one's own body or

body parts. When Orlac wakes up after his horrible nightmare and sees a note sitting on his lap, he suddenly becomes aware that his hands are no longer his own: “Ihre Hände waren nicht zu retten. Doktor Seral hat Ihnen andere gegeben – die Hände des hingerichteten Raubmörders Vasseur.” Orlac stares down at his hands in shock and horror, and suddenly they begin to move on their own, pulling him out of his bed and onto the floor. These hands, it seems, have a will of their own and, from now on, Orlac will struggle to remain master over his own body. This loss of self-control is thematically depicted in Wiene’s film; yet it is also performed on a medial level by the loss of direct aesthetic agency brought on by the invention of the camera. The trauma of Orlac’s hands is paralleled by the medial trauma of film itself. This is underlined by the fact that Orlac is an artist and the loss of his hands has alienated him from his art. Thus *Orlacs Hände* ultimately depicts the trauma of the artist in the modern world; it conveys the trauma of film itself.

Unfortunately, the rather simplistic ending of Wiene’s *Orlacs Hände* detracts somewhat from the complexities of the narrative that are at play throughout the rest of the film. Once Vasseur’s name has been cleared, the characters are more or less restored to their original selves and can go back to their lives as they used to be. In this sense, *Orlacs Hände* does not convey the same complexities as Wiene’s earlier masterpiece, *Dr. Caligari*, which leaves the viewer without any easy answers or clear resolutions. In the end, Orlac’s control over his own body is miraculously restored. It seems that the replacement of his hands by another’s had only been a problem when they belonged to a criminal and, as soon as Vasseur’s name is cleared, Orlac’s anxieties are laid to rest. In addition to the returned control of his body parts, the traditional gender roles which had been overturned by the tragic loss of Orlac’s hands have likewise been brought back to order by the film’s ending. In the final scene, Orlac’s wife faints so that he must carry her through the dark and abandoned streets to their home. He stops to embrace his wife as she stands limply, leaning against him

as if all her previous strength has disappeared. As Orlac's hands move over his wife's face, it is clear that his power and masculinity has been restored: his extremely large hands move slowly across her face until it is completely hidden from the camera. An iris closes in on this scene and fades resolutely into the end of the film.

Despite this ending, the film overall conveys a complex understanding of the modern subject, artistic production, and trauma itself. As described at the beginning of my analysis, the opening scenes of Wiene's film depict the traumatic transition from the pre-industrial to the industrial world and its culmination in the destruction of the First World War (symbolized by the train wreck). This long and powerful depiction of a train wreck immediately brings Freud to mind and, in particular, his own explicit reference to train accidents at the beginning of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. By commencing their respective investigations into trauma with the iconic image of a train accident, both Wiene and Freud ground their studies in a specific historical trauma (although in both cases the actual trauma of war is displaced and reveals itself in a related image of the destructive power of modern technology). This historical trauma plays itself out in the filmic narrative as the loss of a concert pianist's hands, which in turn serves as an allegory of film itself: the technology of the camera, which first severed the hand from the artist's body, now depicts its own story of self-alienation and the loss of direct aesthetic agency. Just as Orlac's hands take on a life and will of their own, resulting in the pianist's loss of control, so too does the camera render the artist's hand useless and therefore traumatically obliterates the corporal connection between artist and artwork. Ultimately, then, the film's depiction of a historical trauma (the Freudian trauma of the train wreck) ultimately shifts into a representation of its own structural trauma (the medial trauma of cinema). A similar phenomenon occurs in Wegener's *Der Golem* and in Murnau's *Nosferatu*, both of which depict a historical trauma (respectively, the Jewish threat of expulsion from Prague and the arrival of the plague in a German town) but ultimately convey the trauma of cinema itself.

### **Bringing Clay to Life: Animating Inanimate Material in Wegener's *Der Golem* (1920)**

Paul Wegener's *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam* is a story of trauma on multiple levels: first, the story of a traumatic historical moment in which Jews were threatened by expulsion from the empire; second, the original trauma of the Jews which is depicted by the Rabbi's cinematic projection; and third, the trauma of the Golem himself – a clay creature who comes to life and thus straddles the boundary between subject and object. These various traumas are conveyed on both a thematic and structural level of the film. Wegener makes use of expressionist architecture and lighting to bring to life the inner states of the characters but also utilizes innovative filmic techniques to complicate the thematic content of the story. In particular, the close-up shots of the Golem largely contribute to his increasingly life-like appearance and make his status as object progressively more ambiguous. Ultimately, this is a *mise-en-abyme* staging of the creation of life: the Golem is the functional equivalent of the medium in which he is represented. The traumas of the Golem – and the process of animating the inanimate – are the traumas of film itself.

The setting of Wegener's 1920 *Der Golem* is a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish Ghetto in Prague and the set design, lighting and framing immediately designate the setting as strange and exotic. Our first glimpse of the main character, Rabbi Löw, shows him gazing at the stars and examining astrological charts as he attempts to predict the future. Underneath the stars are strange, jagged shapes looming up into the skies: these are the pointy rooftops of the sharply angular houses which make up the ghetto. In typical expressionist fashion, the highly stylized houses of the ghetto seem to express their own personalities and, according to Isenberg, "the contemporary face of the Jew emanates from the historical surface of [these] ghetto buildings" (49). The rabbi's own visage is coded as radically other by his flowing white beard and intensely piercing eyes; he sits on the roof of his home, which towers over the neighboring houses, and surrounds himself with mysterious stargazing instruments and

books. Yet, the following shot of the inside of his home reveals a space that is no less foreign or exotic than the outside. The walls curve gently inward in an undulating fashion while the circular stairs seem to lead into a round cave not unlike a seashell. Certain corners of the house are entirely lit up whereas other parts recede into complete darkness. This is not a typical bourgeois interior, such as the ones that most viewers would have been familiar with from 19<sup>th</sup> century novels and plays, nor is it a mirror of the spectators' own homes. Rather, this setting is intentionally foreign; it unquestionably belongs to the world of the exotic and to all things 'other.' In this sense, *Der Golem*, might be compared with other Weimar films that play out escapist fantasies in exotic locations, such as Joe May's *Das indische Grabmal* (1921), Paul Leni's *Das Wachsfigurenkabinett* (1924), or Fritz Lang's *Die Spinnen* (1919).

However, the traumas depicted in *Der Golem* through its expressionist set design as well as its exploration of the line dividing the animate and inanimate world reflect not only relevant but also pressing, contemporary issues. As already mentioned, the distinct style of expressionism can be understood as formally representing the collective fears and anxieties of a culture emerging out of the recently experienced horrors of modern warfare. The thematic exploration of death, fear, the golem, and the divide between animate and inanimate world likewise emerges out of this historical circumstance. Wegener's film depicts a time in which the Jews were threatened with expulsion from the empire and, indeed, the "Jewish Question" was frequently debated in the post-WWI years; this theme was therefore also a familiar issue for audiences. Film scholar Noah Isenberg has suggested this connection as well: "Hinging as it does on the banishment of the Jews from the empire, Wegener's *The Golem* speaks immediately to the lingering Jewish Question – that is, what to do with the burgeoning number of Jews, many of them from central and eastern Europe, occupying German cities in the wake of the Great War" (36). As such, the exotic setting of Wegener's *Der Golem* cannot hide its subject's deep contemporary relevance.

Yet, this alone does not account for the large number of artworks based on this legendary tale that were published and produced in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1908, Arthur Holitscher published his play *Der Golem: Ghettolegende in drei Aufzügen*, and just a few years later in 1913, Gustav Meyrink published a serialized novel on the same subject matter, titled simply *Der Golem*. In 1919, Chayim Bloch wrote a prose fiction interpretation of the legend: *Der Prager Golem: Von seiner "Geburt" bis zu seinem "Tod."* Several filmic versions of the legend were also produced during these years – interestingly, all of them by Paul Wegener. In 1915, Wegener directed his first version of the Golem, succinctly titled *Der Golem*, and only two years later, in 1917, created another adaptation, which he called *Der Golem und die Tänzerin* (Isenberg 36). Unfortunately, both of these early cinematic treatments of the Golem legend have been lost and it is therefore difficult to delineate a precise trajectory in Wegener's various interpretations of the tale. However, contemporary film reviews make it clear that Wegener was largely preoccupied with the same themes during his continued work on the subject, at the center of which stands the creation of artificial life and, thus, the divide between the human and non-human, or subject and object.

The central problem of the narrative – the threat of expulsion and the rabbi's attempt to stop it – is quickly conveyed at the start of the film. The cinematic technique of cross-cutting is utilized to this end as a means for building tension and suspense. In these scenes, Rabbi Löw begins fervently sculpting the Golem out of clay while the emissary from the emperor is simultaneously riding towards the ghetto in order to deliver the "Decree against the Jews" which will banish them from the empire. This drawn-out sequence lasts about 10 minutes and alternates regularly between scenes of the decree being signed and delivered, and the rabbi slowly preparing his golem. A close-up of the emperor's decree is contrasted with a close-up of Rabbi Löw's book, containing diagrams and sketches of the golem. Florian's arrival at the ghetto and passing through the gate is soon followed by a shot of the rabbi going through a trap

door to the cellar where the unfinished golem sculpture awaits him. Once the rabbi has finished his work in the cellar, he walks up at the same time that Florian is being let into the house by the rabbi's apprentice. This entire sequence is followed by a significantly condensed version of the story thus far, reduced to a mere 3 images and lasting all of 30 seconds: a shot of the stars (in which the rabbi had earlier read the fate of the Jews), superimposed by a large Jewish star of David, which in turn fades into a close-up of the Golem's face.

The cross-cutting technique employed in this sequence of Wegener's *Golem* not only builds tension but also explodes boundaries by questioning traditional geographical, temporal, and cultural divisions. The formation of the Golem and the delivery of the decree are clearly central events in the development of the narrative. By depicting these two crucial events simultaneously in a series of alternating scenes, the narrative becomes fraught with tension and the viewers are held in suspense. Whereas photography can be used to similarly juxtapose two spatially distinct scenes, film is also able to convey temporal development and perform not only the trauma of a single moment but its entire evolution. In this particular sequence, two further boundaries are violated: first, the boundary between inanimate objects and animate subjects which is defied in the creation of the Golem and, second, the cultural boundary between the ghetto and the outside world which is transgressed by Florian's entry through the city gates. Florian's otherness is denoted not only by his blonde hair, fair skin, and elaborate dress, but also by the white mare which he rides to the ghetto, the ridiculously large feather in his hat, and the long-stemmed rose which he continuously swings back and forth in front of him in a carefree manner. His manicured appearance stands in stark contrast to the wild beards and serious demeanors of the men living within the ghetto walls. The inevitable affair between Florian and Rabbi Löw's daughter finalizes this transgression of cultural boundaries. In the cellar of Löw's house, another boundary is being violated as the rabbi begins to shape a large mass of clay into the golem. The medium-shots of the rabbi's hands as they mold the clay

highlight the necessity of this vital body part in the process of traditional artistic production (contrary to its uselessness in the medium of cinema). In this moment, however, the hands appear to be in complete control, unaware that they are producing the very work of art which will eventually strip them of their power. It is only a matter of time before the object underneath Löw's hands will assert its own subjectivity.

The creation of the Golem mirrors the creation of *Der Golem*, and this is highlighted in a subsequent scene in which the rabbi does, in fact, create a film: a cinematic projection which depicts the original trauma of the wandering Jew. When the emperor asks the rabbi to entertain them with some magic, the rabbi responds: "I will show you our people's history, and our patriarchs. And if you value your lives, let no one speak or laugh." Löw goes to the front of the court and raises his hands; out of the smoke appears a moving image in which we see a large number of people wandering through the desert. An older man with big eyes and a scraggly beard appears at the center, slowly moving closer to the camera. However, the audience at the emperor's court begins to laugh and at that moment the image starts to flicker. The old man moves closer towards the camera as if urgently trying to convey something to his viewers, but the projection suddenly disappears. The court walls and ceilings begin to shake and fall down around the members of the audience who now cry out in terror. The emperor quickly pleads with Rabbi Löw: "Save me and I will pardon your people." At this request, the rabbi nods to the Golem who obediently holds up the ceiling so that everyone safely escapes the crumbling building. Ultimately, Wegener's film-within-a-film depicts an abbreviated version of the larger narrative of trauma represented by *Der Golem*: it is the trauma of an entire people but is represented by the lone figure of the wandering Jew – a figure who turns and gazes directly at his audience in a plea for recognition. This figure thus mimics and replicates the birth of the Golem and his own appeal to subjectivity.

From the first moment in which the Golem is “awakened,” he begins his own struggle with the trauma of coming into being. The first sign of this is the Golem’s piercing gaze. When the Golem opens his eyes for the first time, they move slowly from side to side as he takes in his surroundings. This act is mimicked by the rabbi himself whose eyes also glance sideways at the golem, back towards the camera, and then towards the side again in quick succession. This play of gazes seems to indicate both an assertion to subjecthood and a struggle for power between the two figures. The Golem’s returned gaze directly challenges the rabbi’s power over him: although the rabbi molded the Golem out of clay and brought him to life, the Golem is no longer merely an object that can be shaped and molded according to the rabbi’s desire. The Golem’s piercing gaze thus contests the very agency of his producer; it is the artwork asserting its independence from the artist. As a metaphor for filmic production this is particularly significant: Benjamin himself noted that a film is not the performance of the actor on stage nor the vision of the director but the edited product of the camera’s positional views of this performance. In other words, the artwork cannot be attributed to the original vision of a single artist. Once the film is projected onto a screen, it takes on a life of its own; it is wrested from the hands of those who worked together to produce it. Similarly, the Golem no longer belongs to the rabbi once he opens his eyes and return’s the rabbi’s gaze.

As already mentioned, the bestowal of a gaze is equivalent to the projection of subjectivity. Even more significantly, the returned gaze “confronts the subject with a fundamental strangeness within and of the self” (“Benjamin’s Aura” 345) and thus leads to a radical destabilization of the boundary between self and other. Perhaps the rabbi’s glance into the camera betrays the shock of this recognition as the once inanimate Golem suddenly returns his gaze. But, even more significantly, the rabbi’s own gaze, when directed at the audience, is itself a *returned* gaze: the rabbi looks out at the audience and insists upon his own subjectivity, thus further complicating the increasingly tendentious boundary between subject and object.

According to Hansen, Benjamin's discussion of auratic perception "seems to hinge upon and bring to fleeting consciousness an archaic element in our present selves, a forgotten trace of our material bond with nonhuman nature" ("Benjamin's Aura" 345-46). Wegener's film certainly brings this theme to the fore in its striking depiction of the human in the nonhuman and vice versa: in fact, the Golem's posture, expression, and mimicry bring to mind some kind of primitive species of mankind. Hansen continues: "Aura's defining elements of disjunctive temporality [...] and the concomitant dislocation of the subject are articulated through, rather than in mere opposition to, the technological media" (346). *Der Golem* undeniably articulates a dislocation of the subject in its explosion of the boundary between subject and object, both within the fictional narrative and extending out towards the extra-diegetic spectators. In this sense, the close-ups of the Golem and the rabbi not only directly address but also traumatize the film's viewers.



The second sign of the Golem's struggle into subjecthood is the scene in which one of the girls at the emperor's court hands him a rose. He seems completely mesmerized by the flower and looks at it in wonderment; he tries to smell it, only to face disappointment. The Golem looks down with a melancholy smile on his face. Arnold Zweig's review of Wegener's first Golem production in 1915 (now lost) also astutely perceives this central conflict in the film:

What makes this film worthy of discussion is indeed above all the form (Gestalt) that Wegener gave to the Golem – the amazing figure of an artificial being who struggles to break free of his inanimate state and enter into a living, feeling existence with the world, to become a human being, to account for himself, to transform and purify his

crude senses... into a redeeming feeling. Here in the lyrical realm, the film gave Wegener the possibility that no theater ever could. (quoted in Isenberg 36)

The Golem's struggle into subjectivity was, thus, already a central theme in Wegener's first production of the Jewish legend and quite likely one of the things that attracted Wegener to the legend in the first place. Ultimately, *Der Golem* is not about a rabbi who molds a creature out of clay, but, more significantly, about a being that "struggles to break free of his inanimate state." The Golem's gaze and his desire to feel emotions challenge the traditional divide between subject and object. He is animated by the rabbi's magic but ultimately takes on a life of his own; in precisely the same way, Wegener directs his filmic production but the artwork ultimately asserts its own independence.

Regardless of the efforts of the director, the technology of film is such that it will penetrate reality and reveal a new mode of perception to the audiences who are simultaneously experiencing this evolving perception in their everyday lives. The new role of art, as proposed by Benjamin, is to serve as confirmation of this newly organized perception. As Wegener's film makes clear, however, this evolving purpose of art is not to be taken lightly: just as the rabbi's cinematic projection begins to fall apart and threatens to destroy the audience as they break into laughter (and even the Golem himself represents both the potential to save and to destroy), so too does the young medium of cinema take on a serious and potentially dangerous role in society. It affirms the evolving perception of the industrialized world and has revolutionary potential but only if used correctly. For this reason, Benjamin calls for the "politicization of art" and wants to "put the machinery of art production into the hands of the workers and allow them to show themselves the world they are in the process of making" (Snyder 171).

## **The Vampire as Liminal Figure in Murnau's *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922)**

F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* portrays the violent destabilization of boundaries between life and death, East and West, human and animal, as well as subject and object in the aftermath of the First World War. The marks that Hutter finds on his neck and the idea of having one's blood sucked out by a vampire threatens the traditional understanding of a subject as an organic whole, and, indeed, is challenged throughout the entire film. Anton Kaes has recently asserted that "the vampire in Murnau's film personifies a state between life and death, a liminal state that was all too familiar to soldiers in the trenches" (101). So, although it does not deal explicitly with the First World War, *Nosferatu* must be read in relation to the recent horrors of war which were still at the center of the thoughts of its contemporary viewers. Death seems to hover around every corner in Murnau's film: when Hutter wakes up frightened and looks out the window to see coffins being loaded onto a carriage, when Ellen looks out her window and sees a funeral procession heading directly towards her, and in *Nosferatu*'s shadow which menacingly hovers over his victims before he kills them. Yet, the film's repetition of near-death experiences, the depiction of a being whose very existence challenges the rigid boundary between life and death, as well as the ambiguous ending of the film all defy a simplistic understanding of these constructs. Ultimately, *Nosferatu*'s oscillations between animate vampire and inanimate corpse – his ambiguous status as neither dead nor alive – complicates the divide between life and death in a way that resonated particularly well in the aftermath of the trauma of the First World War.

I have already discussed the way in which Weimar drama extensively investigated the permeable boundary between the animal and the human, and Weimar cinema likewise engages this theme. Certainly, Murnau's infamous vampire, *Nosferatu*, represents a human-animal hybrid of sorts: not only is he repeatedly identified with the rats that live in the cellars

and in the ship's cargo, but he also exhibits rather striking, animal-like features with his pointed nose and ears as well as his sharp, elongated teeth. Kaes insightfully discerns the fact that the vampire and the rats represent "strangeness, otherness, and above all, a latent, incomprehensible danger approaching from the East" (109). Even more interestingly, he mentions that in 1922 "the image of sleeping in rat-infested dirt had an added connotation drawn from the trench experience: during the war, millions of soldiers were forced to live with rats and unburied corpses for months at a time" (109). In this sense, the trauma of World War I is vividly depicted in the constellation of rats, corpses, vampires, and death which constitute the central images of Murnau's *Nosferatu*. The boundary between humans and animals is continuously challenged in the figure of the vampire who has both human characteristics and animal-like features that persistently define him as 'other.'<sup>66</sup> But even more significantly in the context of this chapter, the history of cinema itself is deeply intertwined with an exploration of animality – beginning with the 19<sup>th</sup> century photographic recordings of animal motion made by Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey.

The traumatic explosion of the boundaries between life and death, and the animal and human worlds are portrayed cinematically through techniques that violently fragment and objectify the subjects in *Nosferatu*. Hutter, one of the film's protagonists, is continuously depicted as a shattered subject. In the opening scene, Hutter gets ready for work and looks at himself in the mirror – a common cinematic device for magnifying certain parts of a character's body and for presenting multiple angles of a character within a single shot. Although this technique is most often utilized with female characters, Hutter is the only character who is repeatedly fragmented by mirrors in the film. As Hutter's role becomes increasingly passive throughout the film and his inability to save his wife associates him with a lack of agency, the shattered subjectivity produced by these mirrors serves as a metaphor

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<sup>66</sup> Anton Kaes also identifies *Nosferatu* as 'other' because of his distinctively Jewish characteristics. In this sense, the film engages the same theme of self versus other along the same lines as Wegener's *Der Golem*.

for the fragmentation and loss of agency caused by the camera itself. Thus the trauma of the modern subject is conveyed here on both a thematic and formal level.

When Hutter examines his neck after waking up in Count Orlok's castle, another threat to Hutter's subjectivity makes itself known: the visible marks on his neck represent the physical threat to his body as an organic and unified whole.<sup>67</sup> This threat is made by the vampire who, as already mentioned, occupies a liminal state between life and death as well as between the animal and human realm. Precisely the same threat is made by the medium of cinema: with the invention of the camera, the artist has been alienated from his own hands and is therefore no longer an organic, unified whole. In this sense, the vampire comes to represent the medium of cinema itself. Both pose a violent threat to the subject: while the mirror can shatter a subject, the vampire (and cinema) has the power to give or take life itself. Like *Nosferatu*, film occupies a liminal state between life – in the form of a projected animation – and death – in the inanimate material of celluloid paper. Whereas the vampire pierces the body with his teeth, film fragments the subject by pointing a photographic gun at it. The inherent violence of cinema is betrayed not only in the shared histories of the technologies of the gun and the camera, but also in the metaphorical death which a photographic image bestows on its subject: Susan Sontag has asserted that “to take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality” (11) and even more radically “just as a camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a sublimated murder” (10). In fact, the photographic studies of motion conducted by Etienne-Jules Marey at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the invention of the chronophotographic gun are often considered to be an early precursor to cinema.

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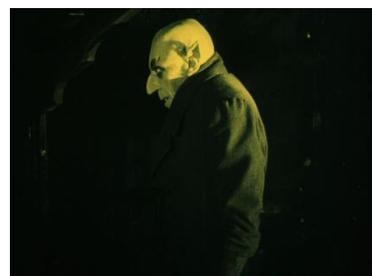
<sup>67</sup> Hutter believes these marks have been made by mosquitos, thus once again affirming *Nosferatu*'s association with the animal world.



Ellen, in contrast to Hutter, is most often framed by windows and doors, rather than by mirrors. This framing device places her firmly in the realm of the domestic, private sphere in which her subjectivity is presumed to be safe from any attempts to breach it from the outside. However, when Ellen begins sleepwalking precariously on the balcony walls, this illusion of safety is overturned. As the film progresses, she begins to break out of the domestic realm and increasingly asserts her own agency and will. When she waits for her husband to return, she sits out by the sea, and when she finally senses that he is near, she runs out of the house into the garden in anticipation of his arrival. After Nosferatu moves in across from their house, it becomes clear that Hutter is unable to protect her and she becomes increasingly aware of the fact that she will have to be the one to save them. Ultimately, this newfound sense of agency culminates in her decision to sacrifice herself to Nosferatu in order to save her husband.

Like *Orlacs Hände* and *Der Golem*, Murnau's *Nosferatu* makes use of cross-cutting in order to depict a central, traumatic event. As Hutter lies asleep in the castle in Transylvania, the door to his room suddenly opens and Nosferatu, framed by the door, begins to move closer and closer. Nosferatu's body seems to become increasingly larger as he moves forward through the static door frame. At the same time back in Wisborg, Ellen wakes up and starts sleepwalking as if she is possessed, her hands reaching straight out in front of her body. She is shown through the window, framed by the balcony door and curtains in a way that

echoes Nosferatu's depiction a moment earlier. Ellen's figure seems small and fragile in comparison, yet both seem to be possessed and the parallel framing devices indicate a link between the two characters. In fact, during a central part of this sequence, Ellen suddenly wakes up and urgently reaches out her hands as if in pleading: Murnau's use of the cross-cut here suggests that, by doing so, she stops Nosferatu from killing Hutter. Just as she reaches out, Nosferatu suddenly freezes and glances to the side, at which point he begins to slowly retreat. The cross-cuts in this sequence imply that a pact has been made between the two, for the very next day, Nosferatu packs up his coffins and boards a ship to Wisborg. Around the same time, Ellen begins going to the beach where she sits surrounded by graves as if she knows that death is coming for her. Thus, the narrator only confirms what has already been made clear by the editing cuts: "Der Arzt berichtete mir von Ellens Angst wie von einer unbekanntem Krankheit. Ich weiss aber, dass ihre Seele in dieser Nacht den Ruf des Totenvogels vernommen hat."



The implicit pact made between Nosferatu and Ellen is further highlighted in the subsequent scenes, in which both Hutter and Nosferatu make their way towards Wisborg. Back in her bedroom, Ellen is again framed in the same manner by her balcony door and begins to walk with her hands stretched out as if possessed. This time she says, “Ich muss zu ihm. Er kommt!” However, we can infer from the scene cuts and editing that she is not, in fact, referring to her husband but, rather, to Nosferatu (and death itself). This long sequence consists of editing three different scenes together: Ellen waiting anxiously on her balcony, Nosferatu moving swiftly towards Wisborg on his ship, and Hutter making his way home overland. The longest shots are the ones which show Nosferatu’s ship sailing across the sea and these are most often directly juxtaposed with Ellen framed by her balcony doorway. In this way, the editing strongly links Ellen’s anticipation with the arrival of the ship rather than Hutter. Furthermore, while Ellen sits by the sea allegedly waiting for the return of her beloved one, an intertitle reports: “Ellen wurde oft am Strande in der Einsamkeit der Dünen gesehen. Ihre Sehnsucht flog dem Geliebten entgegen, ihre Augen suchten über Wellen und Ferne.” Interestingly, it is Nosferatu, not her husband, who is currently travelling across the waves to reach her. In the end, both Hutter and Nosferatu arrive at almost exactly the same time so, again, it is not clear who Ellen is running towards as she sprints through her front door and into the garden. Hutter arrives at the house first, however, and Ellen embraces him. Nosferatu appears near the door just moments later and, after a short hesitation, turns around to head towards the abandoned building across the way.

As Ellen stands by the window waiting, a procession of coffins marches by and appears to be coming directly towards her window. This funeral procession is a result of the plague which has spread throughout the town with Nosferatu’s arrival, and also serves as a forewarning of Ellen’s impending death. According to Thomas Elsaesser, “Nosferatu is a film about networks of contagion and contamination that are also networks of secret and

subversive communication” (83). And, indeed, the contamination of the plague which spreads like wildfire through the town of Wisborg is also represented by Nosferatu’s shadow, which begins to creep closer and closer towards Ellen’s body. The ambiguity as to the real cause of the plague (which the film initially sets out to resolve) is made explicit in the moment when Nosferatu’s ship arrives in the port: the camera not only observes Nosferatu leaving the ship with his coffin, but also points its lens in that direction long enough to show all of the rats that scurry out of the boat only moments later. In this sense it is never made clear whether the spread of the plague was caused by the rats or Nosferatu himself – though, as mentioned earlier, Nosferatu’s status as animal-human hybrid makes this distinction somewhat irrelevant. Both the rats and Nosferatu come to Wisborg from the East and are thus figured as radically other. The plague, then, is explained as the result of a violent confrontation between self and other.

In the final scene of Murnau’s film, Ellen sacrifices herself to Nosferatu in order to save Hutter and the other inhabitants of Wisborg. After reading Hutter’s book and finding out that Nosferatu sucks the blood of his victims at night, she closes her eyes and throws her head back ambiguously in what might be fear but seems more akin to a state of ecstasy. She continues reading a moment later: “There is no salvation other than a faultless woman who lets the vampire forget the rooster’s crow by giving her blood.” That night Ellen is unable to sleep and sees Nosferatu staring at her from his building across the street. She grabs her breast with one hand and again closes her eyes as if in ecstasy. She knows what she must do now and walks towards the window with her hands outstretched. As she does this, Nosferatu also begins to move his hands up excitedly. With one last look at Hutter, Ellen opens the window dramatically which causes Nosferatu to turn quickly away from his window. Ellen wakes Hutter up and tells him to go get the doctor. As soon as he rushes off, Nosferatu begins his ascent towards her bedroom. His menacing shadow moves slowly up the stairs and

towards Ellen who awaits him in the bedroom. As Nosferatu's shadow covers her heart, she sinks backwards as if all her strength has disappeared. According to one critic, Ellen's movement here mimics Nosferatu's earlier action and thus "aggressor and victim, agency and impotence collapse into each other in a way that is paradigmatic of the gestural vocabulary of [many Weimar films]" (266). Although Ellen might be read as a victim who must sacrifice herself to save the one she loves, she also exhibits a great amount of agency in choosing to sacrifice herself to Nosferatu. Her overt sexuality and apparent desire for this moment further complicate the thin line between agency and impotence in the entire film. In this way, Murnau's film makes use of stark lighting and shadows as well as careful framing and editing cuts in order to challenge and destabilize boundaries.

Murnau's film also makes use of time-lapse photography in order to explode traditional conceptions of time, space and motion. When Hutter goes to Transylvania to visit Count Orlok, he spends the first night at a small inn in the countryside. Upon arriving he is told not to go outside after dark because of the evil spirits that roam, and the next shot depicts a wolf prowling the countryside and scaring the horses. As Hutter wakes and looks out the window, he sees horses galloping by. Suddenly he picks up the Book of Vampires he had found the previous night in his hotel room and reads: "Men do not always recognize the dangers that beasts can sense at certain times." These scenes foreshadow and point towards the link between Nosferatu and the animal world, but, even more significantly, they highlight the link between animality and cinema itself. In fact, the shots of galloping horses allude to Eadweard Muybridge, who is often referred to as the 'father of the motion picture,' and his famous study, *The Horse in Motion*, published in 1882. This study used stop-motion photography to reveal the movements of a galloping horse which are too fast to be seen by the naked eye. Murnau, conversely, uses time-lapse photography in order to *speed up* the movement of the carriage as Hutter approaches Count Orlok's castle. If Muybridge's study

was shocking for its exposure of “another nature” invisible to the human eye, Murnau’s time-lapse sequence is equally alienating for its deconstruction of traditional conceptions of time and space. Thus, although Weimar drama also focused intensely on the boundary between the human and animal world, this subject matter takes on new significance in a technical medium that is inherently linked to time and motion. The camera dissects motion and fragments time itself, and in this way ‘penetrates reality’ as Benjamin declares. The vampire in Murnau’s film serves as a site of self-reflexivity because he straddles the same boundaries that cinema itself challenges: the divide between animate and inanimate, animal and human, and life and death.

### **Chapter Conclusion: Self-alienation on the Screen and in the Audience**

Out of the films I’ve discussed at length, *Orlacs Hände* is the only one with a contemporary setting, and, yet, all three films explore highly relevant and pressing concerns of the time. From questions of bodily fragmentation, the boundary between life and death as well as between the animal and the human, the dangers of modern technology, and the animation of the inanimate, these early Weimar films engage the trauma of the First World War in a uniquely media-specific way. Two cinematic techniques are particularly salient in Weimar cinema’s engagement with the subject of trauma: the framing device of the close-up and the editing technique of cross-cutting. Both are characterized by fragmentation and violence. Whereas the close-up isolates and cuts objects or people out of their original contexts, the cross-cut forcefully cuts down the divide between spatially disparate events. Both techniques also evoke Benjamin’s definitions of aura: cross-cutting brings two distant objects or events into juxtaposition thus creating the ‘appearance of nearness however distant it may be’ while the close-up generally has the function of investing something with an ‘awakened gaze.’

In all three of the films analyzed in this chapter, cross-cutting is used to depict a central traumatic event: in Wegener's *Der Golem* the creation of the Golem takes place while the decree of expulsion is simultaneously being delivered, in Murnau's *Nosferatu* an implicit pact is made between Ellen and Nosferatu as he leans over Hutter and she suddenly wakes from her sleep, and in Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* a train hurls towards catastrophe while Orloc's wife prepares for his arrival unaware of the impending disaster. All three of these sequences are designed to build tension and suspense leading up to the moment of trauma, which is characterized in each film as a destabilizing encounter between self and other. This is reinforced by the close-ups which invest objects with a gaze, thus undermining the boundary between subject and object. The vampire, the golem, and the pianist's hands are animated and brought to life through cinematic framing and editing techniques. They question, plead, and assert their own subjectivity. Yet at the root of this subjectivity lies a fundamental sense of self-alienation; it is a liminal subjectivity defined by a precarious straddling of the boundary between life and death, between animal and human, between subject and object, between self and other.

The self-alienation of trauma, which is so vividly depicted in all three of these Weimar films, not only mirrors the experience of soldiers in the First World War but also the experience of a film spectator. Indeed, a sense of self-alienation and divided subjectivity are characteristic of the spectator who is pulled into the fiction of the film while simultaneously being excluded from it. Thomas Elsaesser has described this experience of the cinema spectator quite eloquently: "Torn back and forth between the visible, yet impenetrable space onscreen and the omnipresent, yet invisible space offscreen, the spectator is incorporated into the fiction as a split subject" (quoted in Koch 145). For this reason, the medium of cinema lends itself especially well to an exploration of trauma in modernity: trauma offers itself not only as a fascinating thematic investigation but as a palpable and inherent part of the

cinematic experience itself. As Benjamin has noted, the cinematic spectator can no longer quietly contemplate the artwork before which he sits: the film unfolds so quickly that each scene changes before he has time to grasp it. “Kaum hat er sie ins Auge gefaßt, so hat sie sich schon verändert” (38). This is precisely what creates the ‘shock effect’ of film according to Benjamin:

In der Tat wird der Assoziationsablauf dessen, der diese Bilder betrachtet, sofort durch ihre Veränderung unterbrochen. Darauf beruht die Chockwirkung des Films, die wie jede Chockwirkung durch gesteigerte Geistesgegenwart aufgefangen sein will. Kraft seiner technischen Struktur hat der Film die physische Chockwirkung, welche der Dadaismus gleichsam in der moralischen noch verpackt hielt, aus dieser Emballage befreit. (39)

The shock effect of film is inherent within the very technical structure of the medium. In this sense, film is perfectly suited for conveying trauma in its very ability to traumatize its viewers.<sup>68</sup>

But perhaps more significantly, and as this chapter has by now made clear, the filmic medium also arose out of its own trauma: when the camera freed the artist’s hand, it disrupted the traditional connection between artist and artwork in such a violent manner that this medial trauma reverberates throughout Weimar cinema, echoing the recent historical trauma of the First World War. The new organization of perception, as theorized by Benjamin in his artwork essay, is embodied in the cinematic medium. While the masses may be aware of this evolving perception in the ‘age of mechanical reproduction,’ they must come to film in order to “seek [its] clarification and confirmation” (Snyder 168). But because technical production does away with notions of originality and this includes the originality of the artist’s vision, the finished artwork is torn out of the hands of the artist. The new medium of film can penetrate reality but only by means of a mechanical device and ultimately the artwork cannot be grasped by anyone, even the director, until it is projected onto a screen. This loss of

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<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the idea that the cinema could negatively affect the sanity of the spectator was not an uncommon one in Weimar Germany. “According to one psychiatrist writing in 1920, sensationalistic films often led to hysterical fits among war neurotics and in some cases actually produced neurosis” (Killen 215). This is also related to discourses of hypnosis and cinema as discussed by Kaes, Andriopoulos, and Isenberg.

agency on the part of the artist is traumatic. The young medium of cinema is born out of this very trauma, which it endlessly dramatizes, visualizes, and (re)produces – and which is furthermore mirrored in the historical trauma of the First World War.

## **Dissertation Conclusion**

In concluding my dissertation, I wish to briefly sum up the key implications of my analysis and reiterate its intervention both in contemporary trauma studies and Weimar cultural studies. By examining trauma within three different visual media as well as in psychiatric and psychoanalytic texts, my dissertation has revealed a cross-section of contemporary trauma discourses in early Weimar Germany. In contrast to Ruth Leys' influential genealogy of trauma, which provides a diachronous look at the development of trauma discourses throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, my project explores one single moment in this genealogy: a moment which is both foundational to modern trauma theory and central to the development of modern theater, the new role of photography, and the flourishing of the young medium of film. Thus, rather than traversing forward through time, my investigation traverses primarily across space, wandering through the medially diverse yet interrelated spaces of emergent trauma discourses in the aftermath of the First World War.

Paralleling the synchronous approach of my dissertation, the concept of trauma which emerges in the various works of early Weimar Germany centers largely on a single, traumatic moment in which the previously stable boundary between self and other is suddenly and shockingly exploded. This moment is characterized by an immediacy and intense physicality, represented by Freud's model of a breach in the stimulus shield but also by the fragmented bodies which were so highly visible on the streets of Weimar Germany. The image of the mutilated and prostheticized soldier became a familiar subject of Weimar visual culture, and inevitably influenced contemporaneous conceptions of trauma. Thus, representations of trauma during this time were heavily rooted in corporeality. Within this context, my

dissertation has illustrated that Weimar photography located trauma in the physical boundary between man and machine (prosthetic, militaristic, and optical), theater visualized it in the boundary between man and animal (focusing in particular on the thin and permeable boundary of skin), and cinema identified it in the boundary between life and death (rendered physical in the forms of ghosts, vampires, and golems). Furthermore, all of these thematic (and historically specific) traumas are paralleled by the structural traumas of the very media in which they are represented. Thus, Ernst Friedrich's images of war simultaneously mirror the trauma of photography caused by the replacement of a human body part with a prosthetic device; Ernst Toller and Bertolt Brecht's early theatrical works reflect the trauma of theater as it transitions from traditional to modern forms of representation; and the cinematic works of Robert Wiene, Paul Wegener, and F. W. Murnau convey the trauma of cinema as the modern art form *par excellence* in which the artist has lost direct aesthetic agency over his art.

Moreover, these works can all be understood as engaging in a repetition compulsion: they endlessly repeat the shock of industrialized warfare. This is done, for the most part, without any explicit representation of war. Instead, shock and trauma are repetitively and powerfully conveyed by means of metaphor, leitmotif, or symbol, and, simultaneously, by the newly developed formal techniques of montage, collage, alienation, parallel editing, and close-ups. As mentioned in my introduction, trauma theorist and historian Dominick LaCapra warns against the conflation of two distinct types of trauma – historical and structural trauma – which, I have identified, respectively, in the thematic and formal representations of trauma in the early Weimar years. Yet, in an interesting and highly suggestive footnote, LaCapra asserts that the distinction between these two types of trauma “threatens to be obliterated” in

the repetition compulsion.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, my analysis of trauma in early Weimar visual works, as well as my investigation into Freud's postwar theorization of trauma, frequently reveals a slippage between historical and structural traumas to the extent that the structural trauma of the medium becomes inextricably intertwined with the thematic representations of the historical trauma of the First World War. However, this does not pose itself as problematic but, rather, as a productive slippage – one that, as my dissertation has illustrated, lends a great amount of depth and complexity to the overall conception of trauma in early Weimar Germany.

As the raw physicality and immediacy of war subsided, representations of war became more explicit but also increasingly focused on the narrative assimilation of trauma. Thus, whereas the immediate postwar works discussed in this dissertation are characterized by a visceral and instantaneous trauma visualized in the exploded boundary between self and other, the so-called 'flood of war books' produced a decade after the end of the war consists largely of attempts at integrating the traumatic past into a historical narrative. Perhaps it is for this reason that novels such as Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* were hailed as finally telling 'the truth' about the war. However, as many contemporary trauma theorists have remarked, the desire for narrative closure and, in particular, the assimilation of a traumatic event into a narrative is belied by the very nature of trauma. It is in this sense, they argue, that trauma is implicated in a 'crisis of representation.' Yet, in the immediate postwar works which not only grappled with, but found themselves in the very midst of, trauma, this crisis does not yet make itself known. Here, it seems, trauma takes on a force of its own: its physicality and immediacy pushes forth in the very *form* of photographic, theatrical, and cinematic works.

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<sup>69</sup> The entire quote reads: "The most telling, disorienting instance or effect of the so-called death drive is in the endlessly compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes – scenes in which the distinction between absence and loss, as well as between structural and historical trauma, threatens to be obliterated" (707, note 18).

This manifestation of trauma within the formal techniques of artworks is also related to the creative explosion of new aesthetic techniques and the lack of a single dominant aesthetic style in the early Weimar years. As outlined extensively in my third chapter, early Weimar theater consisted of a variety of theatrical styles including expressionism, Bauhaus, Dada cabaret and street performances, as well as Brecht's as-of-yet unformalized epic theater. This same plethora of genres and artistic styles existed within the media of early Weimar photography and film. Christian Rogowski's recent edited volume, *The Many Faces of Weimar Cinema*, takes this notion as its premise: alongside the canonical art films, a great variety of avant-garde, nonfiction, and popular films such as costume dramas and thrillers were produced during the Weimar Republic. While expressionism played a significant stylistic role in many of these films, it was by no means the predominant style when taking into account the hundreds of films produced each year. The same goes for photography: the proliferation of various genres which made use of the photographic medium – commercial advertising, illustrated magazines, photo essays, photomontages, and so on – resulted in an explosion of styles in the early years of Weimar Germany. Yet, as these genres became more and more precisely defined, so too did style become increasingly streamlined. Indeed, the late Weimar period can be characterized largely by a single artistic trend which made its way into film, theater, and photography and which we know by the name of *Neue Sachlichkeit*.<sup>70</sup> This artistic movement intended to portray the world in an objective and 'realist' manner, candidly representing the violence, poverty, prostitution, and decay of society.<sup>71</sup> This trend towards realist representation, paralleled by the 'flood of war books' in the last years of the Weimar Republic, may have portrayed the reality of war and the deterioration of society in a more

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<sup>70</sup> I do not wish to suggest that all art of the late Weimar years can be subsumed under this single style; yet, in contextualizing my project, it seems worth mentioning that the explosion of styles which characterized the early Weimar years was at least to some degree gradually diminished.

<sup>71</sup> According to Dennis Crockett's *German Post-Expressionism*, "throughout the Weimar period, 'realism' increasingly became the tool of radical artists on both the Right and the Left" (7).

direct and factual manner; yet, and perhaps in direct connection with this, representations of trauma gradually lost the intensity as well as the sense of physicality and immediacy found in the more varied artworks of the tumultuous years directly following the war.

In some sense, of course, my dissertation has not refuted Benjamin's claim of postwar *silence* at all. The preceding chapters have investigated trauma predominantly in the visual culture of early Weimar Germany: in the media of photography, theater, and film, all of which depict the world visually and, thus, reject the supremacy of language. To be sure, both theater and film still rely – to varying degrees – on the spoken word, and photo essays of the 1920s likewise make use of verbal text (at the very least in the form of titles or captions). Yet, the particular form of trauma which I have identified in early postwar works reveals itself primarily in the instantaneity of the image – in the *visualization* of Freud's delineation of trauma as a breach in the stimulus shield. Trauma is able to reveal itself in these media in intensely physical forms and with the penetrating force of immediacy. In this way, and regardless of the degree of emphasis on sight or sound within each particular medium, every single one of the works discussed in this dissertation *communicates* the trauma of war.

According to historian Eric Leed's seminal study on the First World War, "in providing bridges across the boundaries between the visible and the invisible, the known and unknown, the human and the inhuman, war offered numerous occasions for the shattering of distinctions that were central to orderly thought, communicable experience, and normal human relations" (21). Yet, as my dissertation has illustrated, this 'shattering of distinctions' can also be productive in stimulating new – and perhaps more open or less rigid – constructions of identity. In fact, LaCapra has similarly observed that "traumas might instead be seen as posing the problematic question of identity and as calling for more critical ways of coming to terms with both their legacy and problems such as absence and loss" (724). And, indeed, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic essay, Ernst Friedrich's photographic essay, Bertolt

Brecht and Ernst Toller's theatrical works, as well as the cinematic productions of Murnau, Wiene, and Wegener, all respond to the 'problematic question of identity' posed by the trauma of the First World War and do so in incredibly productive ways. All of these early Weimar works convey a complex understanding of trauma and identity in their underscoring of the permeability of boundaries between self and other, and between life and death. This complexity is achieved in large part by means of the mirroring between the thematically represented historical traumas and the broader structural traumas of the various media. As such, the possibility of a critical *Durcharbeiten* remains open. Whereas most studies of Weimar culture examine this period with an eye towards the inevitable catastrophe of the Second World War, thus projecting a sense of doom onto the political, artistic, and social circumstances of the young republic, my dissertation highlights the fluid sense of identity and complex understanding of modern subjectivity – produced in large part through critical engagements with trauma – that actually existed during this particular moment in history.

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