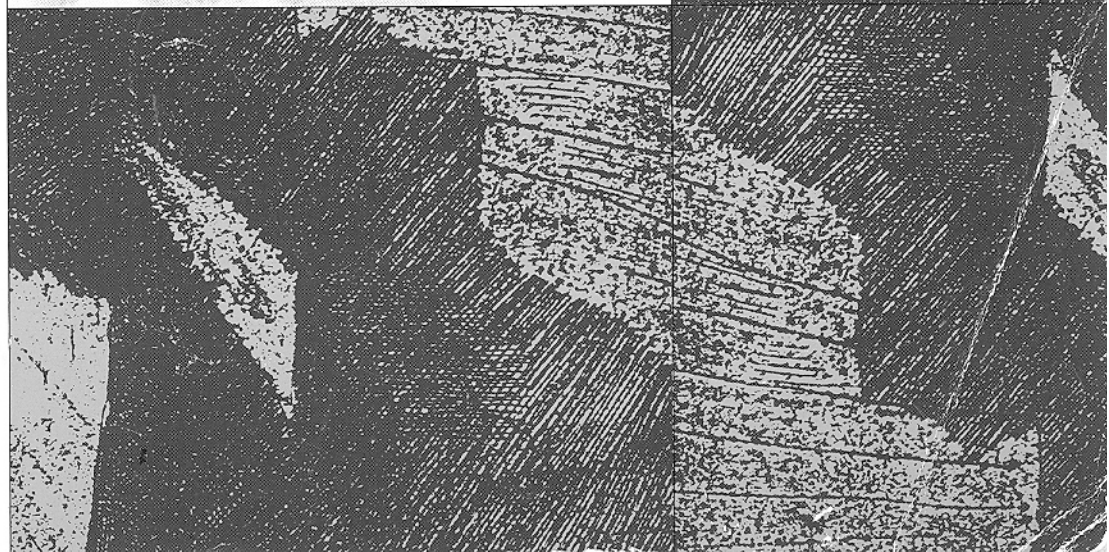


# The Diary and Letters of Kaethe Kollwitz

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Translated by Richard and Clara Winston



## THE EARLY YEARS

I WAS the fifth child in our family. At the time of my birth we were living in Koenigsberg at Number 9 Weidendamm. I dimly remember a room in which I was doing pen drawings, but what I recall most distinctly are the yards and gardens. By passing through a front garden we came to a large yard that extended down to the Pregel River. There the flat brick barges docked and the bricks were unloaded in the yard and so piled that there were hollow spaces in which we played house. Running alongside the yard was another garden, also reaching to the river, and at its end there was a round pavilion built out over the water. I remember once hearing my Aunt Lina, who was then quite young, singing a lovely but very sad song in that pavilion.

To the right of the yard, but separated from it by low buildings, was another yard that connected with ours by a narrow lane between the buildings. I have very strong and lively memories of this other yard. At the end of it, along the Pregel, there was a raft for rinsing laundry. A dead girl was washed onto this raft one day and taken away in the "poor hearse." I can still see the terrifying hearse and coffin.

Besides this, the Ratke children lived there—Max, Lene and Liese. All of

them were older than I. Konrad and Julie, my brother and sister, were their real playmates, and I just tagged along. The Ratke children had lost their mother. Their father was a merchant and was sometimes drunk. Once I was with the girls in their house and I saw their drunken father staggering around. (Either I had heard the matter talked about or in remembering it later on I understood; at any rate, during the last years we were there I knew just exactly what his being "drunk" meant.)

In one of the low, oblong buildings that separated the two yards lived a man who made plaster casts. I often stood there watching him mold the plaster, and to this day I can smell the damp, plastery atmosphere of the place.

From the middle courtyard an alley went past the house to the street, the Weidendamm. Sometimes, though rarely, our games led us out into the street. The bigger children, however, often ran out there. Liese Ratke's short braids would fly up in the air when she ran, and her straight, pale-blond hair would stream back from her head like a banner.

We lived at Number 9 Weidendamm until my ninth year, and ever afterwards, as children, we remembered it with nostalgia. There were endless places to play and numerous adventures to be had in those yards. For example, a pile of coal had been unloaded from a boat and dumped in the yard in such a way that it sloped up gently and then fell off sharply on the side facing our garden. It was a risky matter to climb up it almost to the brink. I myself never dared, but Konrad did. Another boy who tried it was hurt; when he was right at the top and on the brink of the pile, a piece of coal slid out from under him and he fell onto the spiked fence surrounding the coal heap.

Then there was the pit filled with unslaked lime, with only a single plank across it. If you fell in, it was said, your eyes would be burned out.

Then there were the piles of clay we used to build forts out of—one on either side of the yard. The attacking party threw balls of clay which could really hurt.

I had reached that borderline age when a child's older brothers and sisters start finding it worthwhile to let it play with them. Later on I liked playing with boys, but at that time I was still very timid. I could not hold my own against the older children. For example, I remember that my ninth birthday was a black day for me. First of all, I did not like the number nine. Then I

received a set of skittles as one of my birthday presents. In the afternoon, when all the children were playing skittles, they would not let me play—I don't know why. As a result, I had one of my usual stomach aches. These stomach aches were a surrogate for all physical and mental pains. I imagine my bilious trouble began at that time. I went around in misery for days at a time, my face yellow, and often lay belly down on a chair because that made me feel better. My mother knew that my stomach aches concealed small sorrows, and at such times she would let me snuggle close to her.

In those days my sister Lisbeth was very small and I scarcely noticed her. Konrad was a nimble, lively and imaginative boy. He was not disobedient to Father and Mother; he did what they told him, but he was always getting into some new scrape, doing something that had not yet been forbidden. Once, during the days when he was reading books about Indians, he decided to emigrate to America. He simply set out over the meadows along the Pregel. It was only after a long search that he was traced and brought back.

I do not remember much about my sister Julie at that time. Later Mother told me that Julie had always been a solicitous child. Two years younger than Konrad, she was always trailing along behind her brother to save him from mischief. Even at that early age she had begun her mothering of us which we later so rebelled against.

Once Mother sent the two of us to visit Ernestine Castell. As Julie was preparing to leave with me, she took a lump of sugar out of the box and pocketed it. "What is that for?" Aunt Tina asked. "To cram into Kaethe's mouth if she starts to bawl," Julie answered.

This stubborn bawling of mine was dreaded by everyone. I could bawl so loudly that no one could stand it. There must have been one occasion when I did it at night, because I remember that the night watchman came to see what was the matter. When Mother took me anywhere, she was thankful if the fit did not come over me in the street, for then I would stop dead in my tracks and nothing could persuade me to move on. If the fit came over me at home, my parents would shut me up alone in a room until I had bawled myself to exhaustion. We were never spanked.

On the whole I was a quiet, shy child, and nervous as well. Later on, instead of these tantrums of kicking and roaring I had moods that lasted for



hours and even days. When in these moods I could not bring myself to use words to communicate with others. The more I saw what a burden I was being to the family, the harder it became for me to emerge from my mood.

What else was there about Weidendamm that we found so nice? There were the horses and carriage Father kept at that time. The horses were bays. The driver had a blue uniform coat; his name was Gudovius. Later, when Father gave up keeping the carriage, a suit for Konrad was made out of the blue coat. It always smelled of Gudovius, horses and the stable.

The bricks which were unloaded from the barges and piled in the yard were then taken to Father's building sites in brick wagons. In my memories these brick wagons are intimately bound up with the streets of Koenigsberg. They always moved in a procession at the slowest possible speed, dusty, groaning, squeaking, pulled by wretched nags and driven by coarse, crude drovers. One time a foal was brought into our yard in a brick wagon. It was blind. Konrad pleaded with Father to buy it. He rode on it, but the foal was so blind that it could not see where the walls and trees were. It kept bumping into things and almost crushed Konrad's legs.

My memory of my parents from those days is quite dim. Father was probably at work a good deal of the time. I imagine at that period we already had the set of blocks that Father had had made for us. They were big, solid blocks and we used them a great deal for building. We also had many long strips of wastepaper from Father's architectural designs. These were given us for drawing. Konrad's imagination always turned to wolves pursuing sleds, or similar themes. Father kept an eye on our work and soon began saving the strips of paper we had scribbled on.

I do not remember Mother at all from that time. She was there, and that was good. We children grew up in the atmosphere she created. Before Konrad's birth Mother had lost two children. There is a picture of her holding on her lap her first child, which was named Julius after my grandfather. This was the "firstborn child, the holy child," and she had lost it, as well as the one born after it. Looking at her picture you can see that she was truly Julius Rupp's daughter and would never let herself give way completely to grief. But although she never surrendered to the deep sorrow of those early days of her marriage, it must have been her years of suffering which gave her for ever after the remote air of a madonna. Mother was never a close friend and

good comrade to us. But we always loved her; for all the respect we had for our parents, we loved them, too.

A few minutes walk from the Weidendamm was the old Pauperhausplatz. Here, at Number 5, our grandparents lived. There is much to tell about them and their house.

Not until much later did we fully understand what we had lost in moving away from the Weidendamm. At the time we rejoiced in the change. Our new home on Koenigstrasse was one of the finest of the new houses Father had built. We lived on the lower floor, and next to us was my Uncle Julius (Rupp), who had just married and settled down there to practice as a doctor. Here my mother gave birth with great difficulty to her last child. The baby was named Benjamin in accordance with my father's wish. This baby too lived only for a year and then died, like the firstborn, of meningitis. I have a number of very vivid impressions of these events. It must have been shortly before the baby's death—we were sitting at table and Mother was just ladling the soup—when the old nurse wrenched open the door and called loudly, "He's throwing up again, he's throwing up again." Mother stood rigid for a moment and then went on ladling. I felt very keenly her agitation and her determination not to cry before all of us, for I could sense distinctly how she was suffering.

For me the death of Benjamin was associated with a complex of oppressive emotions. My parents had given me Schwab's *Legends of the Greek Gods* when I was very young, and I believed in these gods. I was aware, I suppose, that there was a Christian "dear Lord," but I did not love him. He was an utter stranger to me.

Lise and I had been sent out of the nursery. I don't know what Lise was doing, but I sat down on the floor, built a temple with my blocks, and was busy making a sacrifice to Venus. At that moment the door opened and Father and Mother came in. Father had his arm around Mother. They came over to us and Father said that our little brother was dead. (Probably he said that God had taken him.) I instantly felt certain that this was punishment for my unbelief; now God was taking revenge for my sacrifice to Venus. My relations with my parents were such that I said not a word about it; but what a weight there was upon my mind, for I believed myself to blame for my brother's death.

Then I saw little Benjamin lying on the bed in the front room and looking so white and pretty that I thought: If we only open his eyes, maybe he will

come alive after all. But I did not dare to ask Mother to open the baby's eyes and see whether everything would not turn out all right. I don't know whether I dared to touch the little dead body myself.

Konrad and I were in the big front room. Konrad stood at the door to the smaller room where the body lay. This door opened and Grandfather Rupp came out. This is the first conscious memory I have of him. He had been inside looking at little Benjamin. When he came out, he noticed Konrad and spoke gravely to him—saying, as I recall it, something like, "Do you see now, how fleeting everything is?" They were the earnest words of a minister and possibly (but perhaps not) Konrad understood them. To me, what Grandfather said sounded cruel and unloving.

Then I remember Grandfather speaking at the bier, and then Father and, I suppose, Grandfather and friends of the family drove together down Koenigstrasse and out through the Koenigstor to the Free Congregation's cemetery. Mother stood at the window and watched the hearse depart. I loved her terribly, but I did not go to her.

In those days my love for my mother was tender and solicitous. I was always afraid she would come to some harm. If she were bathing, even if it were only in the tub, I feared she might drown. Once I stood at the window watching for Mother to come back, for it was time. I saw her walking down the other side of the street, but she did not glance over at our house. With that distant look of hers, she continued calmly down Koenigstrasse. Once again I felt the oppressive fear in my heart that she might get lost and never find her way back to us. Then I became afraid that Mother might go mad. But above all I feared the grief I would endure if Mother and Father should die. Sometimes this fear was so dreadful that I wished they were already dead, so that it would all lie behind me.

I had made up my mind what I would do in that case. I would go to the Prengels and stay with them all the time.

There is not much more that I remember from the later years of our life in that house. We played croquet in the garden and had bad squabbles. When we began cheating one another at the game, our parents put the set away. Although here also we had a playground and garden adjoining the house, the grounds felt cramped compared to the spaciousness of our yards in the old house on the Weidendamm. But there was a large swing here, and I used to swing on it

standing up. I swung very high, so it seemed to me, and that was very nice.

From Koenigstrasse we moved to Prinzenstrasse. I am sure it was around this time that Father gave up his business and took over the duties of preaching for the Free Congregation.

The years that followed were very important to me. They were years of development, physically and mentally. I don't know just when I began to suffer from nocturnal frights, but it must have been around this time. These states of mine alarmed my parents; they feared epilepsy. My parents would send Konrad to call for me at school because they were afraid I might have a seizure during the day, but this never happened. Both Konrad and I hated this arrangement. Instead of walking with me, he stayed on the opposite side of the street.

Nights I was tormented by frightful dreams. The worst one I recall is the following: I am lying in my bed in the semidarkness of the nursery. In the next room Mother is sitting in the chair under the hanging lamp, reading. I can see only her back through the half-open door. In one corner of the nursery lies a large coil of rope such as is used on ships. The rope begins to stretch out and unroll, silently filling the whole room. I want to call Mother and cannot. The grey cable blots out everything.

Then there was a horrible state I fell into when objects would begin to grow smaller. It was bad enough when they grew larger, but when they grew smaller it was horrifying.

I experienced such states of unfounded fear for many years; even when I was in Munich they occurred, but in far feebler form. I constantly had the feeling that I was in an airless room, or that I was sinking or vanishing away. I cannot say whether my parents' alarm over these states was altogether justified. In any case, they were very much concerned about me at the time. Later on I was to be more capable and energetic than my brothers and sisters.

On the upper floor of our house lived a boy named Otto Kunzemueller who was my first love. We played out in the yard and garden with the other children of the house and were allowed a fair degree of freedom. Julie had discovered that Otto and I sometimes went down into the cellar to exchange kisses, and she told Mother about it, not to make things hard for us, but because she was really worried. For a while I was afraid I would no longer be allowed to play with Otto, but Mother obeyed her principle of silent trust; she said nothing to me and made no prohibitions. Our kisses were childish and

highly solemn. Each time, we gave one another only one kiss, which we called "a refreshment." Besides Julie, I don't think anyone found us out, for we used to clamber over the fence into the abandoned next-door garden, or go down into the cellar, for our kisses.

I know that it was a wonderful feeling. I literally loved Otto so deeply that my whole being was filled to the brim. But since I was wholly ignorant in matters of love and he, I imagine, no less so, the refreshment kiss was as far as we went. He made up the most fantastic cock-and-bull stories about his past life, and I believed them all.

One time Otto said to me that he could not marry me. Why? I asked in alarm. Because I belonged to the Free Congregation and he did not, he said. For my part, I had a bitter struggle over the question of marrying him because he had the awful name of Kunzemueller. Worse yet, the other boys always called him Kumstemueller.

We played marvelously together. The other boys played with me too. I was in their good graces in those days because I was good at ball-playing. And in winter we swooped down the slope of Prinzenstrasse on sled—I riding and Otto and the Trenck boy hitched to the sled like horses.

This love came to an end because the Kunzemuellers moved away. Otto promised to pay me visits by way of the garden fences, and one day he did so. But after that he never came again. I missed him terribly. I can still remember how it felt when, coming home from school on hot summer days, I went up the steps and looked out of the hall window into the empty playyard with its old pear tree. All my joy in it was gone. I suffered from longing, and all my games with others were dull and meaningless. I had scratched an "O" into the skin of my left wrist, and whenever a scab began to form I opened the scratch up again.

After this first crush of mine I was always in love. It was a chronic condition; sometimes it was only a gentle undertone to my ordinary life, and sometimes it took stronger hold of me. I was not particularly discriminating about my love-objects. Sometimes I fell in love with women. Rarely did the person I was in love with have the slightest suspicion of my feelings. At the same time I was plunged into those states of longing for I knew not what which torment the child at puberty. I felt the lack of any real friendship with my mother more distinctly than ever before. The moral tone of our upbringing was such



that—ignorant as I was of the scientific view of human nature—I inevitably felt guilt about my condition. I needed to confide in my mother, to confess to her. Since I could not conceive of lying to my mother, or even of being disobedient, I decided to give my mother a daily report on what I had done and felt that day. I imagined that her sharing the knowledge would be a help to me. But she said nothing at all, and so I too soon fell silent. My ignorance of the physical aspects of life lasted for many years. I had the wildest ideas about how babies were born. For example, I read Kleist's *Marquise von O.* and of course did not understand the whole basis of the story. I was convinced that I too might have a baby out of the blue.

During this period I was given a little help just once, by Konrad. Of course we did not talk about the matter. But once he found a drawing I had made in which I had expressed what was bothering me. After that he watched over my reading and kept a number of books out of my reach. Always without saying a word. Perhaps only the hint that he too was not altogether immune from such troubles gave me something to cling to. In any case I always looked up to him and wanted him to respect me.

As I look back upon my life I must make one more remark upon this subject: although my leaning toward the male sex was dominant, I also felt frequently drawn toward my own sex—an inclination which I could not correctly interpret until much later on. As a matter of fact I believe that bisexuality is almost a necessary factor in artistic production; at any rate, the tinge of masculinity within me helped me in my work.

I turn now from discussion of my physical development to my nonphysical development. By now my father had long since realized that I was gifted at drawing. The fact gave him great pleasure and he wanted me to have all the training I needed to become an artist. Unfortunately I was a girl, but nevertheless he was ready to risk it. He assumed that I would not be much distracted by love affairs, since I was not a pretty girl; and he was all the more disappointed and angry later on when at the age of only seventeen I became engaged to Karl Kollwitz.

My first artistic instruction came from Mauer, the engraver. There were usually one or two other girls in the class. We drew heads from plaster casts or copied other drawings. It was summer, and we sat in the front room. From the street below I could hear the rhythmic tramping of men laying paving

stones. Above the tall trees of the garden across the way hung the dense, hot, motionless city air. I can feel it to this day.

I was hard-working and conscientious, and my parents took pleasure in each new drawing I turned out. That was a particularly happy time for my father, in respect to us. All of us children were developing rapidly. Konrad was writing, and we gave performances of his tragedies; I was showing unmistakable talent for drawing, and so was Lise. I still remember overhearing my father in the next room saying happily to my mother that all of us were gifted, but Konrad probably most of all. Another time he said something that bothered me for a long time afterwards. He had been astonished by one of Lise's drawings, and said to Mother: "Lise will soon be catching up to Kaethe."

When I heard this I felt envy and jealousy for probably the first time in my life. I loved Lise dearly. We were very close to one another and I was happy to see her progress up to the point where I began; but everything in me protested against her going beyond that point. I always had to be ahead of her. This jealousy of Lise lasted for years. When I was studying in Munich there was talk of Lise's coming out there to study too. I experienced the most contradictory feelings: joy at the prospect of her coming and at the same time fear that her talent and personality would overshadow mine. As it turned out, nothing came of this proposal. She became engaged at this time and did not go on studying art.

Now when I ask myself why Lise, for all her talent, did not become a real artist, but only a highly gifted dilettante, the reason is clear to me. I was keenly ambitious and Lise was not. I wanted to and Lise did not. I had a clear aim and direction. In addition, of course, there was the fact that I was three years older than she. Therefore my talent came to light sooner than hers and my father, who was not yet disappointed in us, was only too happy to open opportunities for me. If Lise had been harder and more egotistic than she was, she would unquestionably have prevailed on Father to let her also have thorough training in the arts. But she was gentle and unselfish. ("Lise will always sacrifice herself," Father used to say.) And so her talent was not developed. As far as talent in itself goes—if talent could possibly be weighed and measured—Lise had at least as much as I. But she lacked total concentration upon it. I wanted my education to be in art alone. If I could, I would have saved all my intel-

lectual powers and turned them exclusively to use in my art, so that this flame alone would burn brightly.

In the years when a young person is developing, his gifts feed on everything that pours into him from all sides. During those years almost everyone has some talent, because he is receptive. My parents followed the principle of giving us the opportunity to develop ourselves without their pushing our noses into things. For example, the bookcases were open to all of us children, and no one checked up on what books we chose. They were mostly good books anyway. I read Schiller in a large, handsome edition with engravings by Kaulbach; and I read Goethe. Goethe took root in me very early, and all my life he has meant a great deal to me.

Father also read aloud to us occasionally. Once—whether it was at this time or later on, I do not know—he read to us Freiligrath's *The Dead to the Living*. This poem made an indelible impression upon me. Battles on the barricades, with Father and Konrad taking part and myself loading their rifles—these were some of my fantasies of heroism at this time.

Lise and I were part of one another. We were so merged that we no longer needed to speak in order to communicate with one another. We were really an inseparable pair. What we called "our game" could be played only with one another. We had no dolls, nor did we have any desire for them. But at the stationery store (Fraculein Sander's on Koenigstrasse) we used to buy sheets of theatrical paper dolls, all of them characters out of different plays. We colored these figures with water-colors and cut them out. There were over a hundred of them, and we played constantly with them. In our room we were our own masters; we played all over the room, turning tables and chairs upside down according to the inspiration of the moment. Greek mythology, Schiller's dramas, our own inventions—we were never at a loss for subjects. Building blocks were brought up, palaces erected, altars, sacrifices, *The Minstrel's Curse* enacted, even to the collapse of the pillared hall. We were indefatigable. Lise, although she was three years younger than I, kept right up with me in everything and obeyed my orders. Without her, play was impossible.

During the following years, when we were passing out of childhood, this playing gradually stopped. We wanted to keep up our game and would start again and again, but it had outlived its time and died inwardly. I remember

how empty I felt; I was clearly aware of a loss. Gradually we slid over into other activities—usually Lise and I together, with her still following me. I loved her deeply and had resolved never to marry; but Lise too was not to marry. She would stay with me all the time and belong to me, so to speak.

She was infinitely goodhearted and easily hurt. Sometimes the devil in me prompted me to hurt her. When I got her to the point where she burst into tears, it wrenched my heart.

I owe a great deal to Lise because she would sit as model for me, and never tired of it. When I was drawing and could not solve a particular problem, she would put herself into the pose; she was always a good model and endlessly patient.

Aside from Lise, I have never had a really close friend. A few years later, though, Lisbeth Kollwitz became the friend of both of us. She had the happiest of temperaments and was much livelier than either Lise or myself. Knocking about town with her was great fun.

At this time we met Karl Kollwitz and his friends. They were still school-boys, but already Social Democrats. Hans Weiss, who was older than Konrad and Karl and by nature fanatically political, came charging into our family with his theories on free love. He belabored Julie with all of August Bebel's ideas about women. Julie, however, was scarcely affected by his talk. Lise and I were not yet old enough for him.

The high point of every year was the summer vacation in Rauschen. From the time I was nine years old we spent our summers there. My parents had once taken a trip through Samland and arrived by chance at the fishing village of Rauschen, half an hour from the ocean. Shortly before, several men of the village had been drowned in a great storm at sea. My parents came upon one of these women, a Frau Schlick, who sat at the door of her house, brooding vacantly. My parents were very much taken with the little house by which she sat. They were particularly impressed by its situation. They rented it first, and finally bought it from Frau Schlick, with the arrangement that she and her two daughters would continue to live there the year round.

My father made some changes in the house, but it retained completely its character as a peasant house. The trip to Rauschen took some five hours. There was no railroad; we rode in a *journalière*, which was a large covered wagon with four or five rows of seats. The rear seats were taken out and the

back stuffed with all the things we would need for a stay of many weeks: bedding, clothing, baskets, boxes of books and cases of wine. What a joy it was when the *journalière* drew up in front of our house and all the things were loaded aboard. Then Mother, the servants and we children (Father usually came later) would be stowed away on the front seats, and the driver would jump up to his special seat up front. The three or sometimes four horses would start, and off we would go through the narrow streets of Königsberg, through the clanging Tragheim Gate, and then out across the whole of Samland. Shortly before we reached Sassau we would catch sight of the sea for the first time. Then we would all stand on tiptoe and shout: The sea, the sea! Never again could the sea—not even the Ligurian Sea or the North Sea—be to me what the Baltic Sea at Samland was. The inexpressible splendor of the sunsets seen from the high coastline; the emotion when we saw it again for the first time, ran down the sea-slope, tore off our shoes and stockings and felt once again the cool sand underfoot; the metallic slapping of the waves—that was the Baltic to us!

As I approached the impressionable years of girlhood, sentimental love for the sea became the rage. But Rauschen was still an unknown place, visited only by a few nature enthusiasts; you were alone with the sunset, and the coastline was not yet built up. This children's paradise is gone for good, now.

Mother would stay out there with us girls until September, when school started. Konrad was allowed to bring friends out for lengthy stays, and once we had Lisbeth Kollwitz there with us.

Here is a good place to speak briefly of school, which gave me no pleasure. Both my grandparents and my parents were opposed to public schools, and so we girls went for lessons to a small private school. This worked out well with Julie, and especially with Lise, but during my schooldays the school's little group of pupils did not learn very much. The headmistress was a tubercular lady; the teachers were, it seemed to me, completely mediocre. I liked only my classes in literature and history. I was stupid in arithmetic and not very good in anything else. During the vacations in Rauschen Father tutored Lise and me in mathematics for a time. Lise was surprisingly good, I surprisingly bad.

One thing for which I shall always be very grateful to my parents is the fact that they allowed Lise and me to wander about the town for hours in the



afternoons. In this, too, they exhibited an attitude of generous confidence and never checked up on us afterwards. Their one stipulation was that we should not take walks in Koenigsgarten. Koenigsgarten began around Tauentzienstrasse. However, we could cross through the quarter if our way led in that direction—and we usually saw to it that it did. In our own way we were a pair of highly conceited young chits; we let our scarves wave in the wind, dressed up, and were often silly and extremely childish. But we acted this way only when we were passing through the Koenigsgarten district. After that we behaved better. We bought cherries or whatever was to be had and then started off on what we called our loafing. That was what it really was. We loafed through the whole city and out of the gates, took the ferry across the Pregel and hung around the waterfront. Or we would stand and watch the longshoremen loading and unloading the ships. We knew the smallest quaint alleys that wound and twisted their way through the old town. How often we stood at the railing when drawbridges were raised and looked down upon the steamers and barges moving through the passage below. We looked down on the swarm of fruit barges, loafed our way through the Castle, loafed past the Cathedral, loafed around the meadows along the Pregel. We knew where the grain ships docked, with their crews of *jimkes* who wore sheepskin jackets and wrapped their feet in rags. They were Russians or Lithuanians, good-natured people. Evenings they stayed aboard their flat, shallow ships, playing the accordion and dancing.

All this apparently aimless loafing undoubtedly contributed to my artistic growth. For a long period my later work dealt with the world of the workers, and it can all be traced back to these casual expeditions through the busy commercial city teeming with work. From the first I was strongly attracted to the workman type—and this bent became even more marked later on. I was about sixteen when I made my first drawing of characteristic workman types; the drawing was based on the poem by Freiligrath, "The Emigrants." A year later, at my father's request, I showed this drawing to my teacher in Berlin, Stauffer-Bern, who recognized it as altogether typical—both of me and of the environment from which I came.

Later, between stays in Munich and my marriage, I set about perfectly consciously to make pictures of the classic situations in the worker's life. This work came to an abrupt end when I moved to Berlin because the type of work-

man to be found was entirely different from the kind which had interested me. The Berlin worker stood on a much higher economic plane than the Koenigsberg worker, and as far as the visual aspects of his personality went, he was useless as a subject for me. Later (especially during a visit to Hamburg) I strongly regretted not having stayed in Koenigsberg long enough to have gotten all I could out of that city.

I do not know when I first began attending the Free Congregation services. (Father and Mother, Konrad, Julie and I entered the congregation's hall and walked down the aisle between the rows of seats in order to reach the front row. We passed by the Prengels and I saw my cousin Max Prengel, who was about my age. I often played with him, but now, instead of a friendly, familiar nod he gave me a measured, dignified bow.) I assume that religious instruction and attendance at the Sunday meetings must have begun at the same time for the children of the community. I attended during the last years in which Grandfather Rupp was our speaker.

The spiritual content of the Sunday sermon was thoroughly discussed during the religious lesson, which was also given by Grandfather Rupp. In the next hour he wanted us to show something for it—best of all to give a summary of the whole sermon. This was very hard for me. As long as I was able to follow what was said, I could reproduce it; but following the sermon for a full hour was very hard, even for Konrad. After one sermon Grandfather told us how he had seen Konrad's face in front of him brighten when he said, "In conclusion . . ."

After the Sunday sermon a number of members of the congregation—Henriette Castell, Lonny Ulrich and Grandfather Rupp's children, sons- and daughters-in-law and the older grandchildren—gathered at Grandfather's house in the old Pauperhausplatz. Grandfather, who had retired to his room to rest for a while, would come down to join us in the parlor. Whenever he entered through the low, white door, he seemed to me very tall and awesome. All of us stood up and greeted him. I do not really know whether or not he was tall; at any rate he seemed so to me: tall, thin, dressed in black up to his chin, his eyeglasses having a faintly bluish tinge, his blind eye covered by a somewhat more opaque glass. Grandfather's hands were very beautiful; my mother's hands took after his. They were large and expressive in shape; he wore a signet ring.

By the wide window stood two old armchairs facing one another. There my grandparents sat. The entire window was wreathed around by ivy. Usually the company talked about the sermon, but politics or any other interesting matters were also discussed. The atmosphere, since it was no longer wholly spiritual, was more comfortable for me. In the dark corner to the right of the large window, behind Grandfather's chair, stood a table with a large portfolio of copper engravings; along the shorter wall to the left, behind Grandmother's chair, was a small wall shelf of books. From this shelf we sometimes took the Grimm fairy-tales. But most of the time Lise and I sat looking at the portfolio of pictures. Quiet as mice, we half listened to the conversation, but were more absorbed in the pictures. In the room hung a portrait of Grandfather in middle life, painted by Graefe. If I remember rightly, it was an excellent portrait; I believe it has remained in the possession of the Theobald side of the family.

This after-sermon hour in my grandparents' warm, bright room has stamped them in my memory as infinitely friendly, kind and intellectual. This impression is reinforced by the festive Sunday gatherings at our house and the Christmas celebration on the first of the Christmas holidays. I must speak of these separately.

Yet Grandfather delivering his sermons or conducting his classes in religion inspired in me no other emotion than awe. When we came into the religion class, we were to him not his grandchildren, but children of the community, just as close and just as distant as the others. That attitude in itself made me timid. But Konrad was not the least bit in awe of him. Whenever Grandfather was at our home and a discussion was going on—he was always the honored and respected center of every conversation—Konrad would sit on his footstool close to Grandfather's feet and bring up his questions without the slightest embarrassment. Nor did it bother Konrad to come late to religion class, and as he stood in the rear of the room, wriggling out of his overcoat, he would answer a question that Grandfather was asking someone up front. Konrad was not the least bit impertinent; he was simply naive and trusting, and so interested in all intellectual matters that he breathed easily in Grandfather Rupp's intellectual atmosphere and was completely receptive. Later on Grandfather often had him over to his house, helped him with Latin and Greek and talked over his reading with him or suggested some book he ought to read. Many of

Grandfather's pithy phrases remained in Konrad's memory. Grandfather was always ready to give, was always kindly and informative, and often laconically humorous. By the time Grandfather died Konrad was a university student; he had therefore been influenced by Grandfather at his most alert and critical age.

I was seventeen when Grandfather died. My sister Julie, who came between Konrad and me in age, received less of the intellectual influence but more of the moral. She often read aloud to Grandfather and dearly loved both our grandparents.

It was often said that the intellectual standard by which Rupp measured the members of his congregation was far too high. Rupp developed his religious-philosophical system in the course of the Sunday meetings. During the Thursday evening meetings, which were devoted to free discussion by all, subjects of preeminently ethical nature were taken up. Along with this went discussion of the Gospels.

Rupp drew almost exclusively from the Gospel of Matthew. He did not offer rationalistic explanations of the miracles, but passed over them. The excerpts from the four Gospels which were given to the children of the Free Congregation were, so to speak, the pure moral doctrines that Rupp believed Jesus had revealed to the world. However, we learned the Gospel according to Matthew thoroughly, and the most important pronouncements we committed to memory. Only the finest hymns of the old church hymnal were kept for the congregation, and the melodies were often set to new words. For example *Integer vitae* had a text which began, "Spirit of eternal truth." The anthem of the congregation, "We have found ourselves and broken the yoke in twain," was sung after "We had built up." The Congregation put out a collection entitled *Voices of Freedom*. It was an anthology of the purest maxims, from poems of Confucius down to selections from contemporary writers. Grandfather often chose an entry from these voices of freedom to discuss with us children during religion class. Thus the religion class included discussion of the sermon, discussion of the Gospels, examination of a significant poem or longer poetic work (such as Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*), and a bit of religious history. For the latter Grandfather had charts drawn up showing cross-sections of time. (Thus he did not only teach how the church developed in Italy in the fifteenth century; he showed how at the same time the religious idea was embodied in other lands and other continents.)

These religion classes were a rich diet, and the intellectually more advanced children got an enormous amount out of them. So did the children's parents (who were permitted to sit in). I later regretted not having been mature enough to profit by this instruction. Unquestionably I owed a great deal to Grandfather, but I felt relieved when Father took over the religion classes in Grandfather's place. Father adapted himself more to the average child and taught, in the main, simple ethics. Subsequently I was confirmed by Father himself; Julie had been given confirmation by Grandfather.

Grandmother appeared very small beside Grandfather. She wore a cap with pale-violet ribbons. Her face was kind and friendly; her temperament was the direct opposite of Grandfather's. Grandfather stood above material things and the happenings of the day; Grandmother was right in the midst of them. Our Aunt Bennina inherited Grandmother's lively temperament; so did Julie, but compounded in a different way.

The oldest child of the Rupps was our mother, who in appearance, mentality and temperament took after Grandfather. She married Father, twelve years her senior, when she was twenty-three. Between Grandfather and Father there always was a firm and cordial friendship. Since the youngest Rupps, Julius and Lina, were growing children when Father became a member of the Rupp family, he took as important a part in their upbringing as Grandfather, who was overworked and only too grateful to have his younger friend help with the education of the children.

The other children of the Rupps were Bennina, who was a beautiful, dark, passionate girl; Theobald, who combined his father's aspiring mind and his mother's earthy temperament; Antonia, a quiet, introspective person, exceptionally devoted to duty; Julius, who must have been wonderfully winning as a boy, since he was so charming and full of grace even in his old age. The sixth child was our dear Aunt Lina. There was only a year or two between her and Julius, and the two were as inseparable as Lise and I. They were always in and out of my parents' household as if they were the grown-up children of the house. Aunt Lina had Grandmother's temperament; she was beautiful and had the same springy step as her brother Julius. (How finely both carried themselves!) She had a splendid voice and wanted to become a singer. But our grandmother was thoroughly conservative and could not permit her daughter to perform in public as a singer of oratorios. Then this beautiful girl had a



love affair; her love was not returned. I can remember those years, when violent inner agitation made her behavior flighty and contradictory. But she worked out her inner struggle. I have probably never known a more delightful person, a person with so joyous and impulsive a manner, as Aunt Lina.

Two stories up in my grandparents' house, in a sweet, old-fashioned room, lived Aunt Berta. She was one of Grandmother's sisters, a small woman with a very finely-shaped head, and even in our childhood she seemed already old. As was common in the past, unmarried girls stayed with their parents or helped out in the houses of their married brothers and sisters. And so Berta lived with the Rupps, but her help was in the intellectual rather than the practical sphere. Grandfather was opposed to public school instruction, and although he had allowed both his sons to attend school, he taught the girls himself. Aunt Berta assisted him in this task; she gave lessons in English and French, and perhaps also in other subjects. Her lessons went according to a schedule which Grandfather carefully worked out. Mother, I know, was particularly good in English and well acquainted with English literature. She had read Shakespeare, Byron and Shelley in English.

We children were very fond of visiting old Aunt Berta. Her room had the pleasantest old furniture, including a sofa with side arms which actually had drawers. She owned a complete Goethe in the small Cotta original edition; a plaster cast of the Amazon group in front of the National gallery; and a Goethe with Gellini's illustrations. Also, even in summer she always had some *Pfeffernuesse* left over from Christmas. She first taught Lise and me to sew—we hemmed handkerchiefs—and we always had a great deal to talk about with her. She was a wise old spinster, such as children are often very fond of—for children like to slip away from their busy mother and even their grandmother to the quiet, old-fashioned cubbyholes where such old aunts live and where there are still such things as lamp trimmers.

All these people, now dead, formed the circle in which we grew up. They all contributed to rearing and shaping us, as did also some other old members of the Free Congregation. These were the Ulrich sisters and the Castell sisters. The Ulrich sisters were two aged canonesses, and in our wanderings through town we often paid them visits. They lived close by one another—Lonny in an old one-story chapter-house that had the nicest miniature garden out back, in a space really just big enough for hanging out the wash. Lonny Ulrich suffered

from heart trouble and died of dropsy after I left Koenigsberg. Her body was small and shapeless; she had a face that was like Socrates' in its ugliness. We seldom saw her when she did not have some knitting in her hands. She was extraordinarily shrewd and intellectually keen.

An uncompromising adherent of the purest Rupp doctrine, she was also a close personal friend of Grandfather Rupp. Later on, during the theoretic disputations between the followers of orthodox Rupp doctrine and my father's reformed doctrines, she vigorously opposed my father. She was happy to have us children visit her, and was an extremely kind hostess. For hours we sat in her tiny chamber with its old furniture and walls hung with pictures. She had a peculiar way of weaving into her stories of personal experiences all sorts of reflections, logical deductions, moralisms, and of presenting general ideas to children in quite concrete form. She considered it her special task to train the growing young people for life in the Congregation.

Her sister Olga Ulrich (who by the way was not a member of the Congregation) lived in a canonry nearby and was the queerest old canoness imaginable. She had the keen wit of her sister Lonny, but with her it took the form of broad humor. She had no scruples when it came to giving in to her own crotchets; in fact she was a kind of bohemian in the canonry. Often she went on long walking tours through Samland. She constantly violated the rules of the order. If the chapter house were already closed, she would let her late visitors go out through the window.

The Castell sisters were altogether different from the amusing Ulrichs. I knew them only as old ladies. They were big, heavy women with large, grave faces. Irony, witty turns of phrase and flashes of thought—these things were wholly foreign to them. In fact they despised such lightmindedness. Henriette, whom we called Yetta, was a favorite figure in the humor sheets which attacked the Free Congregation during the period of reaction. Yetta lent herself to their caricatures—big, always with a stocking and darning needle in her hand, the ribbons of her cowl loosened and tossed over her shoulders when she got excited. A fanatic nature enthusiast, she scorned all kinds of conventional and civilized behavior and often walked barefoot about the city. Once she decided to visit Goethe's Bettina von Arnim in Berlin. The difficulties of such a journey in the days before the railroad were enormous. But she *wanted* to visit Bettina and hear about Goethe. She reached Berlin and went straight to Bettina's

home. In her simplicity she was convinced that Bettina would instantly recognize her as a spiritual comrade and take her to her heart. Instead, a servant girl opened the door and said that her ladyship was not receiving. Whereupon Henriette turned about and set off for Koenigsberg that same day.

Ernestine Castell made a particularly strong impression upon me because of the way nothing had been able to break or bend her. She lived in an isolated one-story cottage situated on a road lined with old willows which ran through the Pregel meadows. She had an injured leg that had never healed properly, so that the only way we ever saw her was sitting in her armchair, the bad leg in a horizontal position. She was one of Grandfather Rupp's oldest friends and followers. She believed fervently in the form of community that Rupp had originally hoped for: imitation of the first Christian communities; communal property; the fraternal familiar form of address to be used among the members.

From what I have heard, the first years of the congregation fostered a type of life which somewhat resembled the kind of life found in present-day young idealistic communist circles.

Ernestine had no interest in questions of theory; the one thing she valued was the expression of personality. She had a number of young girls with her whom she was bringing up. I can well imagine that the emotional interpretation she put upon the ideas of the Free Congregation went counter to Grandfather's temperament and did not greatly please him. He liked sentimental enthusiasm no more than he liked Lessing—who was a favorite of the Castells. The younger members, however, felt that the Castell circle supplemented the idea of the community, that it filled a gap.

It was not easy for anyone to be taken into this circle. The members of it were a select group, and the guiding spirit was unquestionably Ernestine Castell.

I know of this early, highly personal and uncommonly interesting period only at second hand. In our day nothing survived of that period but Ernestine herself, the "Aunt Tina" whom we loved to visit, and she was already quite old. She still seemed to live in a different world from the real world. She knew Klopstock's entire *Messiah* by heart, and I have heard her recite long passages from it. What she liked best was to receive visits from the young men of the community. But she would not tolerate any realists, and above all not those

who leaned toward materialism. Such persons seemed to crush her into silence, and she turned them away.

I have spoken in such detail of these personalities because I wished to show the atmosphere in which we children grew. It was, I think, a blessed atmosphere. We grew up quietly, no doubt, but in a fruitful and meaningful tranquility. When we graduated from these circles, when we went out into the world—I to Berlin and later to Munich—we were plunged into a different kind of life—one which seemed, in all its struggles and joys, so much more torrential and powerful that by and by Koenigsberg, and above all the Free Congregation, seemed to me outmoded and finished with. But only for brief periods. At bottom I always loved it as a home, felt closeness and gratitude toward it.

“Blessed is he who remembers his fathers with gladness.”

## IN RETROSPECT, 1941

**F**ROM my childhood on my father had expressly wished me to be trained for a career as an artist, and he was sure that there would be no great obstacles to my becoming one. And so after I reached my fourteenth year he sent me to the best teachers in Koenigsberg. The first was Mauer the engraver; later I studied with Emil Neide. Neide had painted *Wearry of Life* which created a great stir. His brother was an inspector of the police, and all the painter's themes were drawn from the world of crime. Although *Wearry of Life* was an important canvas painted with virtuosity and so sensational that it spread his reputation as far as America, his later work in this vein was artistically much weaker, and some of it was plain kitsch. On the other hand, I think very highly of a smaller and much quieter painting of his whose subject is again crime. It was entitled, *At the Scene of the Crime*, and was a dispassionate picture of the coroner's jury conducting an investigation in a gravel pit. As I remember it, this painting was on a really high artistic level.

Being a girl, I could not be admitted to the Academy. I therefore took private lessons with Neide, along with a young girl from Tilsit.



When I was seventeen, my mother made a trip for her health to a spa in Engadin. My father sent my younger sister Lise and me with her. Besides being a trip for the sake of Mother's health, this little vacation was intended to show us Berlin and Munich—especially Munich. In Berlin we had the opportunity to meet young Gerhart Hauptmann. He lived in Erkner, where he was a neighbor of my older sister. Her husband, Hofferichter, happened to meet Hauptmann on the commuter's train to Berlin, and they had become quite friendly. And so Lise and I were introduced to Hauptmann. He was still unknown, had only just written his *Lot of the Prometheus*. His house in Erkner was set in the midst of a large garden. I recall that we all sat in a big room, from which a short flight of steps led down into the garden. We were in a festive mood. There were Hauptmann, his wife, the painter Hugo Ernst Schmidt, Arno Holz, and my brother Konrad. It was an evening that left its mark upon us. There was a long table covered with roses in the large room, and we all wore wreaths of roses. We drank wine and Hauptmann read from *Julius Caesar*. All of us, young as we were, were carried away. It was a wonderful foretaste of the life which was gradually but irresistibly opening up for me.

After Berlin we stopped off in Munich for at least a week. In the Pinakothek there I saw the masters, and one of them had an effect upon me which was to be crucial for years to come: Rubens! I was carried away by Rubens. At the time I owned a small volume of Goethe. When the feeling completely overwhelmed me, I wrote in the margin of the book: "Rubens! Rubens! The early poems of Goethe! 'The temple has been built for me. . .'" Goethe, Rubens and the feeling I had about them formed one complete whole.

From Munich we went up into the mountains to Engadin. The sole means of travel was by stage-coach. The coach had two high seats on a platform in the back, to which you mounted by means of a ladder. Mother took these seats for us, while she sat below, up front. It was heavenly. We shouted and sang with glee from our high places. Mother at this time was only forty-seven, so beautiful and so gay. In St. Moritz we met my brother Konrad, who was coming from London. Marx was dead, he told us. Konrad had spent much time talking with old Engels. Before we had been together very long we were plaguing Mother to drive with us from Maloggia Pass down into Italy. But she insisted that she must return home to Father. And so we drove only as far as Maloggia Pass in a small cart, and sat there and sang.

Konrad was studying at the university in Berlin. When I was seventeen I followed him there, to live in a boarding house and attend the art school for girls, with Stauffer-Bern as my teacher. Stauffer-Bern's instruction was extremely valuable for my development. I wanted to paint, but he kept telling me to stick to drawing. He saw the drawings I had done in Koenigsberg as illustrations of poems, such as Freiligrath's "Emigrants," and they prompted him to mention Max Klinger, who was his friend and whom at the time I had not heard of. I went to see Klinger's *A Life* at a Berlin exhibit. It was badly hung, but it was the first work of his I had seen, and it excited me tremendously.

Stauffer-Bern was interested in my work and backed me up in pressing my father to let me attend art school again the following winter. Luckily for me, nothing came of this. For by the next semester Stauffer-Bern had gone to Italy, where he died suddenly. For the time being I went back to Koenigsberg.

Back home, my father persuaded me to paint a genre picture. I started *Before the Ball*, and at my father's urging I finished the painting, in spite of my inward impatience with it. The following year, while I was in Munich, Father had the painting framed and entered in an East Prussia traveling exhibit. The picture was bought, and the buyer ordered from Miss Schmidt of Koenigsberg, currently in Munich, a companion piece to be entitled *After the Ball*. This order was mis sent to an East Prussian Miss Schmidt whom I did not know; she happily accepted the commission, and I was not required to paint a sequel to *Before the Ball*—which also made me happy. In Munich, of course, we all thought paintings on such themes the worst trash.

In my seventeenth year I became engaged to Karl Kollwitz, who was then studying medicine. My father, who saw his plans for me endangered by this engagement, decided to send me away once more, this time to Munich instead of Berlin. That was in 1889.

In Munich I lived in Georgenstrasse, near the Academy, and attended the girls' art school. Once more I had good luck in my teacher, Ludwig Herterich. He did not put so great a stress upon my drawing and took me into his painting class. The life I plunged into in Munich was exciting and made me very happy. Among the girls who were studying there were some who were very gifted. Among these were Linda Koegel, Eugenie Sommer, Marianne Geselschap. This group was later joined by a fine artist who became well known under the pseudonym of Slavona. She moved to Paris and married the art dealer Otto

Ackermann. I must also mention Emma Jeep. What she did in art was not particularly significant; later, as the wife of Arthur Bonus, she revealed her real gift for writing. Together with Bonus she did the well-known versions of the Icelandic sagas. Our two families were very close for many years. . . .

Attacked by a grave disease, Linda Koegel suffered from a peeling of the skin and paralysis—she remained paralyzed for some forty years. From her bed she went on doing drawings for church murals.

I was delighted by the spirit of freedom that prevailed among the girl students. At the beginning, however, Herterich's teaching seemed mannered to me; his pronounced coloristic art was not to my taste. I did not see colors the way he did. I used a trick to win a favored position in the class: I painted the way I knew he wanted me to paint. It was only later on that I really began to understand his colorism.

In Munich I learned a great deal. The day was filled with work; evenings we enjoyed ourselves, went to beer halls, took walks in the surrounding country. I felt free because I had my own house key.

A number of girls in our class formed a club together with Otto Greiner, Alexander Oppler, Gottlieb Elster. We would set a subject for an evening's painting. I recall for example that one of the subjects was "Struggle." I chose the scene from *Germinal* where two men fight in the smoky tavern over young Catherine. This composition was highly praised. For the first time I felt that my hopes were confirmed; I imagined a wonderful future and was so filled with thoughts of glory and happiness that I could not sleep all night.

But in the painting class I made no progress. My fellow students, Sommer, Slavona and Geselschap, had a much better feeling for color than I had. Color was my stumblingblock. Then by chance I read Max Klinger's brochure, *Painting and Drawing*. I suddenly saw that I was not a painter at all. Nevertheless, Herterich knew how to train the eyes, and in Munich I really learned how to see.

I so liked the free life in Munich that I began to wonder whether I had not made a mistake in binding myself by so early an engagement. The free life of the artist allured me. Next year, when the question was again raised whether I should return to Munich, my father left the choice up to me. I did so gladly. It seemed to me a good omen that the first person I should meet on the street in Munich was Herterich. As a matter of course I entered his school

again. Father had promised me only this one more semester, and although I had the chance to go to Berlin instead, I had decided upon Munich. But this semester did not prove as fruitful as I had expected. Later on I often regretted not having gone to Berlin. A great deal was happening there at the time. Hauptmann's *Before Dawn* had been performed; there was the burgeoning of the new literature inside and outside Germany. A highly stimulating group of artists and writers were living in Berlin at the time. My fiancé had also moved to Berlin to spend his half-year internship there. My brother Konrad was working on the editorial staff of the *Vorwärts*. Compared with Munich, there was a noisy ferment about life in Berlin. Perhaps I would have been swamped by all that excitement; but perhaps too it would have had a fruitful influence upon me. In any case, the following year—1890—I was back in Koenigsberg. This time, thanks to the genre paintings I had sold, I was able to rent a small studio for myself. I had not yet completed the transition from painting to working in line. In fact, I wanted to paint; to be exact, I wanted to transfer the scene from *Germinal* to canvas. I would have to make studies for it. At that time Koenigsberg had a number of sailors' taverns near the Pregel, and visiting them at night was as much as one's life was worth. All I could do was to make my sketches in the morning at these places. The most interesting of them to me was the "Boat"—a tavern with double exits. As I stood outside I could hear a terrible din from inside; knife stabbings were commonplace occurrences.

My father no longer watched my work with the serene confidence that I was making progress. He had expected a much faster completion of my studies, and then exhibitions and success. Moreover, as I have mentioned, he was very skeptical about my intention to follow two careers, that of artist and wife. My fiancé had been put in charge of the tailors' *Krankenkasse*,\* and with this prospect for earning a livelihood we decided to take the leap. Shortly before our marriage my father said to me, "You have made your choice now. You will scarcely be able to do both things. So be wholly what you have chosen to be."

In the spring of 1891 we moved into the home in North Berlin where we were to live for fifty years. My husband devoted most of his time to his clinic and was soon burdened with a great deal of work. In 1892 I had my first child,

\* A kind of "hospitalization" scheme. In return for medical care, members paid a small fee at regular intervals into the *Kasse*, or fund.

Hans, and in 1896 my second, Peter. The quiet, hardworking life we led was unquestionably very good for my further development. My husband did everything possible so that I would have time to work. My occasional efforts to exhibit failed. But in connection with one of these exhibitions, a show of the rejected applicants was arranged, and I took part in this. The press paid some attention to this project; in fact the press at this time was receptive to these beginnings which were later to develop into the highly interesting Independents, who were allied to the Paris Independents. There was much in these shows which was merely grotesque; yet the work was always far more interesting than that exhibited in the big shows at Lehrter Station, and Hermann Sandkul later on educated the public to take them seriously.

A great event took place during this time: the Freie Buehne's première of Hauptmann's *The Weavers*. The performance was given in the morning. I no longer remember who got me a ticket. My husband's work kept him from going, but I was there, burning with anticipation. The impression the play made was tremendous. The best actors of the day participated, with Else Lehmann playing the young weaver's wife. In the evening there was a large gathering to celebrate, and Hauptmann was hailed as the leader of youth.

That performance was a milestone in my work. I dropped the series on *Germinal* and set to work on *The Weavers*. At the time I had so little technique that my first attempts were failures. For this reason the first three plates of the series were lithographed, and only the last three successfully etched: the *March of the Weavers*, *Storming the Owner's House*, and *The End*. My work on this series was slow and painful. But it gradually came, and I wanted to dedicate the series to my father. I intended to preface it with Heine's poem, "The Weavers." But meanwhile my father fell critically ill, and he did not live to see the success I had when this work was exhibited. On the other hand, I had the pleasure of laying before him the complete *Weavers* cycle on his seventieth birthday in our peasant cottage at Rauschen. He was overjoyed. I can still remember how he ran through the house calling again and again to Mother to come and see what little Kaethe had done.

In the spring of the following year he died. I was so depressed because I could no longer give him the pleasure of seeing the work publicly exhibited that I dropped the idea of a show. A good friend of mine, Anna Plehn, said,

"Let me arrange everything." She entered the series for me, sent it in to the jury, and a few weeks later it was in the show at the Lehrter Station. Later I heard that the jury—Menzel was one of the members—had voted that the *Weavers* be given the small gold medal. The Kaiser vetoed the recommendation. But from then on, at one blow, I was counted among the foremost artists of the country. Max Lehrs, director of the Dresden collection of engravings and drawings, bought the series and succeeded in procuring the gold medal for it. To this day the *Weavers* is probably the best-known work I have done.

This triumph came to me as a surprise, but by then I was beyond the temptations of success. The *Secession* was started during those years. I was asked to join, and remained a member until it dissolved.

I should like to say something about my reputation for being a "socialist" artist, which clung to me from then on. Unquestionably my work at this time, as a result of the attitudes of my father and brother and of the whole literature of the period, was in the direction of socialism. But my real motive for choosing my subjects almost exclusively from the life of the workers was that only such subjects gave me in a simple and unqualified way what I felt to be beautiful. For me the Koenigsberg longshoremen had beauty; the Polish *jimkes* on their grain ships had beauty; the broad freedom of movement in the gestures of the common people had beauty. Middle-class people held no appeal for me at all. Bourgeois life as a whole seemed to me pedantic. The proletariat, on the other hand, had a grandness of manner, a breadth to their lives. Much later on, when I became acquainted with the difficulties and tragedies underlying proletarian life, when I met the women who came to my husband for help and so, incidentally, came to me, I was gripped by the full force of the proletarian's fate. Unsolved problems such as prostitution and unemployment grieved and tormented me, and contributed to my feeling that I must keep on with my studies of the lower classes. And portraying them again and again opened a safety-valve for me; it made life bearable.

Then, too, my temperamental resemblance to my father strengthened this inclination in me. Occasionally even my parents said to me, "After all there are happy things in life too. Why do you show only the dark side?" I could not answer this. The joyous side simply did not appeal to me. But I want to emphasize once more that in the beginning my impulse to represent

proletarian life had little to do with pity or sympathy. I simply felt that the life of the workers was beautiful. As Zola or someone once said, "Le beau c'est le laid."

As a result of my success with the *Weavers* the girls' art school asked me to teach graphic arts and conduct life classes there. The director of the school at the time was Fraeulein Hoenerbach, and among the teachers were Martin Brandenburg and Hans Baluschek. I taught there for two or three years and then gave it up.

When Fraeulein Hoenerbach first spoke with me about the job, I pointed out that my knowledge of etching technique was too slim for me to undertake to teach it. She said, "Don't worry about that. Koepping taught me how to 'cook' pretty well, and if you ever get in a hole I'll help you out." That came about very soon. I had to show the class how to make an etching ground. The process was a book with seven seals to me and I perspired with embarrassment as I started to trot out my meager knowledge before the eager girls standing in a group around me. Suddenly I heard Fraeulein Hoenerbach's voice; she had joined the group of students. "Yes, Frau Kollwitz," she said, "that is one way to do it. But I'd like to tell you how Koepping taught me to do it." Then she took the plate and other materials out of my hands and saved the situation for me.

My life between thirty and forty was very happy in every respect. We had sufficient to live on; the children were growing up and healthy; we went traveling. During these years I went to Paris twice. The first time was for only a brief stay, on the invitation of Lily and Heinrich Braun. The second time I stayed longer. Paris enchanted me. In the mornings I went to the old Julien School for the sculpture class, in order to familiarize myself with the fundamentals of sculpture. Afternoons and evenings I visited the wonderful museums of the city, the cellars around the markets or the dance-halls on Montmartre or the Bal Bullier. One of my friends and fellow artists, Ida Gerhardt, went there night after night to make sketches. The cocottes knew her, and when they were dancing they handed her their things to watch. Another friend was the painter Sophie Wolff. Sophie Wolff was at the time exclusively a painter; she was very well thought of among the Paris Independents. Later she turned to sculpture. Shortly before the outbreak of the World War she returned to Germany to stay. This move was greatly to her disadvantage.



She did not succeed in getting in Berlin nearly as good a position as the one she had had in Paris, and did not receive the recognition she deserved for her excellent sculpture and drawing.

We used to take our evening meal in one of those big cafés on Boulevard Montparnasse where the artists ate en masse, sitting together by nationalities. The art dealer, Otto Ackermann, husband of Maria Slavona, introduced me into the private galleries. I met a Russian woman named Kalmikoff, the philosophers Simmel and Groethuysen, who were then in Paris, and the writer Hermann Uhde. Twice I visited Rodin. The first time was at the Rue de l'Université, where I found him in his studio. He then invited Sophie Wolff and me to come out to Meudon. I shall never forget that visit. Rodin himself was taken up with other visitors. But he told us to go ahead and look at everything we could find in his atelier. In the center of a group of his big sculptures the tremendous Balzac was enthroned. He had small plaster sketches in glass cases. It was possible to see the full scope of his work, as well as to feel the personality of the old master.

Besides Rodin, I visited Steinlen, the creator of *l'Assiette au Beurre*, in his studio. He too is someone I shall never forget. He was a typical Parisian. The loose tobacco in his wide pants pockets, his continual rolling of cigarettes, his wife, his many children—all combined to produce that Parisian atmosphere.—Among the younger artists Ackermann introduced me to Hoetger, who was then still unknown.

I had planned to round out this tour by going to Brussels to visit Meunier, who was then very old. Unhappily, I never carried out this intention. Paris held me fast until the very last evening. Meunier died, and I never had the chance to meet him.

My longest absence from home came about through my winning the Villa Romana prize, which was given by Klinger. The prize was a grant for a year's living abroad; the purpose of the foundation was to acquaint artists with Florence and its art treasures. Supposedly, the artists would also carry on their own work. I did not work at all, although I was given a handsome studio in the Villa Romana. But there for the first time I began to understand Florentine art. At the beginning of my stay I had my younger son Peter with me; but when my husband came on a brief visit he took the boy back with him. Meanwhile I had met Stan Harding-Krayl, a highly original and tal-

ented Englishwoman who was married to a German doctor in Florence. She had gone on walking tours throughout Italy and proposed that I accompany her on her next one. And so we walked all the way from Florence to Rome, partly through the Campagna, partly along the seacoast. During the entire trip which lasted three weeks we saw only Italians. The people thought we were pilgrims; they fed us for nothing and asked only that we say a prayer for them in St. Peter's. One evening we saw the town of Pitigliano lying before us. Like all Umbrian towns, it was so built that from a distance it looked like a long chain of castles. It was situated on a narrow slope, and a single bridge led across to it. We walked across this bridge into the enchanted town, which had only length and no breadth; there were only stubs of narrow lanes to either side of the main road.

The day after our arrival was an important Catholic holiday. From our window we saw the procession marching by, the children dressed like angels.

On the slope of the town we discovered caves where the people kept their donkeys and other stock. They were Etruscan caves. We were told that an hour's walk further on we would come to a place where there were quantities of "old junk," as they put it, lying about. Next day we went there and found that it was quite so; we literally clambered over the limbs of gods. We bought some of the pieces and divided the spoil between us. From Florence I brought some things back to Berlin.

This walking tour through Italy did not take me to the places I most wanted to see: Perugia and Assisi. But it did give me vivid and characteristic impressions of the country and the people. On June 13, 1907 we crossed the Ponte Molle into the Eternal City. By then we were completely done in.

There was one day on which we went across the Via Appia and down as far as Rocco di Papa, where I was to meet our oldest son Hans. He was fifteen, and he came all the way from Berlin by himself, proud of his independence.

My impression of Rome was that it was scarcely worthwhile to begin studying its art treasures. The superabundance of classical and medieval art was almost frightening. After spending much too short a time there, I went back to Florence with Hans, and from there to Spezia. The same minute our train from Florence arrived in Spezia, another train pulled in from the north, bringing my husband and little Peter. We hired a boat and were rowed across to Fiascherino, a tiny fishing village. There we lived among the fisher-

men. After a while Stan and her husband followed us out there and we spent a glorious vacation together. A rather battered fishing boat was placed at our disposal. We spent whole afternoons on the water and in the cool grottoes. Once we rowed over to Carrara at dawn, climbed up to the marble quarries and rowed back at night. The night was so quiet that the stars were reflected in the sea and the drops of water fell like glittering stars from the oars. That summer I reached my fortieth year. Thin and brown from the sun and the Ligurian Sea, we finally returned home.

Meanwhile Hans had come to the age when he was beginning to write. We used the holidays for performances of his own plays, and then some of the classics. It began with Schiller and went on through Gorki's *Lower Depths* to Hofmannsthal's *Death and the Fool*. Our company consisted of our two boys and Georg Greter, the son of an old friend from my student days in Munich, whom I had met again in Paris. She lent Georg to us for a lengthy stay—he was the same age as our Hans. Then there were my sister Lise's two oldest girls, Regula and Hanna Stern, who went on the stage when they were older. If there was a shortage of actors, the older generation was pressed into service. Gorki's *Lower Depths* in particular was a performance that turned everything in our household upside down.