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Lady Killer and Lust-Murderers: Painting Crime in Weimar Germany

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LADY KILLER AND LUST-MURDERERS:
PAINTING CRIME IN WEIMAR GERMANY

By

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For Brandon
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ABSTRACT

During the years following the First World War, and until the consolidation of the Nazi party, paintings and drawings of nude murdered and butchered women proliferated in the German art galleries and avant-garde publications of the Weimar Republic. *Lustmord*, a term derived from criminology and psychology, was the label assigned to such works, and the representation of the lust-murder of women by men became curiously ubiquitous in Weimar culture. Although previous scholarship has tended to treat *Lustmord* art homogenously, in this thesis I argue that these works must be considered individually to grasp the varying meaning of *Lustmord* to Weimar artists and audiences. My study surveys the transformation of *Lustmord* from a crime to an artistic genre, then looks specifically at two paintings: *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* by George Grosz (1893-1959) and *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* by Otto Dix (1891-1969). I argue that despite the shared subject matter, and compositional and temporal parallels of *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* and *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)*, the two paintings have meaning beyond that generically attributed to *Lustmord* art. The separate meanings that can be culled from these works speak specifically to the circumstances and intentions of the artists who created them, and offer insight to the multivalence of *Lustmord* in Weimar society.
INTRODUCTION

In May 1919, George Grosz mounted his first solo exhibition at Hans Goltz’s Galerie Neue Kunst in Munich. Among the works included in the show was *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* (fig. 1), completed in November of 1918. Grosz’s title translates to “The Little Lady Killer,” and the painting indeed offers us a representation of a crime in progress. A bald, bearded man is shown in profile and mid-step, with a bloody-knife in his right hand. His body is torqued and his right arm is crossed over his torso as though he has just slashed his victim. His motion is emphasized by his red tie, which has loosened from his dark suit and swings behind him. The knife is shown in a suggestively phallic position, and the man’s genitals are revealed in the contours of his pants, emphasizing his arousal. The perspective of the room appears tilted, with the wine bottle and potted plant pitched as though disturbed by the violent energy within the room. The female figure seems caught in mid-air, and the stability of the room is upended in a whirl of angles and shadows. She is nude but for a blue sash, and her face is bruised and her throat cut. Her body has been partly disassembled; her arms are missing and her legs are hidden from view behind her attacker. In Grosz’s pseudo-cubist urban setting, her skewed reflection is suggested in a mirror or reflective window, which abuts against another window that shows either the silhouette of an onlooker or the reflection of our killer. Another male silhouette lurks in the shadows to the left of the canvas.

The same year as Grosz’s first solo exhibition, Otto Dix painted *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* (fig. 2). Dix’s painting also features a central male figure in a bedroom attacking a female victim. In Dix’s painting, the room is stabilized, though a chandelier swings pendulously, and profusely bleeding female body parts are strewn everywhere. Dix’s title translates as “The Lust-Murderer: Self-Portrait,” and it has been noted that the swaying lamp and chair were both copied from furniture within the artist’s Dresden apartment. The red-faced, clean-shaven Dix-as-*Lustmörder* wears a dapper, tweed suit. Just as Grosz’s villain, he too is splattered with blood, caught in the midst of his butchering. He swings a knife in one hand, and a dismembered leg in the other. In addition to limbs, a head, and one breast, Dix has taken care to graphically articulate both

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1 The exhibition history of Dix’s painting is unknown, as is its current location.
the genitals and reproductive organs disemboweled from the woman. As if to emphasize his complicity in this horrific crime, his red handprints literally mark the canvas, pressed specifically onto the woman’s body parts. Here, too, mirrors reflect the crime on the wall behind the desk, on the left edge of the canvas, and above the wardrobe.

Scholars have treated Lustmord art of the Weimar era with a great degree of homogeneity. The destroyed or threatened female form has become a unifying icon of Weimar misogyny, frequently explained as a response to the upsetting of gender roles with the emergence of the “New Woman,” and male traumatization, resulting from the devastation of the First World War. It is understandable that Lustmord in German art has hitherto been treated as indistinguishable. The category of such a crime has no English or French equivalents, though became a kind of genre in Germany during the Weimar Republic. I argue that this singular understanding is reductive and can be misleading.

In this thesis, I explore the transformation of Lustmord from a crime committed against real women to a genre in popular culture and high art. I will resituate Der Kleine Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) within the society that informed and accepted their production, and in doing so, will expose nuanced and significant meaning that is lost when the original context of the works are forgotten. By focusing on two visually and chronologically linked paintings by two of Germany’s most prominent artists of the Weimar Republic, I suggest that the two canvases represent contrasting interpretations of Lustmord in which Grosz and Dix appropriated the Lustmord trope to achieve contrasting, if somewhat parallel, ends. More specifically, I will emphasize the satirical nature of Grosz’s interpretation of Lustmord, and Dix’s use of Lustmord through a Nietzschean discourse. Dix’s democratic treatment of death is far removed from Grosz’s satirical bent, and when viewed within the artists’ oeuvres and in context of Lustmord’s history in German culture, it becomes evident that their use of Lustmord was divergent from one another. The existing literature has failed to look at the Weimar-era Lustmord paintings in context with each other, and the same literature has ignored the indivuality of each Weimar artist working with this theme. In this thesis, I will contrast the Lustmord paintings of Grosz and Dix, and will complicate our contemporary understanding of Lustmord as an artistic genre in order to show that Der Kleine
Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) are not merely reiterations of each other, but are highly informative of the society and artists who created them.

Lustmord Pervades German Society: The Creation and Reception of Lustmord Canvases

The treatment of the female form in Weimar Germany was often dominated by anecdotal violence. Grosz, Dix, and many of their artistic contemporaries often rendered women as victims of murder and mutilation. These works, which sometimes resembled crime scene photographs, were recognized broadly in the mid-1920s under the genre Lustmord—a term that had previously been used by psychologists and criminologists, like Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Erich Wulffen, to categorize those acts of murder in which women and children are killed through a particular combination of desire (Wollust) and cruelty (Grausamkeit). Der Kleine Frauenmörder, Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt), and other Lustmord paintings were initially well received by politically left-leaning art critics who had come to expect violence, cynicism, and satire in the works of the artists of the Weimar avant-garde. Nevertheless, the same critics curiously neglected the violent figuring of women particular to these works. This absence deserves some attention.

Lustmord enjoyed a curious ubiquity in German culture. The term was initially proposed as a condition describing one afflicted with degenerate sexuality. Within just a few decades, it encompassed an entire artistic and literary genre. The application of the term in Germany during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries varied, depending on the decade and the nature of the crime. Criminologists and psychologists often understood Lustmord differently, and once Lustmord entered the cultural sphere, it adopted other new and varied meanings among artists, writers, and the general public.

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4 Krafft-Ebing, 62-74.
Philosopher Richard von Krafft-Ebing popularized the term *Lustmord* in the late 1880s, coinciding with the sensationalized killings of the infamous Jack the Ripper. Krafft-Ebing’s research focused on sexual deviancies, and he argued that *Lustmord* was a product of upsetting gender roles, and that the potential of *Lustmord* was evident in everyone. In the decades that followed, Germany was host to an extended crime-wave of mass-murders of women and children, the most renowned killers being Karl Denke, Peter Kürten, and Johann Otto Hoch. In 1905, criminologist Erich Wulffen published *Der Sexualverbrecher* (The Sex Criminal), which included a chapter on *Lustmord* and numerous, lurid crime scene photographs of raped, murdered, and mutilated women. Wulffen’s text was intended as a handbook for policemen and detectives, but available to the Weimar public at large. Dix, who is believed to have owned a copy of *Der Sexualverbrecher*, and Rudolph Schlichter went so far as to copy Wulffen’s crime scene photographs in their paintings. An overview of contemporary newspapers suggests that despite the specific distinctions of Krafft-Ebing, society conflated *Lustmord* with other, related terms, such as *Frauenmord* and *Sexualmord*. At the same time that *Lustmord* becentered the German lexicon in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, such German artists as Grosz and Dix produced a substantial body of *Lustmord*-related paintings and etchings. Like the varied semantic interpretations of the term, these works offer differing iconographic conceptions of *Lustmord*.

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
8 Johanna Ey, *Dix-Pankok-Wollheim: Freunde in Düsseldorf, 1920-1925* (Düsseldorf: Galerie Remmert und Barth, 1989): 81-82. Paul Westheim points out the similarity between one of Dix’s *Lustmord* paintings and Wulffen’s published crime scene photographs, referring to Wulffen in such a casual manner, suggesting the criminologists’ works were well known and needed no formal introduction: “Freilich wäre zu sagen, wenn man diese Reihe: einen ‘Lustmord,’ der Illustration zu Wulffens [ibid.] Kriminalpsychologie sein könnte…” Paul Westheim, “Dix,” *Das Kunstblatt* 10 (1926): 144.
9 “Noch ein Frauenmord? Gegenstände einer Vermißten gefunden.—Eine neue geheimnisvolle Zuschrift,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* (15 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe) and “Von Großmann zum Düsseldorfer Mörder: Der Schrecken der Sexualmorde: Das schwierigste Gebiet der Kriminalistik,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* (18 Nov. 1929, Der Montag: Die illustrierte Montagszeitung) are two examples taken from German newspapers. Grosz also varied his use of terms referring to his paintings of murdered women, with his earlier works titled *Lustmord* and later works *Frauenmord*. 
Secondary Literature and Lustmord Scholarship

Important, though limited, work has been done on the Lustmord images of the Weimar avant-garde. Brigit S. Barton has analyzed the Lustmord compositions of Grosz, Dix, and their contemporaries as critical of the corrupt German bourgeoisie, while Dennis Crockett explains the works as resulting from the brutalizing effect of war on the veteran-artists. Beth Irwin Lewis has linked Lustmord representations to misogynistic responses to the “New Woman” and the “Woman Question,” and Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius has published studies on Grosz and Dix’s Lustmördes that reveal multiple layers of political and gendered discourse within the works. Maria Tatar has produced the most recent and extensive study on the subject in English in which she concludes that the works amount to “murder committed in the mind of the artist.”

The secondary literature on Der Kleine Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) has focused on the subject matter. Recent scholarship has wrestled with the misogynistic and seemingly sadistic overtones of such art, seeking the significance of the numerous representations of eroticized, murdered women that were produced and widely circulated within Weimar culture. Art historians overwhelmingly associate the Lustmord paintings of Grosz and Dix with the effects of World War I, thereby reducing the importance of such work to an aesthetic consequence of the war. Far too often, scholarship on Lustmord in the visual arts suffers from a lack of careful delineation of the concept in relation to the related discourses of psychology and criminology. The overarching violent themes of the works of Weimar artists producing Lustmord paintings have also been neglected in current Lustmord scholarship.

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Methodology and Outline

Der Kleine Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) are but two of many Lustmord images from Weimar Germany, but these two paintings parallel, and diverge from, each other. I chose to write on these particular works for many reasons, one being the prominence of the artists who created them. George Grosz was one of the most prominent artists in Germany during the Weimar Republic, evidenced in his association with Berlin Dada, his extensive work in publishing satirical journals and his involvement with major German art periodicals, as well as his involvement with highly publicized trials brought against him by the State. Otto Dix was not as established of an artist as Grosz during the early 1920s, but would become a prominent figure of the Neue Sachlichkeit movement later in the decade. The careers of the two artists correlate to a great degree: both men abandoned academic training to fight in World War I, and afterward both become involved in Berlin Dada before aligning themselves with Neue Sachlichkeit. More importantly, Grosz and Dix produced more Lustmord-related art than any of their contemporaries. Finally, Der Kleine Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) parallel each other visually and correspond chronologically. The two paintings share much, but it is in their differences that I find the most pertinent clues to their individual meanings.

By examining these paintings in this thesis, I expand upon the current scholarship on Lustmord by contextualizing representations of Lustmord in the tumultuous Weimar era, and within the oeuvres of Grosz and Dix, in order to understand how these works likely held different meanings for their creators. Working primarily with social history and authorship, I suggest that Grosz’s and Dix’s paintings of Lustmord should not be discussed as two examples of a repetitious and indistinguishable subgenre of violent Weimar-era painting. Rather, I will attempt to prove that Der Kleine Frauenmörder and

13 These trials, which were detailed in many newspaper publications at the time, did not focus on Grosz’s Lustmord imagery, but rather on the public nature of his publications, which the State felt were anti-nationalistic and sacrilegious. See “Die Auswüchse der Dadamesse. Ein Prozeß wegen Beleidigung der Reichswehr.—Der Oberdada’ vor Gericht,” Berliner Tageblatt (21 April 1921); “Der Ober-Dada vor Gericht” 8 Uhr Abendblatt (Berlin, 20 April 1921); George Grosz unter Anklage,” Berliner Volkszeitung (16 Feb. 1924).
Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) were created with very different intentions. I will also examine how these paintings challenge twenty-first century reception as the context of their production is increasingly overlooked.

I have organized this thesis into three chapters. In the first chapter, I discuss Lustmord as a criminological term used to describe a particular crime. I will establish the varied scientific definitions of Lustmord, then discuss its adoption as a genre by artistic and literary fields. I believe the transference of Lustmord imagery onto such cultural spheres has implications of how the term was understood, and in fact broadens its meaning. I will look particularly at the modern metropolis, the sensational media, and crime novels as significant sources that informed the genre of Lustmord. Chapters two and three focus on George Grosz and Otto Dix, respectively. In each chapter, I offer a detailed analysis of the paintings on which this thesis is focused, concentrating on what makes each painting particular to itself and to the artist who painted it.

Der Kleine Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) have too often been lumped together in scholarship, as have George Grosz and Otto Dix. Lustmord as an artistic genre has been accepted by the same scholarship as merely problematic and sexist, without accounting for how or why it was appropriated in such a plethora of cultural manifestations. Lustmord was popular during the Weimar era, and in the following thesis I do not expect to offer a complete comprehension of this phenomenon. I do hope to further our understanding of these problematic paintings as separate and independent works, which engage with a disturbing and ubiquitous theme. Instead of reducing Der Kleine Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) to variants of a singular idea of trauma and misogyny, my goal in writing this thesis is to better understand the individual motives behind and receptions of these paintings.
Lust-murder is a foreign and ambiguous term for non-Germans. Is it a crime? A psychological affliction? A metaphor? A cultural genre? Lustmord has come to be imbued with all of these meanings, but it was not always so. Lustmord began as a criminological term describing a certain crime and criminal, but within the first decades of the twentieth century, Lustmord was enthusiastically seized by the German public as an artistic and literary theme. The term came to define more than a particular horrific act committed by one individual onto another, and was assumed by artists, filmmakers, authors, and critics in labeling and describing a genre of cultural productions. Any attempts to decipher this shift must commence with the beginnings of Lustmord as a criminal and psychological label.

The prototypical Lustmörder developed in the form of the serial murderer of prostitutes that plagued the Whitechapel district of London in 1888. The identity of Jack the Ripper, as the offender came to be known, was never discovered, but the attributed brutal murder and mutilation of eleven women between 3 April 1888 and 13 February 1891 to the infamous Ripper created a media frenzy.\(^\text{14}\) Newspapers sensationalized both the gruesome details of the murders, and the mystery surrounding the now-infamous killer. Jack the Ripper, to quote Colin Wilson, “inaugurated the age of the sex crime.”\(^\text{15}\) If we define this “sex crime” from the mutilations attributed to the Whitechapel murderer, then such would be the murder of a woman in which her corpse is butchered, or otherwise violated. This kind of sex crime was not isolated to London, and from the turn of the century throughout the Weimar Republic, it came to the fore of atrocities in Germany. Violent murders of a sexual nature like those committed in Whitechapel were


identified as Lustmördes in German, and was initially disseminated throughout German society through psychological and criminological studies.

**Lustmord in Psychology and Criminology**

Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* was a study of “contrary sexual instinct” which looked at the psychological underpinnings of Lustmörders, and discussed Lustmord not as a crime, but as a perversion derived from sadistic urges. Krafft-Ebing describes Lustmord as “lust potentiated as cruelty,” though his case studies vary in the specific ways that such lust and cruelty overlap. Krafft-Ebing’s study emphasizes what is done to the corpses of victims after having been killed, primarily identifying cannibalism as a motive for Lustmord. “The Whitechapel murderer,” he says, “probably belongs in this category of psycho-sexual monsters. The constant absence of uterus, ovaries, and labia in the victims . . . allows the presumption that he seeks and finds still further satisfaction in anthropophagy.” The association of cannibalism with Lustmord does not seem to have transferred to popular culture, as it was rarely, if ever, a focus in the Lustmord-themed art, literature, or film of the later Weimar era. It is unknown how widely read Krafft-Ebing’s text was among the general community, but one can assume that this text was meant for an audience broader than for the scientific community. Krafft-Ebing offers another explanation for the butchery done to Lustmord victims, in which “the sadistic crime alone becomes the equivalent of coitus.”

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17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 64.

20 Ibid.
than a cannibalistic drive, became a key aspect of later Lustmord studies. Krafft-Ebing also employs technical jargon to great degree, and often writes entire passages in Latin. Such scientific terminology suggests that such a text was not intended for a non-educated audience.

Erich Wulffen was a criminologist, not remembered in the annals of German criminology so much as by Weimar society in general. Wulffen’s area of focus was criminals who committed sexually based crimes, and his book Der Sexualverbrecher seems to have been well known among Weimar Germans. Der Sexualverbrecher is not only written in the vernacular, but it is filled with gruesome crime scene photographs, which likely led to its popularity. Magnus Hirschfeld, a prominent Weimar sex researcher, noted that after the war there was a public demand for evidence of “the most hair-raising atrocities,” and Wulffen’s book certainly delivered. Der Sexualverbrecher does not read as a celebration of Lustmord, though Wulffen’s writing is not bereft of misogyny, but the photographs that fill nearly every other page are borderline gratuitous. Wulffen’s section on Lustmord arguably contains the most disturbing imagery, accompanied by detailed accounts of the crimes. Close-ups of harm done to genitalia and breasts are frequently included, and seem almost fetishistic in their graphic nature.

Wulffen’s analysis of Lustmord is linked to German law, as this text was intended as a guide to police, lawyers, and the like, and therefore does not direct his attention to the intent or psychological state of the killers. Instead, Wulffen’s focus is on the actual crimes. He emphasizes that Lustmord is an act in which the violent attack and killing of a

22 Ibid.
26 Wulffen’s Weib als Sexualverbrecherin (Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1923) distinguishes all crimes committed by women as sexual in nature, due to her psychological and physical determinations which, Wulffen asserts, are guided by her reproductive system.
victim replaces, or facilitates, sexual climax for the assailant.\textsuperscript{27} Wulffen does not explicitly link anthropophagy to \textit{Lustmord}, as does Krafft-Ebing, but instead focuses on the individual brutalities enacted against the bodies in the included case studies.\textsuperscript{28} Detail is also given to the apprehended \textit{Lustmörders}, as Wulffen outlines their individual social status and circumstance.\textsuperscript{29}

Otto Dix and Rudolph Schlichter both used photographs from Wulffen’s text as guidelines for their own \textit{Lustmord} paintings (fig. 3, 4). The photographs from Wulffen’s book were likely a general source of information for the gruesome crimes reported, but not photographically represented in the newspapers. Both artists vary their copied scene to a degree, keeping the basic positioning of the victim’s body, but altering certain aspects like interior details and the position of the viewer to the crime. Dix was identified as having owned a copy of \textit{Der Sexualverbrecher} in his library, and in a 1926 issue of \textit{Das Kunstblatt}, art critic Paul Westheim refers to \textit{Der Sexualverbrecher} as “Wulffen’s text,” implying his readers were familiar with the book.\textsuperscript{30} Given \textit{Der Sexualverbrecher}’s widespread appeal during the 1920s, I believe that Wulffen’s documentations of \textit{Lustmord} served as the primary vehicle through which \textit{Lustmord} was initially projected visually to the Weimar public. Still, Wulffen was not solely responsible for introducing the public to documents and imagery of this crime. Analysis of Grosz’s and Dix’s paintings suggests that more than simply an atrocious crime against women, \textit{Lustmord} was understood to be a thoroughly modern crime, located within and implicitly bound to the metropolis.

\section*{Fixations on Monstrosity: \textit{Lustmord} in the Metropolis and the Media}

\textsuperscript{27} Wulffen, 454.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 454-93.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
“Weimar was Berlin, Berlin Weimar,” Eric D. Weitz proclaims in his book on Weimar Germany.\textsuperscript{31} By the end of the First World War, Berlin was the largest city in Germany, and the second largest in Europe.\textsuperscript{32} Grosz and Dix both lived in Berlin (though during the early 1920s Dix was living in Dresden, another major German city), and their art often incorporated the sex, filth, and bustling madness of the metropolis. A metropolis such as Berlin was a place where people moved as strangers and voyeurs among one another. After the war, women constituted a larger percentage of the population than ever before.\textsuperscript{33} “Respectable” women now joined the crowds, as being in public unaccompanied was no longer exclusively associated with prostitution. The emergence of women onto the streets as they shopped or commuted to work contributed to their widespread appearance as part of the spectacle of the city. In display windows, café patios, and the neon glow of illuminated advertisements, they too became even more the object of attention. Franz Hessel, the German writer and flaneur, describes

\begin{quote}
  \textit{[t]he agile, erect city girls with their insatiable open mouths are indignant when my glance lingers on their sailing shoulders and soaring cheeks . . . this slow-motion examination by the harmless stroller unnerves them. They notice that with me, nothing is hidden behind my glance.}\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Hessel points out the discomfort of the women he watches, a subtle indication that the Weimar city was understood to be an overwhelmingly corrupt and dangerous place, “lurking” and “ready to pounce,” as Joseph Goebbels once described Berlin.\textsuperscript{35} Movement within crowds heightened the brief and uneasy meetings with strangers, whether on a busy street or a crammed streetcar. Historian Peter Fritzsche makes this point, stating, “Not only was the milling crowd the perfect milieu for strangers; the crowd itself appeared as vague and menacing as the unaccountable people who were part of it.”\textsuperscript{36} The metropolis had become a kind of living creature in its own right, acknowledged simultaneously as the domain of predators and voyeurs, and itself a predacious entity.

\textsuperscript{31} Weitz, 41.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Weitz., 55.
\textsuperscript{36} Fritzsche, 205.
Newspapers were another key component of large cities, especially Berlin, which was host to more newspapers than any other city in Europe.\textsuperscript{37} Most of the ninety-three different newspapers that were sold weekly (of which the bigger publishers would print several editions throughout the day) focused on stories to shock and awe their readers, further adding to the spectacular nature of metropolitan life.\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Lustmord} was one such shocking headline, and most newspapers sensationalized such killings in order to sell papers. Fritzsche reports that when “thirty women were stabbed by an anonymous attacker over the course of a single week in February 1909,” such newspapers as the \textit{Berliner Zeitung} immediately pushed the headline to the front pages (“Das Schrecken von Berlin”).\textsuperscript{39} Newspapers often had to compete with one another in their gruesome accounts. The more sensational the story, the more likely a reader will buy that paper over another. Occasionally, journalists would embellish or exaggerate stories, often using dramatic language and supernatural metaphors, as when they referred to the \textit{Lustmörder} as a \textit{Gespenst} (ghost) or \textit{Vampir}.\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Lustmörders} Karl Denke, Peter Kürten, Johann Otto Hoch, Fritz Haarmann, and Wilhelm Grossmann were the most renowned serial killers of the era, made infamous by not just their harrowing crimes, but through the scores of newspapers that pushed them onto the front pages, describing their victims in exaggerated detail.\textsuperscript{41} Early twentieth-century critics often commented on the excessive promotion of such lurid news stories. In a 1909 edition of \textit{Der Zeitung-Verlag}, one anonymous author critiques the certain Berlin tabloids as “cultivat[ing] sensation as a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 16.  \\
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 22-3.  \\
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 138.  \\
\textsuperscript{40} H. R. Berndorff, “Der Ort des Grauens: An der Haniel-Mauer,” \textit{Vossische Zeitung} (19 Nov. 1929). The passage that uses the term is as follows: “An der Mauer Haniel ist ein einfaches kleines Kreuz. Hier liegt begraben Gertrud Albermann, 5 Jahre alt, ermordet von einem unbekannten Täter, den ganz Düsseldorf erregt sucht, der bisher neun Menschen getötet, zehn schwer verletzt hat und der in dieser schönen, eleganten Stadt zu einem Gespenst geworden ist, das aber grauenvollstätatschlich ist,” as quoted in Layne, 24. Peter Kürten was dubbed the Vampire (\textit{Vampir}) of Düsseldorf by the media.  \\
\textsuperscript{41} Jay Michael Layne, \textit{Uncanny Collapse: Sexual Violence and Unsettled Rhetoric in German-Language Lustmord Representations, 1900-1933}, dissertation (University of Michigan, 2008). The first chapter of Layne’s dissertation relays many such accounts, pointing out excessive and fantastic reportage, primarily dealing with the murders of Peter Kürten.
\end{flushright}
genre,” anticipating the literary and pictorial genres of Lustmord that developed over the course of the following decades.42

These sensationalized reports, though, usually only related the crime scene and the state in which the victim was discovered. The absence of the killer arguably drove the fascination and hysteria over the killings, while the exaggerated accounts of the murders served to titillate, more than show concern for the victims. While many Weimar-era Lustmord paintings portray apparent crime scenes, containing disembowled victims but lacking the perpetrator, Der Kleine Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) notably include all three essential components. The victim’s fractured, bloody form is depicted in mid-air, the room either tumultuously upturned or spattered with blood. In each, however, the murderer provides the focal point, caught in the frenzy of his butchering and revealing to the viewer a scene not available to newspapers, but nonetheless likely imagined by their readers.

The voyeuristic nature of urban living, as articulated by Hessel and others, is intrinsic to Der Kleine Frauenmörder. The painting features three possible windows, but the fragmented depiction of the room is built of numerous ninety-degree angles, which suggest the possibility of more. One of the windows explicitly reveals the shadowy profile of a witness, or spectator, to the crime, and another profile is shown in a more vague space, which might represent a window or perhaps an entranceway into the room. The most important witness to this crime is the viewer, whose access into the painting is unobstructed, and whose voyeuristic relationship to the scene is echoed in the shadowy profiles in the background.

The urban setting is further emphasized through other details within the painting. A red crescent moon hangs over the top-most center of the canvas, while two greenish-blue orbs hover to its right, possible suggesting the lights of a city lamppost. The blue, silk sashes and tights that the woman wears suggest that she is a prostitute, a profession with which at least since the Whitechapel murders Lustmord has been associated.43 Her attacker, though unshaven, is dressed in business attire, a suit and tie.

42 Fritzshe., 179.
Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) does not give us a view of the world outside, but we can assume this crime is occurring in the city. A discarded corset lies on the floor, once again suggesting the victim is a prostitute. Like Der Kleine Frauenmörder, the dapper killer in the Dix painting (Dix himself, as he has intended this work as a self-portrait) also wears a suit and tie, with shiny dress shoes complete with spats. What appears to be a gourd-shaped atomizer sits on a desk or vanity (bearing the artist’s name and date of the painting) could also be indicative of a city dwelling, where commercial goods and luxuries were readily available. The refined Biedermeier furniture depicted within the room is typical for a middle-class urban home, and was apparently copied from Dix’s own bedroom furniture from his Dresden apartment. Unlike Dix’s Lustmord of 1922, Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) does not feature a window, and instead offers a large mirror which functions in a similar manner, suggesting a space beyond the picture plane—a space that we, the viewers, inhabit. Another mirror is painted atop the wardrobe, doubling the emphasis of the viewer’s perspective, and underscoring the viewer’s complicity in the Lustmord as bearing witness to the painted crime.

A final indication of the metropolitan location of these paintings is their mise-en-scènes. Der Kleine Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) are both set in interior urban spaces of the apartment or hotel room. While not only representing their urban surroundings, the rooms can be understood as representing traditionally gendered spaces. Jonathan P. Eburne, in his discussion of Yves Tanguy’s 1925 Lustmord painting Fantômas, has postulated that the villain’s entry into the private space of the room where he murders a female victim is a “violent parable of sexual penetration.” It could be further suggested that the violation of the private, traditionally female space of the home by the male criminal is an inversion of the female urbanite’s increasing encroachment on the public spaces of the city. The danger of the metropolis in thus insinuated: if the modern woman enters into the public life of the city, she is putting herself in danger. I don’t believe that Grosz and Dix intended their Lustmord paintings as warnings against female movement in the city, but parallel aspects within the paintings do suggest why the prostitute and the city, as well as the bourgeois customer-killer, contributed to the

44 Lewis, 220.
formulation of the Lustmord genre. Prior to the emergence of the pictorial Lustmord genre, the violently murdered woman featured prominently in horror-fiction and crime stories.

**Lustmord’s Transformation: From Crime to Culture**

The transformation of Lustmord from crime to culture did not only evolve from newspaper sensationalization and criminology, but was present in other forms of fiction. In his autobiography, Grosz describes himself as a child fascinated by the thrills of the horrific, whether in the form of so-called penny-dreadful novels or the sensational picture shows promoted by the traveling fair, and it is here that we may find the earliest precursors to Der Kleine Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt). A precursor to the modern slasher film was the traveling horror peepshow that accompanied the fair. These fairs were primarily rural, and in his autobiography, Grosz recalls the pre-cinematic horror shows of country fairs that so affected him. Grosz’s explanation of these fairs offers the most detailed account of these peep shows, and insinuates that they were well-known, and travelled through Germany annually. How widespread the horror peepshows were is unclear, but they certainly informed Grosz’s own Lustmord compositions.

“An indelible impression was made on me by the horror shows at county fairs,” Grosz says, “They always had a stall with two galleries and peepholes through which you could look at pictures . . . I still consider this type of art as a kind of atrocity reportage and . . . in its own way ideal.”

46 This comparison likely points to atrocity propaganda used by both sides during the war, which often took shape in the form of raped and murdered women. Grosz linked such imagery together, unified by

war, and possibly reveals the beginning of this visual formation for him as an artist. He recounts the “bright red blood [as] as important ingredient for their subject matter,” which bring to mind the heavy censorship of the German government before World War I, which prohibited “anything openly bloodthirsty.” For Grosz, these horror shows, which united voyeurism and titillation from violence, served as a kind of premonition “of the atrocities, the blood and the murder that was to come.” One must assume that Grosz is speaking about World War I, and such a statement suggests that Grosz associates fictional violence as foregrounding real violence, which again assumes a fictive existence in his post-war paintings. “Every time I saw another bloodcurdling picture in one of the itinerant show booths,” he explains,

A vague and eerie feeling came over me of the unknown horror and crime of a veiled and unexplored world. I was enraptured, but perplexed. Behind those peculiarly painted assassinations . . . I suspected the romance of an untracked world of great dangers and bloody adventure . . . That world, it seemed to me, could not be experienced in our small Pomeranian town.

Grosz’s knowledge of, and near admiration for big cities as the domain for violent crime is clear. His explanation of the awesome anticipation he felt in moving to such a romantic and horrific place seems almost contradictory to the self-proclaimed satirical nature of his work, but explains the metropolis as a linchpin for so many of Grosz’s apocalyptic city scenes, including his Lustmord paintings.

“In those days I would read a heap of blood curdling novels,” Grosz said of his youth, “[and] it was always the goriest stories that attracted us.” Cheap fiction, known as penny or dime novels, were also prevalent in German society, and came to be the center of controversy during the Weimar years. Whether narrating a murder

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48 Grosz, 13.
49 Grosz, 13-14.
50 Ibid., 15.
51 Grosz, 15-18.
52 Eric D. Weitz, Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007): 41. Such Schund und Schmutz, as the salacious novels were labeled, were so ubiquitous as to come under fire from the Reichstag, who saw the cheap publications as appealing “to the most basic human instincts and destroyed respect for authority . . . [and were] directly responsible for the frightening rise in criminal behavior, promiscuity, and sexually
mysteries or fantastic battles of the American West, the pulp fiction read by Grosz and ubiquitous in German society was fueled by violence, and often sex. The cover of an early twentieth-century Harry Dickson’s pulp magazine *Aus den Geheimakten des Welt-Detektivs* (fig. 5), fashioned after Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes novels, offers an example of the popular pulp fiction that centered on *Lustmord*. It features a *Lustmörder* butcher in a dungeon-like setting, wielding an axe towards the bound detective while three semi-nude women hang limply from chains on the wall behind him. The female victims act as agents of titillation that support the actions of the male protagonists, hero and villain—a point made clear in this particular example by the women’s unconscious states and nudity.

Even the western penny novels, like the popular Buffalo Bill series (proclaimed by Grosz as a favorite), would later influence *Lustmord* imagery.⁵³ Rudolph Schlichter’s drawing *Lyncher*, published in *Das Kunstblatt*, depicts the lynching of two women, one dressed in a buckskin dress with dark hair (presumably an American Indian) and the other fair and dressed as an American.⁵⁴ The women are strung up in the center of the image, hung limply from a wooden beam. The breasts of one woman are visible through her dress, formally echoing the chained captives from *Die Welt-Detektivs*. Schlichter has sketched a motley crew of Mexican bandits and cowboys around the women, while a group of men on horseback bearing an American flag gather in the background, all further establishing the scene as one set in the American West. Grosz, too, borrowed themes from the American West in his *Lustmords*, but the significance of these associations will be addressed in the following chapter.⁵⁵

transmitted diseases.” In 1926, the Reichstag made its utmost attempt to quell the popularity of the novels to protect Germany’s youth with the 1926 Law to Protect Youth from Trash and Filthy Writings. In hindsight, the opinions of the German government to the novels so beloved by Grosz ironically parallel the satirical reproaches of Grosz and his contemporaries toward German society, as both were elicited from the perceived moral decline of German society.

⁵³ Grosz, 18.
⁵⁴ *Das Kunstblatt* 4, no. 4 (1920): 107.
⁵⁵ A close relative of the penny novel existed in the more sophisticated, but still consequential, detective novel. These genres were not always clearly defined from one another, though I understand the detective novel as appealing to the intellect, while pulp fiction serves to excite. Roger Callois differentiates between the detective novel and the penny novel, explaining that the former begins with murder, which is the finale of the latter.⁵⁵ *Lustmord* existed in the crime novel, either explicitly or implicitly, and though it functioned in different ways in literature than in
Lustmord as art

Grosz appears to have been the first artist to adopt Lustmord as a subject so titled, and Lustmord did not spring from his mind or his paintbrush like Athena from Zeus’s skull.

Many factors influenced Grosz in his appropriation, not simply a desire to paint ruined women. The transfer of Lustmord from a crime in the real world, to one photographed and documented, to narratives in fiction and genre in art is a complicated and intriguing road. The most literal relocation of Lustmord from the realm of the historical to the artistic is Dix and Schlichter’s borrowing from Wulffen’s book. Dix and Schlichter literally transform the victim in Der Sexualverbrecher from an end—the end of a life—to an eternal and multivalent form to be deciphered. In their paintings, Grosz and Dix insist the victim’s body and the offenders who attack them represent not just a crime that originates in reality and is sensationalized by the media, but can act as metaphors for the ills of humankind, and as Nietzschean protagonists who represent another aspect of human existence.

Lustmord paintings like Der Kleine Frauenmörder and Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) are problematic works. Grosz and Dix have rendered morbid and frightening crimes against women in their canvases. Their paintings are not traditionally beautiful, and yet, one cannot dismiss them as being simply vulgar, ugly, or cruel in themselves. They remain paintings, not crimes, and they reflect a societal intrigue of the Weimar Republic. Martha Dix, wife of the artist, reflects back on the 1920s, saying, “themes such as Lustmord were fascinating in those days.” It remains our task as art historians to try to understand why.

Examples of paintings of women murdered by men are, of course, found throughout art history, but Grosz appears to be the first to recognize such a composition as a Lustmord. Possible German precedents for this kind of imagery are Theodor Heine’s Eifersucht (1894, Munich Private Collection) and Oskar Kokoschka’s Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen (Der Strum, 14 July 1910, Berlin).

George Grosz created the earliest composition on the topic of Lustmord in 1913, and exerted an enormous influence on subsequent artists working on this genre, such as Otto Dix, Heinrich Maria Davringhausen, and Rudolph Schlichter. Though, as I argue, each artist used the imagery to achieve varying goals, all took up Lustmord as a subject after establishing a relationship with Grosz (and presumably viewing his Lustmord paintings and prints). Grosz exhibited Der Kleine Frauenmörder in 1920, alongside another Lustmord painting, John, Der Frauenmörder (fig. 6), in his major solo exhibition at Hans Goltz’s Munich Galerie Neue Kunst. The latter painting was also published in a special issue of Die Ararat, which also functioned as a catalogue for the exhibition.

The two paintings, developed within the same month and exhibited together, are similar not just in their subject matter but also in style, and have mirrored compositions. Each is painted in Grosz’s Cubo-Futurist style, with the details of the interior settings shifting and seemingly tilted upwards, threatening to topple onto the viewer. The female victim in each is airborne, with her throat slit. The shapes that make up their bodies are

58 Davringhausen moved to Berlin in 1915, where he and Grosz became close friends, and two years later Davringhausen painted Der Lustmörder (Staatsgalerie Moderner Kunst, Munich; 1917). Schlichter also came under Grosz’s influence upon moving to Berlin in 1919, when his style underwent a noticeable change and he too began working with Lustmord imagery. Otto Dix and Grosz had become acquainted during their involvement in Berlin Dada, and Dix’s 1920 self-portrait as lust-murderer (which will be discussed in further detail in chapter 3) was painted the same year Grosz exhibited two Lustmord paintings at Hans Goltz’s Galerie Neue Kunst. Dennis Crockett, German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder 1918-1924 (University Park: the Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999): 43, 105.
60 Ibid., 11.
62 Leo Zahn and Willi Wolfradt both refer to Grosz’s work as Futurist in Die Ararat (2-3), but the influence of Cubism, with it’s French origin, appears to have been less acknowledged at the time. Theodore Däubler clarified this point in a 1920 issue of Der Cicerone: “Die Italiener und die Deutschen sind die Völker, die dem Impressionismus am fernsten stehen: er ist eine französische Angelegenheit!” in “Neue Kunst in Italien,” Der Cicerone 12 (May 1920): 349.
solid and contoured, shadowed like spheres and cylinders more than thighs and breasts. *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*, though, is more complicated in its depiction than the other *Lustmords* with which it is contemporary: the room is much more fragmented, and filled with more angles, details, and figures. The protagonist-killer is depicted at the moment just after he slashed his victim, knife in hand and genitals emphasized, and the painting is permeated with red. The palette of *John, Der Frauenmörder* is dominated by yellowish-green and its composition simplified, with only the frame surrounding the victim’s body and the windowpanes countering the planes of the tilted walls. Also, the unarmed killer is depicted running away, with a bouquet falling to the ground behind him. A pun, often overlooked by translators, is suggested by the inclusion of the bouquet. *John, The Lady-killer* assumes his vocation both literally and figuratively, a feature that distinguishes the one painting from the other.

In 1917, Theodor Däubler remarked on Grosz’s “uncanny scale of reds,” describing what can only be an early version of *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*—a *Lustmord* featuring a thick woman in silk stockings and ankle boots, a palm plant, and even greenish-blue lamps. Däubler later called Grosz’s paintings, “A passionate affirmation of the modern life,” and observed again the artist’s use of “erotic” reds. *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* and *John, Der Frauenmörder* did not provoke a troubled or sensational reception from the public during the Weimar Republic. No critic commented on the artist’s exploration of the genre of *Lustmord*. As Kathrin Hoffman-Curtius points out, only after 1933, with the “Degenerate Art” pillory of the National Socialists, did Grosz’s *Lustmord* paintings, as well as those by Dix, come under attack. The Weimar reception would seem curious to contemporary audiences, and requires our attention.

*Lustmord as Satire*

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63 Theodor Däubler, “George Grosz,” *Das Kunstblatt* 1 (1917): 82. No other existing painting of Grosz’s fits this description.
65 Hoffmann-Curtius, 8.
“Man is not good; he’s a beast!” Grosz proclaimed in a 1922 exhibition catalogue, reiterating his frustration of German society that had manifested itself within Grosz’s art and essays since the inception of the Weimar Republic. Grosz’s involvement with politics was encouraged by Wieland Herzfelde, the brother of John Heartfield and destined to Grosz’s life-long friend, whom Grosz met around 1915. Grosz and Herzfelde’s political interests were initially united in their contempt for the war. Before the end of the war, Grosz was less Socialist than Herzfelde in his political leanings, but after the Weimar Republic was established (and the November Revolution failed), Grosz joined the German Communist Party, even receiving his membership card in person from Rosa Luxemburg. Grosz not only supplied illustrations for Spartacist and Communist pamphlets, but he helped to organize their publication. His contribution to such left-wing journals as *Der Blutige Ernst* and *Die Pleite*, including his numerous condemnatory caricatures of German types, positioned him as one of Germany’s leading satirists of his times. His first professional experience was publishing cartoons in the supplemental comic section of the daily newspaper, *Berliner Tageblatt*. Grosz’s roots in illustration affected his entire artistic career, in both style and character. His figural depictions were considered *faux-naïf* during the late 1910s, primitive and brutally scrawled out on paper and canvas. A 1914 print titled *Pandemonium* represents Grosz’s enduring and cartoonish *naïf* style (fig. 7). His protagonists skulk, snarl, and rage among the jaunty and jagged lines that make up the riotous city street. Violence dominates this early print, with men and women both drawn with round, misshapen heads. The individual figures converge in overlapping forms, shaded with minimal cross-hatching and layered transparently atop one another, to form a hundred-headed mass that rapes, pillages and murders.

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66 George Grosz, “Der Mensch ist nicht gut; sondern ein Vieh!” (Galerie von Garvens exhibition catalogue, April 1922, Hannover.)
67 Lewis, 41.
68 Ibid., 66-67.
70 Däubler, “George Grosz,” 80-1. Däubler uses the terms *Infantilitaten* and *primitiver*. This association was concurrently associated with Rudolph Schlichter and Heinrich Maria Davringhausen.
Germany, *A Winter’s Tale*, a painting similar in composition to *Pandemonium*, was begun the same year as *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*. The painting was exhibited in the 1920 Dada Fair, and demonstrates the political nature that Grosz’s satire often took (fig. 8). The title borrows from Heinrich Heine’s epic poem and critique of German society, and the painting illustrates those figures that benefit from a society failing everyone else.\(^{71}\) A frenetic and tumultuous metropolis, a painted interpretation of the mass from *Pandemonium* and often repeated in Grosz’s city scenes, spins around the central figure of a “good German burgher,” as Grosz describes him, dining on an unsteady and pastisched table.\(^{72}\) Below the burgher, a triumvirate of priest, military general, and schoolteacher form the “three pillars of society;” the base of the power pyramid on which the burgher precariously tops.\(^{73}\) In the bottom left of the canvas, a dark profile (often used in Grosz’s own self-portraits) harkens to the profile of the protagonist of *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*.\(^{74}\) Grosz’s 1917 portfolios *Erste Grosz Mappe* (Berlin: Heinz Barger Verlag) and *Kleine Grosz Mappe* (Berlin-Halensee: Malik Verlag) contained example after example of Grosz’s disparaging perceptions of society, and were well known at the time of his 1920 exhibition. Grosz had also gained much notoriety from his involvement with Berlin Dada, whose members were largely antagonistic towards Germany’s social and cultural environs.\(^{75}\)

*Der Kleine Frauenmörder*, as well as Grosz’s other *Lustmord*-themed compositions, was thus understandably received as another form of Grosz’s satire. In a 1923 introduction to his one-man exhibition at the Flechtheim Gallery, Grosz connects himself with Hogarth, Goya, and Daumier, whom he describes as “the committed outsiders and moralists of painting.”\(^{76}\) He continues, “I drew and painted out of a spirit of contradiction, and through my work I sought to convince the world that it . . . was ugly,

\(^{71}\) Heine’s poem of 1844 is the author’s imaginary return to his native country of Germany after his exile.


\(^{73}\) Ibid.

\(^{74}\) Grosz’s *Self-Portrait (to Charlie Chaplin)* (1919, museum and city) is one example.

\(^{75}\) For an example of such antagonism, see Raoul Hausmann’s “The German Philistine Gets Upset,” *Der Dada* 2 (1919): 2.

Indeed, Grosz was championed as a moralistic hero by virtue of his violent subject matter and rough, pointed style. Art critics and journalists, perhaps influenced by Grosz’s own proclamations, also associated the artist with Hogarth, Goya, and Daumier, as well as identifying the dark and often gruesome art of the men as inherently German. The exhibition did receive some negative criticism, illustrated in journalist R. Braungart’s article in a Munich newspaper “In [Goltz’s gallery], pictures and drawings of George Grosz are displayed. The common title of this art: brothel and asylum. This statement is sufficient. Every word more about this cultural dishonor would be a sin against ourselves.” Yet, even these denunciations treated Grosz’s work as a whole, and did not mention *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* or *John, Der Frauenmörder* in particular. That a painting of a murdered and butchered woman went without apparent comment, even when read as satirical, seems to reflect the patriarchal society that governed Western society, despite (or due to) the encroachment of the New Woman and the relative newness of women’s suffrage in Europe. The *Lustmord* figures of Grosz were not individually received as revolutionary, and, I believe, were perhaps considered as characters in a lineage of German social art. Grosz’s formation of *Lustmord* imagery, though, does seem to be born of high art, but from vernacular cultural influences.

**Fixations on Monstrosity: The 13th Room and Grosz’s Early Lustmord Drawings**

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77 Ibid., 37.
In my first chapter, I delved into Grosz’s early experiences with representations of violence in the form of dime novels and the horror peep shows of the county fair. Grosz’s autobiography, which serves as the vehicle for such recollections, provides additional insight to the artist’s appropriations of Lustmord. Grosz devotes an entire chapter of his autobiography to an episode during his youth when he spied upon his friend’s aunt undressing in her room. The chapter, aptly titled “Peeking into the Thirteenth Room,” is dramatically narrated, and emphasizes Grosz’s voyeuristic thrill at seeing a nude woman for the first time:

> In breathless excitement I absorbed it all. I was troubled but enchanted. So this is what a woman looks like! These two halves! . . . She moved around quite naturally, for how could she know that anyone, let alone I, was watching her? . . . I was shaking with excitement, couldn’t tear myself away. . . Something had peeled off with her clothes. This was the fruit itself, the pure female gender complete with all its attributes . . . This was my first experience with a naked woman, and it affected me to the marrow.\(^8_1\)

The emphasis given to this anecdote, which comprises an entire chapter (Grosz’s years in the war did not merit that much attention), should be considered. Grosz revels in its telling, describing every item in the room in detail, and luxuriating over how the woman’s body is slowly revealed to him, and the thrill he gets in his illicit spying. This chapter, the second in his autobiography, also connects Grosz’s voyeuristic thrills from the horror peep shows, as described in the first chapter, and the decisive period of his youth when he decided to become an artist, suggesting a literal connection between this episode and the awakening of artistic desires in Grosz. Indeed, the female form dominates much his work, often articulated in stages of undress or in transparent clothing. “Peeking into the Thirteenth Room” also details the interior boudoir setting of Grosz’s many Lustmord works, meticulously describing every piece of furniture and how the light fell upon the room’s every corner. In the midst of his recollection, Grosz wonders if his vivid remembrance of every component of the room is that his “excited imagination related it all to the woman in the room.”\(^8_2\) Grosz continued to flesh out this very setting in his Lustmord drawings, etchings, and paintings, from his earliest appropriations of the subject matter to his exhibited paintings Der Kleine Frauenmörder

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\(^8_1\) Grosz, George Grosz, 21-9.
\(^8_2\) Ibid., 23.
and John, Der Frauenmörder. Grosz’s earliest and most romanticized Lustmord compositions seem to draw upon these early voyeuristic and titillating experiences, lay the foundation for the general formula for future Lustmord paintings.

Scholarship on Lustmord has failed to take into account Grosz’s early works, focusing instead on the artist’s post-war productions. This oversight has led art historians to emphasize war-induced trauma as the primary influence on Grosz’s use of Lustmord, a contention with which I do not entirely disagree. Yet, I believe that comparing the pre-war Lustmords by Grosz to his 1918 paintings can provide insight as to what the later paintings may have meant for the artist, and how his use of the Lustmord iconography evolved.

Interestingly, Grosz’s earliest Lustmord works still diverge greatly from the artist’s later paintings of the same subject matter, though the narratives of the penny dreadfuls and horror panoramas are perhaps more discernible in the earlier works. Of the early drawings that can be considered Lustmord imagery, only one, dating to 1913–14, is explicitly titled Lustmord (fig. 9). This drawing centers on a man and woman in a violent embrace set in a domestic interior. The male figure has one arm wrapped around the woman’s neck with his other hand clawing her face, while the female figure is bent backwards under her captor’s torso. The couple is bracketed on the left and right by a wardrobe and what appears to be a washstand. A chair and lamp lie upended at the couple’s feet, presumably knocked over during the struggle. The drawing is composed with sharp lines that radiate pell-mell from all angles. Unlike his later drawings, which also share a sketchy, crosshatched quality, the forms of the figures and the furniture in the room are stable and drawn with perspective. These figures also differ from Grosz’s later Lustmords in the higher degree of modeling of the figures, lending a more realistic interpretation of the human form, and an overall sense of heightened drama.

This early Lustmord is closely related to two other, contemporaneous drawings by Grosz, all produced in the same theatrical and roughly sketched manner, and which seem to make up a kind of visual narrative. The earliest of these is The Double Murder in the Rue Morgue of 1913 (fig. 10). The scene is set once more in a domestic interior, with

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83 Grosz’s pre-war drawings were published in George Grosz 1893-1959: A Selection of Fifty Early Drawings, an exhibition catalogue from 1968 (Binding unknown).
furniture, candles, and lamps discernable among the riot of hectic lines that confuse a
definite analysis of all save the three figures that form a pyramid in the center of the
picture plane. The discarded form of a woman lies nude at the base of this pyramidal
configuration, while a massive, presumably male figure embraces another limp female.
The title of the drawing refers to the 1841 story by Edgar Allan Poe, a forerunner of the
detective novel (and likely influential source to the penny dreadfuls of later in the
century) in which an escaped orangutan violently murders a woman and her daughter. Yet, the culprit in Grosz’s illustration is not clearly an ape, but rather humanoid. The
third drawing of this murderous triad is titled Ein Verbrechen (fig. 11). This drawing is
composed like a crime scene, with a nude female body splayed across a bed, and
anticipates future Lustmord works by Otto Dix and Rudolph Schlichter (which I discuss
briefly in chapter one and again at greater length in chapter three) that also, quite literally,
mimic crime scenes.

Grosz also produced two other murder-themed drawings before, or around, the
outbreak of the war. Ein Mord (fig. 12) is dated to 1912–13, and portrays a nude woman
lying on the ground, her mouth agape and eyes black, with her feet propped up on what
appears to be a washstand or desk. A bald figure hunches over her, his hands reaching
unseen beneath her torso. The style is sketchy, though not as frenzied or finished as those
previously discussed. Der Mörder of 1915 (fig. 13) is drawn in the busy, hectic style of
The Double Murder in the Rue Morgue, and though there is no clear setting depicted, two
figures grapple in a tortured embrace reminiscent of the Double Murder and the earlier
Lustmord drawing. The male figure is grabbing and clawing the face of a woman, who,
once again, is bowed back under the hold of her assailant.

To look at these three in relation to Der Kleine Frauenmörder and John, Der
Frauenmörder reveals a departure in Grosz’s use of Lustmord. The fact that the later
works are oil paintings produced for exhibition is perhaps the most radical of
developments. The pre-war works are personal drawings, probably quickly executed, and
most were not exhibited during Grosz’s lifetime. Canvas and oil paints were both
expensive, and frequently abandoned for cheaper mediums by artists at this time, Grosz

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Though Grosz seems to have preferred to work in print rather than oil, *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* and *John, Der Frauenmörder* were produced in one of the most expensive media during a time of severe economic inflation. The paintings were included in Grosz’s first one-man show, and functioned within the show as one of many social critiques produced in a similar visual language. Obvious stylistic differences aside, the bloody and fractured *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* and *John, Der Frauenmörder* are frank, grotesque, and share a cartoonish ambivalence absent from the earlier drawings. The early *Lustmords* are romantic and theatrical, often focusing on a crushing embrace. There do not seem to be political implications within the drawings, and when the assailant is present, he is obscured by webbed, crawling lines. Narrative dominates the drawings, while violence governs the paintings.

The increased violence of Grosz’s *Lustmord* works is congruous with their increasingly public nature. *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* and *John, Der Frauenmörder* were the first explicit *Lustmords* to be exhibited (and the latter work published in the exhibition catalogue), but Grosz used images of men murdering women, visible through apartment and basement windows, in many of his city scenes. The 1916 *Lustmord in der Ackerstrasse*, published in the 1923 portfolio *Ecce Homo* (fig. 14), relies on both narrative and suggested violence, perhaps functioning as a bridge between Grosz’s earliest *Lustmord* drawings and his later works. The pen and ink drawing is of a middle-class apartment, with a bloody, beheaded female corpse lying on a bed. A bloody axe lies beside the body, and a man washes his hands in a washstand as he guiltily peers around a partition. Bourgeois trappings litter the room, and a reed cane (identical to one often carried by Grosz) hangs on the partition. A bundle of switches lie on a chair next to the bed, hinting at sexual perversion. Buildings peek out of a window behind the man, affirming the urban environment of the scene. The writing at the bottom of the drawing reads, “Jack the Killer—drawing by Dr. William King Thomas.” “Jack” is no doubt

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85 Weitz, 131. During this time, the number of etchings and drawings by Grosz greatly increased, and the number of oil paintings diminished. *Der Mörder* was published in *Die Aktion* (24 July 1915): 370.

86 “George Grosz,” *Die Ararat*, Erstes Sonderheft, Katalog der 59, Ausstellung der Galerie Neue Kunst-Hans Goltz (Munich: Goltz Verlag, 1920). The other paintings included in the exhibition catalogue correspond compositionally, stylistically, and iconographical to the *Lustmord* paintings include *Im 28. Stock, Feiertag*, and *Gefährliche Straße*.

meant to allude to Jack the Ripper, and Grosz’s pseudonym refers to a murderous ship captain.\textsuperscript{88} The room is stable, like the earlier \textit{Lustmord} drawings, but Grosz’s style is in the sharply rendered, cartoonish one of his 1918 paintings. In \textit{Lustmord in der Ackerstrasse}, as in Grosz’s multiple street scenes, the city has emerged as an important, and soon to be pervasive detail in Grosz’s \textit{Lustmords}. I have already discussed the relationship of \textit{Lustmord} to the metropolis, and in particular to \textit{Der Kleine Frauenmörder} and \textit{Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)}. Grosz, however, wrote about Berlin and the idea of the city, and I will now further explore what the metropolis specifically meant to Grosz.

\textbf{Degenerate Berlin}

In 1932, George Grosz published a collection of songs and poems, including one titled “Berlin, 1917” that prefaced the collection as the title page, part of which reads:

\begin{quote}
Gloomily the overcoat flaps at the pimp’s bones,
Back bent, brass knuckles fixed,
Descending with a sharp Solingen knife
Deep into tenements
Into fur shops and silk houses
Or coal cellars
Afterwards one sometimes finds a bloody
Piece of taffeta or a wool stocking
Or the bill with a handprint.\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

Grosz’s poem, written a year before he painted \textit{Der Kleine Frauenmörder}, alludes a \textit{Lustmord}. The assailant is a hunch-backed pimp, armed with brass knuckles and a kitchen knife.\textsuperscript{90} Grosz provocatively describes the deathblows, “Descending … deep into tenements/Into fur shops, and silk houses/Or coal cellars.” The tenement apartments and fur shops initially suggest a metropolitan setting, but the phrase “silk houses” clues the reader that these buildings are symbols for the victim’s body. The female body has

\textsuperscript{89} George Grosz, \textit{Gedichte und Gesänge, 1916-17} (Litomysl: Josef Portman Verlag, 1932), quoted in Lewis, 204.
\textsuperscript{90} Solingen is a city in Germany known for its manufacture of swords, knives and cutlery.
become the city, its unique architecture, and man’s violation of his own civilized status. The “coal cellars” subtly implies the womb of the woman so often eviscerated during the crime. The end of the poem details evidence left behind, what the police or detective may find in a crimescene. The bloody scrap of women’s lingerie and the handprint would certainly be clues integrated into detective novels and penny-dreadfuls as the key piece of evidence that help to solve the crime. Grosz’s mention of the handprint in this poem and Dix’s later application of his own red handprints in *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* are surely connected. Dix may have been influenced by Grosz’s poem, but such a detail was obviously an understood signifier of guilt and detection.

The poem is titled after the city where the crime must have occurred, detailed like an urban street complete with pimps, tenements, and shops. As I have argued, the metropolis is integral to *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*, as well as integral to the Lustmord genre in general, in all of its varying manifestations. For Grosz, the Weimar city was a living being that bred dazzling, modern life and its attendant corruption. The city as the scene for *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* is reinforced by the apartment interior, the green orb of streetlamps are distinguished from a red crescent moon, the suggestion of the woman as prostitute through her garb, and the windows that reveal shadowy profiles peering in. This last voyeuristic detail also refers back to Grosz’s own experience of “peeking into the thirteenth room,” and insinuates that the city is an intensely public space, where even private lives are visible through gaps in the curtains.

Grosz produced numerous street scenes during the 1910s and 1920s, often named after real Berlin Straßen. A year before he painted *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*, Grosz completed his painting *Metropolis (Berlin)* (fig. 15) in which, like many of his street scenes, the upper half of the canvas is dominated by architecture (hotels and apartment buildings) while the bottom swarms with ghoulish figures. The palette and style of *Metropolis* is nearly identical to that of *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*, and the violence that permeates the later painting is suggested in the riotous mass of faceless strangers. In *Suburb*, a 1917 drawing from the *Ecce Homo* portfolio (fig. 16), Grosz illustrates a suburban street filled with scribbled ghoulish characters. The street opens to a funeral procession and a graveyard, with the city beyond filling the background like a mountain range. Two tenement apartment buildings frame the picture, the windows all bearing their
inhabitants in various activities, including Lustmord, suicide, and people watching. The interior lives of people, piled atop each other and visible to a prying world, are revealed as sick and troubled. The city is drawn as the literal meeting point where life and death converge.

The apartment building and the hotel were not only urban structures, but also thoroughly modern ones, which dominated Weimar cities in order to accommodate the population growth of Germany’s major cities. 2.5 million apartments were built during the Weimar Republic, and these buildings were defined by rows of windows that pierced their structures so that inhabitants could look out upon the city, or those outside could look in. An intrigue with looking out at the city was even demonstrated by newspapers that often incorporated “window shots” in their illustrations—photographs taken from inside out, so that the window frame would frame the shot thereby offering both a view of the metropolis and discretely suggesting the voyeuristic nature of living in the city.91 As these looming, modern edifices occupied the skyline and landscape of Berlin, and other German Großstädte, so too did they act as identifying features particularly of Grosz’s Lustmord paintings, situating the crimes in an appropriate environment.

“In Grosz there is a kind of demon,” Anglo-German art patron and writer Count Harry Kessler wrote in November of 1917:

I think rather highly of him . . . All the new art coming out of Berlin is especially remarkable . . . It is big city art, a hypertense concentration of impressions which culminates in simultaneity. It is brutally realistic but like a fairy tale at the same time—like the big city itself—things turn red as though illuminated by spotlights…It is art like flash photography exuding the perfume of vice and perversion like every big city street at night.92

For Grosz, the spaces of the city offered a wealth of implications when appropriated as the context of his paintings. During Grosz’s life, Berlin was a city of leisure and spectacle, and a place filled with strangers, crime, and a fascination for sex. This “Degenerate Berlin,” to borrow Weitz’s terminology, was a dangerous city that occupies

the canvases of Grosz, and becomes not only the setting for *Lustmord*, but also central to *Lustmord* as a uniquely urban experience. Here, the city has become a battlefield for women and a hunting ground for criminals, where the beastial side of humankind is unleashed upon civility.

**Grosz’s Lustmord**

George Grosz held a fascination with *Lustmörders* and “savages,” a bloodlust that was perhaps identified with the war, but more deeply associated with the cruelties predominant in so many men. Grosz suggests this connection with the butcher, a figure he later represented in his paintings. In his autobiography, Grosz reflects on a friend’s father—a butcher from his childhood—describing him as

> a big man with one blind eye standing behind his chopping block, the triangular top of his long butcher’s apron worn over his chest like a monastic garb, a cleaver in his hand to split a cutlet—like a symbolic figure … his hand was made to wield a cleaver, a mallet and the various butcher knives, not the bow of a violin. A solid, strong slightly brutal hand, that hand of Ite’s father—but actually that was not what I was going to talk about.^[94]

Grosz was also fascinated with the fictional construction of the “savage” of the American West, and I understand Grosz’s appropriation of such themes as an analogy of the city as the new frontier, and the urbanite male as the new warrior. Grosz’s drawing *Apache* (fig. 17) addresses this association. Three men sit, playing cards in a basement, with evidence of a murder strewn about them. A woman’s bloody leg hangs out of a box on which one of the oafish men sit. A discarded axe lies in the lower center of the image, to be later used in *Lustmord in der Ackerstrasse*. The title, *Apache*, can be assumed to doubly reference both the American Indians of the American West that Grosz read about in dime novels, and to the men within the image. The city had become a dangerous frontier, one that replaces the “Wild West” of America with new “savages” to debauch society. Grosz’s interest in American-Western themes illustrates his predilection for fantasy, a predilection that reaches far into his youth. As an adult, Grosz continued to

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[^93]: Weitz, 76.
divulge in fantasy, “playing” iconic character types from the narratives of his adolescence in photographs and sometimes through costume. He even decorated his home, to quote Paul Westheim, “like a Sioux chief,” and playfully portraying himself as Jack the Ripper along side his future wife (fig. 18). Grosz was compelled to such figures as the butcher and the savage, and he guided this intrigue with his political leanings.

So how do we understand Lustmord for George Grosz? This question is problematic, and I do not propose an answer, but I do suggest that that it meant and represented many things beyond a fascination with violence brought from experience in combat, antifeminism, or the release of repressed tendencies. As a satirist and an artist committed to leftist politics, one way of understanding Der Kleine Frauenmörder is as satire. Lustmord here expresses urban chaos and how German life has changed since the war and with encroaching modernism. In desiring to show the people of Weimar Germany their own failures, Grosz was able to fuse his love of titillating fiction and fantasy with his satirical roots. Central to this goal was the appropriation of the murdered woman. The social climate of the unstable and ever-growing city offered the vulnerable woman up for the taking, and Grosz drew upon this figure again and again. As I hope to have shown, the experiences and imagery that influenced Grosz’s Lustmords were highly personal, and while some sources were available to all of Grosz’s contemporaries, each surely experienced and interpreted these sources to varying degrees. Grosz’s good friend and colleague Otto Dix is one such artist who would also use the figure of the female Lustmord victim, but his and Grosz’s influences only parallel to a point, and as I argue, each produced Lustmords with different intentions and results.

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Otto Dix painted *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* in Dresden during 1920, the same year George Grosz exhibited *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* in Hans Goltz’s gallery in Munich. At this time, Dix’s style was still exemplary of the exaggerated and cartoonish manner of his works most strongly associated with Dada. Dix, like Grosz, at this time worked with Cubo-Futuristic forms, though, as I have discussed, his subject matter is closely tied with German culture.

The painting, now lost, is one of Dix’s many self-portraits, and here he has transformed his semblance into a *Lustmörder*, in the midst of his gruesome crime. He faces the viewer, squarely set in the center of the canvas, his arms flailing as he grips a bloody knife in his left hand, and a dismembered leg in his right. A year earlier critic Hugo Zehder had described the artist as “swing[ing] his brush like an axe,” and it seems Dix has here responded to Zehder’s suggestion.\(^96\) In *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)*, the red paint that symbolizes blood, the same paint Dix pressed his hands into and smeared directly upon the canvas, drips thickly from the knife the painted-Dix weilds. The red paint/blood symbolizes Dix’s identity as both the painter, in the painted signature, and as the killer, in his personal handprints that could be traced to him by the relatively new science of fingerprinting.\(^97\)

The painting features other specific details, some again implicitly connected to Dix. An ornate lamp swings above the perpetrator, and butchered body parts from his female victim whirl about, her screaming head suspended above her truncated torso. Blood sprays and spills, and pools beneath Dix around a discarded corset, breast, and

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\(^{96}\) Crockett, 65.

\(^{97}\) William Hershel is first noted for using a handprint as proof of identity in Bengal India in 1858, but the Scottish scientist Henry Faulds is credited with the development of fingerprinting in the 1880s, and in the following decade Francis Galton is credited with the first fingerprint classification system. Still, the science was not institutionalized in Europe until after the turn of the century, as the general consensus relied on the perceived accuracy of anthropometrics. See Simon A. Cole, *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001): 66-98.
entrails. The victim’s vagina has somehow been removed from her body, and is shown spilling reproductive organs as it is suspended between Dix’s right knee and a cluttered desk. Other Biedermeier-style furniture fills the room, including a wardrobe, chair, and a mirror that reflects a bed suggested to be in the viewer’s space. The bed, lamp, and chair have been recognized as identical to those belonging to Dix when he lived in Dresden, but would have been recognized by a general audience as traditionally bourgeoisie. The juxtaposition of the “civilized” bourgeoisie with such a savage crime is emphasized in Dix’s figure: Dix has painted himself red-faced, with a toothy, mad grin, wearing a chic tweed suit and spats on his shiny shoes. On a gourd-shaped atomizer that sits atop the desk, Dix signed his name and the date. Dix’s authorship is again, quite literally, indexed through his red handprints that he pressed onto the canvas.

The significance of Dix’s handprints should not be overlooked. As I have mentioned, Dix’s self-portrait, signature, and literal handprints all index his physical self as the artist and Lustmörder. His prints only appear on the body parts of the victim, as though he had pawed at the victim’s thick limbs while cutting her asunder, or even used his own brute strength to rip her limb from limb. The handprints look back to Grosz’s poem “Berlin, 1917,” which though not published until 1932, Grosz claims to have written in 1917, and if so, it is possible that Dix read it. New technologies in criminology would have also been suggested, as fingerprinting was replacing anthropometrics in criminal detection and identification. Detection, in general, was a hot topic in Weimar Germany, as the narrative formula of much popular fiction, cinema, and even becomes a topic of theory of the era’s most prolific philosophers like Walter Benjamin and Seigfried Kracauer.

98 Beth Irwin Lewis, “Lustmord: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis,” Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture, ed. by Katharina von Aksum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 220. Lewis cites Lothar Fischer’s Otto Dix: Ein Malerben in Deutschland (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagbuchhandlung, 1981), in which a fellow art student tells of being invited to Dix’s bedroom to see this self-portrait, and remarks that the settings for this painting was Dix’s own living space.

99 Dix inexplicitly added ‘AV’ after ‘DIX,’ perhaps referring to a previous form of his family name. The date is somewhat ambiguous. ‘1920’ is clearly written, though the day and month are difficult to make out, readings either as ‘31 8 1920,’ or ‘8 18 1920.’

100 Cole, 96.
The exhibition history of this painting is uncertain. After the work was completed, it initially hung in Dix’s home.\textsuperscript{101} Prior to Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)’s completion, Dix had exhibited in the Dada Fair, but his next contribution to a major exhibition was not until five years later. The painting may have been included in Gustav Hartlaub’s 1925 Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition at the Stadtische Kunsthalle in Mannheim, though this is unlikely as Hartlaub believed that “morally confusing works” were unsuitable for public exhibition.\textsuperscript{102} To my knowledge, the work was not reproduced in any exhibition catalogues or mentioned specifically by critics, leaving little to suggest its history. An etching of the painting does survive (fig. 19), and after being hung in Johanna Ey’s Düsseldorf Gallery in 1920, it was quickly sold to a private collector.\textsuperscript{103} Dix produced numerous Lustmord-themed works, and when not explicitly titled as such, Lustmord imagery is often still suggested. A study of Dix’s political, philosophical and artistic influences, as I articulate in this chapter, reveals a very different interpretation of Lustmord than that offered by George Grosz.

Dix and Weimar Politics

In the 1920s, as with scholarship today, Dix and Grosz were usually associated with one another, and their works understood as expressive of similar ideas through similar styles. Both men came from similar backgrounds: born two years apart in rural German towns, 


\textsuperscript{103} Eva Karcher, Otto Dix (Vaduz: Otto Dix Foundation, 2002): 55.
both abandoned their studies in art academies to go to war. The artists were friends, likely meeting through their involvement with Berlin Dada, and both were recognized as working in both intentionally naïve styles, and borrowing from Cubism and Futurism.\textsuperscript{104} Perhaps the most controversial artists of the Weimar era, both Dix and Grosz had numerous lawsuits brought against them because of their work, and thus received much media attention.\textsuperscript{105} Dix and Grosz often worked with the same themes (the city, prostitutes, war), and Dix began to use \textit{Lustmord} as subject matter after befriending Grosz. Dix, though, produced many more works narrowly focused on \textit{Lustmord}, and his paintings are marked with deviations and a heightened sense of violence.

Critic Carl Einstein’s 1923 essay on Dix establishes his connection to Grosz, separating Dix and Grosz from “constructors” and “abstractionists” as they “demolish the real with pithy objectivity, unmask this era, and force it into self-irony.”\textsuperscript{106} Einstein describes Dix as kicking his era “in its swollen belly,” and “waging civil war.”\textsuperscript{107} Five years later, journalist Erich Knauf describes Dix’s style as both completely objective, yet with a “brutality [that prods] into the festering wounds of society.”\textsuperscript{108} Einstein and Knauf speak to how Dix’s works were received and understood, but fail to take into consideration Dix’s intentions, his own subjectivity (which was negated due to his associations with \textit{Die Neue Sachlichkeit}), and how he viewed his role as an artist.

Dix came from a proletarian background, a fact that has certainly encouraged the affiliation with Dix and the leftist politics so popular among his colleagues.\textsuperscript{109} Dix, in fact, denied all associations with politics, and emphasized his own subjective role as an artist. When Dix’s friend and fellow artist Conrad Felixmüller asked him to join the


\textsuperscript{105} The charges never focused on the \textit{Lustmord} works of either artist.


\textsuperscript{107} Ibid. “Dix tritt dieser Zeit, die nur Persiflage einer solchen ist, entschlossen und technisch gut montiert in den geblähten Bauch . . . Diese Maler führen Bürgerkreig…”

\textsuperscript{108} Karcher, 12.

Communist party, Dix replied, “I’d much rather go to the whorehouse!”\textsuperscript{110} In 1924, Dix defended his work against Communist alliances, saying, “I am neither political nor tendentious or pacifistic or moral or whatever. Also not symbolic also not painting with a French accent—am not for and not against.”\textsuperscript{111} Dix claimed political ambivalence until the end of his life. In an interview four years before his death, Dix recalls, “No, I did not become a supporter of any political programme—probably couldn’t stand all those platitudes.”\textsuperscript{112}

Perhaps the artist denied political affiliations to free his work from being labeled in such a way, and perhaps critics insisted on doing just that to justify such violent representations. Despite Dix’s insistency, cynical political undertones are evident in some of his work, but the role of politics has been overstated. Grosz’s Der Kleine Frauenmörder as satire is more believable from an artist who claimed to use irony throughout his career, and likely prided himself as being Weimar’s Daumier and Hogarth. Grosz uses distancing devices in his Lustmords, which allow space between the viewer and the crime. He does so by employing humor, as with his later works, or by using a romantic theatricality found in his pre-war drawings. Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) is, contrarily, a self-portrait made by an artist eschewing political ties. All of Dix’s Lustmords evade politicization, unlike those by Grosz, which are most often steeped in political commentary. Instead of sequestering the Lustmord-inflicted bodies to third-story windows or abstractedly scribbling the gore of the crimes, Dix seems to relish in his exact, bloody details. Dix does use dark humor in his work, but Dix’s irony is personal, and less playful than Grosz. The violence of Dix’s oeuvre is not meant to be incendiary or revolutionary, but reflects the artist’s acute curiosity of death and the human body.

\textbf{Plumbing Life’s Depths: World War I, Lustmord and Dix’s Subjectivity}

\textsuperscript{112} Karcher, 17.
It appears to be both Dix’s academic training coupled with his lengthy deployment on the frontlines of the war, instead of his social background or political affiliations, that most impacted him as an artist. Dix first studied art in Dresden from 1909 through 1913, and in Düsseldorf from 1922 to 1925. During Dix’s first years in the Dresden academy, he worked in the verist style that would dominate his career. Between his years in the academy, Dix spent four years serving the German army in France, and kept sketches of what he saw: trenches gouging the earth, the ruined bodies of soldiers, explosions of dirt, light, and body parts. His war drawings, more than any of his other work throughout his career, deviate most from naturalism. Dix, working with gouache and chalks, shortly abandoned his naturalistic style learnt from the academy, instead expressing forms as fractured and jagged, translating the brutality of the battlefield into his drawing technique. With his induction to Berlin Dada, Dix’s style began to evolve back to the naturalism of his Neue Sachlichkeit paintings, and this naturalistic style is central to critical interpretations of Dix as painting in a style that is distinct from Expressionism and without subjectivity.

_Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)_ , while admittedly not one of Dix’s more naturalistic works, is difficult to comprehend from an objective perspective. A dark humor is suggested in Dix’s audaciously making himself the grinning and well-dressed culprit, and the grotesquely silly juggling of body parts and murder weapon. A study of one of Dix’s more naturalistic _Lustmords_, like his 1922 oil painting (fig. 20), still defies total objectivity. The painting is again set in his own apartment, with an upturned chair cleverly mimicking the corpses’ pose. The woman’s body is unnaturally large, dwarfing the bed and amplifying the violence inflicted upon her body. A tilted mirror above the bed reflects her ruined genitalia and doubles its presence in the crime scene. Dix’s juxtaposition of the orderly architectural background, visible through the open window, and the bourgeoisie furniture against the brutality of the crime scene implies, though more subtly, Dix’s own subjective interpretation of _Lustmord_. The calm exterior of the vacant city behind the traumatic interior of the apartment also echoes the abused and exposed interior of the victim’s body. Even Dix’s _Lustmord_ etching of 1922 (fig. 3), composed as it was from a crime scene photograph (fig. 4; discussed in chapter one), is

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113 Karcher, 22; McGreevy, 133.
not true to the photograph, and thus not truly objective. The body in the crime scene photograph is identified as a prostitute, but wears no clothing. Dix has rendered his figure in stockings and boots, a detail rarely absent from any Lustmord composition. He has replaced the chaise longue of the photograph with a bed, and, most importantly, has placed two copulating dogs in the foreground. This etching is one of a series of six in Dix’s portfolio Death and Resurrection, and is meant to be an allegory of the cyclical nature of life, but without a moral emphasis. If Dix had intended to be objective and act as a chronicler of the violence of his era, then he had no need to stray from Wulffen’s photograph.

The Neue Sachlichkeit, or New Objectivity, came to be a dominant style in the mid–1920s. Dix is always discussed as a central figure within the movement, but this association can be misleading. Hartlaub did include several works by Dix in his 1925 Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition in Mannheim, but I argue that his paintings are not as objective as such a label suggests. Critics like Knauf and Einstein seem to overlook Dix’s highly personal war drawings and Lustmords when they describe Dix as utterly objective. Even Dix’s mimetic works, from the most naturalistic portraits to his cartoonish Dada canvases, betray the artist who composed them. Dix himself never made such a claim to objectivity, and I believe it is better to read Dix’s verist works as having a more personally subjective relationship to reality. Dix explains his penchant for reality, emphasizing the role of his own perceptions: “I simply happen to be a person who likes reality. I have to see everything. I have to plumb all life’s depths myself.”

Dix’s exploration of “life’s depths” pivoted around the human body, a fascination that seems to have reached a zenith during his time at war, and never declined. Dix was described as having a “remorseless, dissecting gaze;” a gaze that lay bare all of the body’s viscera on canvas and paper. Weimar critic and art historian Paul Schmidt articulates the veracity of Dix’s bodily scrutiny, describing Dix as connecting “the

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115 Dix’s war drawings were exhibited in 1916 in Dresden, and published in a portfolio titled Der Krieg in 1924. McGreevy, 133.
116 Karcher, 34.
117 Dyke, 51.
visions of the somnambulist with the focus of an anatomist. Monstrous the authenticity of life; monstrous the rigor mortis which is spread over this life.”

Dix’s anatomical curiosity wasn’t based on gendered lines, and Dix portrayed the blighted bodies of men and women rather democratically. That man was mostly depicted as a casualty of war, and woman as victim of male psychosis is the definable difference of Dix’s treatment of death and gender. Arguments from such scholars as Maria Tatar and Beth Irwin Lewis, who understand Dix’s Lustmords as rebuttals against the New Woman, need to be complicated.

Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) can be read as highly misogynist, but this reading can be suspended when analyzed in a new context. Eric D. Weitz remarks that the New Woman “was the most renowned symbol of the sexual revolution of the 1920s,” emphasizing a divergence between her idealization as an image and her reality. Gender roles were in conflict, and there was much resistance to the emancipated, modern woman. The New Woman was certainly a source of agitation for many Weimar-era men, but this does not mean that Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt) was a reflection of Dix’s unease with the New Woman. Germany was still a patriarchal society, and Lustmord was a ubiquitous cultural phenomenon. Dix’s appropriation of Lustmord as subject matter is curious indeed, but not proof of his hatred of women. In fact, it could be argued that his wife, Martha, was the embodiment of the New Woman.

Martha Dix, née Lindner, came from a wealthy, liberal family in Mannheim. She was highly educated, spoke many languages, and was a considered a connoisseur of world literature. Frau Dix is described as being very independent, and had first been married to the art collector Hans Koch, but divorced Koch to marry Dix. She left her doctor and art collector husband for a working-class artist, and if her independent nature

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118 Ibid.
120 Weitz, 305-8.
121 Karcher, 61-2.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
threatened Dix, his personal life did not reflect it. He openly adored Martha, and painted her and their three children, throughout his life. A family portrait from 1927, titled *The Artist’s Family* (fig. 21), is one example, and seems at first to be the polar opposite of *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)*. *The Artist’s Family* is a tranquil vision of Dix, his wife, and their two first-born children. Martha’s body takes up most of the canvas, with young daughter Nelly, and infant son Ursus filling the bottom half of the picture plane. Nelly, the only figure to look out at the viewer, offers a flower. In this nurturing and fecund scene, Dix has fractured himself, with only his face and part of one hand peeking in the picture plane from the right side of the canvas. Martha’s motherly body dominates the canvas, her fertility emphasized in the bodies of her children and in the blossom held by Nellie. Dix, here, is her partner in creating life, no longer pictured as the destroyer of it. As antithetical as *The Artist’s Family* and *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* seem to be, Dix was likely to have perceived them as related in their representation of the forces of life and death in the body of the woman. Such an understanding is suggested by Dix’s Nietzschean influence.

**Nietzsche and Dix**

Friedrich Nietzsche was eminent among German artists at the turn of the century. Upon arriving in Munich in 1899, Paul Klee declared, “Nietzsche is in the air. Glorification of the self and the instincts. Boundless sexual drives.”\(^{124}\) Dix studied the writings of Nietzsche as early as 1911, and has been quoted as naming Nietzsche’s work “the only correct philosophy.”\(^{125}\) In 1912, Dix sculpted a plaster bust of the philosopher (whereabouts unknown), which was the first work by the artist to be bought from a German art gallery.\(^{126}\) Otto Conzelmann, Dix scholar and friend of the artist, claims Dix took a copy of Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science* with him to war.\(^{127}\)


\(^{125}\) Karcher, 22.

\(^{126}\) Twohig, 40.

\(^{127}\) Ibid., 48, n. 19.
Twohig points out, Dix’s reception of Nietzsche is difficult to ascertain as the artist rarely spoke, and never wrote, about the philosopher.\textsuperscript{128} Still, it is evident that throughout his life, Dix never disavowed the importance he accorded to the philosophies of Nietzsche. In a 1965 interview, Dix vented his frustrations “when the Nazis claimed him for themselves, and totally misunderstood him.”\textsuperscript{129} Upon his death, Dix’s library held four volumes of Nietzsche’s philosophy, including \textit{The Will to Power} and \textit{Twilight of the Idols}.\textsuperscript{130} Dix liberally marked revealing passages in many of the texts, which Twohig recounts in some detail.\textsuperscript{131} This path of marked passages leads us to not only grasp Dix’s reading of Nietzsche, but how profoundly the philosopher affected Dix’s work. It is perhaps here that we can begin to understand Dix’s artistic commitment to violent and wasted subjects, and his concomitant use of fecundity. Dix’s “hectic markings” of his Nietzsche volumes frequently highlight Nietzsche’s emphasis on life affirmed through experiencing the extremities of joy and pain.\textsuperscript{132} Nietzsche’s \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} (1872) establishes destructive and creative forces in nature, or “drives,” relating these to artistic drives also understood as issuing from nature.\textsuperscript{133} Dix marked a related section in his copy of \textit{Twilight of the Idols}: “The Dionysian man . . . enters into every skin, into every emotion; he is continually transforming himself.”\textsuperscript{134} If Dix considered himself a Dionysian man, then this passage may inform the artist’s recurrent ventures into self-portraiture and his depiction of himself as a \textit{Lustmörder}.

Nietzsche’s duality of life and death drives, which look forward to Freud’s exploration of Eros and Thanatos, is an idea that dominates all of Dix’s oeuvre. His previously mentioned \textit{Death and Resurrection} series seems to have generated from this binary. Two passages from Dix’s collection especially shed light on Dix’s choice of \textit{Lustmord} as a frequent and gruesomely detailed subject. Dix marked the following section from \textit{The Will to Power}: “To represent terrible and questionable things is, in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 42.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 42-3.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, \textit{The Nietzsche Reader} 10 (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 36.
\item \textsuperscript{134} Twohig, 43-4.
\end{itemize}
itself, the sign of an instinct of power and magnificence in the artist; he doesn’t fear them. There is no such thing as pessimistic art. Art affirms.”\textsuperscript{135} In \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, he marked a similar passage: “The tragic artist is not a pessimist—it is precisely he who affirms all that is questionable and terrible in existence, he is Dionysian.”\textsuperscript{136} In \textit{Twilight}, Nietzsche also ponders beauty and ugliness, saying, “Nothing is beautiful, only man: on this piece of naïvety rests all aesthetics. Let us immediately add its second: nothing is ugly but degenerate man.”\textsuperscript{137} Dix’s emphasis of these passages perhaps reveals a motive for Dix’s inclination for depicting life in its various states of putridity. Instead of quelling sadistic urges or showing society the repercussions of moral degeneration, Dix’s works can be understood as a Nietzschean exploration of life in all of its extreme states.

Dix also spoke of beauty and ugliness, and their opposing but complimentary relationship: “Yes, of course, it’s also a kind of pleasure in the grotesque, just as everything in the world is dialectic! The way opposites stand side by side! . . . No, it was a pleasure for me to find that life is that way, that’s it, that not everything is sugar-coated and wonderfully beautiful.”\textsuperscript{138} Dix’s paintings seem to delight in what we may consider ugly: bodies destroyed by violence or degraded by age, the physical extremities of obese and gaunt, unapologetic and unidealized portraits of war cripples, prostitutes, street urchins, and his friends and colleagues. Still, one cannot deny the beauty of these “ugly” paintings—even Dix’s \textit{Lustmords} can be, and were, understood aesthetically. To say that Dix was aestheticizing death and violence would be erroneous; he painted how he saw the world, and, as Dix said so eloquently just prior to his death in 1969, “I was not so much concerned with portraying ugliness. \textit{Everything I have ever seen is beautiful.”}\textsuperscript{139}

\textbf{Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt): Fecundity and Destruction}

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{138} Karcher, 66.  
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 76, emphasis my own.
Dix’s paintings challenge the value of the categories of ugliness and beauty. Dix also explores Nietzsche’s Dionysian philosophy, challenging the one-sided appropriation of German artists, like those involved with Die Brücke, who focused only on the vitalistic affirmation of life. The depiction of life’s extremes—life and death, inextricable from each another—govern the work of Dix, and are notably pronounced in his Lustmords. Dix’s focus on the body within his art, which is emphasized in the whirl of bloody body parts and spilling entrails of Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt), also looks back to a Nietzschean influence. For Nietzsche, the human body is where everything begins, and prior to physicality, there is only “the beautiful chaos” of brute nature.

This concept of the body as the beginning and end, and, similarly, the duality of life and death as experienced through the body, is crystallized in one detail of Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt): the eviscerated reproductive organs that spill from the cleaved vagina. As Eva Karcher points out, Lustmord is the ultimate paradox of life and death, “fusing two seemingly irreconcilable, radically opposite poles,” and Dix’s persistent attention to female genitalia in his Lustmord compositions reinforces this paradox. Dix is the only Weimar artist whose every Lustmord depicts the butchered vagina of the victim, and he does so in startling, morbid detail. In Der Kleine Frauenmörder, Grosz does not even include female genitalia, and instead emphasizes that of his male protagonist. When Grosz does include female genitalia in his paintings, it is not represented as destroyed. Grosz depicts the female victim’s genitalia as a simple half-moon in John, Der Frauenmörder, and an ambiguous scrawl in The Double Murder in the Rue Morgue and Ein Verbrechen, but otherwise omits this detail in almost all of his other Lustmords.

Dix’s focus on female genitalia has been regarded by scholars as a visual, and virtual attack on women. Maria Tatar relates this attention to a kind of womb-envy, a line of argument that neglects Dix’s apparent celebration of the fecundity of all women, including his wife. A year before Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt), Dix completed the

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140 Die Brücke derived their name and manifesto from Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Twohig, 42.
142 This detail is more clearly defined in the etching (fig. 19), in which it is located on the bottom right of the picture plane.
143 Karcher, 70.
mystical oil painting *Schwangeres Weib* (fig. 22). Here, red swirling orbs formulate the body of a pregnant woman who seems to make up the night sky. More naturalistic paintings of pregnant women emerge throughout his career, including a 1931 painting of a very pregnant model who turns her face from the viewer, emphasizing her role as a mother and not her identity (fig. 23). Dix also painted his own children and wife throughout his career, as well as his own mother, Louise Dix. Dix’s binary focus on vitality and fecundity of the woman and her destruction by violence or deterioration by age speaks strongly of his Nietzschean influence. His constant return to such themes suggests that the body of the woman, as mother or victim of *Lustmord*, best represented this duality of life and death.

**The Self-Portrait and the Nude: Dix as Lustmörder and Academic Tradition**

*Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* also differs from the *Lustmord* canvases of Dix’s contemporaries in that it is a self-portrait. It may seem odd that Dix would choose to represent himself as such, but Dix produced many self-portraits throughout his career, many of which represent the artist in other personas. His interest in this transformation of the self reflects Dix’s own academic training, and perhaps speaks again to his interest in Nietzsche. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche states that the “Dionysian man . . . enters into every skin, into every emotion; he is continually transforming himself.”

In *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)*, Dix has transformed himself into the chic criminal of the era, the lust-murderer. To psychoanalyze this choice, as Tatar does, is to tread on shaky ground and risk overanalysis. Tatar equates Dix’s *Lustmord* canvases as “murder committed in the mind of the artist,” and argues that Dix’s choice was “an expressive release for murderous urges.”

Tatar’s interpretation assumes a murderous psychological state of the artist, for which she has no evidence. Dix may have painted himself as a knife-wielding madman, but he also portrayed himself as a surgeon, a prisoner of war, a father, and a Greek god. Fantasy may be at play with Dix’s self-

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144 Nietzsche, *Twilight*, 84.
145 Tatar, 15.
portraits, but fantasy and repressed urges are not equivalent. During his deployment, Dix portrayed himself as Mars, the god of war (fig. 24), yet he never spoke of any pleasure he received from his stint on the battlefield. Contrary to Tatar’s argument that Dix was expressing “murderous urges,” which he would have been able to express literally on the battlefield, Dix maintains an emotional distance from death in his diary, stating, “corpses are impersonal.” Portraying the female figure as eviscerated and impersonal corpses would have been recognized by critics as having repercussions on established and respected genres of art, which center on the figuring of the female form.

In his figuring of the fractured woman, *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* both suggests, and challenges Dix’s academic training. Other Lustmords by Dix, as well those by his contemporaries, have been considered as reinterpretations, or ruinations, of the reclining nude, a compelling comparison that does not adhere to *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt).* The armless torso and detached solid limbs suggest another, older tradition of high art: the fragmented survivors of Classical sculpture, like the Nike of Samothrace (ca. 220–190 BCE; Paris, Louvre) and the Venus de Milo (ca. 130–100 BCE; Paris, Louvre). Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius suggests the anti-academic nature of the Weimar Lustmords, proposing that these violent figurations are representative of Dix and Grosz deconstructing their academic training, using the fragmented female form as an opposition to “the academic tradition of the ideal, full nude.” Whether in opposition to, or guided by the tradition of, the academic nude and ancient sculpture, the female figure so important to Dix’s Lustmords, or indeed any contemporaneous Lustmord painting, are consanguineous to the earlier models.

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146 Karcher, 33.
147 Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius is but one scholar to make this analogy, *Im Blickfeld: George Grosz, John, Der Frauenmörder,* (Hamburg: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1993): 38-40. Heinrich Maria Davringhausen’s 1917 *Der Lustmörder* (Munich, Bavarian State Painting Collections) is perhaps the most recognizable Lustmord as the reclined female, as Davringhausen was visually quoting Manet’s *Olympia.*
A more literal connection between the fragmented body of the Weimar Republic to art of antiquity is found is Dix’s *The Barricade* of 1920 (whereabouts unknown). In this painting, completed the same year as *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*, a barricade of cultural icons has been built atop corpses, upon which civilians and soldiers shoot firearms out of the picture plane and into the city streets. In the center of the barricade, among books, paintings, and a piano, our eyes rest upon an armless marble nude (probably meant to represent the Venus de Milo) which stands out against its dark surroundings and becomes the focal point of the painting. *Prager Straße*, also of 1920, portrays fragmented nudes in the form of mannequins and prosthetics (fig. 25). Behind the two crippled war veterans that occupy most of the canvas, collaged pieces of mannequins and prosthesis occupy store windows. This, of course, references to the artificial limbs needed by many veterans, though the men depicted in *Prager Straße* have only wooden dowels and planks to replace their missing body parts. The mannequins in the window, interestingly, are gendered female. This association sheds new light on *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)*. The three canvases were painted within the same year, and speak to the ruined bodies of men and women brought on by modern life. The technologies and repercussions of war and the dangers of living in a metropolis inform and transform culture. Dix shows us what he sees on the streets and in the newspapers, arguably cynical but without apparent judgment.

Dix’s anatomical concentration of *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* could also be related to his exposure to autopsy drawings. Dix studied cadavers and internal organs from local hospitals, and later portrayed himself in a surgeon’s coat (which he wore as a painter’s smock), and painted a bloody operation (*Die Operation (Prof. Dr. R. Andler, of Singen)*, 1943; Private Collection). Dix was not lost on the connections between his paintings and those of the master’s from which he had learned. He once connected his paintings to those from the canon of art history: “What I see as the new element in painting lies in the expansion of the subject matter, in the intensification of those

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149 For a more in-depth reading of prosthetics in Weimar culture, see Mia Fineman’s “Ecce Homo Prostheticus,” *New German Critique* 76, Special Issue on Weimar Visual Culture (Winter 1999): 85-114.

150 Conzelman describes Dix’s study of corpses and internal organs that he had delivered to him from the hospital in Friedrichstadt, Karcher, 42-3.
expressive forms which, after all, were already present in the works of the old masters." Dix didn’t see his work as artistically novel creations, but a modern augmentation of the old. Under such an analysis, we can construe Dix’s Lustmords as unifications of older, established genres to create new, modern interpretations of the female form.

**Dix’s Lustmord**

Dix had his detractors during the Weimar Republic, and those who spoke against Dix’s art were usually motivated by his grotesquely articulated subject matter. Julius Meier-Graefe compared Dix unfavorably to Rembrandt, saying that the Anatomy Lesson (1632, Mauritshuis, the Hague) of the latter makes “you want to kiss it,” while Dix’s paintings makes one nauseous. After reviewing Dix’s work somewhat favorably in his 1923 essay in Das Kunstblatt, Carl Einstein dismisses the artist’s Lustmords and Schießbude (shooting galleries) as “the romantic section [of the newspaper], somewhat childish journalism.” The same work that Einstein dismissed assisted in Dix’s fame, and led critics to promote Dix as an artistic barbarian. “He is an Indian, a Sioux chief,” critic Hugo Zehder described Dix (perhaps influencing Einstein’s exact description of Grosz as a Sioux Chief years later), “Always on the warpath. He swings his brush like an axe . . . a truly possessed individual.” Otto Griebel similarly describes Dix as painting “like a lunatic,” and these impressions seem to be reinforced by Dix’s portrayal of himself in Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt). Such descriptions imply a connection between painting and killing, and have no doubt influenced the theories of such scholars as Tatar. Yet, as I have discussed, Dix was a self-proclaimed pragmatist. I believe, owing to Dix’s unflinching humor, he was likely entertained by Zehder’s and Griebel’s perceptions,

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151 Karcher, 10.
152 Karcher, 44.
153 “Romantik Teils; etwas kindlicher Journalism,” Einstein, 100.
155 Ibid., 66.
though his reaction to such receptions is not clear. Still, he never seemed to promote himself as a lunatic or criminal, except in his self-portraits.

Dix is an often misunderstood artist, and I hope that rather than further compound the problem I have suggested that there may be more to this artist than even his Weimar contemporaries understood. *Lustmord* did not necessarily mean one single thing to Dix, but his continual return to *Lustmord* as subject matter implies that it meant something significant to the artist. *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* is unlike the distanced and satirical *Lustmords* of Grosz, and it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to understand from Dix’s perception. Its reception in the 1920s seemed to stray from Dix’s own understanding of his work, while its contemporary reception deviates further. The important question may be if Dix’s intentions matter at all, and this I cannot answer. It is my belief that analyzing Dix’s intentions in painting *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* offers a more complex understanding of Dix in general, which is significant for such an under-studied artist. An investigation of Dix’s intentions more broadly helps scholars better decipher what *Lustmord* meant in Weimar Germany, why it proliferated in so many manifestations, and promotes an approach to *Lustmord* that spans its many perceptions and receptions.
CONCLUSION

In 1921, charges of obscenity were brought against Otto Dix, and the painting that incited such a reaction was removed from its gallery and banned from public exhibition. The painting, *Mädchen vor dem Mirror* (fig. 27), seems a curious choice for such a reaction after studying the *Lustmord* paintings of Dix and Grosz, which seem much more inflammatory to a contemporary viewer. The banned (and subsequently destroyed) painting features the back of an apparently youthful “girl” examining her reflection, which has transformed her into a gaunt and sunken old woman. *Mädchen vor dem Mirror*, like so many others of Dix’s paintings, focuses on the dichotomy of life and death, beauty and ugliness, but still seems somewhat tame after viewing paintings where women were depicted as victims of extreme violence. I think this reaction speaks to the context in which Dix and Grosz worked: It was more problematic to depict a woman “ruined” by age than by violence. Perhaps this reception is because of a fear within man of age and dying—a threat that they cannot control—as opposed to a violent act executed by men and thereby controllable in theory. Grosz, too, had works protested against as obscene and heretical, but no *Lustmords* were among the offenders.

That *Lustmord* was an accepted genre within art is foremost in understanding why these works were created. As Martha Dix stated in an interview, “themes such as *Lustmord* were fascinating in those days.” Note that she refers to *Lustmord* as a theme, not a crime. She speaks of *Lustmord* within a cultural sphere, and thus somewhat removed from reality, related to it through a kind of cultural medium. As subject matter, *Lustmord* manifested itself in many media, culminating in Fritz Lang’s 1931 film *M*, and in this thesis I have argued that every manifestation is individual. *Der Kleine Frauenmörder* and *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)* are rendered in the same medium, parallel one another visually, and overlap temporally. In both, the city has replaced the war-ravaged battlefields as the setting for death, and the bodies of women have replaced the bodies of men. For Grosz and Dix, the war was over, but society was still a place of turmoil, and filled with the extreme violence that had so dominated Germany from 1914

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156 Karcher, 74.
157 Ibid., 66.
through 1918. The paintings certainly share meaning, but to try to achieve a more complete understanding of why Weimar artists painted *Lustmord*, I have argued that generalities only go so far. *Lustmords* vary as greatly as do any contemporaneous portraits, landscapes, or still lifes. Grosz’s *Lustmords* were developed from his left-leaning politics and interest in satire. Quite oppositely, the *Lustmords* of Dix seem to have been influenced by his interest in Nietzschean philosophy. For me, these differences in intention influence the meaning of the works themselves. Scholars must not forget the individuality of Weimar-era artists, distinct from each other and from contemporary understandings of sex and violence in representation. I hope to have shown that detailed and individual analysis of the *Lustmord* paintings of Weimar-era Germany reveals complicated and divergent works that peel back different layers of meaning, all of which reveal insight into the artists, and society, that created them.
Figure 1: George Grosz. *Der Kleine Frauenmörder*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 66 x 66 cm. Private Collection.
Figure 2: Otto Dix, *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 170 x 120 cm. Lost.
Figure 3: Otto Dix. *Lustmord*, 1922. Etching, 27.5 x 34.6 cm. Albstadt, Städtische Galerie Albstadt.
Figure 4: Crimescene photograph of the *Lustmord* of a Viennese Prostitute. Figure 9 from Erich Wulffen, *Der Sexualverbrecher* (Berlin: Groß-Lichterfelde, 1910): 455.
Figure 5: Artist unknown. Der Mädchenmörder von Boston cover of Aus den Geheimakten des Welt-Detektivs, c. 1907-1911.
Figure 6: George Grosz. *John, Der Frauenmörder*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 86.5 x 81 cm. Hamburger Kunsthall, Hamburg.
Figure 7: George Grosz. *Pandemonium*, 1914. Ink, 47 x 30.5 cm. Princeton, Estate of George Grosz.
Figure 8: George Grosz. *Germany, A Winter’s Tale*, 1918-1920. Oil on canvas, 215 x 132 cm. Lost.
Figure 14: George Grosz. *Lustmord in der Ackerstrasse*, 1916. Offset lithograph. Plate 32 from *Ecce Homo* (Berlin, 1923).
Figure 15: George Grosz. *Metropolis (Berlin)*, 1916-17.
Oil on canvas, 100 x 102 cm. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.
Figure 16: George Grosz. *Suburb*, 1917. Offset lithograph. Plate 73 from *Ecce Homo* (Berlin, 1923).
Figure 17: George Grosz. *Apache*, 1916. Offset lithograph. Plate 58 from *Ecce Homo* (Berlin, 1923).
Figure 19: Otto Dix. *Der Lustmörder (Selbstporträt)*, 1920. Etching, 30 x 25.7 cm. Hamburg, Private Collection.
Figure 20: Otto Dix. *Lustmord*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 165 x 135 cm. Lost.
Figure 21: Otto Dix. *The Artist’s Family*, 1927. Oil on wood, 80 x 50 cm. Städelscher Museum, Frankfurt.
Figure 22: Otto Dix. *Schwangeres Weib*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 133 x 72 cm. Stuttgart, Dr. Freerk Valentien Collection.
Figure 23. Otto Dix. *Die Schwangere (Halbakt)*, 1931. Mixed media on wood, 83 x 62 cm. United States, Private Collection.
Figure 24: Otto Dix. *Selbstbildnes als Mars*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 32 x 26. Freital, Städtische Kunstsammlung im Haus der Heimat.
Figure 25: Otto Dix. *Prager Straße*, 1920. Oil and collage on canvas, 101 x 81 cm. Stuttgart, Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart.
Figure 26: Otto Dix. *Mädchen vor dem Mirror*, 1921. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Destroyed.


Hartlaub, G., letter to George Scholz, April 25, 1923, George Grosz Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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