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HEINRICH ZILLE'S BERLIN
SELECTED THEMES FROM 1900 TO 1914:
THE TRIUMPH OF 'ART FROM THE GUTTER'

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
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Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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Heinrich Zille (1858-1929), an artist whose creative vision was concentrated on Berlin's working class, portrayed urban life with devastating accuracy and earthy humor. His direct and often crude rendering linked his drawings and prints with other artists who avoided sentimentality and idealization in their works. In fact, Zille first exhibited with the Berlin Secession in 1901, only months after Kaiser Wilhelm II denounced such art as Rinnsteinkunst, or 'art from the gutter.'

Zille chose such themes as the resultant effects of over-crowded, unhealthy living conditions, the dissolution of the family, loss of personal dignity and economic exploitation endured by the working class. But Zille also showed their entertainments, their diversions, their excesses. In so doing, Zille laid bare the grim and the droll realities of urban life, perceived with a steady, unflinching gaze.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vi
CHRONOLOGY	xi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. AN OVERVIEW: BERLIN, ART AND ZILLE	8
III. "ART FROM THE GUTTER:" ZILLE'S THEMATIC CHOICES	54
IV. UP FROM THE GUTTER: ZILLE'S ART TODAY	127
APPENDIX	134
BIBLIOGRAPHY	135

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. The Studio of August Kraus - Zille poses for <u>Siegesallee</u> portrait bust, Photograph by Heinrich Zille, 1899.	xiv
2. Book Cover: <u>Kinder der Strasse</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1908	xv
3. "Verkehrsunfall" (Traffic Accident) Drawing by Heinrich Zille, awarded Menzel Prize, 1910	xvii
4. Book Cover: <u>Kubinke</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1910	xviii
5. Book Cover: <u>Mein Milljoeh</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1914	xix
6. Book Cover: <u>Vadding in Frankreich</u> , Part I, Heinrich Zille, 1915	xxi
7. Book Cover: <u>Kriegsmarmelade</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1916-19	xxii
8. Book Cover: <u>Die Landpartie</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1920	xxiii
9. "Modellpause," Drawing by Heinrich Zille, 1925	xxv
10. Book Cover, <u>Rund ums Freibad</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1926	xxvi
11. Death Notice of Heinrich Zille in <u>Eulenspiegel</u> , 1930	xxviii
12. Placard for <u>Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glueck</u> , by Kaethe Kollwitz, 1930	xxix
13. Announcement of Kollwitz, Nagel, Zille Exhibition in Amsterdam, 1934	xxx
14. <u>Kleinkinderschule</u> , Oil Painting by Max Liebermann, 1875	vii

Figure	Page
15. <u>'Auf fremder, ferne Aue'</u> Heinrich Zille, 1881	30
16. Studies from Nature, Heinrich Zille, 1883	31
17. <u>Grete Zille</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1886	32
18. Bowling Club to which Zille belonged, Photograph by Heinrich Zille, c. 1895	34
19. Storefront in Berlin, Photograph by Heinrich Zille, c. 1900	38
20. Alley in Berlin, Photograph by Heinrich Zille, c. 1900	39
21. Window sill in Berlin, Photograph by Heinrich Zille, c. 1900	41
22. <u>Bauzaun -- Berlin, Kaiser-Wilhelm-</u> <u>Strasse</u> , Photograph by Heinrich Zille, c. 1895	42
23. <u>'s dunkle Berlin</u> , Etching by Heinrich Zille, 1905	42
24. <u>Eine Mutter I</u> , Etching by Max Klinger, 1883	43
25. <u>Bierkeller, Eiergasse -- Berlin</u> , Etching by Heinrich Zille, 1890	45
26. <u>Karikatur auf die naturalistischen</u> <u>Jungliteraten</u> , artist unknown, 1895	48
27. Receding Arches of <u>Mietskasernen</u>	56
28. Crowded Living Conditions in <u>Mietskasernen</u>	56
29. <u>Die Ratte</u> , Drawing by Heinrich Zille	58
30. <u>Zweites Quergebäude, Hof im Keller</u> , Heinrich Zille	60

Figure	Page
31. <u>Naturerlebnis im Hinterhof</u> , Heinrich Zille.	63
32. <u>Mutta, wat kochste?</u> , Lithograph by Heinrich Zille.	66
33. <u>Im stillen Gaesschen</u> , Lithograph by Heinrich Zille, 1914.	68
34. <u>Das kranke Kind</u> , Drypoint Etching by Edvard Munch, 1894.	70
35. <u>Ohne Apparate</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1904.	72
36. <u>Beim Arzt</u> , Heinrich Zille.	73
37. <u>Das Jubilaeum</u> , Heinrich Zille.	75
38. <u>Das Jubilaeum</u> (Companion piece to preceding work), Heinrich Zille	76
39. <u>Freut euch des Lebens</u> , George Grosz, 1933.	78
40. <u>Mann am Tisch in einer Kneipe</u> , Charcoal sketch by Heinrich Zille	79
41. <u>Schlafender Mann am Tisch</u> , Charcoal sketch by Heinrich Zille	80
42. <u>In einer Berliner Kellerwohnung</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1913.	82
43. Study of a Woman and Child Charcoal Drawing by Heinrich Zille	83
44. Study of a Woman, Charcoal Drawing by Heinrich Zille	84
45. <u>Berlin -- Lohntag, die Frauen erwarten die Maenner</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1913.	86
46. <u>Die Dachstube der Naeherin</u> , Charcoal Drawing by Heinrich Zille	89

Figure	Page
47. <u>Bescheidener Wunsch</u> , Heinrich Zille.	90
48. <u>Wohnungs-Hygiene</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1907.	92
49. A Work by Heinrich Zille with Suicide as its Theme	94
50. <u>Ins Wasser</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1904.	96
51. <u>Ins Wasser</u> , Ink Drawing by Kaethe Kollwitz, 1909	97
52. <u>Frau Storchens Ruhetage</u> , Pen and ink Drawing by Heinrich Zille, 1908	99
53. Pen and ink Drawing by Heinrich Zille with alcohol consumption as its theme	103
54. <u>Der Budikerkeller</u> , Heinrich Zille	104
55. <u>Ball in der Kaschemme</u> , Heinrich Zille	105
56. <u>Chansonette</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1900	107
57. <u>Salon-Humorist</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1900.	108
58. <u>Pause</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1910	109
59. Group of Children, Pen and ink Drawing by Heinrich Zille, 1901	111
60. <u>Rollschuh-Klub 'Halt Dir feste</u> , Drawing by Heinrich Zille, 1910	112
61. <u>Kohlenplatz in Charlottenburg</u> , <u>Dankelmannstr. 16a</u> , Photograph by Heinrich Zille, c. 1900	112
62. <u>Erntefest auf dem II. Hof, Berlin O.</u> , Heinrich Zille, 1910.	114
63. Group waits for <u>Rummelplatz</u> show to begin, Photograph by Heinrich Zille	116

Figure	Page
64. Sign that announces features of carnival entertainment, Photograph by Heinrich Zille.	117
65. <u>Ringkampf in der Schaubude</u> , Charcoal Drawing by Heinrich Zille, 1903.	119
66. Police officer gives citations, Photograph, 1906.	120
67. Beach at Wannsee, Photograph, 1907.	120
68. <u>Wannsee Familienbad</u> , Drawing by Heinrich Zille, 1907.	122
69. <u>Berliner Strandleben</u> , Gouache by Heinrich Zille, 1912.	123
70. <u>Auf der Planschwiese</u> , Drawing by Heinrich Zille	125
71. <u>Badefreuden in der Ferienzeit</u> , Press Photograph in <u>Berlin</u> <u>Illustrated Newspaper</u> , 1903	126

A Chronology on the Life and Works of
Heinrich Zille: 1858-1929

- 1858 Rudolf Heinrich Zille born January 10 to locksmith Johann Traugott Zille and Ernestine Louise (nee Heinitz) in Radeburg near Dresden.
- 1865 After suffering financial difficulties, family moved to home of maternal grandparents in Potschappel while father served sentence in Dresden Debtor's Prison.
- 1867 Father released from prison and moved to Berlin. In November, sent for his family to join him.
- 1869 After period of unemployment, during which the family lived in poverty, father found steady employment with the Siemens/Halske Electrical Contracting Firm. Around this time Heinrich earned his own money for private art lessons.
- 1872 End of public education. Abided by father's wish to become butcher's apprentice. Zille found this vocation distasteful and stopped after a short time. Art teacher Spanner urged Zille to study lithography. Began apprenticeship at the Fritz Hecht Studio.
- 1873-74 Attended classes in anatomy taught by Professor Carl Domschke at the Royal Academy Art School.

- 1873-75 Attended evening life drawing classes taught by Professor Theodor Hosemann at the Royal Academy Art School.
- 1874 March 31, completed lithography apprenticeship. Found work at several Berlin lithography studios, among them the respected Winckelmann & Soehne.
- 1877 Began his thirty years of employment with the Photographische Gesellschaft in Berlin. Personal landscape sketches and watercolors survive from this period.
- 1880-82 Military service in Frankfurt/Oder and Sonnenburg. Zille pursued his interest in art with drawings that recorded military life.
- 1883 December 15, married Hulda Frieske, daughter of a forest ranger, in Fuerstenwalde an der Spree.
- 1884 October 4, birth of daughter, Margarete, of whom he made numerous drawings and watercolor sketches.
- 1886 Brief tour of active military duty with National Guard in Angermuende.
- 1888 February 26, birth of son, Hans.
- 1891 January 9, birth of son, Walter. At this time Zille regularly frequented social gatherings attended by other Berlin artists.
- 1899 Zille posed as model for friend August Kraus' portrait bust of Junker Wedigo von Plotho, one of many

- statues along the Siegesallee, pet project of Kaiser Wilhelm II (Fig. 1).
- 1901 Zille's first public exhibition of drawings with the Berlin Secession, its first Schwarz/Weiss Exhibition.
- 1902 Exhibited in Secession Schwarz/Weiss Exhibition for graphic arts, where his works were hung next to works by guest artists, Toulouse-Lautrec and Steinlen. First drawing contributed to Simplicissimus, popular Munich-based satirical journal.
- 1903 Zille voted member of the Berlin Secession.
- 1905 Works published in Lustigen Blaetter and Jugend. Zille's first portfolio of prints published under the title: Zwoelf Kuenstlerdrucke.
- 1907 After thirty years of employment, Zille fired from his position at the Photographische Gesellschaft for reasons which remain unclear. For the first time in his career, Zille supports his family through the sale of his art works.
- 1908 February 2, mother dies. First book of illustrations published: Kinder der Strasse. A huge success, 48,000 copies were sold by 1919 (Fig. 2).
- 1909 April 2, father died.
- 1910 Together with Fritz Koch-Gotha, Zille won the Menzel-Preis for best published drawing by a German



Fig. 1, Heinrich Zille, Zille at the Studio of August Kraus, photograph, 1899.



Fig. 2, Heinrich Zille, Book Cover:
Kinder der Strasse (Children of the Street), 1908.

- illustrator; prize of 3,000 Marks conferred by Berlin newspaper, Berliner Illustrierte (Fig. 3). Designed cover for Georg Hermann's popular novel, Kubinke (Fig. 4).
- 1912 First theater role in Julius Freund's Revue: Chauffeur, ins Metropole. Erholungsstunden published. Painted two large murals in oil for Berlin pub, Stallmannschen Kuenstlerkeller.
- 1913 Zille founding member of Freie Sezession, with Max Liebermann at its head. Other members included Ernst Barlach, Max Beckmann, August Kraus and Max Slevogt. Painted large mural in oil for Landre's Weissbierstube. Berliner Luft published. Huren-gespraech, pornographic work published as private edition under pseudonym, W. Pfeifer. Zille suffered frequent attacks of gout; diagnosed as diabetic.
- 1914 Developed close friendship with popular song writer, Hermann Frey. Designed poster and stage set for Frey and F.W. Hardt's Revue: Rund um die Spree. Mein Milljoeh published (Fig. 5).
- 1914-18 Series of wartime drawings published in Ulk, supplementary periodical of local newspaper, Berliner Tageblatt. Series featured the antics of two good-natured German soldiers, Vadding and Korl.
- 1915-16 Three-part book series published, based on Vadding

Der gestürzte Droschkengaul



Fig. 3, Heinrich Zille, Verkehrsunfall
(Traffic Accident), Drawing which won Menzel
Prize for German Illustrators, 1910.

Kubinke



Roman
von **Georg Hermann**

Umschlag zu Georg Hermanns Roman
«Kubinke», 1910

Fig. 4, Heinrich Zille, Book
Cover: Kubinke, 1910.



Fig. 5, Heinrich Zille, Book Cover: Mein Milljoeh (My Milljoeh), 1914.

- and Korl characters which appeared in Ulk. They were: Vadding in Frankreich (Parts I and II, see Fig. 6) and Vadding in Ost and West (Part III). Illustrated Sigmar Mehring's novel, Rieke im Kriege.
- 1916-19 Created anti-war portfolio, Kriegsmarmelade, which remained unpublished until Otto Nagel included nineteen drawings in Fuer Alle, Ernstes und Heiteres in 1929 (Fig. 7).
- 1917 Designed costumes, set and poster for Hermann Frey Revue, Rund ums Jahrhundert. Illustrated Hans Hyan's novel, Auf der Kippe.
- 1919 June 9, wife died. Zwanglose Geschichten und Bilder published.
- 1920 Die Landpartie published (Fig. 8).
- 1921 National Gallery in Berlin acquired a number of Zille works.
- 1922 Warm friendship with leftist artist Otto Nagel developed; Zille encouraged him to paint Berlin working class motifs.
- 1923 Heinrich Zille: Drawings, Etchings, Lithographs, Graphisches Kabinett Erfurth, Dresden.
- 1924 February 1, admitted to the Prussian Academy of Arts with the title of Professor. Berliner Geschichten und Bilder published. Designed set for



Fig. 6, Heinrich Zille, Book Cover: Vadding in Frankreich (Vadding in France) Part I, 1915.



Fig. 7, Heinrich Zille, Portfolio Cover:
Kriegsmarmelade (War Marmelade), 1916-19,
West Berlin, Axel Springer Collection.



Fig. 8, Heinrich Zille, Book Cover:
Die Landpartie (The Outing), 1920.

- the 'Zille Act' of the Revue: Das hat die Welt noch nicht gesehen by James Klein.
- 1925 March 21, first Hofball bei Zille at the Grosses Schauspielhaus. August 28, premiere of first Zille-Film: Die Verrufenen (Der fuenfte Stand). Illustrated Berliner Kinderreime, "Komm, Karlineken Komm!," compiled by Alfred Richard Meyer. Despite efforts of many artists, Zille convicted and fined by Stuttgart court for creating 'lewd' drawing which appeared in Simplicissimus (Fig. 9).
- 1926 February 20, Hofball bei Zille, held at Berlin's sports arena, the Sportpalast. Rund ums Freibad published; declared 'obscene' in Basel, Switzerland (Fig. 10). Rings um den Alexanderplatz published. Premiere of Zille-Film: Die da unten.
- 1927 February 5, Hofball bei Zille held at Sportpalast; six thousand Berliners attended. Bilder vom alten und neuen Berlin published. Zille filmed by Hans Curlis for series on artists at work: Schaffende Haende.
- 1928 January 10, many Berliners honored Zille's seventieth birthday. February, Zille's Werdegang, a special exhibition held at the Maerkisches Museum in Berlin. February 4, Hofball bei Zille held at Sportpalast. Together with Otto Nagel, Zille



Fig. 9, Heinrich Zille, Modellpause
(Models' Break), Drawing, 1925.

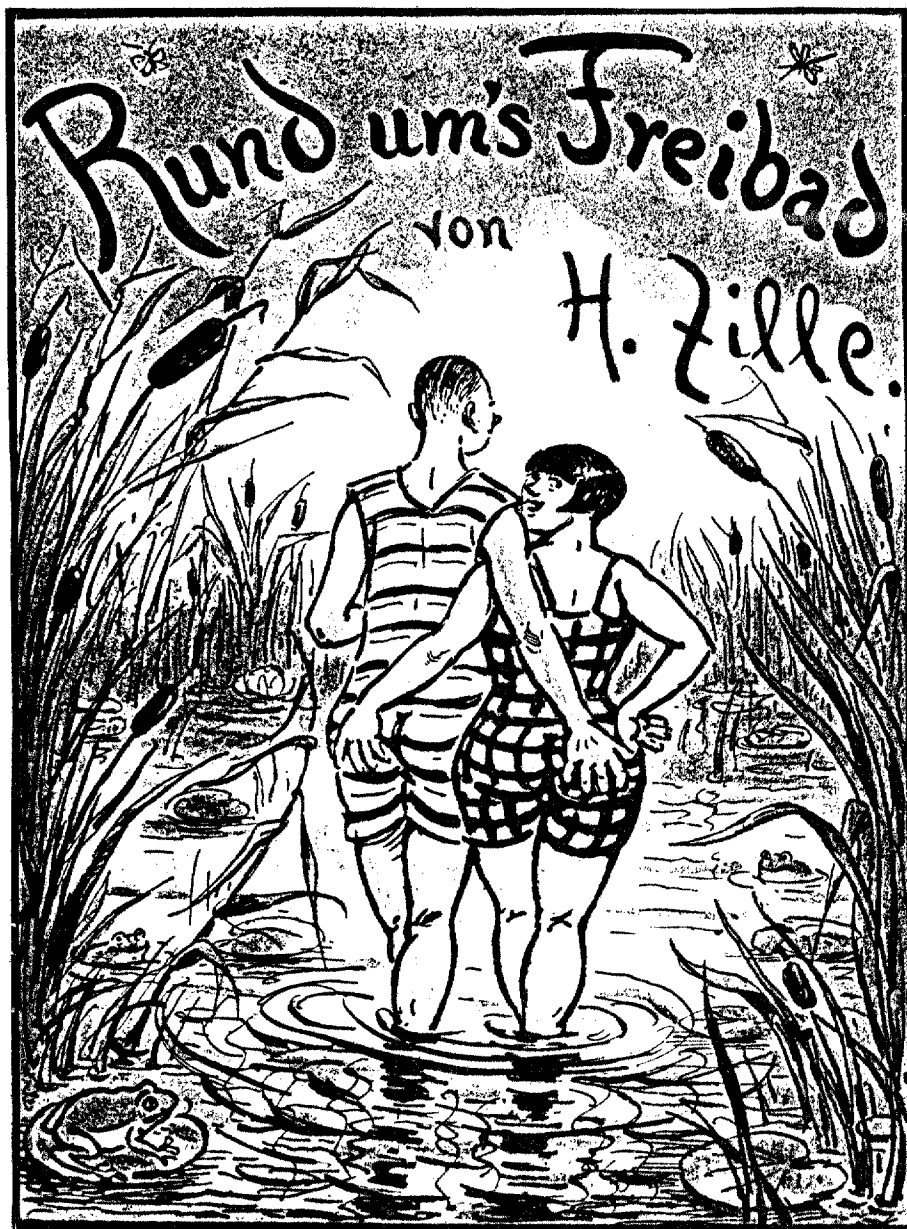


Fig.10, Heinrich Zille, Book Cover:
Rund ums Freibad (Around and About the
Beach), 1926.

- founded satirical journal, Eulenspiegel, to which Zille contributed until his death.
- 1929 Vier Lebensalter published. Das Zillebuch, a collaboration with Hans Ostwald, published. February 26, suffered debilitating heart attack. May 4, second heart attack. August 9, Zille died peacefully at his home at the age of seventy-one years (Fig. 11). August 13, burial in Stahnsdorf near Potsdam; two thousand attended funeral. Pastel und Zeichnungen von Heinrich Zille, special Fall Exhibition at the Prussian Academy of Arts, Berlin. December 29, premiere of Zille-Film: Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glueck, at Alhambra Theater on Kurfuerstendamm. This film produced by Kaethe Kollwitz, Hans Baluscheck and Otto Nagel for Prometheus Films; directed by Piel Jutzi (Fig. 12).
- 1931 Heinrich Zille Exhibition, Kestner Society, Hannover.
- 1934 Kaethe Kollwitz, Otto Nagel, Heinrich Zille, Kunsthandel Aalderink, Amsterdam. In order to elude Nazi censorship, Nagel forwarded all works for this show by regular mail; exhibition well received, but prevented from moving to other cities by order of the Nazi regime (Fig. 13).
- 1941 Vater Zille by Otto Paust published; failed in an



(Selbstporträt HEINRICH ZILLE)

Heinrich Zille

Ist tot. Er, der Mitbegründer unserer Zeitschrift war, der mit Rat und Tat die Entwicklung des „Eulenspiegel“ förderte, ist von uns gegangen. Er wird uns jetzt an allen Ecken und Enden fehlen. Wer Heinrich Zille war, brauchen wir unseren Lesern nicht zu sagen; es gibt ja kaum einen Menschen, dem der Name Heinrich Zille nicht bekannt ist. Als Proletarier geboren — als Proletarier gelebt — als Proletarier gestorben. Ein Ankläger gegen die falsche Gesellschaftsordnung, ein Kämpfer für die Befreiung der Unterdrückten und Ausgebeuteten. Die „guten“ Bürger wollen in ihm ihren Spaßmacher sehen, — Zille selbst hat sich sein Leben lang dagegen verwahrt. Das, was er darstellte, war bitterer Ernst: „das Leben der Menschen, die nichts besitzen und nichts bekommen“. Offen bekannte er sich zur klassenbewußten Arbeiterschaft. **H e i n r i c h Z i l l e !** Was irdisch an Dir war, ist zu Grabe getragen worden. Du, als Mensch und Künstler, Du lebst in Deinen Werken fort. Dein Name bleibt tief eingegraben in Millionen Herzen des Proletariats!

Redaktion und Verlag des Eulenspiegel

*Nachruf für Heinrich Zille.
1929. Aus: Eulenspiegel*

Fig. 11, Death Notice of Heinrich Zille
in Eulenspiegel, 1929

**DER GRÖSSTE ERFOLG
DES PROLETARISCHEN FILMS**



Käthe Kollwitz
*Mutter Krausen's
Fahrt ins Glück*

Der grosse Zille - Film

Unter dem Protektorat von Käthe Kollwitz, Hans Baluschek, Otto Nagel
Architekten: Scharfenberg, Haacker. Regie und Kamera: Piel Jutzi
Jeder muß dieses große, dem Andenken, unseres
Heinrich Zille gewidmete Kunstwerk sehen!

FABRIKAT UND VERLEIH:
PROMETHEUS-FILM, BERLIN SW 48

Käthe Kollwitz, Plakat. 1930

Fig. 12, Kaethe Kollwitz, Film Placard:
Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glueck (Mother
Krausen's Pleasant Trip), 1930

TENTOONSTELLING

VAN ORIGINEELE
**TEKENINGEN
 KRABELS
 EN PASTELS**

**KÄTHE KOLLWITZ
 OTTO NAGEL
 HEINRICH ZILLE †**

VAN ZATERDAG 5 MEI 1934
 TOT EN MET
 VRIJDAG 25 MEI D.A.V.

BIJ **KUNSTHANDEL AALDERINK**
 JACOB VAN LENNEPKADE 85 (op de hoek met HUYGENSTRAAT)

Doelrijk (behalve Zon- en Vrijdagen) van 10-6 uur. — Saandagen, Vrijdagen en Vrijdagsavonden van 4-9.30 uur.
 Entree f10.25 - Leden van alle vakverenigingen f8.10. DEZE TENTOONSTELLING WORDT NIET VERLENGD

Ausstellungsplakat Amsterdam, 1934

Fig. 13, Exhibition Announcement:
Kollwitz, Nagel, Zille Exhibition,
 Kunsthandel Aalderink, Amsterdam, 1934.

- attempt to make Zille's art palatable to Nazi government.
- 1944 January, Heinrich Zille, Weyhe Gallery, New York, first one-man show in United States.
- 1950 Heinrich Zille Exhibition, Rat des Kreises Neubrandenburg, Neubrandenburg.
- 1953 Heinrich Zille exhibitions in Berlin area town halls of Reinickendorf, Neukoeln and Spandau.
- 1955 Heinrich Zille by Otto Nagel published. Mein Vater Heinrich Zille by Margarete Koehler-Zille published (DDR).
- 1957 Det war sein Milljoeh, travelling exhibition compiled by Gerhard Fluegge, with assistance from Margarete Koehler-Zille, for the Ministry of Culture, Deutsche Demokratische Republik. Das grosse Zille-Album by Werner Schumann published.
- 1958 Commemorative Exhibition for hundredth anniversary of Zille's birth, Schoenberger Rathaus, Berlin. Same exhibit shown in East Berlin at German Academy of Arts, with catalogue introduction by Otto Nagel. Heinrich Zille Retrospective Exhibition, Wilhelm-Busch-Museum, Hanover; included works from the Gallery of Twentieth Century Art and private holdings on loan to the Wilhelm-Busch-Museum.
- 1966 Heinrich Zille - Zeichnungen, Aquarelle, Graphik,

Galerie Pels-Leusden, Berlin/GDR. October 12, Maerkisches Museum reopened following extensive post-war restoration; introduced Heinrich-Zille-Kabinett, Berlin/DDR. Heinrich-Zille-Stiftung formed under the direction of the cities of Berlin and Hanover, the state of Lower Saxony, the Wilhelm-Busch-Gesellschaft (Hanover) and Fackeltraeger Publishing Company in Hanover.

1967 Heinrich Zille Bequest on permanent loan to Wilhelm Busch Museum, Hanover. Mein Photo-Milljoeh by Friedrich Luft published after photographic plates dating from 1890 to 1910 were found in Zille's home in 1966.

1968 Sammlung Axel Springer: Heinrich Zille, Berlin Museum, Berlin; this exhibition, the first for the Berlin Museum, was dedicated to Heinrich Zille. It comprised much of Axel Springer's collection of Zille works; Springer also assumed the costs of preparing the exhibition catalogue. Heinrich Zille Exhibition, Gustav-Luebke-Museum, Hamm.

1969 Heinrich Zille, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen, Graphik, Maerkisches Museum, Berlin/DDR. Heinrich Zille Exhibition, Galerie Voemel, Duesseldorf. Zille-Almanach published; included information about the Heinrich Zille Bequest.

- 1970 Heinrich Zille - Pastelle, Aquarelle, Handzeichnungen, Galerie Pels-Leusden, Berlin/GDR.
- 1970-71 Heinrich Zille - Zeichnungen, Radierungen, Lithos; travelling exhibition sponsored by the Berlin Council for Science and Art, Frankfurt/Main and other cities in the Federal Republic of Germany.
- 1971 Heinrich Zille - Aquarelle, Pastelle, Zeichnungen, Graphik, Kunstverein Konstanz, Constance; included holdings from private Swiss collection. Heinrich Zille in der Galerie Rosenbach, Hanover. Heinrich Zille Exhibition, Muenchweiler/Palatinate.
- 1972 Heinrich Zille - Zeichnungen und Druckgraphik aus einer Privatsammlung, Staedtisches Museum an der Ruhr, Muelheim/Ruhr. Heinrich Zille - Aquarelle, Zeichnungen, Graphik, Galerie Siegfried Brumme, Frankfurt/Main. Heinrich Zille - Aquarelle, Pastelle, Handzeichnungen und Graphik, Galerie Pels-Leusden, Berlin/GDR.
- 1975 Heinrich Zille - Heliogravueren, Radierungen, Zeichnungen und Buecher aus einer Privatsammlung, Staedtisches Museum Schleswig, Schleswig. Heinrich Zille - Photographien: Berlin 1890 bis 1910, travelling exhibition originating at Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn, Bonn; exhibition and catalogue compiled by Winfried Ranke.

- 1977 Heinrich Zille Exhibition, Galerie Gloeckner, Cologne.
- 1978 Heinrich Zille Exhibition, Galerie Koch, Hanover.
- 1979 Heinrich Zille zum 50. Todestag - Pastelle, Aquarelle, Handzeichnungen und Graphik, Galerie Pels-Leusden, Berlin/GDR. Heinrich Zille und sein Berliner Volk: Bilder, Photographien, Dokumente, Berlin Museum, Berlin/GDR. Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu. Heinrich Zilles Aufstieg in der Berliner Gesellschaft by Winfried Ranke published.
- 1981 Hurengespraech, Zille's pornographic work dating from 1913, reprinted by Schirmer/Mosel, Munich.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Heinrich Zille (1858-1929), an artist whose creative vision was concentrated on Berlin's working class, portrayed urban life with devastating accuracy and earthy humor. While his work was manifest in the graphic arts,¹ photography and film, throughout Zille's career the source of his inspiration remained the struggle of the working class to survive Berlin's overcrowded, unsanitary, unsavory North and East districts to which they were relegated. Specifically, he chose as his themes the resultant effects of existence in Berlin's back streets, such as disease, inadequate housing, dissolution of the family, economic exploitation and the loss of personal dignity. However, Zille parted company with many of his contemporaries as he also recorded the inhabitants of the inner city as they entertained themselves at local pubs, at back-alley festivals, swim trips to area lakes and travelling side shows. In short, Zille laid bare the grim and the droll realities of urban life, perceived with a steady, unflinching gaze.

1

In addition to drawings in ink, pencil and charcoal, watercolors and gouaches, Zille was proficient in lithography, etching and engraving.

As the social ills spurred by the rapid industrialization of the Prussian capital remained unsolved, Zille's work and its attendant popularity flew in the face of the royal edict of what art should be. In 1901, the Kaiser, Wilhelm II, proclaimed his views on art, which stated, in part, that it was the task of artists:

... to offer to the toiling classes the possibility of elevating themselves to the beautiful and of raising themselves above their ordinary thoughts. If art, as so frequently happens now, does nothing more than paint misery more ugly than it is, it sins against the German people. 2

It was in this same speech that the Kaiser referred to all art that did not conform to academic standards prescribed by him as Rinnsteinkunst, or 'art from the gutter.' Clearly, Zille's art fell into this category: widowed mothers with hungry broods to feed, unemployed fathers and brothers, maimed old men with no one to care for them, street-wise youth who flaunted their excesses, children raised in treeless back alleys -- this was the Berlin that Heinrich Zille exposed in his drawings and prints.

Beginning in 1902, Zille's drawings with humorous captions appeared regularly in satirical journals and Berlin's daily newspapers. During his career, his works were published in a variety of formats: a single drawing or a

2
Richard Masur, Imperial Berlin (New York, 1970), p.211.

series of drawings with captions that appeared in daily newspapers or Sunday supplements, or in satirical journals that were published weekly or monthly. With typically coarse Berlin humor and Zille's accurate representation, working class Berliners found themselves mirrored more convincingly than ever before. Critic Adolf Behne commented in 1925:

Heinrich Zille is neither the first artist who drew the working class, nor the first artist who emerged from it. But through his work, the working class reveals itself for the first time. 3

In 1908, Zille's success was assured with the publication of Kinder der Strasse, a collection of drawings with captions underneath in the Berlin dialect. Other similar books followed, and by the time of his death in 1929, Zille had achieved a popularity known to few artists in their own lifetimes. However, his art faded from view during the Third Reich and the busy years following World War II. But in the early 1950's, renewed interest in Zille's work stimulated publication of books by and about the artist. No fewer than forty books have been published since 1949; most of these are revised editions with editorial commentary or facsimile reproductions of original editions. His drawings and photographs have been exhibited widely throughout Germany; at least twenty-five Zille Exhibitions have been held since 1950.

Statement of Problem and Objectives

Confined to Zille's career between 1900 and 1914, this thesis explores a time when Zille's work was consistent and unfettered by political collaborations that characterized his artistic output in the 1920's. Iconographical in nature, this study emphasizes the thematic choices and their subsequent representation in Zille's art. It is not an in-depth study of Zille's style, method or present connoisseurship of his works; rather, it is hoped that the reader will find an overview of Zille's work within the mentioned timeframe and will acquire an understanding of his art as perceived in its historical context. In this regard, this thesis poses the following questions.

1. What were the political, social and economic conditions of early twentieth century Berlin?
 2. In what media did Zille work? Were there aspects of his work that can be regarded as unique?
 3. Were there significant influences on the development of his artistic style?
 4. Did Zille belong to a specific art movement? If not,
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Further, it should be mentioned that this thesis does not attempt to explore every theme represented in Zille's art. One notable omission from this study is the theme of licentious and criminal behavior of the working class in Berlin. While many Zille works draw on this element, it was felt that it warranted study in and of itself. Perhaps future scholarship will explore this topic in the great detail it deserves.

what were his ties to Berlin's art community, if any?

5. How did art, in general, fare in Wilhelmine Berlin?

6. How was Zille's art received during his lifetime?

7. Are there recurring motifs in Zille's oeuvre? Are there stereotypical representations? If so, are they accurate?

8. What was the measure of Zille's success in Berlin? To what extent has Zille's work reached the rest of Germany? the world? Specifically, where has his work been exhibited or published?

Methodology - Sources

The sources for this historical research project were both primary and secondary.

Primary Sources:

Memoirs - autobiographical material

Zille's works in print

Eyewitness accounts

Secondary Sources:

Books, periodicals, exhibition catalogues

Biographies

Methodology - Collecting Data

Concerning the research process for this thesis, every effort was made to acquire the latest scholarship on Zille in the United States and Germany. With few exceptions, works

published in West Berlin or West Germany were selected. Books from libraries in the United States were obtained through the diligent efforts of the Interlibrary Service staff of the University of Texas at Austin. Materials not available in the United States were purchased directly from publishers or museums in Germany; several books were acquired by relatives and friends. Special thanks go to my late uncle, Dr. Joseph Scholand of Berlin, for the gift of several books about Zille. To Mr. Hans Rauschnig of the Fackeltraeger Publishers in Hannover, West Germany, I offer sincere thanks for the gift of three fine Zille books. When possible, the date, medium, size and present location of the work were cited. Translations from German are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

Methods of Collecting Data:

1. Basic library references
2. Interlibrary Loan
3. Written inquiries to German publishers

Methodology - Analysis:

Following extensive historical research on the work and times of Heinrich Zille, judgments were made concerning the original questions asked. While continued research poses new questions, every effort was made to confine the topic to the stated objectives.

Possible Conclusions:

Based on historical research and careful analysis of the information gathered, the following are viable outcomes.

1. Heinrich Zille revealed the squalid living conditions as well as the indefatigable exuberance of Berlin's urban poor.

2. Generally, Zille concentrated on various recurring themes which depicted life for the working class in Wilhelmine Berlin.

3. The work of other artists who dealt with similar urban themes in Berlin from 1900 to 1914 help one to grasp the art historical context of Zille's work.

4. Study of the political, social and economic conditions in Berlin between 1900 and 1914 enhances comprehensive understanding of Zille's work; likewise, through the study of Zille's work, one has a broader perception of Wilhelmine Berlin.

CHAPTER II

AN OVERVIEW: BERLIN, ART AND ZILLE

Heinrich Zille and working class Berlin of the
Wilhelmine period - - to know one is to know the other.¹
Zille, a prolific graphic artist, recorded life as he saw
it for the disinherited poor.² A blend of word and image,
usually spiced with humor, his art exposed the harsh reali-
ties of urban life. On the one hand, Zille's art ruffled
the Kaiser's feathers, and on the other, suited the artis-
tic program of the progressive Berlin Secession. It was in
an atmosphere of impending confrontation that Zille's art
emerged and flourished.

Berlin, the Prussian city that became the capital of
unified Germany in 1871, experienced unprecedented growth
following its rapid industrialization.³ The population

1

The Wilhelmine Period referred to here includes the
years between 1900 and 1914. It should be noted that Wil-
helm II was Kaiser from 1888 until 1918.

2

Primarily, Zille's works include the following media:
drawings in ink, pencil and charcoal; watercolors and gou-
aches; lithographs, etchings and engravings.

3

Eduard Bernstein, Die Geschichte der Berliner Arbeit-
er Bewegung, 3 vols. (Glasshuetten im Taunus, 1972), Vol.
III, p. 57.

increased dramatically as people swarmed to the city to avail themselves of Berlin's economic opportunities. As a result, the burgeoning population far outpaced the city's ability to provide needed services for its new citizens. As they migrated to Berlin, most were relegated to overcrowded barracks-like housing and unsanitary conditions in the northern and eastern sections of the city; there they remained to make up what Winfried Ranke calls the "Reservearmee"⁴ of workers needed for Berlin's huge industrial complex. Richard Masur explains: "An industrial economy shifting into high gear has many by-products, and among them are the segregation and degradation of the working classes."⁵

Efforts to improve the lot of Berlin's working class were thwarted by political in-fighting and tension between the classes. Generally speaking, the upper class, the aristocracy and landed gentry, regarded such problems as substandard living conditions as inevitable consequences in the life of the working class in capitalist society.⁶ They,

⁴
Winfried Ranke, Vom Molljoeh ins Milieu Heinrich Zilles Aufstieg in der Berliner Gesellschaft (Hanover, 1979), p.26.

⁵
Richard Masur, Imperial Berlin, (New York, 1970), p. 69.

⁶
Carlos H. Waisman, Modernization and the Working Class, The Politics of Legitimacy (Austin, 1982), p. 51.

therefore, felt no responsibility to change it and sought simply to maintain the status quo. The middle class, for their part, cared little for relinquishing their newly acquired material wealth for the sake of social reform; they dug in their heels and hoped that things would continue as they were.

It was the Socialist Party that agitated for social change, not only in Berlin, but elsewhere in Germany. By 1900, the Party had made significant gains, and hoped to use their newly won clout to secure for the poor better living conditions and improvements in the workplace.⁷ The upper class, which had been successful in imposing its will, reacted defensively to the threat of Socialism. In fact, they overreacted, as Masur explains:

The constant increase in votes cast by the German people for the 'party of revolution' actually produced a kind of neurosis among the ruling class, a fear bordering on hysteria.⁸

Undeniably, the stage was set for confrontation which would pit the classes against one another. By 1900, the working class, championed by the Socialist Party, had acquired a

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By 1905, thirty-five of Berlin's forty-two elected officials were Socialists, prompting the statement: "The residence of the Hohenzollern had become 'red' Berlin." Rolf Hellmut Foerster, Die Rolle Berlins im europaeischen Geistesleben (Berlin, 1968), p. 123.

8

Masur, Imperial Berlin, p. 258.

strong political voice. As Irmgard Wirth says: "The justifiably disgruntled working class became an inexorable political force."⁹ Bolstered by their political success, the Socialist Party optimistically charted a new course for the new century.¹⁰

It is not surprising to find that the same tensions that existed in Berlin society were also reflected in attitudes toward art. The Prussian monarchy, of course, held sway over official, state-commissioned art; however, it also prescribed its narrow view for all of German art. History painting and sentimental genre motifs prevailed as the dominant themes in Berlin, as elsewhere in Germany. For a time, artists complied with this arrangement. Exhibitions in Berlin were essentially closed to artistic innovation, and the selection process was particularly hostile to art movements from other countries. Such movements as Naturalism, Realism, and later, Impressionism, were regarded with suspicion, because, among other things, their works were

⁹ Heinrich Zille und sein Berliner Volk: Photographien, Dokumente, Compiled by Irmgard Wirth, Introduction by Winfried Ranke (Berlin, 1979), p. 15: "Das Proletariat in seiner berechtigten Unzufriedenheit wurde immer mehr zu einem nicht mehr zu uebersehenden Faktor im Spiel der politischen Kraefte."

¹⁰ Wirth also says that in spite of their efforts to bring about reform, the exploitive conditions persisted into the 1920's, and continued to take their toll on Berlin's working class poor. *ibid.*, p. 15.

11

not uplifting or glorifications of the State.

Eventually, however, the academic establishment that supported these "undiscerning and obtuse"¹² views came under fire as artists in Germany lobbied for a system that allowed for freedom of artistic expression. As early as 1877, discontent triggered an emboldened group of artists to test the system. They submitted works for the annual Berlin Academy of Arts Exhibition that defied the accepted norm; their genre paintings exhibited the commonplace activities of ordinary citizens, rather than the sanctioned stereotypes of idyllic domestic bliss. Quite surprisingly, their works were accepted for the exhibition, but precipitated an angry reaction from Berlin's critics. They singled out the works of Max Liebermann in particular, calling his work the "high point of triviality."¹³ Masur says of Liebermann:

[His] style was formed by the French masters, especially Manet, and like Manet by some of

11

As late as 1909, the Kaiser still held this view, and refused to allow the Director of the National Gallery, Hugo Tschudi, to acquire French Impressionist works. Masur, Imperial Berlin, p. 211.

12

ibid., p. 210.

13

Writer Otto von Leixner's words were stronger yet when he called those whose art was similar to Liebermann "the Apostles of the Ugly." Further, of Liebermann, he said: "The young artist had the misfortune of becoming enchanted with the art [of] Courbet in Paris." Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 146.

the Dutch painters, notably Frans Hals. His work showed a new approach in his brushstrokes, in his choice of color and light, and in his preference for the contemporary and the human above the historical or religious subject. 14

Liebermann represented a new direction in the arts, and as mentioned earlier, that new direction was not welcome in the conservative art circles in Berlin. Liebermann, undaunted and committed to artistic freedom, spoke for many of his contemporaries when he said:

A bunch of asparagus, a bouquet of roses is a suitable [subject] for a masterpiece, an ugly or a pretty girl, an Apollo or a deformed dwarf; everything is a possible subject for a masterpiece, [and] of course, it must have imagination; it alone transforms manual labor into a work of art. 15

A painting by Liebermann from 1875, Kleinkinderschule (Preschool), is an example of the style he had developed after living in Paris and the Netherlands (Fig. 14). Many of the children pictured here have unhappy faces; some appear to be crying. Their clothing is dirty, their surroundings are dreary, and the tots seated in rows of benches lead the viewer to surmise that regimentation is an

14

" Masur, Imperial Berlin, p. 224.

15

Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 147: "Ein Bund Spargel, ein Rosenbukett genuegt fuer ein Meisterwerk, ein haessliches oder ein huebsches Maedchen, ein Apoll oder ein missgestaltener Zwerg: aus allem laesst sich ein Meisterwerk machen, allerdings mit dem noetigen Quantum Phantsie; sie allein macht aus dem Handwerk ein Kunstwerk."



Fig. 14, Max Liebermann, Kleinkinderschule
(Preschool), 1875, Painting in oil.

important element in their experience here. This work might have been in the 1877 Exhibition, and if so, would surely have qualified as 'trivial' and 'ugly' to von Leixner, or anyone else who cared little for insignificant subjects represented in art. The painting of children was not deemed suitable, unless the subject was of royal birth or some other high social station. And in that case, the child would be dressed in finery, with hair combed and face washed!

In studying this work further, one finds that the figure at the right assumes an important role in conveying the subtle, underlying message in this painting. She is the adult who presumably has these many children in her care, and yet she is unaware of them, totally preoccupied with her own busywork. This work is beguiling; one notices immediately the loose brushwork and the cheerful lighting. With study, however it begins to weigh heavily as each child communicates through facial gestures or posture that it is miserable. Later, we shall see that Zille's works offer this same multi-level response.

In addition to the growing schism between Berlin's progressive and academic art communities, Berlin faced serious social problems. By 1890, living and working conditions had deteriorated dramatically. Edward Lucie-Smith writes:

By the last decades of the century the full consequences of the Industrial Revolution had had time to come home to people, and

there was an impatience to find solutions
for what now seemed intolerable evils. 16

Exacerbated by Berlin's escalating population,¹⁷ and the
city government's inability to provide adequate services,
the capital city became an obvious target for those who saw
in Berlin the results of an unjust economic system. After
all, the largest sub-standard rental housing project in the
world was located in Berlin.¹⁸

In 1890, Berlin experienced great change. As a result
of the social foment that had been building since the found-
ing years, and the gaining momentum of the Socialist Party,
Berlin had become the battleground between opposing social
and political ideologies. Of great importance was the repeal
of the Socialist Law in January, 1890. This law, in effect

16

Edward Lucie-Smith and Celestine Dars, Work and
Struggle The Painter as Witness 1870-1914 (New York, 1977),
p. 37.

17

Nelson reports that between 1880 and 1890, "...the
city's population had doubled, to more than two million."
Walter Henry Nelson, The Berliners: Their Saga and Their
City (New York, 1969), p. 83.

18

Most of these poorly constructed buildings, called
Mietskasernen, were constructed in the 1860's, when Berlin
undertook a massive building campaign to house the maxi-
mum number of workers as it could fit into the smallest
area possible. Quickly and cheaply constructed in the east-
ern and northern parts of the city, these buildings stood
in stark contrast to the ostentatious trappings of the
Prussian capital. Walther Kiaulehn, Berlin: Schicksal einer
Weltstadt, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1958), pp. 87-89.

since Bismarck's day, had denied the right to assembly and other civil rights to Socialist groups. The repeal had an almost immediate effect; it opened the door for freer expression in politics and the arts. This freedom was by no means without opposition; as would be expected, Wilhelm II, Kaiser since 1888, fearful of losing power, became defensive to the extreme.

The same battle of the new world against the old was also raging in the arts. By 1890, French Naturalism¹⁹ could claim many converts in Berlin. Since the early 1880's, the writings of Emile Zola were most influential; he emphasized the vital role played by the environment in the shaping of an individual.²⁰ His theory encouraged observation and experimentation, not dissimilar from a scientific endeavor. He urged "study of the surroundings of a human being, much the same way a zoologist studies a plant on which an insect

19

Naturalism, as mentioned here and elsewhere in this report, refers to the term as defined by Richard Hamann and Jost Hermand. They said that Naturalism should not be considered exclusively as a literary movement. Rather they said it "...was a general reaction to the incredible narrow-mindedness of the founding years...whose supporters by no means limited their recruitment from the ranks of playwrights and writers." Winfried Ranke, Photographien Berlin, 1890-1910/Heinrich Zille (Munich, 1975), p. 15. ("...als allgemeine Reaktion auf die prunkvolle Borniertheit der Gruenderjahre...dessen Verfechter sich keineswegs nur aus dem Lager der Dichter und Schriftsteller rekrutierten.")

20

Ranke, Vom Miljoeh ins Milieu, p. 91.

lives."²¹ City life was a prime target in Zola's works, and he encouraged study of its problems so that solutions could be found. In order to help the individual, or individuals, Zola claimed that a thorough investigation of their surroundings must be made.

Artists warmed to these ideas, and Zille in particular, must have considered himself to be an observer and and experimenter.²² And Zille also took seriously the notion shared by Naturalists that their work would bring about change.²³ He always hoped that his art would implement reform, enabling those trapped in the Milljoeh of Berlin to rise out of its hopelessness.

Naturalist artists and writers in Berlin were on common ground. To illustrate this, it is helpful to compare the words of Liebermann as he defended the 'bunch of asparagus' as artworthy (See p. 13), to an 1891 statement by a writer defending paupers as heroes in literature:

And now the question is before us: Should such a modern degenerate [or] 'the picture of ill health' be the main character in a

21

Ranke, Photographien Berlin, p. 17: "...die Umgebung des Menschen zu studieren, wie der Zoologe die Pflanze studiert, auf der ein Insekt lebt."

22

ibid., p. 17.

23

ibid., p. 17.

written work? Or in other words, can a bum be considered to be artworthy? The old aesthetic says: No! We modern ones say: Yes! 24

It becomes clear that the conflict between, as Merian said, the 'old aesthetic' and the 'moderns' was intense. Lines were drawn and each side aggressively promulgated its own view. Berlin's progressive art community banded together, not so much in commonality of style, but in response to restrictions that confined their artistic experience.

They had good reason to rely on that mutual support, when in 1892, the Association of Berlin Artists closed an exhibition by Norwegian artist, Edvard Munch.²⁵ Angered by this pernicious act, eleven artists, led once more by Max Liebermann, formed Gruppe XI (Group 11). Until 1897, the group worked to scuttle Berlin's restrictive exhibition

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Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, pp. 90-91: "Nun stehen wir vor der Frage: Darf ein solcher moderner Verkommener, darf eine 'Krankheitserscheinung' zum Mittelpunkt einer Dichtung gemacht werden? oder mit anderen Worten: wirkt ein Lump als Held kuenstlerisch? Die alte Aesthetik behauptet: nein! Wir Modernen behaupten: ja!" These words were written in a journal titled Die Gesellschaft, or The Society by Heinz Merian. Put another way, Edward Lucie-Smith said: "One of the tenets of Naturalism was that all men had within them the capacity for being heroic." Lucie-Smith, Work and Struggle, p. 42.

25

After only two days, the Association closed the Munch Exhibition. Masur explains: "The exhibition produced a storm of indignation among the critics, who accused Munch of lack of form, brutality, crudity, and vulgar emotion." Masur, Imperial Berlin, pp. 224-25.

policies; they met with little success, and in 1898, formed a more cohesive group that actually seceded from the Academy. Called the Berlin Secession, the group sponsored its own exhibitions, enabling artists to explore their full creative range without fear of biased rejection.²⁶ So successful were the Secessionist exhibitions, that they soon outgrew their space, and by 1901, they sponsored two shows a year. Painting and sculpture were exhibited in late autumn; the graphic arts exhibit, called the Schwartz/Weiss, or Black/White,²⁷ took place in the summer.

The encouragement of aspiring artists was certainly an important goal for Secessionist artists. More importantly, perhaps, was their role in bringing to Berlin art from elsewhere in Europe; most notably, as far as graphic artists such as Zille were concerned, were the works of Daumier, Toulouse-Lautrec and Munch.²⁸ Masur states that the Secessionists "felt themselves to be the true representatives of German art, and they took care to bring some of the best painters, past and present, to the attention of the

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Liebermann was elected its first president; other members included graphic artists Kaethe Kollwitz, Lovis Corinth, Max Slevogt and Christian Rohlf.

27

Masur, Imperial Berlin, p. 225.

28

ibid., p. 226.

public."²⁹ This role of educator, of introducing Berlin's citizens to the artistic innovations through independent exhibitions, became a mission that the Kaiser and "... those sycophants who catered to his taste"³⁰ could no longer tolerate in the capital city. In view of growing opposition to the Secessionists, Kiaulehn claims that Kaiser Wilhelm II,³¹ in particular, added fuel to their campaign. As self-proclaimed arbiter of artistic taste, the Kaiser felt his authority undermined by the Secessionists.

To him, their movement smelled of treason; it negated the official optimism which stressed the well-being of Germany and the assurance that the Kaiser was leading the country toward a glorious future. These new fellows were rocking the boat; they questioned his omniscience, and he would have none of it.³²

In 1901, the Kaiser took advantage of a public gathering to declare his views on art, in general, and contemporary art, in particular. At the dedication ceremony

²⁹
Masur, Imperial Berlin, p. 225.

³⁰
ibid., p. 226.

³¹
In fact, the word 'secessionist' came to mean anything new or unusual; fine stores on Kurfuerstendamm sold 'secessionist' ties, rugs, and glasses. Kiaulehn, Berlin, p. 309.

³²
Masur, Imperial Berlin, p. 225.

for the Siegesallee, the Kaiser said:

An art that transgresses the laws and barriers outlined by Me, ceases to be an art; it is merely a factory product, a trade, and art must never become such a thing... Art should help to educate the people, it should give to the lower classes after their hard work... the possibility of lifting themselves up to ideals. To us, to the German people, ideals have become permanent possessions, whereas among other peoples they have been more or less lost. Only the German nation is left, and we are called upon to preserve, cultivate, and continue these great ideals, and among those ideals is the duty to offer the toiling classes the possibility of elevating themselves to the beautiful and of raising themselves above their ordinary thoughts. If art, as so often happens now, does nothing more than paint misery more ugly than it is, it sins against the German people. The cultivation of the ideal is, moreover, the greatest work of civilization; if we wish to be and do remain an example for other countries, the entire nation must cooperate. If culture is going to fulfill its task, it must penetrate into the deepest layers of the people. This it can do only if it proffers a

Masur says that the Siegesallee was "... a wide avenue on both sides of which there should be placed a number[32] of white-marble monuments commemorating the achievements of his [Kaiser's] forebears...The Siegesallee, when completed, was a gift of the monarch to the city... They [Berliners] called the Siegesallee the avenue of the puppets, and Max Liebermann said he needed dark glasses to look at this crime against good taste." Masur, Imperial Berlin, p. 212. What is more, Heinrich Zille, with his "potato nose," posed for one of the portrait busts for his friend, sculptor, August Kraus. Several years later, when Zille's participation in the project became widely known, the ancestors of the knight, Wedigo von Plotho, protested vehemently, but to no avail. Unfortunately, some time after 1945, it was the only Siegesallee sculpture to be stolen. Lothar Fischer, Heinrich Zille in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten, (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1979), pp. 41-42.

34

hand to uplift, instead of to debase.

In his attempt to trivialize art that ran counter to his own views, the Kaiser classified such art as coming from the gutter, or Rinnstein. Hereafter, Rinnsteinkunst came to mean any art that dealt with themes deemed inappropriate by the Kaiser.³⁵

Meanwhile, as Berlin's society as a whole became more polarized, Zille lived simply, but comfortably, with his wife and three children in Charlottenburg, then a western suburb of Berlin. Neither middle class, nor proletariat, Zille earned his keep reproducing artworks to the graphic medium.

However, Zille had known humbler beginnings. Born in Radeburg, near Dresden, in 1858, Zille and his family moved to Berlin in 1867, after his father's release from Debtor's Prison. It was a cold, rainy November night as his father led Zille, his mother and sister to their rented room. Zille later recalled:

Torn wallpaper with dirty outlines from
beds and furniture that had been there

34

Masur, Imperial Berlin, p. 211.

35

ibid., p. 225: "...it was the breakaway movement of the secessionists which caused the Kaiser to deliver his speech on 'the art from the gutter,' a phrase which soon became familiar to the intellectuals of the capital."

before... bloodspots from swatted bed-bugs. In one corner a pile of hay was to be our bed. There was a large wooden trunk... a few bundles of clothes and that was all we owned as we 'started our new life.' 36

For two years the family lived in poverty; it was not uncommon for them to take their meals at the local Volkskueche, or community kitchen, where inexpensive meals were available. They earned what they could by fashioning jewelry and inkblotters from wood and cloth scraps. As young Zille sold his wares door-to-door in the working class district, he became intimately acquainted with the poverty-ridden Berlin that existed just out of view of the glamorous center of the capital city. He saw many things that caused the ten year old to grow up quickly.

I was good friends with the drunken cabinet-maker in the cellar apartment facing the street, as well as the blind cane weaver in her gloomy room, four floors up in the inner courtyard. 37

36

"An den Waenden zerrissne Tapeten mit schmutzigen Konturen, wo Betten und Moebel gestanden... Blutflecke von zerquetschten Wanzen. In einer Ecke ein Haufen Stroh, das sollte unser Bett sein, und ein grosser hoelzener Koffer... paar Buendel Kleidungsstuecke, das war alles, was wir, 'zum neuen Leben anzufangen,' besassen." Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 12.

37

"Vom versoffenen Kommodentischler im Keller des Vorderhauses bis zur rohrstuhlflechtenden blinden Frau in der dunklen Kammer, vier Treppen hoch im Hinterhaus, wurde ich der Vertraute." Friedrich Luft, editor, Mein Photo-Milljoeh (Hanover, 1967), p.12.

After Zille's father finally found regular employment with the Siemens & Halske Mechanical Works, the family moved to a modest home in Rummelsburger Kietz, a rural area outside the city limits. Once the family moved away from their hard life in the inner city, Zille was able to pursue his personal wish: to take art lessons. ³⁸ Earning the money himself, Zille, at fourteen years, enthusiastically began his study of art. His instructor was an elderly artist named Spanner, who offered much encouragement to his young and eager pupil. Zille later recalled his teacher with fondness: "Of all my school years, my favorite times were the hours spent at old Spanner's bare attic apartment in eastern Berlin, on Blumenstrasse." ³⁹

When Zille's public schooling was completed, it was Spanner who convinced him that lithography would be a sound career choice. ⁴⁰ In Bilder vom alten und neuen Berlin, Zille

38

Zille was interested in art at an early age. He once told writer, Adolf Behne, that as a young boy he had been profoundly moved by Hogarth prints he saw in pennysheets at a Berlin fleamarket. Zille said: "I likened the subject of those pictures to the life I saw around me." (Ich verglich den Inhalt der Bilder mit dem Leben, das ich um mich sah.") Behne, Heinrich Zille, p.2.

39

"Von der ganzen Schulzeit waren mir die liebsten Stunden, in der aermlichen Dachstube, Berlin O., Blumenstrasse, beim alten Zeichenlehrer Spanner." Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 17.

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Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 17.

related Spanner's advice:

A lithographer sits down at work and he wears a shirt and tie. He doesn't sweat and doesn't get his fingers dirty. You would go home at four o'clock in the afternoon, the training lasts three years and: 'You would be addressed formally with Sie.' What more could you want? 41

In Zille's recollection about Spanner's question, he answered with admitted pragmatism: "I didn't want more so my future was decided. I learned lithography."⁴² Winfried Ranke states that a boy of fourteen years, who had known the misery of poverty, would naturally be lured by the prospect of a white collar position.⁴³ With Spanner's help, Zille secured a three-year apprenticeship with the Fritz Hecht Studio, where he learned to hand-color prints and to render drawings from photographs.

Upon completion of his apprenticeship in 1875, Zille worked in several other studios in Berlin until 1877, when he was hired by the Photographische Gesellschaft. This firm specialized in mass production of popular works of art,

41

"Bei dieser Arbeit sitzt man, gut angezogen mit Kragen und Schlips, man schwitzt nicht und bekommt keine schmutzigen Finger. Nachmittags 4 Uhr geht man nach Hause, die Lehre dauert 3 Jahr und: 'du wirst mit Sie angeredet. Was willst du mehr?'" Heinrich Zille, Bilder vom alten und neuen Berlin (Dresden, 1927), p. 2.

42

"Mehr wollte ich nicht, das entschied ueber mein 'Schicksal.' Ich lernte Lithographie." *ibid.*, p. 2.

43

Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 39.

past and present, through photo-mechanical processes.

Zille recalled the themes of the day:

In the years following the [Franco-Prussian] War, a tide of lithographs with war themes flooded the market. Day and night more counts, field marshalls, generals and battle scenes were drawn and printed -- the horror of war was glorified and extolled. At that time, the chromolithograph had been recently developed, and usually the pictures were printed in color -- the 'oil paintings of the poor.' 45

In the second year of Zille's apprenticeship, he studied anatomy at night classes offered by the art school associated with the Royal Academy of Art. His teacher, Carl Domschke, must have been a colorful character; in a

44

The Photographische Gesellschaft, or Photographic Society, reproduced many works of the old masters. For example, they offered a luxury edition of the Bible that included sixty photo-engravings of Dutch and Italian Masters. Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 78. But the Society also printed original editions by contemporary artists. Fischer reports that the Society printed a series of eighteen etchings by Liebermann in 1883. According to Hans Ostwald (in Fischer), August Kraus said in the eulogy at his friend Zille's funeral: "...Liebermann [who] visited the lithographer and worker Zille often at his workplace, before he even had an inkling that he would someday sponsor Zille's membership in the Academy." Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 138: "... Liebermann, den Lithographen und Arbeiter Zille oft in seiner Werkstatt aufsuchte, ohne zu ahnen, dass dieser Arbeiter einst ...in der Akademie seinen Einzug halten wuerde."

45

Zille, Bilder vom alten, p. 2: "In dieser Zeit, also nach dem Krieg 1870/71, setzte eine Hochflut von auf den Stein gezeichneten Kriegsbildern ein. Fuersten, Feldmarschaele, Generaele, Schlachtenbilder wurden Tag und Nacht gezeichnet und gedruckt -- die Kriegsgreuel verherrlicht und verewigt. Der 'Oeldruck' was damals erfunden, meist wurden nun die Bilder bunt gedruckt -- die 'Oelgemaelde der Armen.'"

genuine Berlin dialect, he often chided his students sarcastically. For example, he was known to have said: "Those are supposed to be arm bones? Those aren't bones, they're a pair of twigs. You'd better get rid of that."⁴⁶

In addition to his training in anatomy, Zille also studied life drawing with noted illustrator and genre painter, Theodor Hosemann. Under his tutelage, Zille was encouraged to take art seriously. Zille frequently saw the elderly man home, where he was permitted to make studies from Hosemann's work. The artist advised Zille:

You shouldn't copy -- at the Hecht Studio by day and mine by night! That's too much copying! Rather, go outside, on the street, observe directly, [and] that's better than copying! 47

In 1880, Zille was called to serve a peacetime tour of duty in Frankfurt/Oder. There he pursued his hobby, and enjoyed recording his experiences, as evidenced by the many drawings that survive from this period. For example, a work

46

"Det sollen die Unterarmknochen sein? I, det sind 'n paar kleene Baumaeste, aber keene Knochen. Det machen Se man wieder wech." Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 54.

47

"Sie sollten nicht kopieren -- am Tage die Gestalten bei ihrem Lehrmeister Hecht und abends meine. Das ist zuviel Kopiererei! Gehen Sie lieber ins Freie, auf die Strasse, beobachten Sie selbst, das ist besser als nachmachen." Gustav Schmidt-Kuester and Karl Wiechert, editors, Zille Almanach (Hanover, 1969), n.p. Zille's studies with Hosemann ended prematurely with the artist's death in October, 1875. Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 65.

from an 1881 sketchbook (Fig. 15), shows a melodramatic, romantic side of Zille's early work. The delicate, decorative details reveal an interest in nature that is still evident in a study of wildflowers from 1883 (Fig. 16). In that year, Zille married and returned to his position with the Photographische Gesellschaft. Although his work and his growing family responsibilities took up most of his time, he continued his personal artistic expression in the form of landscape watercolors, studies of trees and flowers, and domestic scenes. A sketch of his young daughter, Margarete, in a natural pose (Fig. 17), evokes a loving father's interest in the simplest of his child's activities.

Around 1890, undercurrents of change that moved in Berlin, also brought about a marked change in the "artist/⁴⁸ technician and Sunday painter Heinrich Zille." It was at this time that Zille's friendship with sculptor, August Kraus, introduced him to a new circle of friends. Regularly, they attended gatherings of a Kegelklub, or bowling club,⁴⁹ frequented by other artists. Zille later reported

48

Ranke referred to Zille's place in the art world of 1890: "...Reproductionstechniker und Hobbymaler..." Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 145.

49

Among the members of the Bowling Club were Emil Orlik, Leo von Koenig, Fritz Klimsch, Lovis Corinth, Max Slevogt and Paul Cassirer. Werner Schumann, Zille sein Milljoeh, 16th ed. (Hanover, 1973), p.51. Zille's photograph of the group is from c. 1895 (Fig. 18).



Fig. 15 Heinrich Zille, 'Auf fremder, ferne Aue, da liegt ein toter Soldat...' ('On the distant, foreign pasture, there lies a dead soldier ...'), Drawing, 1881.



Fig. 16, Heinrich Zille, Disteln --
Mohn -- Sonnenblumen (Thistles -- Poppies --
Sunflowers), Aquarelle, 1883, 20.2 x 25.3cm,
East Berlin, State Museum of Berlin.

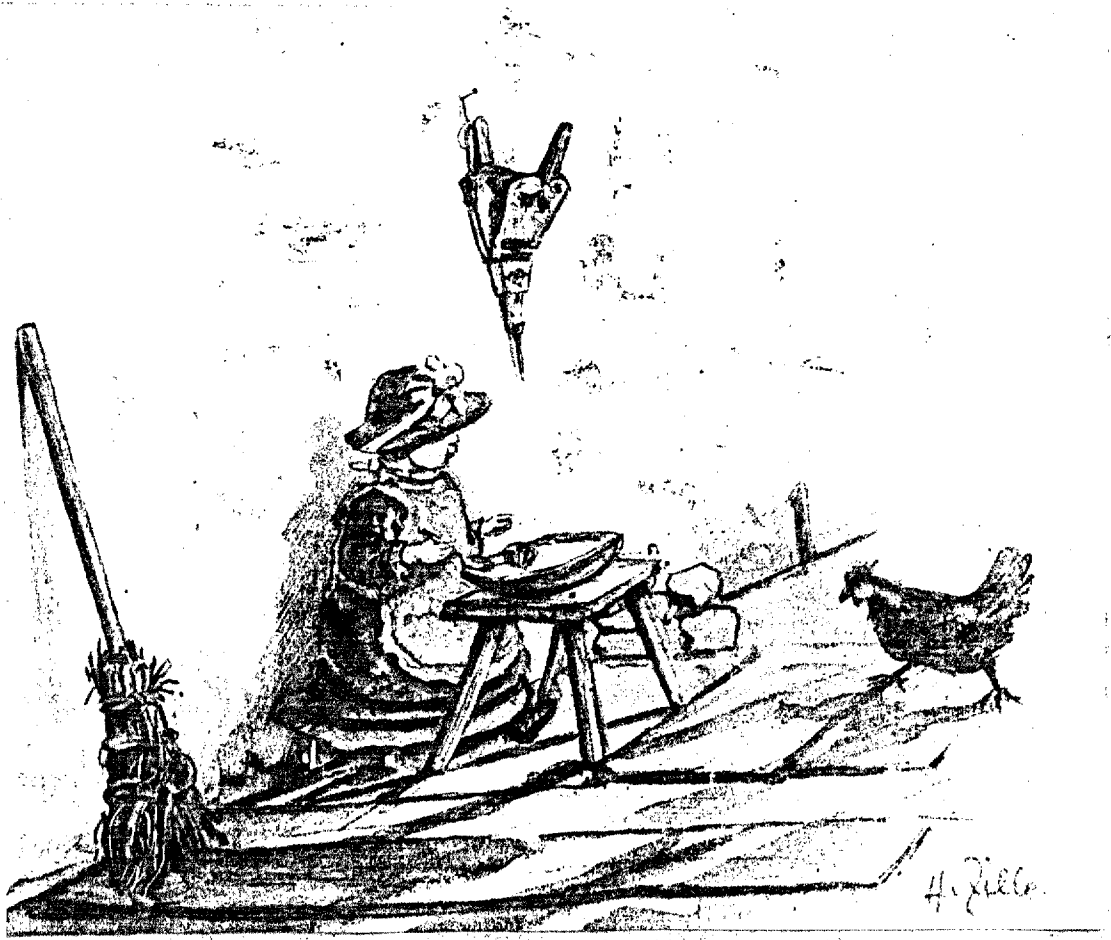


Fig. 17, Heinrich Zille, Grete Zille,
Aquarelle, 1886, 14.5 x 16.5 cm, East Ber-
lin, Private Collection: Gerhard Fluegge.

that their lively discussions overshadowed their bowling efforts, often necessitating that the next bowler be called three or four times. ⁵⁰ Surely, Zille was exposed to many new ideas at these gatherings, especially since most of the members were later involved with the Berlin Secession, and therefore, with the dramatic upheaval in art that ⁵¹ accompanied it. He seems to have spent much time in their company, either at the Kegelklub gatherings (Fig. 18), visiting studios or enjoying joint family outings. Zille's quiet family lifestyle was altered, and the continual exposure to the avant-garde was just one reason Zille found the sands shifting beneath his feet.

Berlin's increasing preoccupation with its social problems also caught Zille's notice, and he had reason to reflect on what he saw in journals and newspapers. They had become the predominant means of communicating contemporary events and the interpretation thereof; in newspapers and journals, the graphic medium proved to be an effective vehicle for expressing social commentary. Zille surely did not need journals to inform him about the deprived existence endured by the working class; his personal experience had

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Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 41.

51

This club was later known as the Secessions-Kegelbahn (Secession Bowling Alley). Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 152.

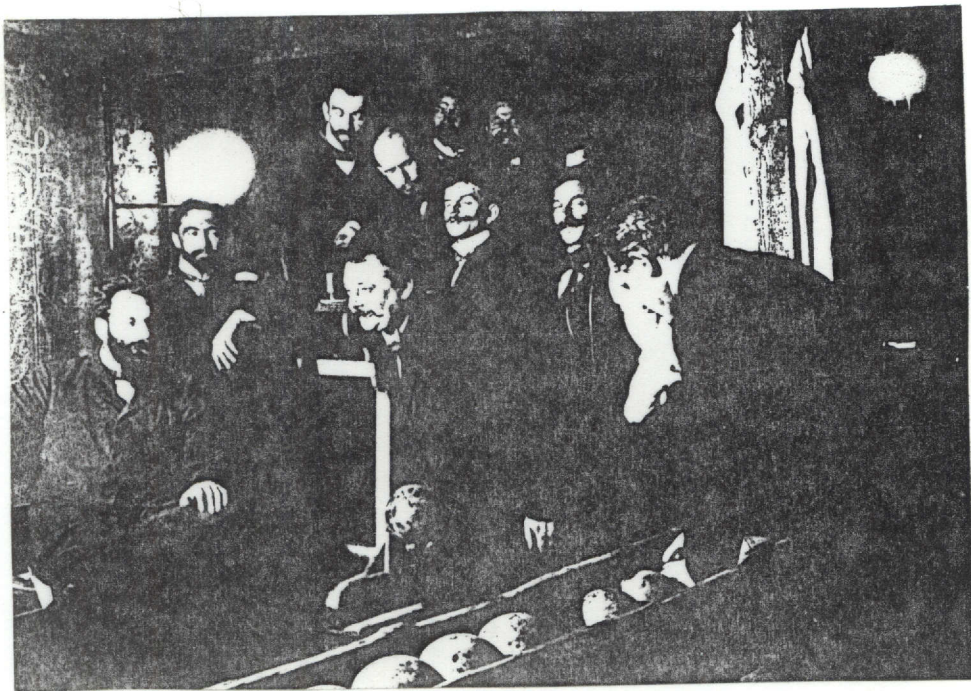


Fig. 18, Heinrich Zille, Kegelklub
(Bowling Club), Photograph, c. 1895.

52

taught him that cruel lesson years before. However, it was through the illustrated press that these issues were presented to the public; whether this was a stimulus to Zille or not, it remains that Zille found that his artistic motivation shifted from domestic and nature studies to what the Kaiser referred to as: 'art from the gutter.'⁵³

Fifteen years after Professor Hosemann had urged him to go 'out into the street,' Zille set his sights on the milieu of Berlin's poor.⁵⁴ Ranke adds that Zille, "... as one who saw

52

After 1850, most large European cities had satirical journal which lampooned government affairs and social conditions, with the widening gap between the classes as a frequent theme. Gradually, the urban crisis in Europe's largest cities received more and more attention. Ranke explains that Berlin, as the capital city, was of great interest to all Germans. Moreover, by century's end, as artists and writers increasingly revealed the undesirable aspects of the city, all of Germany was exposed to its mounting social problems. Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 115.

53

Ranke says no one can know exactly what caused Zille to revert to the theme of city life. It could have been the influence of a friend, or a personal, deliberate thought process. In any case, "...the Berlin Naturalists provided ample food for thought." Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 108: "...lieferten die Berliner Naturalisten Anstoesse und den Stoff zum Nachdenken."

54

Zille transformed the term milieu to become Milljoeh. Nelson says: "Berliner Milljoeh means only one thing: the milieu as portrayed by Heinrich Zille, or perhaps by Bert Brecht and Kurt Tucholsky. The setting is typically tawdry and the characters are unfortunate, and sometimes depraved." Nelson, The Berliners, p. 299. Zola's teacher and Naturalist theorist, Hippolyte Taine, used the term milieu to mean the environment as "life's determining factors." Aust in Von Liebermann zu Kollwitz, p. 1: "das Leben bestimmenden Faktoren."

his childhood experiences suddenly depicted on stage and in novels, belonged to those from whom the Naturalists expected understanding and compassion." ⁵⁵ With determination, Zille used his spare time to press his 'hobby' further. He said:

Eventually, I was moved to draw this poverty-stricken life...to restate what my memories held. I thought back to my childhood, to the ugly and the happy experiences, and tried to re-create them with seriousness and humor. How different from copying from originals and photographs for lithographic reproduction. ⁵⁶

Clearly, Zille's artistic creativity was no longer served at the Photographische Gesellschaft; with renewed vigor, he set to the task of recording what his memories held. To accomplish this, Zille often went to working class districts, armed with paper and charcoal pencil, his favorite medium while underway. ⁵⁷ Otto Nagel, Zille's close friend during the 1920's, explained: "Heinrich Zille literally

55

Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 107: "Als einer, der ploetzlich seine eigenen Kindheitserfahrungen auf dem Theater und in Erzaehlungen thematisiert fand, gehoerte er zu denen, fuer die die Naturalisten Verstaendnis und Mitleid forderten." Ranke adds that Zille read a good deal; further, it is known that he was familiar with many of Zola's writings. Ranke, Photographien Berlin, p. 15.

56

Zille, Bilder vom alten, p. 3: "Da regte sich so nach und nach in mir der Wunsch, dies armselige Leben zu zeichnen ...Gesehenes aus der Erinnerung wiederzugeben. Ich dachte an die Kinderzeit, an haessliche und heitere Erlebnisse, versuchte diese auf's Papier zu bringen, mit Ernst und Humor zu versehen. Wie anders als das Abzeichnen von Vorlagen und Photographien fuer den Steindruck."

57

Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 136.

went out into the street, his pocket stuffed with small papers. Wherever he went, sat or stood, he 'scribbled' his studies.⁵⁸"

Of the various media Zille utilized at the Photographische Gesellschaft, his proficiency in photography served him well on his frequent outings to Berlin's slums.⁵⁹ Zille's sketches, in addition to photographic studies, aided him at home where the works were completed. From 1890, until 1910, Zille photographed the working class districts of Berlin, leaving a rich legacy of social and art historical value.⁶⁰ His images of a store front (Fig. 19), a back-alley (Fig. 20), and the detailed study of incidental trappings of

58

Erhard Frommhold, Otto Nagel. Zeit Leben Werk (Berlin, 1974), p. 368: "Heinrich Zille ging im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes auf die Strasse, die Tasche vollgepackt mit kleinen Blaettchen. Wo er ging, sass oder stand, da 'strichelte' er seine Studien."

59

Ranke explains that the photo-mechanical means of reproducing art works learned by Zille at the Photographische Gesellschaft included photo engraving and industrial lithography. In fact, Zille represented his firm some time shortly after 1880, in Vienna, to learn of improvements in the photo engraving process. Thereafter, the Photographische Gesellschaft concentrated on photo engraving and it eventually became their specialty. Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 80.

60

Over three hundred urban studies were found in the Zille home in Charlottenburg in 1966. Luft, Mein Photo-Milljoeh, p. 5. Thereafter, his photographs have received critical acclaim, often compared to French photographer of Parisian streets, Eugene Atget. The popularity of Zille's photography, as evidenced by its frequent exhibition, rivals his reputation as a graphic artist.



Fig. 19, Heinrich Zille, Storefront in Berlin, Photograph, c. 1900.



Fig. 20, Heinrich Zille, Alley in Berlin,
Photograph, c. 1900.

the Milljoeh, the window sill in Figure 21, were often reproduced exactly in his drawings and prints. Zille's photographs, therefore, helped to create the background for the human drama that unfolded in his drawings and prints (Figs. 22 and 23).

Zille broadened his artistic range when, beginning in 1890, he experimented with various printmaking techniques, not as part of his professional duties with the Photographische Gesellschaft, but for his own fulfillment. In this, Ranke feels that Zille was inspired by the etchings of Max Klinger, who believed that the graphic arts were especially well suited to portray the dark side of life.⁶¹

Guenter Aust relates:

Under the influence of Zola's writings and the city of Berlin, Max Klinger created a cycle of ten etchings called Dramas, of which Plates 3, 4 and 5 were titled A Mother. The series appeared in 1883, inspired by news reports concerning a local legal trial.⁶²

Eine Mutter I (Fig. 24), which shows the husband about to beat his wife, is filled with foreboding. Zille strove for the same ominous quality in his first etching, Bierkeller,

61

Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 90 and p. 124.

62

Aust in Von Liebermann zu Kollwitz, p. 4: "Unter dem Eindruck der Schriften Zolas und der Grossstadt Berlin schuf Max Klinger die 10 Radierungen seines Zyklus Dramen (erschienen 1883), dessen Blaetter 3,4 und 5, unter dem Titel Eine Mutter, durch den Bericht ueber eine Gerichtsverhandlung angeregt wurden."

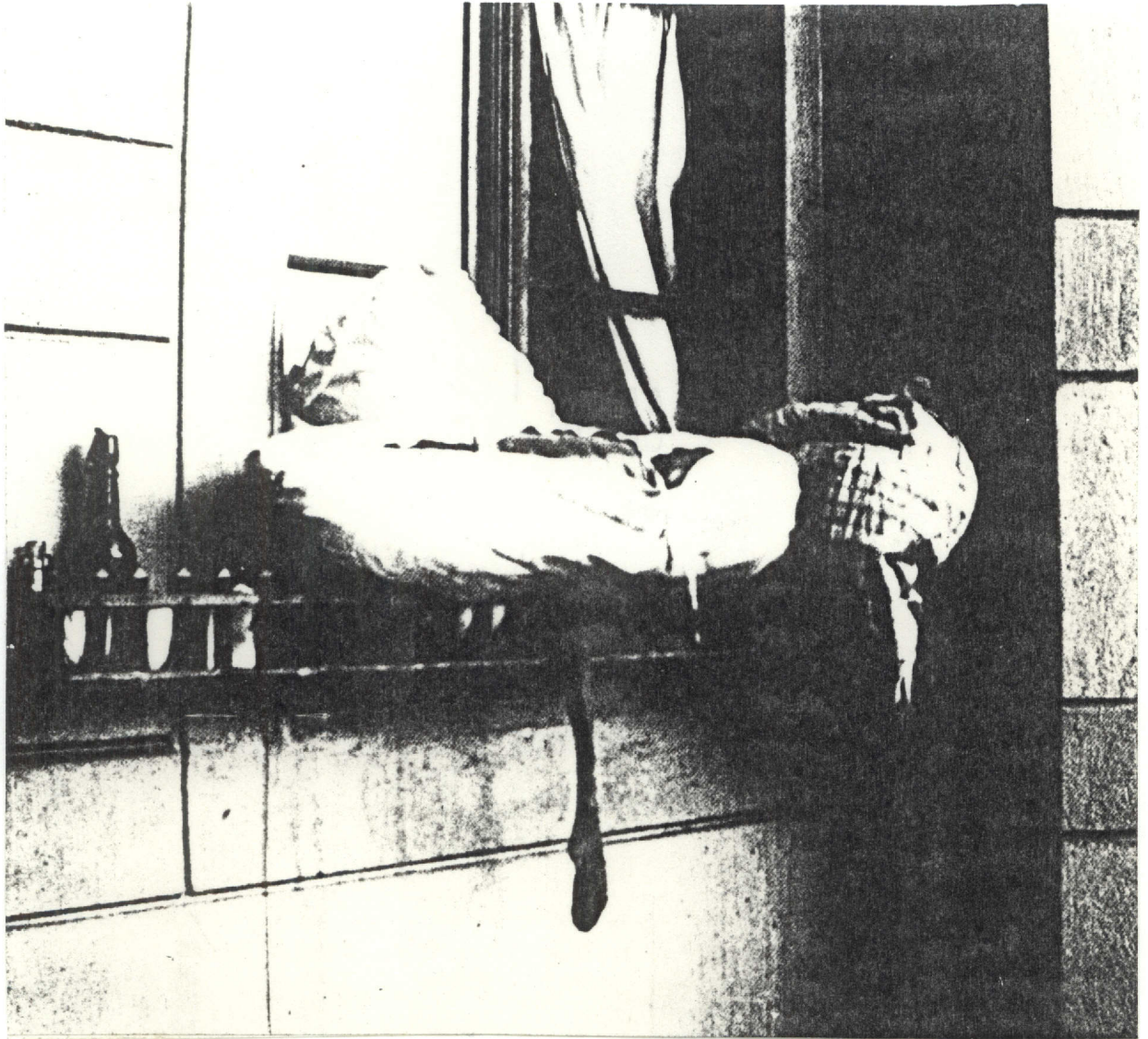


Fig. 21, Heinrich Zille, Window Sill in Berlin, Photograph, c. 1900.



Fig. 22, Heinrich Zille, Bauzaun -- Berlin, Kaiser-Wilhelm-Strasse (Construction Barricade -- Berlin, Kaiser-Wilhelm-Strasse), Photograph, c. 1890-98.



Fig. 23, Heinrich Zille, 's dunkle Berlin, (Berlin's Dark Side), 1898, Etching, 15.9 x 21.7 cm. published in Zwoelf Kuenstlerdrucke, 1905.



Fig. 24, Max Klinger, Eine Mutter I,
from Dramen series (Opus IX), Etching,
1883.

Eiergasse -- Berlin (Fig. 25). He succeeded in capturing the atmosphere of gloom, but Ranke offers that there were as yet deficiencies in Zille's treatment of spatial depth and the human form.⁶³ Whereas Zille still needed time to perfect his drawing style, Ranke says that Zille's serious attempt to pattern his work after that of another artist indicates an important shift in Zille's self-perception; he was beginning to think of his work as worthy of being compared to, or viewed by others.⁶⁴

From 1890, Zille worked tirelessly to improve his drawing style, and by century's end, had amassed a sizable portfolio. With the encouragement of his fellow artists, he continued to perfect his style until in winter, 1901, Zille⁶⁵ was invited to exhibit with the Berlin Secession. Thus, 'Sunday painter' Heinrich Zille burst onto the turbulent Berlin art scene. His works, steeped in the everyday and spiced with the Berliners' coarse dialect, stood squarely

63

Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 90.

64

ibid. p. 90.

65

Max Liebermann encouraged Zille to participate in this exhibition; Liebermann's fondness for Zille's work played an important part in Zille's career. Pfefferkorn says that Liebermann "...was mentor to quite a few younger artists, above all, Heinrich Zille." Rudolf Pfefferkorn, Die Berliner Secession. Eine Epoche deutscher Kunstgeschichte (Berlin, 1972), p. 89: "...protegierte eine Reihe juengerer Kuenstler, zu denen vor allem Heinrich Zille gehoerte."



Fig. 25, Heinrich Zille, Bierkeller,
Eiergasse -- Berlin, Etching, 1890, 14 x 8.5 cm,
West Berlin, Private Collection: Axel Springer.

in opposition to the royal art view. In light of the Kaiser's Rinnstein speech in March 1901, Zille's work, and much of that of the other Secessionists, was predictably held in disdain by the academic camp. They complained:

They [artists] no longer cared to paint princes or elaborate affairs of state; rather [they painted] pines in the Mark district, children's swimming holes, or a woman pulling a pair of malnourished goats uphill, no 'great subjects' ... nothing that enriched one's life, but only 'insignificant' things, in other words, 'art from the gutter.' 67

Zille certainly knew that his art fell into the Rinnsteinkunst category, and therefore, knowingly presented his work with no apology. With the support of the Secessionists behind him, Zille felt confident in his portrayal of Berlin's sinister back streets. As his work was included in daily newspapers with increasing frequency, Zille's warm reception by the working class was especially

66

Zille later recalled that he overheard an elderly man at one of the Secessionist exhibitions remark as he stood before a Zille work: "This fellow takes all the fun out of life." ("Der Kerl nimmt ja die ganze Lebensfreude."), Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 44.

67

Kiaulehn, Berlin, p. 309: "Sie dachten nicht mehr daran, Fuersten zu malen oder grosse Staatsakte, sondern Maerkische Kiefern, Kinderbadeanstalten oder eine Frau, die ein Paar magere Ziegen bergauf zog, keine 'grosse, konkreten Stoffe' ... nichts was das Leben erhob, sondern nur 'kleine, konkrete Sachen,' eben 'Rinnsteinkunst.'"

68

Heinrich Zille und sein Berliner Volk, p. 5.

69

gratifying. Nagel reports that Zille said:

For the most part, people didn't like my work; they complained about me. By and by, they learned to see, to judge, and to understand me. In the East and North though, they grasped my work immediately. 70

Zille's close ties with the working class and his familiarity with their environs, enabled him to move freely among them. He had become their champion of sorts, as he exposed the cruel realities that characterized their existence. He had taken their side against what Ranke refers

71

69

Zille once reported that his first exhibition was at his favorite bar, the Nussbaum (nut tree). There, an entire wall was hung with 'Zilles,' cut from newspapers or journals and affixed to the wall with dabs of mustard. Wolfgang Tschechne, Heinrich Zille -- Hofkonzert im Hinterhaus (Munich, 1979), p. 58.

70

Rudolf Freund and Michael Hanisch, Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glueck (Berlin, 1976), p. 114: "Im allgemeinen gefiel ich nicht. Die Leute schimpften auf mich. Erst nach und nach lernte man sehen, urteilen und mich verstehen. Im Osten und Norden allerdings begriffen sie mich gleich."

71

In contrast to Zille's visits to Berlin's slums, Naturalist writers, primarily, came in search of an authenticity that existed outside their experience; they took great pains to understand the life of the working class in order to recreate it in their works. Young, idealistic and often well-heeled, some rented second apartments in working class neighborhoods in order to be closer to their subjects. Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 94. A contemporary work by an unknown artist (Fig. 26), effectively points out the inherent chauvinism of the upper classes toward the working class. The workers seem to understand the ludicrous nature of the writers' mission, which while well-intentioned, made the working class into something of a side show.



Fig. 26, Unknown Artist, Karikatur auf die naturalistischen Jungliteraten (Caricature of Young Writers in the Naturalist Style), published in Fliegende Blaetter, 1895.

to as "...those who considered this miserable existence as normal and inevitable."⁷² Therefore, Zille's equal footing with Berlin's poor, afforded him the opportunity to reveal their disadvantaged existence as an insider, a factor which contributed to the credibility of his work.

Along with Zille's acceptance by the working class, he was also recognized by his peers; in 1903, Zille was elected a member of the Berlin Secession. He wrote to August Kraus:

You'll be surprised to know that your [friend] Zille is now a member of the Secession, elected with two nay votes. I had considered it myself, but I thought better of it... 73

Zille's membership in the Secession carried with it a legitimization of his work, a stamp of approval by his colleagues. As meaningful as membership in the Secession was to Zille, Kiaulehn suggests that it might have tainted the group as a whole. He said: "Since they [the Secessionists] made room for the amiable folk artist, Heinrich Zille, all their efforts were dashed, they confirmed one's qualms [about the group] and demonstrated their preference for

72

Heinrich Zille und sein Berliner Volk, p. 6: "jene, die dessen miserable Lebensbedingungen fuer normal und unabaenderlich hielten."

73

"Es wird Sie ueberraschen, dass jetzt Ihr Zille Sezessionsmitglied ist, gewaehlt mit zwei Stimmen dagegen. Hatte freilich daran gedacht, mich aber nicht gemeldet..." Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 45.

74

'art from the gutter.'

In 1902, Zille was invited to contribute drawings to the highly regarded, Munich-based satirical journal, Simplicissimus.⁷⁵ Therefore, in just two years, Zille had gained a following in Berlin, and a national audience as well. One can imagine the pressure Zille felt as the increasing demand for his work competed with his daily

74

Kiaulehn, Berlin, p. 311: "Aber dass sie auch dem liebenswuerdigen Volkszeichner Heinrich Zille ein Plaetzchen einraeumte, machte alles wieder zunichte, erwies sie als 'suspekt' und bewies ihren 'Hang zum Rinnstein.'" Kiaulehn's use of a phrase, literally translated, "that they made a little place" for Zille, implies that he was squeezed in, or that his admittance was an exception. There would always be detractors who questioned Zille's place with 'real' artists. Even after his election to the Academy of Fine Arts in 1924, some critics railed against it. For example, the critic for the voelkische Blatt said: "Berlin's W.C. and pregnancy artist, Heinrich Zille, has been voted a member of the Academy of Arts, and as such, has been confirmed by the Director. Hide your head, oh Muse." ("Der Berliner Abort- und Schwangerschaftszeichner Heinrich Zille ist zum Mitglied der Akademie der Kuenste gewaehlt und als solcher vom Minister bestaetigt worden.-- Verhuelle, o Muse, dein Haupt.") Heinrich Zille, Berliner Geschichten und Bilder, Introduction by Max Liebermann (Dresden, 1925), p. 6.

75

Nineteenth century artists had long since discovered that the graphic media proved to be an effective means of social commentary. Simplicissimus, for example, although based in Munich, covered topics of national and local interest to its readership in all of Germany. Simpl, as it was called by its devotees, was at its satirical prime in 1902, the year of Zille's first participation; he continued to have his works published well into the 1920's. Appelbaum states that Zille was among the "...major artists who were associated with the magazine over long periods..." Stanley Appelbaum, editor, Simplicissimus, 180 Satirical Drawings from the Famous German Weekly (New York, 1975), p. vii.

routine at the Photographische Gesellschaft and family responsibilities. Zille recalled, in 1927:

I didn't waste any time; [I] observed and sketched constantly. Even though I had to work as a graphic draughtsman to earn my keep, I was able to submit work to journals with success -- [and] also to show my drawings in exhibitions. 76

Indeed, Zille's visibility was further enhanced with works published the following year in the journals, Jugend and Lustigen Blaetter.

For reasons which remain unclear, in 1907, Zille was abruptly dismissed from his position with the Photo-
 graphische Gesellschaft.⁷⁷ Thus, for the first time, Zille found himself dependent on his art that, heretofore, had been superfluous to his position through which he earned his livelihood. He was forty-nine years old and faced his
 career change, at first with anxiety,⁷⁸ but then set to his

76

Zille, Bilder vom alten, pp. 3-4: "Keine Stunde liess ich unbenutzt, beobachtete und strichelte drauf los und konnte, trotzdem ich im graphischen Gewerbe war und damit mein Brot verdienen musste, manchen Beitrag fuer Zeitschriften mit Erfolg los werden -- auch in Ausstellungen meine Zeichnungen zeigen."

77

Fischer suggests that Zille's outspoken criticism toward the owners of the Photographische Gesellschaft might have been grounds for dismissal. Apparently, homes had been promised to loyal, long-time employees; instead the owners built new villas for themselves. Fischer, Heinrich Zille, pp. 48-49.

78

ibid., p. 49-50.

task with great vigor. According to Ranke, at the time of his dismissal, Zille was still exhibiting with the Secessionists, and he contributed regularly to seven newspapers and journals.⁷⁹ However, Zille worried that his income would be insufficient support for his family. His friends offered Zille encouragement; they were confident that Zille could find financial stability through his art. In fact, they were relieved, as Zille's good friend, August Kraus said:

All of us, Gaul, Klimsch, Theodor Heine and I, were happy to learn that the artist, Heinrich Zille, was freed from the yoke of exploitation that kept him from pursuing his true vocation.⁸⁰

In 1905, Zille's diligence was rewarded with the publication in 1908, of a book of drawings with captions, Kinder Strasse. Published in Berlin by Lustigen Blaetter (Funny Pages), Zille's successful book was printed in many editions; 48,000 copies had been sold by 1918.⁸¹ Hereafter, Zille's successes were repeated with later similar publications and a variety of collaborations. Into the 1920's, Zille applied his talents to projects as varied as set

79

Heinrich Zille und sein Berliner Volk, p. 10.

80

Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 50: "Wir alle, Gaul, Klimsch, Theodor Heine und ich freuten uns, den Kuenstler Heinrich Zille frei vom Joch der Ausbeutung zu wissen, das ihn von seinem eigentlichen Schaffen nur fernhielt."

81

ibid., p. 51.

design for comic revues to politically aggressive campaigns for reform. Throughout his career, no matter what the venture, Zille could be relied upon to be the advocate of the working class. Subsequently, Zille's oeuvre from 1900 to 1914 will be explored in depth. It is the period during which he evolved from an artist who occasionally saw his works published in journals, to an esteemed member of the Berlin Secession, and popular Berlin illustrator.

CHAPTER III

'ART FROM THE GUTTER:' ZILLE'S THEMATIC CHOICES

In all the years Zille lived in Berlin, from 1867 when he arrived with his family, to the year of his death¹ in 1929, he was witness to a continual housing shortage. That is not to say that Berlin's governing body did not attempt to alleviate the problem. In 1862, when overcrowding first became critical, the city drew up a plan that authorized construction of the world's largest city of rental barracks (Mietskasernen). Intended to house the working class, they were built as cheaply and as quickly as possible.² The resulting mass of poorly constructed housing became the ghetto of Berlin's working class; in spite of these efforts to provide housing, no matter how ignoble, as the numbers of workers coming to Berlin increased, they found themselves crammed into these shoddy quarters.

¹ In 1867, Berlin's population stood at 600,000; in 1929, the year of Zille's death, it had grown to 4,000,000. Wirth, Heinrich Zille und sein, p. 15.

² The Prussian government devised a plan which was carried out by Building Commissioner, James Hobrecht. With buildings criss-crossing entire blocks, he sought the most efficient use of space. In order to justify this plan, the government printed a pamphlet in which Hobrecht explained that like classes, in this case the working class, should be housed together for the sake of civil harmony. Kiaulehn, Berlin, pp. 87-89.

The Mietskasernen, usually four or five stories high, encompassed a whole block, within which the buildings were separated by interlocking courtyards and alleys. A photograph in Kurt Tucholsky's Deutschland, Deutschland Ueber Alles,³ shows the arches as they recede inward, away from the busy street (Fig. 27). Courtyards, and especially those that were located in the middle of the block, were narrow and surrounded on all sides by stone walls; it followed that these areas "admitted very little air and hardly any light."⁴ As if these conditions were not bad enough, the overcrowding caused by the housing shortage made these areas hellish places to live.

A family was considered fortunate to have two rooms; more often than not, family members of both sexes and all ages were crowded into one room. Once more, a photograph from Tucholsky's book (Fig. 28), illustrates these crowded conditions. Tucholsky commented on the loss of privacy that resulted from this lifestyle in that someone is always "...coming and going, yelling and screaming, cooking and washing, and everyone hears everything, everybody shares their most personal experiences with everyone

³ Although Tucholsky's book dates from 1929, the photograph cited is representative of the Wilhelmine Berlin.

⁴ Hans Bodlander, "The Philosopher of Slang, Heinrich Zille," American German Review, XXXV (Aug./Sept., 1969), p. 21.



Fig. 27, Receding Arches
of Berlin Mietskasernen



Fig. 28, Crowded living conditions
in Berlin Mietskasernen

else..."⁵ Small wonder that families found their rural sensibilities undermined by the humiliating lifestyle they came to know as a result of moving to the city. Their hopes of finding economic prosperity in Berlin were dashed as they realized they had little chance of escaping their oppressive existence. Zille understood their plight when he said in Zwanglose Geschichten und Bilder:

People who cannot avoid their lot in life, which is the result of present and past social policies. [They are] to be pitied, those... who find their destinies irrevocably preordained.⁶

The Mietskasernen were built with deep cellars, and since rental space was in short supply, "...more than 100,000 people lived in these basement apartments, actually dungeons..."⁷ Although some had small windows that opened to the sidewalk, they "... were damp and moldy and never had a

⁵
Kurt Tucholsky, Deutschland, Deutschland Ueber Alles, Photographs compiled by John Heartfield, Reprint of 1929 ed. (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1964), p. 125: "...kommen und gehen, schreien und rufen, kochen und waschen, und alle hoeren alles, jeder nimmt am Schicksal des andern auf die empfindlichste Art teil..."

⁶
Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 89: "Menschen, die ihrem Geschick nicht entgehen koennen, die das Resultat der heutigen und frueheren Gesellschaftsordnung sind. Bedauernswerte... finden sie ihren Lebensweg schon in harten Lettern vorgeschrieben."

⁷
Masur, Imperial Berlin, p. 68.

chance to dry out."⁸ In a pen and ink drawing from 1908 (Fig. 29), Zille shows two toddlers; one pulls a dead rat on a tiny wagon. The other child asks, "How did it die?" He answers, "It's too wet in our apartment." That children play with rats at all is one level of the tragedy; that the rat died due to conditions that the child's family tried to survive in, is the deeper, more devastating message. Georg Hermann said in the introduction to Zille's "Mein Milljoeh." Bilder aus dem Berliner Leben: "Zille rarely accuses. But when he does, it is twice as effective since he puts the words in the mouth of a child, who is unaware of the grim truth it speaks."⁹

The cellar flats were physically uncomfortable, but they were also psychologically oppressive. To Zille, and most Germans, the enjoyment of nature was a vital part of life.¹⁰ Children who grew up without sunlight were

⁸ Bodlander, American German Review, p. 21.

⁹ Heinrich Zille, "Mein Milljoeh." Bilder aus dem Berliner Leben, 11th ed., Introduction by Georg Hermann (Berlin, 1925), p. 6: "Selten ist Zille Kläeger. Wenn er es aber ist, so wirkt er doppelt ueberzeugend dadurch, dass er meist einem Kind die Worte in den Mund legt, das selbst nicht weiss, was fuer eine letzte grausige Wahrheit es ausspricht."

¹⁰ In an interview in 1969, Zille's daughter remarked that her father had a deep respect for nature. Schmidt-Kuester and Wiechert, Zille Almanach, n.p.



Fig. 29, Heinrich Zille, Die Ratte

considered spiritually deprived, and as such, were more like
 caged animals than children who could grow and thrive.¹¹

In a poignant work titled: Second Corner Building, Cellar Room, Courtyard Side, Zille depicts a young boy who frees the family's pet bird (Fig. 30). He can no longer bear to see the animal trapped in the dark cellar flat. The youth opens the cage and says: "Poor bird, you don't get any sun in our dark courtyard! Even if Daddy spansks me tonight -- I'll let you go -- fly and join the other birds!" Zille touches the viewer through an image of human kindness. The boy's empathy for the trapped bird bespeaks the compassion Zille felt toward the children of Berlin's slums. It grieved him to know that inhabitants of the Mietskasernen were deprived of frequent enjoyment of Berlin's natural surroundings. He said in Rund ums Freibad:

...Unfortunately, there are thousands [of people] in the city who can't afford the 'Nature Doctor.' Poverty, too many children, the costly train, [or] they can't travel long distances... Half of the children have never seen a sunrise or sunset, [They] haven't heard a bird sing, haven't seen a

11

French Naturalism, taken to heart by so many artists and writers in Berlin, professed that a close connection existed between nature and society. Ranke says: "It was in France, especially, that this concept was developed: that nature and society are one, and that they both exist under the same laws." ("Insbesondere in Frankreich war die Auffassung entwickelt worden, dass Natur und Gesellschaft eines seien und beide den gleichen Naturgesetzen unterlaegen.") Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 91.



Zweites Quergebäude,
Hof im Keller.

"Armer Vogel, kriegst keene
Sonne uff unsen dusteren
Hof! Un wenn mir ooch
Vata uffin Abend verghant
- ik lafs dir raus - flieg
in's Vogelland!"

Fig. 4, Heinrich Zille,
Zweites Quergebäude, Hof im Keller
("Poor bird, you don't get any sun in
our dark courtyard! Even if Daddy
spanks me tonight -- I'll let you
go -- fly and join the other birds!")

12

flowing brook, a frog or a snake.

Since the sun rarely shone in the bleak alleys, plant life was a rarity. Even a weed that somehow pushed through the crack of pavement was unusual, and therefore, was to be protected. A lone dandelion has survived in an alley in a work from 1914, Experiencing Nature in the back-alley (Fig. 31). A woman appears at the doorway and snaps at the children: "Get away from the flower, go play with the garbage cans!"¹³ The plant that grows in its miserable soil is guarded against harm; the pathetic children who languish in the gloomy alley have no such protection. After the initial reaction to the coarse humor, the irony behind emerges to temper it, and arouses indignation. There is throughout Zille's work a special concern for the welfare of children who endure the depraved environment of Berlin's slums. Popular novelist, Georg Hermann, in his introduction

12

Heinrich Zille, 300 Berliner Bilder. Mein Milljoeh, Kinder der Strasse, Rund ums Freibad, Reprint of 1914, 1908 and 1926 eds., respectively (Hanover, 1977), p. 9 of Introduction to Rund ums Freibad. "...leider, in der Grosstadt sind es noch Abertausende den sich den 'Naturarzt' nicht leisten koennen. Armut, zu viele Kinder, die Eisenbahn zu teuer, die, die weiten Wege koerperlich nicht aushalten koennen... Die Haelfte der Kinder kennt keinen Sonnenaufgang, keinen Sonnenuntergang, haben keinen Singvogel singen hoeren, kein fliessendes Wasser, keinen Frosch, keine Schnecke, gesehen."

13

"Wollt ihr von die Blume weg, spielt mit'n Muellkasten!"



Fig. 31, Heinrich Zille, Naturerlebnis im Hinterhof (Experiencing Nature in the Back-alley), c. 1914.

for Zille's Mein Milljoeh, said:

Yes, isn't it obvious, that in all of his work, there is one consistent plea: But the children! But the children! -- Here are these wonderful, young and often still uncorrupted people, they can become anything, anything -- healthy, happy, strong people. But poverty and suffering, inadequate housing, vice and alcoholism produce the people shown in [Zille's] work! -- All the adults you see in [Zille's] work, they were just like these children! 14

Since his youth, as a child who had experienced poverty, Zille knew and understood the realities of life in the overcrowded Mietskasernen. He could look back to his own family's experience and recall:

Squeezed together in tall Mietskasernen with narrow, musty stairways. Paltry shelters in damp cellars and above reeking stalls, without air or sunlight. 'A tenement can kill, just as an ax can.' 15

14

Zille, 300 Berliner Bilder, p. 6 of Introduction to Mein Milljoeh: "Ja, versteht man denn nicht, wir durch alle seine Blaetter stets wieder nur der eine Schrei geht: Aber die Kinder! Aber die Kinder! -- Da ist dieses wundervolle, junge, oft noch unverdorbene Menschenmaterial, alles kann aus ihnen werden, alles! -- gesunde, glueckliche, kraeftige Menschen. Aber Armut und Elend, schlechte Wohnungen, Laster und Alkohol machen das daraus, was ich euch hier zeige! -- All diese Grossen, die Ihr bei mir seht, sie waren ebenso wie diese Kinder!"

15

Heinrich Zille, Die Landpartie. Zwanglose Geschichten und Bilder, Reprint of 1921 ed. (Hanover, 1978), p. 3: "Zusammengepfercht in hohe Mietskasernen, mit schmalen unge-luefteten Treppen. Elende Zufluchtsorte in nassen Kellern und ueber stinkenden Staellen, ohne Luft und Sonne. 'Man kann mit einer Wohnung einen Menschen genau so gut toeten, wie mit einer Axt!'" Although Zille used the expression, Lange claims that British author Margret MacMillan is its originator. Lange, Das Wilhelminische Berlin, p. 470.

The overcrowded Mietskasernen caused serious health problems for the working class; as such, they were a frequent theme in Zille's works. He avoided sentimentality and heart-wrenching images of hungry and sick working class families. He opted instead, to permit the viewer to snatch glimpses of everyday life of the working class, through whom he revealed the consequences of their inadequate health care.

Regarding the problem of hunger and poor nutrition, Zille's poignant statements were often reserved for children whose innocent comments could be devastating. For example, a lithograph which is one of Zille's best known works, shows a cluttered apartment where a woman tends a large pot on the stove (Fig. 32). Asked by her young child: "Ma, what's cookin'?" the mother answers: "Laundry, you dummy!" The hungry child, wishing for a hot meal, asks: "Does that taste good?" With typical Berlin brusqueness, the mother dashed the child's hopes; Zille successfully revealed the reality of inadequate nutrition among the poor.

While Zille's rendering of the working class was accurate and visually effective, it was his use of the coarse Berlin dialect through which the immediate essence of the working class Berliner emerged. As in the work above, the combined effect of authentic image and speech allowed the working class to see their Mietskasernen interiors and to hear their words spoken with conviction and humor. The



"Mutta, wat kochste?"
 "Wäsche, du Dummlack!"
 "Schmeckt'n det jut?!"

Fig. 32, Heinrich Zille, Lithograph,
 "Ma what's cookin'?" "Laundry, you dummy!"
 "Does that taste good?"

The working class response to Zille's work was immediate. Nagel reported in a 1929 article in Film und Volk: "And because he [Zille] spoke their language, the masses understood him better than any other -- his name became a familiar by-word."¹⁶ It should be noted that the middle class was amused by Zille's low-bred humor, and were charmed by his honest characterizations; through his work they gained access to the world of the proletariat. With Zille as a guide, the curious middle class was witness to the horrors of Berlin's mean streets without ever setting foot in Wedding or Moabit.¹⁷

If one were to venture into the inner courtyards of the Mietskasernen, one arch after the other, one would very likely have found a scene similar to a Zille work titled, Im stillen Gaesschen, or In the Quiet Alley (Fig. 33). Set in a cheerless corner of a courtyard, Zille portrayed a desperately ill girl tended by her younger brother; the child's gaze, with her drawn face, brings the viewer into the scene. Adolf Heilborn, writer and Zille's physician and friend, was moved to describe this work in detail:

I am thinking of In the Quiet Alley from Mein Milljoeh: a narrow court, the trash cans, out-house, drainage ditch, and the cellar-room addition that even lessen the bit of existing

16

Freund and Hanisch, Mutter Krausens, p. 115: "Und weil er ihre [die Masse] Sprache redete, wurde er von ihr verstanden wie kein anderer -- wurde sein Name ein Begriff."

17

Wedding and Moabit are boroughs in Berlin that were inhabited predominantly by the working class.

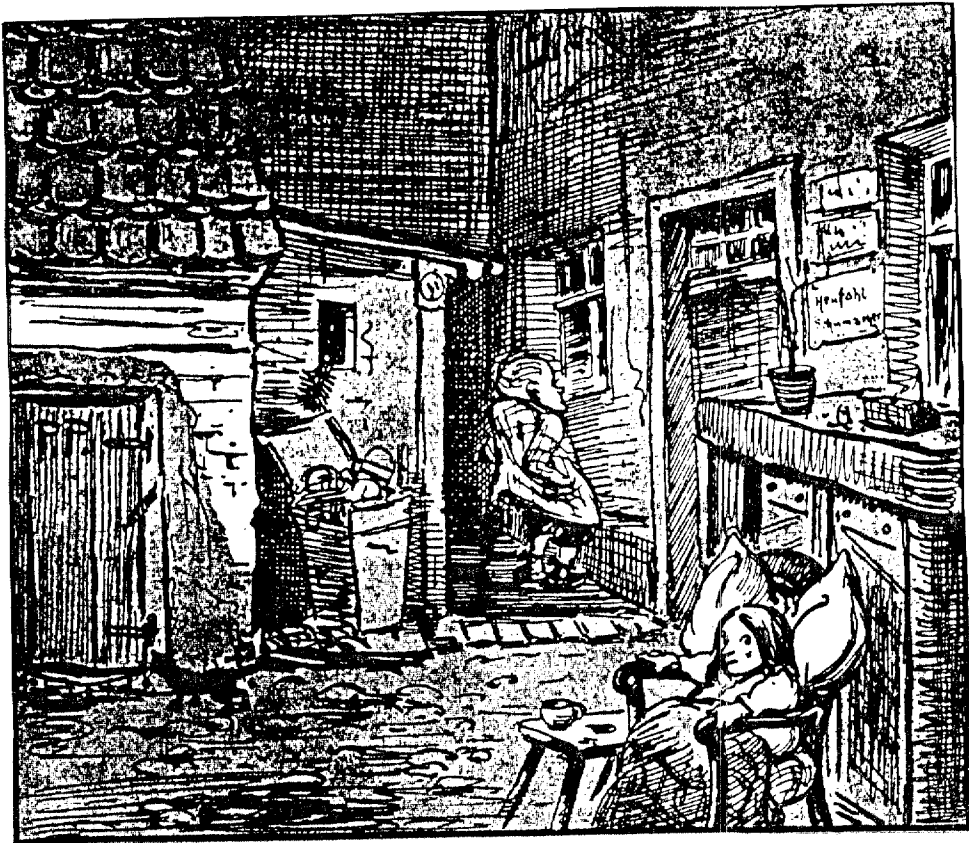


Fig. 33, Heinrich Zille, Im stillen Gaesschen (In the Quiet Alley), 1914, "Ma, bring out those two potted plants -- Lizzie loves to sit in the country!" (Translation by Hans Bodlander.)

ventilation. Wrapped up with pillows and blankets like a mummy, they sit the little 'bundle of worry'...outside...Her cup of watered-down milk stands next to her on a kitchen stool. And her brother, whose body is just as deformed and whose growth is just as stunted as hers, shuffles his bowed legs to the kitchen window and calls inside: 'Ma, bring out those two potted plants -- Lizzie loves the country! 18

Zille's handling of the subject of impending death differs markedly with that of Munch's The Sick Girl (Fig. 34). Both artists convey family concern for a seriously ill child. However, Munch's quiet observation of the two figures, tinged with foreboding, focuses directly and movingly on the subject of death.

In contrast, Zille's work is steeped in the everyday, the routine. Zille supplied ample narrative information for the viewer; in broad daylight, he presented the pathetic family as it tries to make the child's remaining days comfortable. It is at once a testament to courage in the face of death and a denunciation of urban squalor.

18

Adolf Heilborn, Die Zeichner des Volks. Kaethe Kollwitz -- Heinrich Zille (Berlin, 1924), p. 74: "Ich denke an jenes 'Im stillen Gaesschen' aus Mein Milljoeh: ein enger Hof, dem Muellkaesten, Aborthaueschen, Senkgrube und Kellervorbau noch das bisschen Luft schmaelern. Da hinaus haben sie das in Kissen und Decken gemummelte Haeufchen Unglueck...gesetzt...Auf einem Kuechenschemel neben ihr steht die Tasse mit der duennen Milch. Und das ebenso verwachsene, zwerghaft alt dreinschauende Bruederlein schluerft mit den Saebelbeinen ans Kuechenfenster und ruft hinein: 'Mutta, jib doch die zwee Blumentaeppe raus, Lischen sitzt so jern ins Jriene.'" Mein Milljoeh, published in 1914, was a huge success; Fischer reports that by the end of the 1920's, more than 100,000 copies had been printed. Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 59.



Fig. 34, Edvard Munch, Das kranke Kind
(The Sick Child), 1894, Drypoint, 275 x 270mm.

In another instance, Zille revealed the insidious presence of death in children's lives. A girl who walks with her friends announces: "If I want to, I can spit blood on the snow..." (Fig. 35).¹⁹ Tuberculosis, known as the "disease of the poor,"²⁰ claimed many lives, both young and old, in Berlin's tenements. As in Im stillen Gaesschen, Zille did not show the gravely ill girl on her deathbed; he exposed her tubercular condition as she chatted idly with her friends. Titled Ohne Apparate, or Without Contrivance, this work appeared in Zille's popular first book of graphic works published in 1908, Kinder der Strasse.

Health problems were also brought about by excessive alcohol consumption; in Zille's work, this subject is generally confined to men. A pen and ink drawing, executed in 1906 and published in Kinder der Strasse, Beim Arzt, or At the Doctor's, illustrates Zille's use of humor to expose a serious problem (Fig. 36). The doctor points to a chart on the wall and warns: "If you go on drinking that way, you'll end up with a damaged heart, liver, kidneys and stomach, as you see them here. The man, repulsed by what he sees, says: "How disgusting, Doctor, after seeing that I'll have to have

¹⁹
"Wenn ick will, kann ick Blut in'n Schnee spucken..."

²⁰
Annemarie Lange, Das Wilhelminische Berlin. Zwischen Jahrhundertwende und Novemberrevolution (Berlin, 1967), p. 350.



Ohne Apparate.

„Wenn ich will, kann ich Blut in den Schnee spucken.“

Fig. 35, Heinrich Zille, Ohne Apparate (Without Contrivance), 1904, "If I want to, I can spit blood in the snow."



Beim Arzt. "Wenn Sie so weiter trinken, bekommen Sie ein Bierherz, Leber, Nieren und Magen wie hier auf der Abbildung."
 "Pfui Teibel, Herr Doktor, da muß ich aber gleich nachher een Druff trinken!"

Fig. 36, Heinrich Zille, Beim Arzt (At the Doctor's Office), 1906, "If you go on drinking that way, you'll end up with a damaged heart, liver, kidneys, and stomach, as you see them here." "How disgusting, Doctor, after that I'll have to have a drink!"

a drink!" It is evident that the man pictured here has no intention to give up alcohol, no matter how disagreeable the consequences. Along with the light-hearted humor, Zille transmits a sense of the working class as helpless, innocent victims. This harks back to the theory propounded by Zola's teacher, Hippolyte Taine, who asserted: "Crime and virtue are products, just as acid and sugar are."²¹

Two companion pieces, pen and ink drawings from 1909, Das Jubilaeum, or The Anniversary, point up the exploitive nature of the attitude of management toward labor. The first work shows a loyal employee who marks his twenty-fifth year with the company. As there are handshakes and kind words all around, his co-workers say: "Fritz, we congratulate you, now go and see the boss; surely he must have something for you" (Fig. 37). In the second work, Zille shows the worker standing humbly by as the manager says to him: "So today you've been with me twenty-five years; now just imagine all the money you've carted away from me" (Fig. 38). Rarely did Zille accuse a villain explicitly. But in this work, he purposely included certain details in the background: the diploma, the wine and the flowers. These signs of material success and luxury contrast sharply with the thin, bent

21

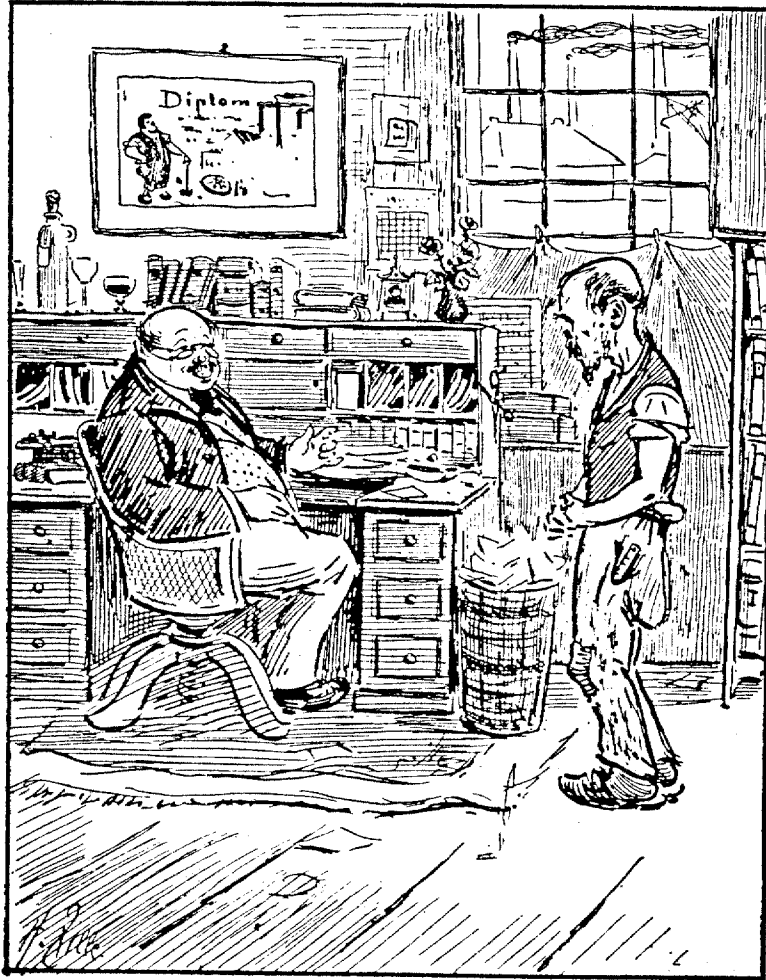
Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 91: "Das Verbrechen und die Tugend sind Produkte wie das Vitriol und der Zucker."



Das Jubiläum.

„— Frihe, wir gratulieren dir, nu jeh man zum Schëff, der muß doch was zum besten jeben!“

Fig. 37, Heinrich Zille, Das Jubiläum (The Anniversary), Pen and ink drawing, "Fritz, we congratulate you, now go and see the boss; surely he must have something for you."



(Das Jubiläum.)

„So, heute sind Sie 25 Jahre bei mir, nun denken Sie mal, wieviel Geld Sie mir schon haben weggeschleppt.“

Fig.38, Heinrich Zille, Das Jubiläum (The Anniversary), Pen and ink drawing, "So today you've been with me twenty-five years; now just imagine all the money you've carted away from me."

figure in tattered clothing who sought but an expression of appreciation for his loyalty. The sardonic quality of this work calls to mind those works by George Grosz that frequently attacked over-fed, self-serving bureaucrats in the 1920's.

A comparison between Zille's work above and a 1923 drawing by Grosz, Freut euch des Lebens (Fig. 39), illustrates that the two artists attacked the social order directly. Both used stark contrast of rich and poor, thereby creating an effective means of conveying a message: the social injustice that pervaded Berlin, both during the Wilhelmine period and the 1920's, caused much hardship.

Employment for those of the working class was unpredictable. As in Zille's case, when his family first came to Berlin, his father, although an artisan, had difficulty finding steady work. The family endured the life of poverty, just barely getting by. Most newcomers faced the same problem, and many men, separated from ancestral homelands, were ill-equipped to deal effectively with their sudden loss of respectability or the inability to provide adequately for their families. With Berlin's unreliable employment, often seasonal or short-term, small wonder that Zille's work abounds with studies of men wiling away their idle hours. Sketched in situ, he successfully captured the despondent dispositions of his unwitting models (Figs. 40 and 41).

In Zille's generally unflattering portrayal of fathers, he was likely to emphasize their lack of commitment to



Fig. 39, Geroge Grosz, Freut euch des Lebens (Enjoy Life), 1923.



Fig. 40, Heinrich Zille, Mann am Tisch
in einer Kneipe (Man at Bar Table), Sketch,
Hanover, Wilhelm-Busch-Museum.



Fig. 41, Heinrich Zille, Schlafender Mann am Tisch (Sleeping Man at Table), Charcoal sketch, West Berlin, Berlin Museum.

family responsibilities. It was not unusual for women or children talking among themselves to allude to drunken fathers, philandering husbands, or brothers in jail.²²

For example, In einer Berliner Kellerwohnung (In a Berlin Cellar Flat), a drawing which appeared in Lustige Blaetter in 1913, Zille shows a woman sewing at home in her cramped quarters (Fig. 42). Her daughter, standing on a stool to look out the window, says: "Mom, some drunks are fighting outside, but Dad's not one of them!" The woman is doubtlessly grateful that this time, her husband is not involved.

While Zille produced only very few works that showed men in their daily work routine, at a factory, for instance, it seems he must have followed women everywhere as they performed their daily chores. He made studies of them as they tended their children, did their housework and shopped for food (Figs. 43 and 44). Otto Nagel, Berlin artist and Zille's close friend during the 1920's, explained:

He [Zille] told me how, for days on end, he followed old women, in order to observe the fall of the folds in their skirts. Then, he ducked into the next building's hallway and 'jotted it down.'²³

22

While it is true that Zille also showed women with these same behaviors, he did so with less frequency.

23

Erhard Frommhold, Otto Nagel. Zeit Leben Werk (Berlin, 1974), p. 368: "Er [Zille] erzählte mir, wie er tagelang hinter alten Frauen hergelaufen war, um das Fallen der Rockfalten zu beobachten. Er nahm dann, wie er sagte, 'das Gesehene mit den Augen in den naechsten Hausflur' und 'notierte es dort auf.'"



„Mutta, draußen hau'n sich'n paar Besoffne, aba Vata is nich mang — —!“

Fig. 42, Heinrich Zille, In einer Berliner Kellerwohnung (In a Berlin Cellar Apartment), c. 1913, "Mom, some drunks are fighting outside, but Dad's not one of them."



Fig. 43, Heinrich Zille, Study of a Woman and Child.



Fig. 44, Heinrich Zille, Study of a Woman

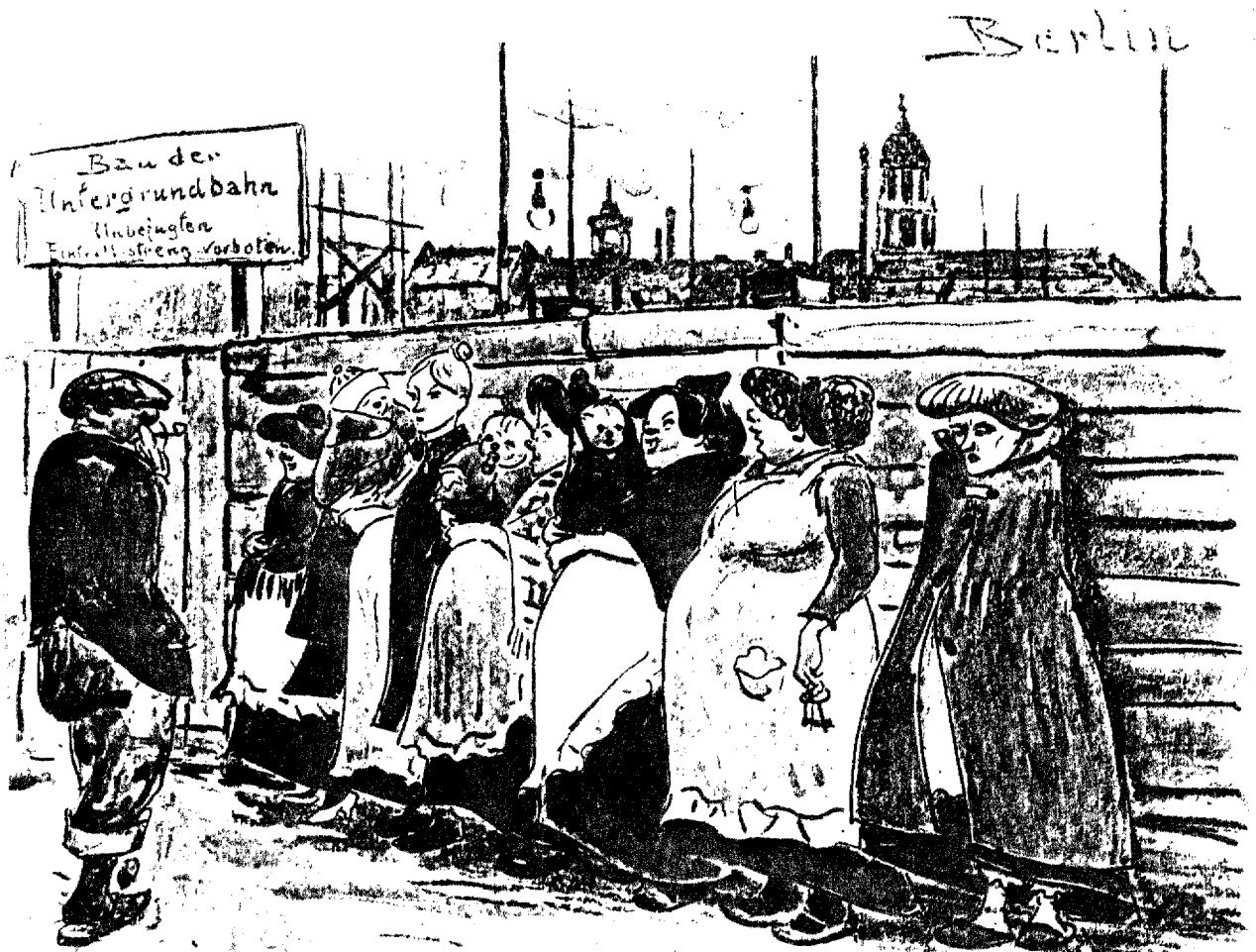
Zille's studies of women, often showed their trials in the face of poverty. In view of the needs required by a large family, women often took it upon themselves to protect the family's financial resources. A good example of this appears in a work from 1913, Berlin -- Lohntag, die Frauen erwarten die Maenner, or Payday, Women Await the Men (Fig. 45). To be certain that the week's pay was not washed down at a pub, the women, queued at the entrance to a construction site, wait for their men. Zille took care to include narrative details, such as the sign which indicates that the men were building Berlin's subway system. Zille added to the visual appreciation of this work by attributing to each character personal facial expressions and countenance.

It was not uncommon for women to be the sole support for themselves and their families; often many had to work to supplement their husband's income. Because most had young children, they resorted to Heimarbeit, or work done at home. Zille remembered the lean years his own family endured as they worked long days and nights making ink blotters to sell in stationery stores. Zille recalled in 1924:

I still buy my art supplies at Bormann's on Bruederstrasse and put my money down on the same counter upon which, as a child, I received the money for our work as it was pushed grudgingly in my direction. 24

24

Fischer, Heinrich Zille, p. 13: "...ich hole mir noch mein Zeichenmaterial von Bormann in der Bruederstrasse und lege mein Geld dafuer auf denselben Tisch, auf dem ich als Junge den kargen Verdienst fuer unsere Arbeit muerrisch hingeschoben bekam."



Lohntag, die Frauen erwarten die Maenner.

H. Zille.
1913.

Fig. 45, Heinrich Zille, Berlin -- Lohntag, die Frauen erwarten die Maenner (Berlin -- Payday, the Women Await the Men), 1913, Charcoal pencil, aquarelle, black ink, 25x31 cm, Private Collection, Switzerland.

For his family, Heimarbeit provided the income that kept them clothed and fed until that time when his father found dependable employment.

The most common form of Heimarbeit, tedious piece-work for Berlin's thriving garment industry, was demanding and the pay was low. Compounded by monthly installments to their employer for purchase of the sewing machine, women had to work long hours in order to realize a profit. This, coupled with the care of their children, made for endless days and nights. To make matters worse, the garment industry was not a reliable employer; the need for seamstresses was seasonal, and therefore, the threat of sudden dismissal was ever present. As a result of these factors, Heimarbeit took a terrible toll on Berlin's working class women; Masur reports that the average life expectancy for a seamstress in the working class was twenty-six years.

Quite often, Zille included in his domestic scenes,

25

Lange says that garment industry owners successfully resisted changes in the Heimarbeit system; since they had no out-of-pocket expenses, such as those incurred with the operation of a large workshop, they had everything to gain. "In running a factory they would have unions with pay raises and strikes to hassle with, also inspections along with rules for observing lawful hours of work." ("In Fabrikbetrieben haetten sie die Gewerkschaften mit Lohnforderungen und Streiks auf dem Halse, auch die Gewerbeinspektion mit Kontrolle der gesetzlichen Arbeitszeiten." Lange, Das Wilhelmische Berlin, p. 80.

26

Masur, Imperial Berlin, p. 131.

the visual evidence of Heimarbeit in the home: the sewing machine in a corner of the room, or a woman working at the machine (See Fig. 42). Sometimes, Zille placed groups of objects on a table, which indicated the presence of Heimarbeit, perhaps trinkets to sell, much the same as Zille's family had done. In a charcoal drawing of an interior, Die Dachstube der Naeherin, or The Attic Room of the Seamstress (Fig. 46), Zille brings the viewer into the room, as if one had just opened the door. The sewing machine stands at the window, where the light is best; personal items lie about as if they had just been used. In this work, Zille reveals the rooftop room, just one of many in Berlin. No humor here, this study allows the viewer to absorb the image quietly and to reflect on it.

Because of the many hardships endured by the working class in Berlin, the frequency of untimely death in all age groups was staggering. Predictably, Zille's treatment of the topic was direct and honest. One hears from the words spoken by his characters, the role that death played in their lives. For instance, in a work from Mein Milljoeh, titled Bescheidener Wunsch, or Humble Wish (Fig. 47), Zille showed a woman who walks along with her blind father. They pass by a shop that sells coffins and the woman exclaims: "Oh gosh, if only you could still see, Father, this would be quite a coffin for my Willy!" It is evident that the woman has



Fig. 46, Heinrich Zille, Die Dachstube der Naeherin, (The Attic Room of the Seamstress), Charcoal and red chalk drawing, 36.2 x 27.7cm, West Berlin, Berlin Museum.



Bescheidener Wunsch.

„Ach Jotte doch, Vater, wenn de bloß det noch kieken kennt'st, det wär so'n Särjekin for mein Willy!“

Fig. 47, Heinrich Zille, Bescheidener Wunsch (Humble Wish), "Oh gosh, if only you could still see Father, this would be quite a coffin for my Willy!"

experienced death before, and she is prepared, one can say she even expects, to see death again. Nagel said of Zille's work: "Heinrich Zille was never sentimental -- but he was also never overly bitter. He expressed the simple truth."²⁷

In a work that appeared in Ulk, the satirical supplement to the Berliner Tageblatt daily newspaper, in 1907, and in Kinder der Strasse in 1908, Wohnungs-Hygiene, or Hygiene in the Home (Fig. 48), Zille exhibited the casual attitude children also had toward death. It is one of the most morbid of Zille's works. Left alone in their attic tenement, a doctor arrives to confirm the death of the children's baby brother. He asks: "Children, where is your brother who died this morning?" They answer: "Oh doctor, Mother had to go out and so she locked Hans in the dresser; we're not supposed to play with him." The stunned doctor stares at the dresser; so too, does one of the other children, who has already tried to pry the drawer open. The youngsters, as the adults in the working class, have become accustomed to death. Zille often used the words of children to shock middle class sensibilities; in this case, the doctor is dumbstruck and simply looks on in disbelief. Ranke explained Zille's treatment of the theme of death: "He

27

Freund and Hanisch, Mutter Krausens, p. 114: "Heinrich Zille war niemals sentimental -- aber auch niemals uebertrieben bitter. Er war einfach wahr."



Wohnungs-Hygiene.

Arzt im Norden Berlins, der den Tod eines Arbeiterkinds bestätigen soll, findet in der Wohnung des Arbeiters nur die Kinder beim spielen vor: „Kinder, wo ist denn euer heute morgen verstorbenes Brüderchen?“

„Ach Herr Doktor,“ erwidern die Kinder, „Mutter is wehgegangen und hat den Hans in die Komode geschlossen, damit wir nich mit ihm spielen.“

Fig. 48, Heinrich Zille, Wohnungs-Hygiene (Hygiene in the Home), 1907, Doctor in North Berlin, who has come to confirm the death of a worker's child, finds the children alone in the flat: "Children, where is your brother who died this morning?" "Oh doctor, Mother had to go out and so she locked Hans in the dresser; we're not supposed to play with him."

created...works of macabre seriousness, in which death is stripped of all veiled sentimentality and emerges for children as a means of deliverance from their unbearable existence."²⁸

Considering the grim conditions for the working class, gradually dignity, optimism and trust were replaced by hopelessness. Zille's oeuvre includes many studies of broken old men, self-deprecating youths, resigned housewives and desperate mothers. It follows that Zille did not shrink from its occasional result: suicide or genocide. In a work characterized by dark humor, Zille presents a crowd gathered in the street at the scene of a recent suicide (Fig. 49). The building's landlord looks on and comments glibly: "If people keep jumping out the windows, I won't have any renters left!" As in Das Jubilaeum (Fig. 38), Zille exposed a condescending rogue, who in this case even astounds the hardened residents of the working class neighborhood.²⁹

In 1906, Zille's work, Ins Wasser (Into the Water), addressed the subject of suicide and genocide in a strong

28

Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p.229: "Es gelingen ihm...Blaetter von makabrem Ernst, in denen das Sterben aller verschleiernden Sentimentalitaet entkleidet wird und als Erloesung aus den schon fuer die Kinder unertraeglichen Daseinszwaengen erscheint."

29

A work such as this appears to cross the fine line between Naturalism, that does not interpret social circumstances, and Social Realism, that points an accusing finger at the existing order.



„Alle Tage stürzt sich einer bei mir aus't Fenster, ick habe bald keene Mieter mehr!“

Fig. 49, Heinrich Zille, "If people keep jumping out the windows, I won't have any renters left!"

statement that appeared in Simplicissimus in 1906 and in Kinder der Strasse in 1908 (Fig. 50). Writer Adolf Heilborn said of this work:

... a stormy, early Fall evening outside the city gates, the pregnant woman carrying a child in her arms, strides resolutely toward the water to jump into the canal; the child asks: 'Mom, isn't it [the water] cold too?' and the agonized woman answers: 'Be quiet -- fish live in it all the time.'³⁰

A mother about to drown herself and her child is as morbid a subject imaginable; Zille's combination of word and image effectively communicates the desperation felt by a woman who can no longer bear her poverty-stricken existence.³¹

Kaethe Kollwitz created a work, also titled Ins Wasser (Fig. 51), and although it deals with the theme of suicide, it bears little resemblance to Zille's work. Kollwitz' female figure is poised on the last step at the water's edge and grapples with her decision. Narrative

30

"...ein stuermischer frueher Herbstabend draussen vor den Toren, das schwangere Weib, das, die Kleine auf dem Arme, in unbeirrbarem Entschlusse gleichsam einen Anlauf nimmt, sich in das Wasser der Schleuse zu stuerzen; die Kleine fragt: 'Mutta, is's ooch nich kalt?' und das gequaelte Weib gibt die Antwort: 'Sei ruhig -- die Fische leben imma drin!'" Winfried Ranke places the time of day at early morning. Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 177.

31

Zille did not only use suicide or genocide as a solution in drawings or prints. In the 1929 film, Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glueck, based on Zille's Milljoeh, the story took a tragic turn when the mother, filled with despair, took her own life and that of her young daughter by means of inhaling gas fumes from her kitchen stove.



Ins Wasser.

„Mutter is's doch nich kalt?“

„Sei ruhig — die Fische leben immer drin.““

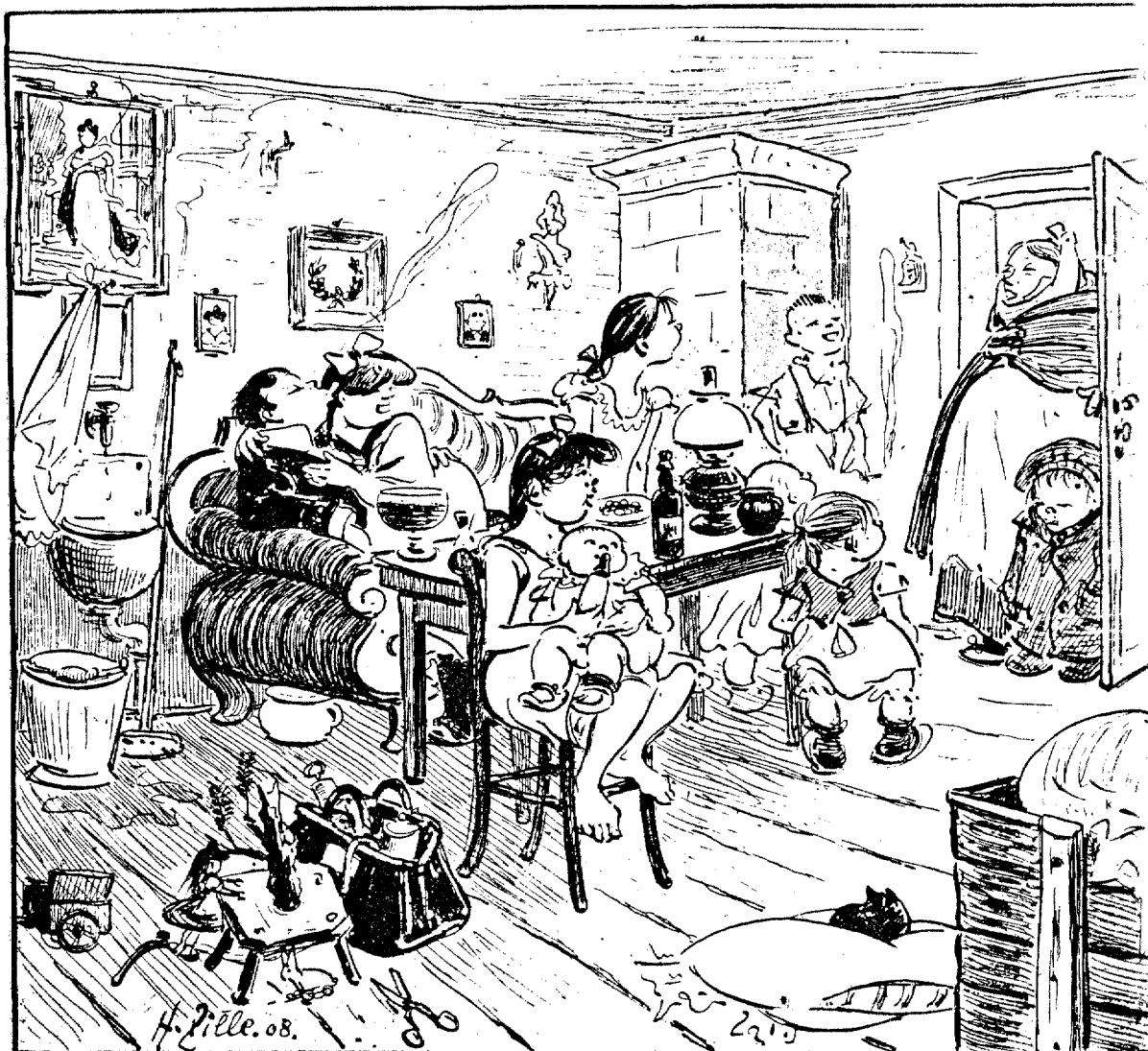
Fig. 50, Heinrich Zille, Ins Wasser (Into the Water), 1904, "Ma, isn't it [water] cold too?" "Be quiet -- fish live in it all the time."



Fig. 51, Kaethe Kollwitz, Ins Wasser
(Into the Water), 1909, Ink Drawing, 63 x 46 cm.

information, such as that supplied by Zille, the time of day, the ragged clothing and the cityscape in the background, has been omitted. The woman, as presented by Kollwitz, could live anywhere, at any time. This universal statement of the agonized moment before the act of suicide, has been captured with simplicity and quiet power. It is interesting to note that Heilborn stated in his book, published in 1924, Die Zeichner des Volks. Kaethe Kollwitz -- Heinrich Zille, that Kollwitz maintained that Zille's work, Ins Wasser, was much stronger than her own.³²

Zille never backed away from controversial issues, and a pen and ink drawing from 1908 that appeared in Simplicissimus in January, 1909, illustrates this. Frau Storchens Ruhetage (Mrs. Stork's Days Off) touches on several unsavory realities for the working class: the use of midwives (assumedly untrained) for purposes of birth and abortion, imprisonment and the resultant unattended family (Fig. 52). The room filled with children and youth, whose excesses in smoke and drink far exceed their years, turn to a neighbor who is obviously near term in her pregnancy: She asks: "Where's your mother, kids? Is she out reconnoitering?" They answer: "You can't count on Mother this time. She's been in jail for three weeks now for performing abortions."



Frau Storchens Ruhetage.
 "Wo is denn eure Mutter, Kinder? Is se uff
 Kundshaft?" —
 "Uff Muttern kemm se dies mal nitg reihnen, die
 sitzt schon drei Woichen, die hat Miß'geburten
 jemaicht!"

Fig. 52, Heinrich Zille, Frau Storchens Ruhetage
 (Mrs. Stork's Days Off), 1908, Pen and ink drawing,
 "Where's your mother, kids? Is she out reconnoitering?"
 "You can't count on mother this time. She's been in jail
 for three weeks now for performing abortions." (Trans-
 lation by S. Appelbaum)

Zille's portrayal of Berlin's poor was not limited to cramped housing conditions, disease, hunger, economic exploitation and hopelessness. Much of his oeuvre was devoted to their frequent display of high spirits, despite the problems they faced. Zille delighted in recording their bars and dance halls, the elaborately staged alley festivals, the often bizarre world of the travelling side-show and their revelry at Berlin's lakes. Zille's view, therefore, was consistently egalitarian. He presented a balanced view of the working class: their problems and their amusements. Georg Hermann offers this explanation in the Introduction to Zille's Mein Milljoeh:

To be sure, when one comes to one's art as a mature man, then one is no longer on the attack... Then one has seen that the lowly and those on the very bottom...that golden lights can also light their existence. 33

As mentioned earlier, the consumption of alcohol often reached abusive levels, and played a role in the instability of family life. Drinking was not only a leisure pastime, but for many, it was a daily diversion from life's pressures. Bars of all kinds were readily available. Nelson explains:

Kneipen, or bars, became especially popular in

33

Zille, "Mein Milljoeh." Bilder, pp. 5-6: "Gewiss -- wenn man wie Zille als reifer Mann zu seiner Kunst kommt, dann ist man kein Anklaeger mehr... Dann hat man gesehen, dass auch die Letzten und Niedrigsten...dass auch ueber ihrem Dasein goldene Lichter spielen."

the days after 1871, when thousands lived three, four, five to a room, in wretched Mietskasernen. The Kneipe afforded them [the working class] a measure of privacy; it was the only place they could be away from relatives, except on a park bench. 34

Known by such colorful names as Kneipen, Budiken, Destillen, Kaschemmen and Klausen, they catered to the needs of their neighborhood and their clientele. 35 Zille spent much time at his favorite Kneipe, Zum Nussbaum, a sixteenth century establishment in northern Berlin. He felt at home and enjoyed the display of his works there. 36 In the same vein, Fischer cites Zille's view: "My pictures should hang in bars and dives; that's where most of them come from and that's where they belong. There, at least the people can see them; no one goes to the museums anyway." 37

34

Nelson, The Berliners, p. 285.

35

Nelson tells of all Berliners' penchant for a drink in their 'own' bar. *ibid.*, p. 285. Nelson also relates Walther Kiaulehn's comment: "Anyone who lives in Berlin and doesn't go to a Kneipe regularly is either sick or he's no Berliner." *ibid.*, p. 285.

36

Tschechne, Heinrich Zille, p. 8. It was at Zum Nussbaum that the patrons used mustard to secure Zille's works from newspapers and journals to the wall (See Chapter I, p. 47, Note 69).

37

Fischer, Heinrich Zille, pp. 76-77: "Meine Bilder sollen in Kneipen und Kaschemmen haengen, denn da kommen die meisten naemlich her, und da sollen sie auch wieder hin. In't Lokal koennen die Menschen se wenigstens sehen, in die Museen geht ja doch keener."

A pen and ink drawing that appeared in Zille's Mein Milljoeh (Fig. 53), shows two men in a bar as they ponder the virtues of a newspaper article on alcohol abuse: "-- they're always going on about alcohol -- what do we need alcohol for, as long as we've got Schnapps!" As in Beim Arzt (Fig. 36), Zille presents men avoiding the issue of alcohol as it relates to their health. Good-naturedly, Zille reveals their foolishness, but he does not chide them. A work, also from Mein Milljoeh, titled Der Budikerkeller (Fig. 54), Zille turns to a seamy bar, the gathering place of prostitutes and pimps; it offers its patrons few creature comforts and little more than a place to sit and drink. According to Otto Nagel, Zille's depiction of working class bars "... is genuine, right down to the last detail..."³⁸

In a Berlin Kaschemme, one was more likely to find musical entertainment of some sort. In Ball in der Kaschemme (Fig. 55), Zille shows two couples dancing; they seem to be the only sober patrons, as the others are in various states of drunkenness. Ranke explains:

He [Zille] knew... what these people were trying to forget while having fun, and [he knew] how desperately they needed a little release in order to survive. 39

38 Freund and Hanisch, Mutter Krausens, p. 114: "... ist echt bis zum letzten Strich ..."

39 Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 216.



„— Ja redende Leute immer wat von
 Alkohol — wat brauch'n wir'n Alkohol
 wenn wir Schnapps hab'n !“

Fig. 53, Heinrich Zille, Pen and ink drawing,
 "-- they're always going on about alcohol-- what do
 we need alcohol for, as long as we have Schnapps!"



Der Budikerkeller.

Fig. 54, Heinrich Zille, Der Budikerkeller



Ball in der Kaschemme.

— Immer an de Wand lang, immer an de Wand lang! —

Fig. 55, Heinrich Zille, Ball in der Kaschemme,
 "-- Just follow the wall, just follow the wall! --"

The dancers in Zille's Kaschemme enjoy a popular hit tune⁴⁰ penned by Zille's friend, Hermann Frey.

Yet another kind of bar was the Tingel-Tangel; it combined social drinking with entertainment, provided in part, by female singers called Chansonetten (Fig. 56). Their somewhat dubious singing abilities were put to the test with audience-participation contests of sorts; the loudest applause indicated the crowd's favorite for the evening. It was bawdy fare, and this was especially true of the house comedian, who delighted his audience with naughty ditties and the recitation of racy Couplets⁴¹ (Fig. 57). Zille offered a glimpse of a Tingel-Tangel in Pause, or Intermission (Fig. 58), a work published in Simplicissimus on May 30, 1910. It aptly conveys the raucous atmosphere of the Tingel-Tangel; Frey says that men generally predominated in the audience, but in this work women and children are in attendance,⁴² seemingly unaware of the goings-on. One of the

40

The song, Just Follow the Wall, instructs inebriated revelers how to find their way home. Perhaps Zille and Frey heeded that advice the night they met in 1914; into the wee hours they went from bar to bar, and Zille even used a secret knock to gain entry to a private club, actually a bar that had no license. Hermann Frey, Immer an der Wand lang, Illustrations by Heinrich Zille (Berlin, 1943), pp. 146-52. Their friendship bore artistic fruit; for the next several years Zille designed placards, stage sets and costumes for comic revues produced by Frey.

41

Frey, Immer an der Wand lang, p. 42.

42

ibid, p. 42.



Tingel-Tangel-Chansonette um 1900

Fig. 56, Heinrich Zille,
Chansonette, 1900.



Fig. 57, Heinrich Zille, Comedian, 1900



„Frau Direktor! Uff de Sarberobe is schon wieder ten Elmeer!“

Fig. 58, Heinrich Zille, Pause (Intermission), 1910, "Boss! There's no pail in the dressing room again!" (Translation by Stanley Appelbaum).

onlookers at the left, a man who is quite well dressed, looks out to the viewer with a knowing smile as if to say: "I could tell you a thing or two about this place!" One immediately grasps the crude ambience as a buxom songstress shouts indelicately: "Boss! There's no pail in the dressing room again!"

Children at play was a favorite subject for Zille; he seems to have taken special delight in portraying them in as many activities as possible. His attention to detail is most evident in these works, as can be seen in a pen and ink drawing from 1901 (Fig. 59). Zille moves one's eye from one child to the next, giving the work a freize-like quality. Zille's effort to individualize each child's clothing and physical appearance adds much to the work. These children are in good spirits; as they lock arms, the older children protectively take the hands of the toddlers. No languishing, sickly children here; this work's universal quality precludes any response to social conditions. These are children who nurture each other, as well they must, since parental supervision was not always readily available.

In another work, Zille presents a group of children, aged from two or three to their teens, as they skate up the street (Fig. 60). Called Rollschuh-Klub 'Halt Dir feste,' or Rollerskating Club 'Hold on Tight,' the gleeful group rolls by; once more, each child has been individualized. The background setting is based on a Zille photograph taken circa



Fig. 59, Heinrich Zille, Group of Children, 1901,
Pen and ink drawing, 14.4 x 22.8 cm, East Berlin,
Private Collection: Gerhard Fluegge.



Fig. 60, Heinrich Zille, Rollschuh-Klub
'Halt Dir feste' (Rollerskating Club 'Hold
on tight,' 1910, Drawing.

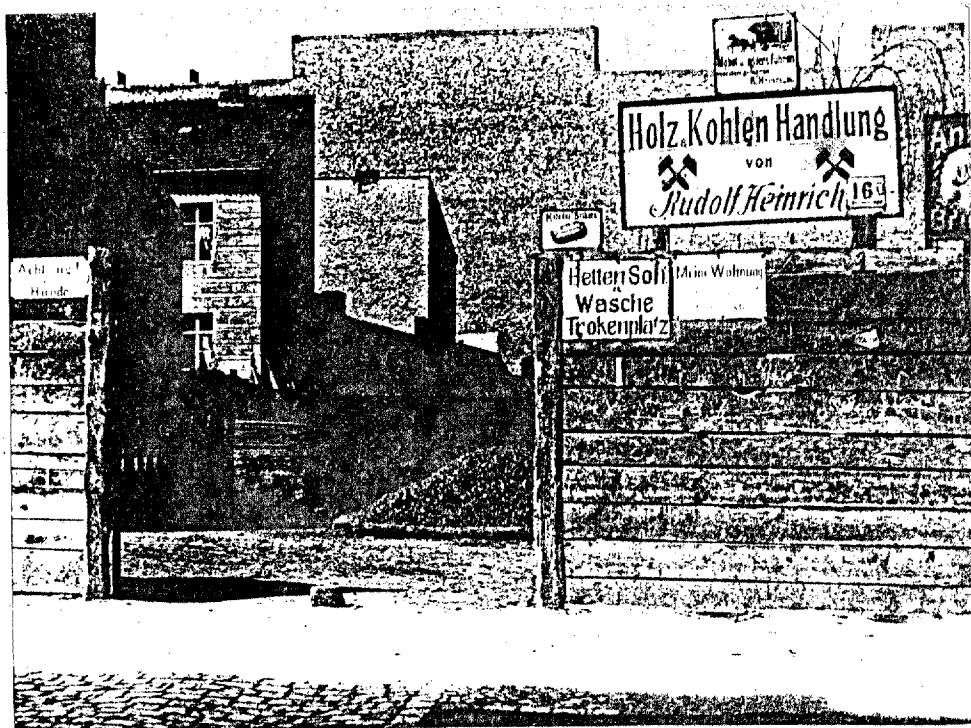


Fig. 61, Heinrich Zille, Kohlenplatz in
Charlottenburg, Dankelmannstr. 16a (Coal
Yard in Charlottenburg, 16a Dankelmann
Street), Photograph, c. 1900.

1900 (Fig. 61), which pictures a coal yard in his own neighborhood, Charlottenburg. In addition to the skating youth, on the sidewalk are other figures, one of which is a woman who helps her young child go to the bathroom. One can well imagine the response to such a work by the opponents of Rinnsteinkunst, with the horse droppings in the foreground and all else; this is 'art from the gutter' in the true sense of the word!

Occasionally, a Mietskasernen courtyard was the site of an outdoor cabaret, called a Hofball. The drab courtyard would be transformed to a gaily decorated meeting place for residents of all ages, but especially for the children. It afforded the opportunity to socialize, to dress up and to forget their worries, as in Erntefest auf dem II. Hof, Berlin O., or Harvest Fest at the Second Courtyard, Berlin East (Fig. 62). The girls put ribbons in their hair and the boys don hats and jackets, and for a while, the deprivation that otherwise attends their lives is not evident.

For much the same reason that working class Berliners loved their back-alley festivals, they thronged to traveling carnivals held at Rummelplaetze, or fairgrounds on the edge of the city. Zille left a fine photographic record of these fairs, which, it should be noted, were fancied by all Berliners, not just the working class. Friedrich Luft, author of the first book on Zille's photography in 1967, says:

He [Zille] must have spent days at the seedy



Fig. 62, Heinrich Zille, Erntefest auf dem II. Hof, Berlin O. (Harvest Fest at the Second Courtyard Berlin E.), 1910, West Berlin, Galerie Pels-Leusden.

Rummelplatz. There he felt alive. There were children galore, barefoot, their hair standing up like spikes, shorn to make it easier to get rid of lice that so often chose children as their hosts. And next to them [were] the children from 'better homes,' with their nice straw hats, ankle boots, [dressed] in their sailor suits. 43

Zille's photograph of a crowd, many of them barefoot boys, is effective use of the medium as it conveys the eagerness of the group awaiting an attraction (Fig. 63). These fairs usually catered their entertainment to a male audience, as another Zille photograph indicates (Fig. 64). The large sign that announces the offerings at the carnival, lists for example, "Anatomy (For Adults Only)" or "Dancing Sylphs -- Amazing Works of Art in the Flesh." Luft confirms our suspicions that enticements such as these signified but one thing: "Naked Women!"⁴⁴

Among the most popular events at the carnivals were wrestling matches between men and women. A drawing from 1903, Ringkampf in der Schaubude (Wrestling Match in the Arena), pits two wrestlers as they do battle with no holds

43

Luft, Mein Photo-Milljoeh, p. 65: "Er muss ganze Tage auf einem armseligen Rummelplatz zugebracht haben. Da klopfte sein Herz. Hier waren die Kinder zuhauf, die barfuessigen, die stiftekoepfigen, denen man die Haare abgeschoren hatte, um das Ungeziefer, das die Kinder so gern befiel, schneller ausmachen und eliminieren zu koennen. Und daneben die Kinder aus den 'besseren Haeusern' mit ihren feinen Strohhuetten, Stiefelettchen, in ihren Matrosenanzuegen."

44

ibid., p. 133: "Nackte Weiber!"

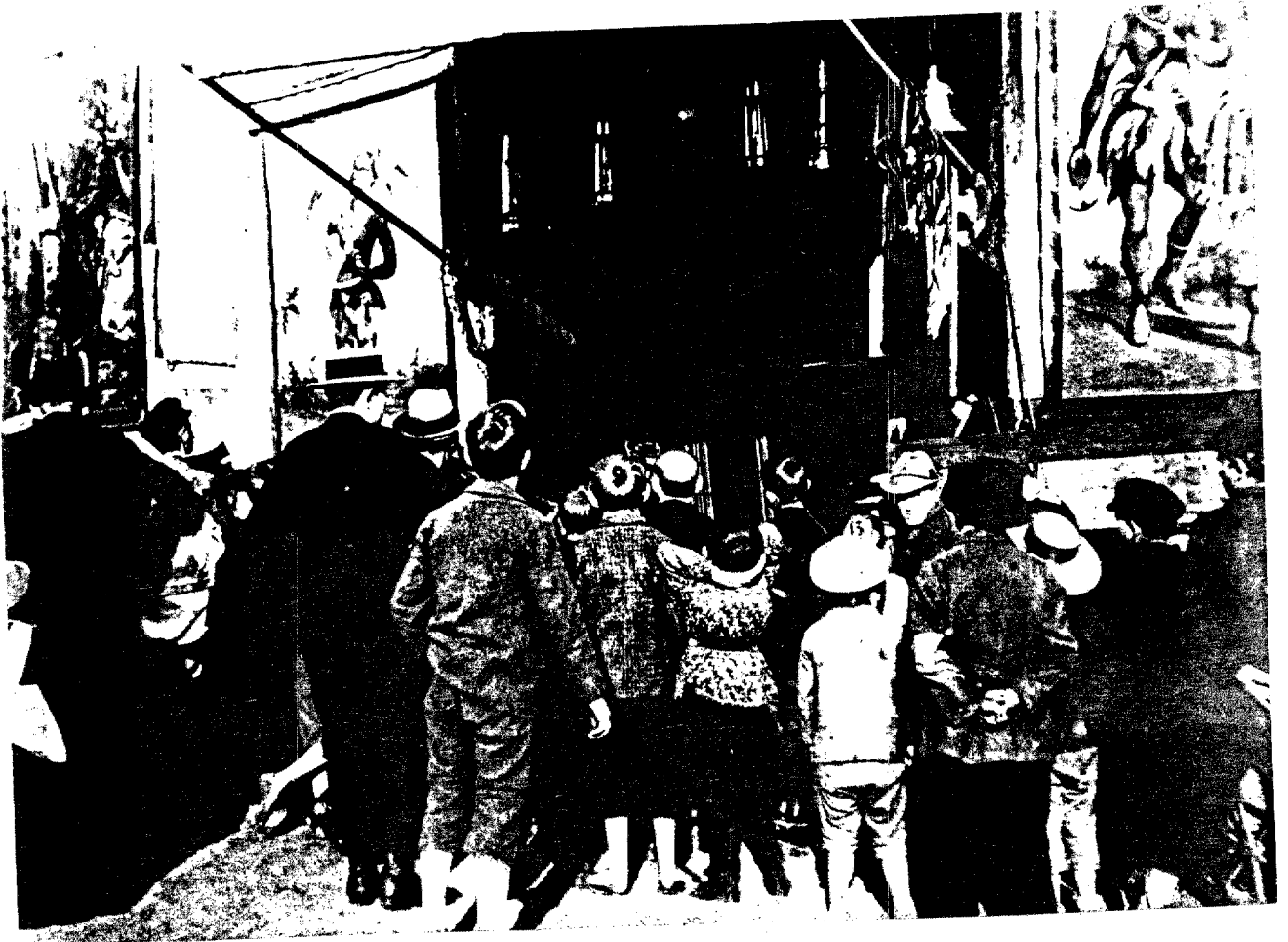


Fig. 63, Heinrich Zille, Rummelplatz
(Carnival), Photograph.

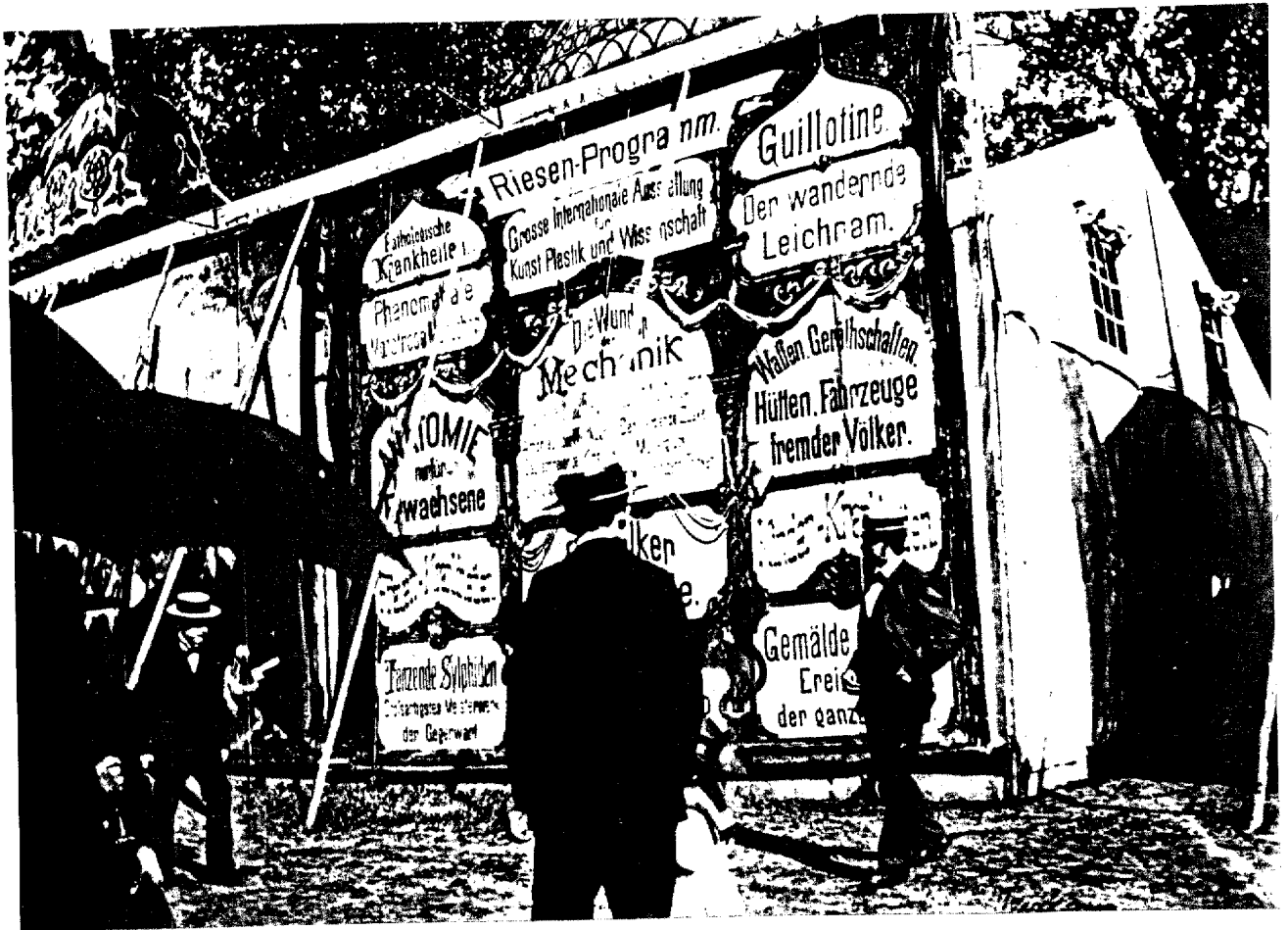


Fig. 64, Heinrich Zille, Rummelplatz
(Carnival), Photograph.

barred (Fig. 65). Wrestling matches between the sexes presented opportunities for comical, as well as suggestive positionings of the two wrestlers. It appears likely, and Zille intends for the viewer to notice the couple on the right, that the man's interest in his companion has been piqued by the events in the 'ring.'

In addition to pubs, back-alley fests and the fairgrounds, Berliners loved water sports. Berlin's many lakes, it would seem, could have provided cooling respite for its citizens, especially those who made their homes in stifling Mietskasernen. However, it was forbidden to swim along the miles of existing shoreline; in fact, police officers patrolled the shores to enforce the law (Fig. 66). Lange reports:

Ever since the turn of the century, the summer 'migration' to the Spree and Havel lakes had established a tradition. From Wedding, Rixdorf, and Rummelsburg, from all over the people fled the summer heat of Berlin's 'wilderness of stone.' However, the police officers were already there with strict orders to protect the wealthy villa owners on Wannsee and Nicholassee, etc., from inevitable intrusions. Large warning signs were placed on every available location along the banks. On foot and on horseback, the 'spiked helmets' patrolled the banks of the Mueggelsee, and especially the lakes of the Grunewald and Wannsee, in order to apprehend unauthorized bathers. 45

46
However, after a "persistent campaign" by Socialist

45
Lange, Das Wilhelminische Berlin, p. 552. For German text, see Appendix.

46
ibid., p. 551: "...ein hartnaeckigen Kampf."



Fig. 65, Heinrich Zille, Ringkampf in der Schaubude (Wrestling Match in the Arena), Chalk Drawing, 1903, Private Collection, West Berlin.



Fig. 66, Police officer gives 5 Mark fines for Unlawful Swimming, Photograph, 1906.

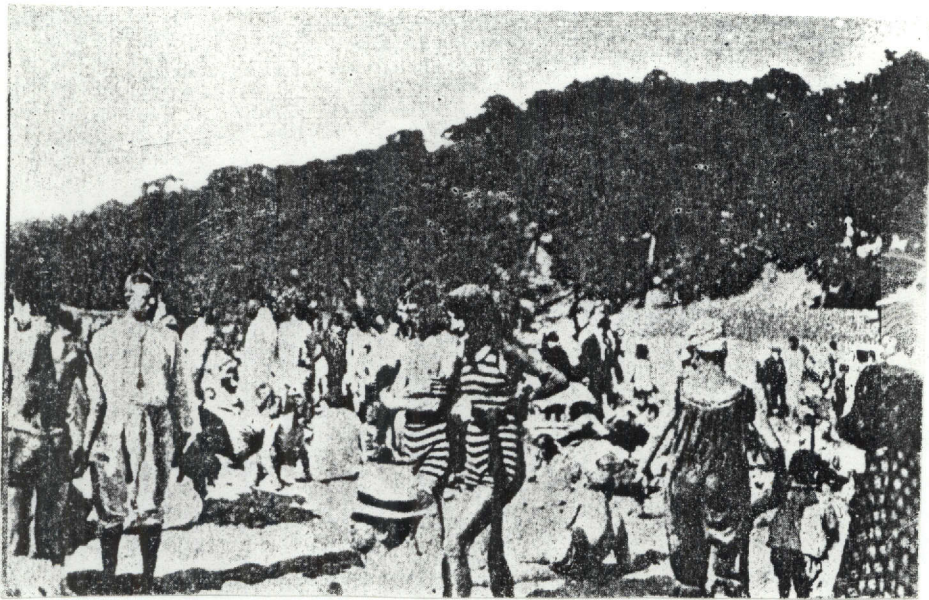


Fig. 67, Beach at Wannsee, Photograph, 1907

working class youth, in 1907, several beaches were opened to the public, and a welcome summer activity availed itself to Berlin's sweltering residents (Fig. 67). Zille wrote in the Introduction to Rund ums Freibad (Round and About the Beach), his collection of works on the swimming theme published in 1926:

Since 1907, throughout Germany, we have the [ultimate] medicine: the public beach. Sun, fresh air, water, fragrant fields and woods refresh the people physically and mentally after a hard week of work. 46

For Zille, the crush of humanity on Sunday afternoons afforded an opportunity to portray the Berlin masses at play. Ample figures in flimsy bathing suits, tipsy fathers, mothers tending babies, teenagers in hot pursuit of the opposite sex -- Zille presented these scenes with warmth and humor (Figs. 68 and 69).

Zille's beach scenes, as his other works, are imbued with an honest quality that amuses as well as informs. They are documents of social history which hold before the viewer scenes taken directly from life as it was lived in the early years of the twentieth century. In a drawing from Mein Milljoeh, Auf der Planschwiese (At the Plansch Meadow), Zille shows young children enjoying water sport at a flooded

46

Zille, Introduction to Rund ums Freibad, 300 Berliner Bilder, p. 9: "Nun haben wir seit 1907 in ganz Deutschland das Heilmittel: Das Freibad. Sonne, Luft, Wasser, duftende Wiesen und Waelder geben nach der schweren Arbeitswoche den Menschen koerperliche und seeliche Kraefte."



Fig. 68, Heinrich Zille, Wannsee Family Beach, 1907, Charcoal, Aquarelle, Gesso, Hanover, Galerie Koch.



Fig. 2-48, Heinrich Zille, Berliner Strandleben (Berlin Beach Life), 1912, Gouache, 31.9 x 49.3, East Berlin, Maerkisches Museum.

field (Fig. 70). Based on a photograph (not by Zille) which appeared in the Berlin Illustrated Newspaper in 1903, Zille underscored the importance of children's need for outdoor activities, especially swimming, that was reflected in their happy faces (Fig. 71).⁴⁷ In Rund ums Freibad, Zille exhorted fondly: "And now to all of you out there who are young... out into the sun, into the wild blue yonder -- you can't learn to swim in the bathtub!"⁴⁸

47

It was not uncommon for Zille to use illustrations that appeared in the press as inspiration for his work. Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 233. In this case, he chose to use the entire composition, rather than a portion thereof.

48

Zille, Introduction to Rund ums Freibad, 300 Berliner Bilder, p. 10: "Und nun ihr alle, die ihr jung seid... hinaus in die Sonne, in's Freie, in die Weite, in die Gefahren -- in der Badewanne lernt man nicht schwimmen!"



Auf der Planschwiese.

Fig. 70, Heinrich Zille, Auf der Planschwiese
(At the Plansch Meadow).



Fig. 71, Joys of Swimming During Vacation,
Press Photograph in Berlin Illustrated News-
paper, 1903.

CHAPTER IV

UP FROM THE GUTTER:

HEINRICH ZILLE'S ART TODAY

The recurring themes in Zille's artistic output between the years 1900 and 1914 maintain remarkable consistency. Bearing in mind the number of books of his illustrations, Kinder der Strasse in 1908, and Mein Milljoeh in 1914, and the considerable enterprises that attended these years of his late-blooming career,¹ Zille remained true to the portrayal of the working class in Berlin's tenement slums. The themes of inadequate housing, oppressive environment, unhealthy conditions, hunger, economic injustice, hopelessness, counter-balanced by the entertainments pursued by this same working class, reappear over and over again. It has been mentioned in Chapter I that not every topic touched upon in Zille's work is included here, but that a selection has been made that is representative of his work from 1900 to 1914.

¹ These include: submission of works to satirical journals, daily newspapers and Berlin Secession exhibitions; illustration of books written by others; publication of a portfolio of his prints; collaborations with producers of comic revues, including costume, set and placard design and murals painted in oil for several Kneipen.

It has been shown that French Naturalism exerted a powerful influence on Zille. He took the movement to heart, and it fueled creation of his works for a long period of almost forty years. One can say that the elements necessary to bring about a phenomenon like Zille's sudden awakening to a new course for his artistic expression were well placed and well timed: Zille was a competent artist, he lived in a large city that had many problems, and he had experienced some of those problems. In 1890, with increasing attention given to the social ills in Berlin, Zille faced an abrupt change in his outlook about his art, and about the motivation to create art for others.

During the ten years between 1890 and 1900, when growing influence of other artists figured importantly in his life, Zille developed his style and method of creating art according to the Naturalist belief of direct observation. He used sketches made in situ and photographs made with his own camera (or with one of three at the Photographische Gesellschaft)¹ to make his finished drawings at home. And so Zille was prepared with the technical know-how and a style that was uniquely his own. But this accomplishment had not come easily. In concert with the Naturalist notion that emphasized the value of good and honest work, Zille

¹ Ranke, Photographien Berlin, pp. 18-19.

stated emphatically that he achieved this accomplishment in the following way:

I achieved everything only with dogged determination. Only with discipline! and determination again!...At that time, my colleagues at the Photographische Gesellschaft asked me why I sketched every morning -- just studies from nature -- and also in the evening, often into the night. I didn't need to do that. After all, I had my salary. ²

But there was a factor that set Zille apart from other artists who portrayed urban life in the Naturalist style: Zille had authenticity. He had come to know the poorest, most wretched parts of Berlin as an impressionable youth. That experience, along with the fact that Zille kept his ties with North and East Berlin after he left, gave him a unique perspective that not many Naturalists could claim. He could approach his subject as an equal; Schumann said: "He [Zille] looked down their throats and into their hearts; he ate, drank, laughed and celebrated with them. ³ Transformed to an artist driven to relate his memories of poverty to that which he saw around him in Berlin's slums, Zille

²
Fischer, Heinrich Zille, pp. 47-48: "Das habe ich alles nur mit Gewalt erzielt. Nur mit Fleiss! und immer wieder Gewalt!... Da fragten mich die Herren von der Photographischen Gesellschaft, warum ich denn jeden Morgen schon zeichne -- so 'n bisschen nach der Natur -- und abends auch noch oft bis in die Nacht. Das haette ich doch nicht noetig. Ich haette doch mein Brot..."

³
Werner Schumann, Zille sein Milljoeh, 16th ed. (Hanover, 1973), p. 17: "Er sah ihnen aufs Maul und ins Herz, er ass, trank, lachte und feierte mit ihnen."

had acquired by 1900, a sure drawing style, a close circle of artist friends and the confidence to share his work with others.

It is only natural that one might wonder where Zille fit in the myriad of styles and movements that appeared in Berlin like mushrooms overnight. In light of his contacts with the progressive art community, it would seem likely that the influence of such artists as Kollwitz and the leftist Nagel, would have pitched Zille into the thick of the social realist camp. Rather, while willingly participating with such campaigns as International Hunger Relief or an eight-hour workday, Zille did not change his style or his method. His work never approached the gripping force, the universality of Kollwitz; rarely was his work likened to the bitterness of George Grosz. His art never became a weapon; in the midst of the artistic changes that occurred around him, Zille continued to explore the working class existence as he had always done. Amazingly, for forty years, Zille remained true to his Naturalist vision: to lay before the viewer, the realities of the oppressed masses in Berlin's slums. Ranke said of Zille's rightful place, in art historical terms:

... he remained an outsider, but one who

4

Both campaigns date from 1924; some of the other artists who participated were Kollwitz, Nagel, Grosz and Otto Dix.

through stimulation by Naturalist theories, pursued the investigation of social reality more thoroughly than most of his contemporaries. 5

It has been established that Zille's art consistently looked at the working class in a manner that characterized it as 'art from the gutter.' It is ironic that 1901, the year the Kaiser denounced Rinnsteinkunst, was the very year that Zille exhibited with the Berlin Secession for the first time. This group, regarded as upstarts by the monarch, undermined his concern for the aesthetic well-being of his subjects. His protestations in the Siegesallee Speech had the hollow ring of a voice from the past whose words fell on deaf ears. Berliners had already welcomed the modern age, and as such, the 'moderns' or those who opted for free expression in the arts had already won the day in the capital city.

If Zille's art received a mixed reaction during the Wilhelmine years, what can be said of his art today? Zille's drawings and prints, as well as his photographs, enjoy great popularity in all of Germany. Many of his illustrated books

5
 Ranke, Photographien Berlin, p. 18: "...blieb er so weiterhin ein Aussenseiter, aber einer, der den in naturalistischer Theorie enthaltenen Ansatz zur Erforschung gesellschaftlicher Realitaet gruendlicher und weiter verfolgt hat als die meisten seiner Kuenstlerkollegen."

6
 Zille's works also found their way across the Atlantic. An exhibition of Zille's photographs compiled by the Goethe-Institut in Munich traveled to twelve cities in the United States and Canada during 1982 and 1983.

have been reprinted in recent years. The Fackeltraeger Publishing Company in Hanover acquired the rights to reproduce Zille's works as early as the 1950's, and thereby earned the nick-name: 'Zille-Verlag.'⁷ That firm is also one of several entities who in 1966 formed the Heinrich-Zille-Stiftung, or Heinrich Zille Foundation. The other members include the states of Berlin and Lower Saxony, the city of Hanover and the Wilhelm-Busch-Gesellschaft. Together they accumulated over one thousand items which included artworks, of course, but also postcards and letters, first states of his prints, placards, and so on. The most valuable works are on permanent loan to the Wilhelm-Busch-Gesellschaft, where they are housed in a separate wing. The Maerkisches-Museum in East Berlin includes the Heinrich-Zille-Kabinett as part of its print collection. In West Berlin, the Berlin-Museum houses artifacts pertinent to Berlin's history, and from time to time, exhibits Zille works loaned by private collectors.

As to Zille's works and their desirability in the art market of today, Ranke wrote in 1979: "For about the last ten years, his water color sketches, drawings, prints and

7

Information regarding the Fackeltraeger-Verlag and the Heinrich-Zille-Stiftung is from Gustav Schmidt-Kuester and Karl Wiechert's Zille Almanach from 1969. Also, it should be noted that it was the Fackeltraeger-Verlag which decided in 1952, that a wide-ranging monograph on Zille would be published in 1979, the year that marked the fiftieth anniversary of his death. Ranke, Vom Milljoeh ins Milieu, p. 5. They accomplished this goal with the publication of Winfried Ranke's fine book about Zille's life and work.

sketches are especially sought after on the art market."⁸
 Ranke also said: " Today, the more finished works are sold
 at top-dollar prices..."⁹ It is evident, therefore, that
 Zille's individual artworks, his books, his photographs and
 his personal effects command much attention from the public.
 However, there are as yet many questions about Zille's life
 that deserve further scholarship: the licentious and the
 criminal element in Zille's Berlin, Zille's preoccupation
 with erotic themes throughout his career, the extent and sig-
 nificance of his involvement with Berlin's theater and film,
 an assessment of Zille's depiction of war, and perhaps most
 importantly, the extent to which his life and works have been
 politicized during his lifetime, and after his death. Hope-
 fully, this review of Zille's work will add to the already
 extensive cultural history of the Wilhelmine Period. It is
 meant to facilitate a balanced view of those years, dominated
 as they were with political and military events. Through
 Zille's work, we see "those who could not make history, but
 those who had to endure it."¹⁰

8

Ranke, Vom Milieu ins Milieu, pp. 310-11: "Seit etwa zehn Jahren sind seine Aquarelle, Zeichnungen, Graphiken und Skizzen besonders gefragte Objekte auf dem Kunstmarkt."

9

ibid., p. 311: "Heute erzielen bildmaessig ausgefuehrte Blaetter Spitzenpreise..."

10

ibid., p. 310: "die, die diese Geschichte nicht machen konnten, sondern aushalten mussten."

APPENDIX

Chapter III, p. 118, Note 45:

Seit der Jahrhundertwende setzte die sommerliche 'Auswanderung' nach den Seen der Spree und der Havel ein. Vom Wedding, von Rixdorf und aus Rummelsburg, von ueberallher kamen die Menschen, um der Sommerhitze der Berliner 'Steinwueste' zu entfliehen. Doch waren auch schon die Landgendarmen zur Stelle mit dem strengen Befehl, die reichen Villenbesitzer von Wannsee, Nikolassee usw. vor derart unglaublichen 'Belaestigungen' zu bewahren. An jeder freien Uferstelle standen grosse Verbotstafeln. Zu Fuss und hoch zu Ross patrouillierten 'Pickelhauben' an den Ufern des Mueggelsees und besonders der Grunewaldseen und des Wannsees, um jeden 'unbefugt' Badenden in Strafe zu nehmen!

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