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Max Ernst, Grattage, and *The Horde* Series

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Max Ernst, Grattage, and *The Horde* Series

by

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis, first of all, to my husband-to-be, Jon Stark, whose patience and support throughout this entire effort kept me positive and smiling. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to our families for their unwavering support, love, and confidence in me. To Mom and Dad, who have supported me all of my life, thank you for your unbiased support.

Abstract

Max Ernst, Grattage, and *The Horde* Series

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This thesis investigates Max Ernst's series of paintings made in 1927 titled *The Horde*. Most scholarship on Ernst's experimental art focuses on frottage and collage. While these were important techniques for the Surrealist movement, the grattage technique used for *The Horde* paintings was essential to Ernst's personal artistic growth as well as a contribution to the Surrealist search for an "automatic" form of art making. In his quest to understand and make art tapping into the unconscious mind, Ernst drew on a wide variety of sources, including his personal history, German background, literature, animals, geological formations, and monsters. An investigation of these sources expands the possible meanings of *The Horde* paintings for Ernst, painting up their connections to Germany in the past and present, and their reflection of his deep interest in the archetypal Surrealism theme of metamorphosis. His invention of grattage as a painting technique made such a fusion possible.

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Introduction

This thesis investigates a series of paintings made by Max Ernst (1891-1976) in 1927, titled *The Horde* [La Horde] (Fig. 1). Created using a technique called *grattage*, or scraping of paint layers over textured surfaces, these paintings served as laboratory experiments with a new medium, as well as an excavation of the mind. My study closely examines the form of these paintings as well as their content. Responding to Surrealism's pursuit of the unconscious through automatism and exploring the world of dreams, Ernst developed multivalent symbolism deeply rooted in his German identity and German history.

> In a 1961 interview for BBC television show 'Monitor' Ernst stated:
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> Seeing usually means that you open your eyes to the outside world. It is possible to see another way; you close your eyes and you look into your 'inner world'. I believe the best thing to do is to have one eye closed and you look inside: this is the inner eye. With the other eye, you have it fixed on reality and what is going on around you in the world. If you can make a synthesis of these two important worlds you come to result in what can be considered as the synthesis of objective and subjective life.[1]

The artist occupies a strange position perpetually caught between external representation and introspective process. The production of artwork relies on this dualism and requires an open channel between the exterior world and internal perspective. Ernst attempted to blend these two worlds through experiments with innovative mediums, rejecting the material reality that had once seemed so permanently secure. He was also clearly interested in explorations of the psyche.

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[1] Ronald Penrose, "Monitor, Gian Carlo Menotti and Max Ernst," BBC, September 12, 1962, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00fzrsg.

Like an alchemist, he constantly searched for images, rites and symbols, putting into visual

question these mysterious forces, interior tensions, and the world of dreams.[2]

Anxiety and aggressiveness emerge as themes in Ernst's work, yet there is also a deep

interest in the revelation of nature. The microscopic structures and underlying patterns of nature

become apparent in his works through his use of new methods of making art.[3] All boundaries of

form and space are thus lost, and all exist in permanent metamorphosis: plants, stone, man, and

animal. The creatures produced, such as in *The Horde* grattage paintings, are haunting and

menacing figures that elude any single definition. Their forms force viewers to search for

recognizable elements. These hybrids escape reason and logic, instead relying on free association

and chance.

Predicated on the suppression of rational consciousness, or only partial use of it,

Surrealist automatism in the 1920s and 30s provided the theory from which Ernst could attempt

to reconcile his two worlds. The Surrealists began their experiments with automatism in response

to discoveries in French "dynamic psychiatry" as well as to the Freudian psychology that was a

major stimulus for their pursuit of the unconscious.[4] The movement began as a literary group and

was still so at the time of the first manifesto's publication.[5] Founder André Breton in the *First*

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[2] Alchemy is a topic that will be revisited later in this study. M.E. Warlick has explored Max Ernst's relationship to alchemy at great length. See M.E. Warlick, *Max Ernst and Alchemy: A Magician in Search of a Myth* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

[3] See, for example, Karin Von Maur, "Max Ernst and Romanticism," in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, ed. Werner Spies (Munich: Prestel, 1991), 341-50

[4] See, for example, Jennifer Gibson, "Surrealism before Freud: Dynamic Psychiatry's 'Simple Recording Instrument,'" *Art Journal* 46, no. 1 (1987), 56-60; and David Lomas, *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

[5] For a detailed history of Surrealism see Gérard Durozoi, *History of the Surrealist Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) as well as Marcel Jean, *The History of Surrealist Painting* (New York: Grove Press, 1960). For an accessible overview of the movement and its participants, see William Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968).

Manifesto of Surrealism of 1924 described how, while falling asleep one evening, a phrase had occurred to him as though "knocking at the window."[6] Before long, Breton was making use of such spontaneously occurring material for poetic purposes and, with the poet Philippe Soupault, published what he called the first fully "automatic" text, *Les Champs magnétiques*, in 1920.[7] It was in the 1924 Manifesto that Breton identified Surrealism with "pure psychic automatism, by which one intends to express verbally, in writing or by any other method, the real functioning of the mind."[8]

The Surrealist drawing game, the exquisite corpse [*cadavre exquis*], developed as a practice of the automatic method (Fig. 2). First, a piece of paper is folded as many times as there are participants. Each participant takes one side of the folded sheet and, starting from the top, draws the head of a body, continuing the lines at the bottom of their fold to the other side of the fold, then handing that blank folded side to the next person to continue drawing the figure. Once everyone has drawn her or his "part" of the body, the last person unfolds the sheet to reveal a strange composite creature, made of unrelated forms that are now merged.[9] A Surrealist Frankenstein's monster, of sorts.

Yet, automatism was not entirely an invention of Surrealism. It could be argued that automatism had been employed by Dadaists and was later theorized in psychoanalytic terms by the Surrealists. Dadaists, especially from Zurich, understood the abandoning of creative control

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[6] Mark Polizzotti, ed., *André Breton: Selections* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003), 1.

[7] David Hopkins. *Dada and Surrealism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 67.

[8] Peter Selz, Joshua C. Taylor, and Herschel B. Chipp, eds., *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 412.

[9] Eliza Adamowoicz, *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image: Dissecting the Exquisite Corpse* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

in terms of chance, as David Hopkins has discussed.[10] Around 1916-17 (within the Zurich Dada group) Hans Arp dropped pieces of paper onto mounts and fixed them where they randomly landed (Fig. 3). He claimed they were produced "according to the laws of chance." In doing so, Arp, like many Dadaists, radically departed from traditional models of art making. Arp's impersonal method was controlled by nature-based processes as opposed to predetermined artistic intentions.

In the *First Surrealist Manifesto*, Breton established the pursuit of "pure psychic automatism" as Surrealism's principle objective. One of the first responses was that of André Masson, who produced a sequence of "automatic drawings." In works such as *Automatic Drawing* from 1924 (Fig. 4), the artist's hand wandered freely with a pen, producing webs of lines and other markings out of which he then pulled up fragments of bodies and objects, as if in response to his unconscious mind. Masson made his automatic drawings rapidly, in order to prevent editing and thus guarantee a fresh unconscious impulse.[11] However, the necessity of speed made this method difficult to translate onto canvas with paint and brush, as will be discussed in the following section.

Slightly later, the German-born Ernst, who had moved to Paris from Cologne in 1921, similarly reacted to the *Manifesto* with the invention of frottage.[12] Ernst placed sheets of paper over raised surfaces, such as wood grain, and made rubbings with pencil or charcoal. He then allowed forms to suggest themselves, blocking out or emphasizing parts of the images to conjure

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[10] Hopkins, *Dada and Surrealism*, 69.
[11] William Rubin and Carolyn Lanchner, *André Masson* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1976), 21.
[12] For a history of interactions between Breton and Ernst see Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

up sensical forms. It is interesting that Ernst, who had been part of the Dada movement in

Cologne, reveals a greater degree of passivity in his working process than Masson. He thus

looked back to the impersonal principal of chance as it had been understood within Dada,

although his direct inspiration was Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting*. There, Leonardo

had recommended that artists use formless blots as inspirational triggers for compositions.[13]

Ernst cleverly harnessed Dadaist chance to Surrealist automatism, making it answerable

to the impulses of the unconscious. His case reveals how Surrealist aesthetics often subtly

reverted back to Dada. In the early 1920s, writers such as Breton had become involved with

Parisian Dada. Although he, and others, shared the group's interest in anarchy and revolution,

they felt Dada lacked clear direction for political action. In late 1922, this growing group of

radicals left the movement and began looking to the mind as a source of personal and social

liberation.[14] The group responded both to French "dynamic psychiatry" and the work of Sigmund

Freud, performing experiments that allowed them to explore subconscious thought and identity

while bypassing restrictions placed on individuals by the conscious mind and by social

convention.

In November 1922 Breton had presented a short list of artists who could, in his opinion,

remedy what he called the "inadequacy" of Dadaism; these artists included Pablo Picasso,

Francis Picabia, Marcel Duchamp, Giorgio de Chirico, Man Ray, and Max Ernst.[15] It was just the

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[13] See U. M. Schneede, *Max Ernst* (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1972), 134.

[14] For more on early Surrealist politics see Robert S. Short, "The Politics of Surrealism, 1920–36," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 2 (1966): 3-25.

[15] Werner Spies notes this lecture in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective* (New York, NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 11. The original text is from André Breton, "Characteristics of the Modern Evolution and What It Consists Of," a lecture originally delivered in Barcelona in 1922; reprinted in André Breton, *The Lost Steps*, ed. Mark Polizzotti (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 205.

previous year, in 1921, that at the invitation of the Paris Dadaists, who had been aware of his activities in Cologne, Ernst held an exhibition of his collage works at the *Au San Pareil* gallery in Paris. The exhibition proved essential for the Parisian group, who embraced his collages as a visual proto-Surrealism just as much as *Les Champs magnétiques* had foreshadowed textual Surrealism.[16]

Collage was already a well-established avant-garde technique by the time of the exhibition, in the wake of its invention by the Cubists Pablo Picasso and George Braque.[17] Ernst began making collages in the context of Cologne Dada, using recognizable imagery, which drew from fragments of encyclopedias, commercial catalogues, anatomical treatises, and photographs to produce counter-realities. He further complicated his collages by introducing what he called *Ubermalung* [overpainting], in which his painted over or joined aspects of images at will. The addition and suppression of found elements in these "peinto-peintures" laid the grounds for the development of grattage (see Fig. 5, for example).[18]

In the context of Surrealism, collage proved to be the perfect medium to awaken what Ernst called "the most powerful poetic detonations."[19] Subsequently, he produced a series of Surrealist collage novels including *Répétitions* [Repetitions] (1922), *Les Malheurs des immortels* [Misfortunes of the Immortals] (1922), *La Femme 100 Têtes* [The Hundred Headless Woman] (1929) and *Une Semaine de bonté* [A Week of Plenty] (1933). For these novels, Ernst cut and

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[16] Christopher Green, *Art in France 1900-1940* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), vii.

[17] For a history of collage see Katherine Hoffman, *Collage: Critical Views* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989).

[18] This term comes from Ernst as quoted in William S. Lieberman, *Max Ernst* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972), 16.

[19] Cathrin Klingsöhr-Leroy and Uta Grosenick, *Surréalisme* (Cologne: Taschen, 2015), 9.

pasted from an assortment of popular scientific and literary publications and were combined then

in bizarre and irrational relationships.[20] Ernst's choice of sources, however, was not random.

According to Charlotte Stokes, they in fact represented the repressed memories of his childhood,

and his collage books were a provocative assault on authoritarian society.[21] The juxtaposition of

images from different contexts stymied a viewer's ability to make rational sense of them, ideally

stimulating a viewer's unconscious mind. Yet the question of what Surrealist visual art should be

was a pressing one – what would be the equivalent of the poet's automatic writing or "pure

psychic automatism"? Masson's automatic drawing had been a first response to the *First

Manifesto*, but even before its publication a debate has emerged about the very possibility of

Surrealist painting, as discussed further in the following section.

In response to this skepticism, as we shall see, Ernst began experiments to find a

technique that could manifest Surrealist goals in the realm of painting. The grattage technique, a

new and innovative way of working with paint and canvas he developed in 1927, would serve

this aim. Like a scientist in a laboratory, Ernst reworked his experimental canvases often in a

series that repeated a theme. The forest, in particular, is a theme that appears throughout Ernst's

artistic career, from the impressionistic sketches of his youth to many frottages which

transformed wood grain patterns into dense planes of vertical trees. These same forest images

appear in his scratched painting technique of grattage, including his series of paintings titled *The*

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[20] The most thorough survey of Ernst's collages is Werner Spies, *Max Ernst Collages*: *The Invention of the Surrealist Universe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968).
[21] Charlotte Stokes, "Collage as Jokework: Freud's Theories of Wit as the Foundation for the Collages of Max Ernst," *Leonardo* 15, no. 3 (1982). 199-204.

Horde. As this thesis will suggest, these works are rich in meaning at the same time that they demonstrate Ernst's innovative creation of a Surrealist painting technique.

Chapter I

Grattage

Strong-armed and rearing back, their forms might be eroded stone upon a rounded stage. Their fur, their hair, their feathers billowing in the wind, one can almost hear the roar of the crowd. These windblown, apocalyptic creatures are malevolent-looking as if one could be trampled by their force. The empty eyes of the figures impart a mysterious unease, implying the presence of irrational forces in nature. The anguish of a fallen foe is ignored amidst the excitement of the dance. The strange patterns on the bodies of the figures evoke fossils, geological formations, or the bark of wood but are in fact the result of grattage.

Painted in 1927, The Horde (Stedelijk Museum) belongs to one of the most creative periods in Max Ernst's career, marked by a stream of constant technical experimentation and invention. During these years, Ernst developed and established his personal mythology (his visual universe of themes and images) that would become central to his entire oeuvre. Adapting frottage to the medium of oil painting, Ernst explored new complex patterns and shapes on the surface of the canvas which he transformed into unexpected compositions.

Discussing this grattage technique, Werner Spies wrote: "Max Ernst laid his canvas over various objects with raised textures – pieces of wood and string, grates, textured glass panes – and, drawing the paint over them with a palette knife, brought forth the most vivid effects."[22] In the course of the following years, this technique led to astonishingly innovative imagery. The pictures became more abstract in effect, their formats larger. The dramatic force of these

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[22] Werner Spies, ed., *Max Ernst: A Retrospective* (London: Tate Gallery, 1991), 148.

paintings, with their rich and scintillating color, made them high points of imaginative Surrealist art in the late 1920s.[23]

GRATTAGE PRECURSORS

Grattage developed out of Ernst's earlier inventive techniques, both frottage and overpainting. *The Gramineous Bicycle* (1921) (Fig. 6) is an example of his highly creative use of overpainting to define new forms out of a pre-existent image. In this work, Ernst began by painting with a poster illustrating how brewer's yeast cells mutate and reproduce. He used black paint to cover everything on the poster except the cells. He then painted a gray platform at the bottom to add depth, transforming the lower yeast cells into a bicycle complete with gears and bells, and using the yeast cells in the middle to create imaginary creatures, one of which appears to be a tightrope walker. Ralph Ubl has commented that overpainting "makes the act of interpretation conspicuous as always being an act of selection and recombination of different and incompatible alternatives."[24] Overpainting such as *The Gramineous Bicycle* disrupt the flat, orderly arrangement of the original illustration page, creating a dynamic network of pseudo-sculptural, anthropomorphized forms, complete with shadows and jaunty appendages—a colorful mayhem. This technique informs Ernst's early interest in the flexibility of painting using it as a tool for addition and subtraction in order to create imaginary, nonsensical scenes.

The imaginative aspect of these works was heightened with frottage's ability to let the unconscious guide the creation of the image. Rather than relying on the premade imagery

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ralph Ubl, *Prehistoric Future: Max Ernst and the Return of Painting between the Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 149.

provided by magazines and scientific illustrations, Ernst found inspiration in natural textures

which he would transfer onto paper with pencil or charcoal. Ernst describes his first encounter

with frottage in 1925: "struck by the obsession that showed to my excited gaze the floor-boards

upon which a thousand scrubbings had deepened the grooves." Taking a piece of paper to the

grain, he rubbed it with black lead. Upon the appearance of images, he experienced a "sudden

intensification of [his] visionary capacities and by the hallucinatory succession of contradictory

images superimposed." He then began to discover new forms within the patterns; "[his] eyes

discovered human heads, animals, a battle that ended with a kiss, rock…"[25]

As he developed this procedure, Ernst used a wide variety of elements to begin—stale

bread, a straw hat, twine, or leather—always transforming the results so that whatever lay

beneath his paper experienced a metamorphosis. Unrefined textures turned into more precise

shapes. The grain of wood became the tossing surface of the sea, the scaly pattern of the weave

of a straw hat became a Cyprus tree, and the texture of twine became another kind of grain or

even a horse. One of his first frottages, *Animal* (1921), was a rubbing on the back of a telegram,

done spontaneously. He did not, however, adopt the technique as a systematic working method

until 1925, and, accordingly, he dates his invention of the procedure as 1925 in his

autobiography, *Beyond Painting*. Frottage permitted Ernst to move beyond the spontaneous

improvisational aspects of automatism to a more calculated method with which to achieve the

Surrealist ideal of merging two planes of reality.

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[25] Max Ernst, *Beyond Painting and Other Writings by the Artist and His Friends* (New York, NY: Wittenborn Schultz, 1948). *Beyond Painting* was first published as "Au-delá de la peinture" *Cahiers d'art*, 11 (1936): 149-182.

Ernst cited the precedent of Leonardo da Vinci in the development of frottage, pointing

out the following passage in Leonardo's *Treatise on Painting*:

> Botticelli did not like landscape painting. He felt that it was "a kind of short and
> mediocre investigation." He says with contempt that "by throwing a sponge soaked with
> different colors against a wall one makes a spot in which may be seen a beautiful
> landscape." That statement brought him a severe admonition from his colleague,
> Leonardo da Vinci:
> "He (Botticelli) is right; in such a daub one may certainly find bizarre inventions. I mean
> to say that he who is disposed to gaze attentively at this spot may discern therein some
> human heads, various animals, a battle, some rocks, the sea, clouds, groves, arid a
> thousand other-things — it is like the tinkling of the bell which makes one hear what one
> imagines. But though this stain serves to suggest some ideas it does not teach one how to
> finish any part of the painting. And the above-mentioned painter makes very bad
> landscapes. To be universal and to please varying tastes it is necessary that in the same
> composition may be found some very dark passages and others of a gently lighted
> penumbra. It is not to be despised, in my opinion, if, after gazing fixedly at the spot on
> the wall, the coals in the grate, the clouds, the flowing stream, if one remembers some of
> their aspects; and if you look at them carefully you will discover some quite admirable
> inventions. Of these the genius of the painter may take full advantage, to compose battles
> of animals and of men, of landscapes or monsters, of devils and other fantastic things
> which bring you honor. In these confused things genius becomes aware of new
> inventions, but it is necessary to know well (how to draw) all the parts that one ignores,
> such as the parts of animals and the aspects of landscape, rocks and vegetation.[26]

Ernst's own description of frottage is clearly indebted to Leonardo:

> On the tenth of August, 1925, an insupportable visual obsession caused me to discover
> the technical means which have brought a clear realization of this lesson of Leonardo.
> Beginning with a memory of childhood in the course of which a panel of false mahogany,
> situated in front of my bed, had played the role of optical provocateur of a vision of half-
> sleep, and finding myself one rainy evening in a seaside inn, I was struck by the
> obsession that showed to my excited gaze the floor-boards upon which a thousand
> scrubbings had deepened the grooves. I decided then to investigate the symbolism of this
> obsession, and, in order to aid my meditative and hallucinatory faculties, 1 made from the
> boards a series of drawings by placing on them, at random, sheets of paper which I
> undertook to rub with black lead. In gazing attentively at the drawings thus obtained, "the
> dark passages and those of a gently lighted penumbra," I was surprised by the sudden
> intensification of my visionary capacities and by the hallucinatory succession of

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[26] Max Ernst. *Beyond Painting*, 4-7.

contradictory images superimposed, one upon the other, with the persistence and rapidity characteristic of amorous memories.

My curiosity awakened and astonished, 1 began to experiment indifferently and to question, utilizing the same means, all sorts of materials to be found in my visual field: leaves and their veins, the ragged edges of a bit of linen, the brushstrokes of a "modern" painting, the unwound thread from a spool, etc. There my eyes discovered human heads, animals, a battle that ended with a kiss (the bride of the wind), rocks, the sea and the rain, earthquakes, the sphinx in her stable, the little tables around the earth, the palette of Caesar, false positions, a shawl of frost flowers, the pampas.[27]

In his frottages, Ernst temporarily rejected the painting techniques of his earlier works. Even the most complex of frottages at this time were made without drawing. The image always resulted from the process of rubbing over objects. For example, rubbing over threads produces delicate lines which appear to be drawn. In many frottages, multiple textures are used, the sources of which are rarely identifiable. These textures are metamorphosed into images that are always natural: birds, plants, animals—some fairly realistic, some strange and mysterious. The transformed textures are taken out of context and often drastically altered in scale, thus heightening a sense of enigma.[28]

Elaborating upon his use of frottage, Ernst developed a similar process with oil painting—grattage. In works such as *The Horde*, Ernst highlighted the visual possibilities of happenstance by connecting the accidental with conscious decision making. Ernst's treatment of the theme of the forest and monsters demonstrates his affection for German Romantics. In 1956, his biographer Patrick Waldberg argued that Ernst's link with his predecessors shaped his attitude to life and the problems of creativity. As Karin von Maur has observed in her essay "Max Ernst and Romanticism," "In the 1920s it is again not so much direct references to German

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[27] Ibid.

[28] On this subject, see Diane Waldman, "Max Ernst," in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1975), 15-61.

Romanticism as a certain affinity of mood that is found in Max Ernst's work. This is most apparent in the 'Forest' paintings, if for no other reason than that they have recourse to a motif with a long and rich tradition in Germany."[29]

Ernst's grattage paintings evoke the dampness of a forest-floor with decomposing detritus. The anthropomorphic dancers are representative of the apparitions of Ernst's imagination and experience. He wrote in his autobiography of "mixed feelings" when he first went into a forest: delight and oppression and what the Romantics called "emotion in the face of nature." He continued, "The wonderful joy of breathing freely in an open space, yet at the same time distress at being hemmed in on all sides by hostile trees. Inside and outside, free and captive, at one and the same time."[30]

In many of his pencil-based frottages, Ernst had transformed wood-grain patterns into the dense planes of vertical trees, such as *The Chestnut Trees Take-Off* (from *Histoire naturelle*, c. 1925) (Fig. 7). Warlick has pointed to grattage scenes of "cavorting" animals trapped in the dense underbrush of Ernst's forests and suggests that such imagery parallels that of animals trapped between walls, found in *Histoire naturelle* plates such as *The Origin of the Clock* (c. 1925). Warlick further notes that the "exuberant undergrowth" of Ernst's forests "becomes the site of spawning wild animals and human beings, whose descendants, the Hordes finally break free into paintings of their own."[31]

Grattage allowed Ernst to integrate chance discovery, previously explored in his pencil rubbings, into the colorful, vibrant medium of oil paint. The initial construction of grattage

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[29] von Maur, "Max Ernst and Romanticism" in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, ed. Spies and Rewald, 341-43.
[30] John Russell, *Max Ernst: Life and Work* (New York: N.H. Abrams, 1967), 32.
[31] Warlick, *Max Ernst and Alchemy*, 193.

shapes and forms, similar to frottage, was divorced from the initial creative impulses of the artist. Ernst later said that the process of grattage uncovered images that provided him with inspiration and helped him to overcome the terror he claims to have when confronted with a bare canvas. The semi-automatism of these related processes continued to be influential throughout Ernst's career and affected his later development of a technique called decalcomania, in which he produced textures by placing a canvas over a still-wet painted surface and pulling it away, producing another kind of "automatic" texture. All of Ernst's these inventions were important for the development of Surrealist art making.

GRATTAGE TECHNIQUE

In grattage, a coat of paint is left to dry on a canvas or sheet of paper. Another coat of a different color is painted on top of the first layer. An object, such as wood or wire, is placed underneath the canvas and pressed up so that the texture or form is visible on the canvas above. The artist then uses a palette knife or the back end of a brush to scratch out a design, leaving behind an image in the color of the first coat of paint.

In *The Horde* paintings, the origin of the scratched marks remains visible in the finished work. For example, in *The Horde* (Stedelijk Museum) one can see that the brown paint of the figures has lines both vertically and horizontally (Fig. 8). On the chest of the figure lying across the bottom of the canvas, there are even scribbles on the chest, circular motions in a lighter brown. Underneath the brown (uppermost) layer there had been layers of black, light brown and red that have become visible due to the scratching over the surface with a palette knife.

Yet, the black lines on the large figure at center right are sharp and unnatural: it has perfectly arched eyebrows, eyes, and teeth. After scraping away painted layers of the canvas

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Ernst would look at the abstract image and find the figures within the image. Sometimes he would emphasize these figures with bold lines, suggesting, for example, facial features of a creature. The tips of the horns on all three characters of *The Horde* painting are also highlighted with painted additions by Ernst. The background was also adjusted afterward, the blue overpainted to suggest the happenstance shapes, as he had done earlier in his overpainted earlier Dada works such as *Gramineous Bicycle*.

Accounts of the technicalities of the grattage process vary, and there are a few brief discussions that speculate on *The Horde* series, in particular. While scholars generally mention the use of either twine or another form of string in Ernst's creation of the works, there are differences in accounts of how the string was used. Werner Spies has argued that some string was placed underneath the canvas: "Again and again in his *Hordes* and *Bride of the Wind* paintings he manipulated twine in various thicknesses, arranging and rearranging it beneath the canvas subjected to grattage so that the lines of the resulting image suggest vibration and earthquake."[32] By contrast, Christopher Green argues that Ernst created the *Horde* paintings with string laid on top of the canvas: "By 1926, grattage had been combined with chance markings obtained by dropping paint-covered string onto the picture surface to generate some of Ernst's most powerful images, for instance, *The Horde*." Green believes that in *The Horde,* "images were isolated by overpainting, after the processes of scraping and dropping string." He continues, "The lasso line in a work like *The Horde* can give the impression of something close to frenzy,

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[32] Spies, *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, 12-3.

but the deliberate exclusion of will (even in its most spontaneous register) from the initial mark-making process is clear even here...."[33]

In either case, the artist chose the nature of the initial mark making by selecting objects to place under the canvas. This process removed Ernst's hand from the mark making process and instead created an excavation site in which he must discover forms. The goal was to let one's unconscious mind find patterns within the textures to make objects and creatures appear. As if finding shapes in the clouds or within the grain of wood, Ernst discovered new nature-oriented forms in the process.

REPRESENTING THE UNCONSCIOUS: A SURREALIST DEBATE

Though Surrealism as a movement was not officially created until 1924, the faction of aspiring poets who formed the group had begun collective creative experiments in the early 1920s. These proto-Surrealists' interest in the unconscious mind propelled their search for means to expose new realities. While the theory of automatism dominated their theory and practice after 1922, debate ensued over which techniques would be the most effective and viable for creating an artistic equivalent to the poets' creations. There loomed an issue of how to represent the unconscious, and a major debate began in the early 1920s over which media could serve this aim. The *First Surrealist Manifesto*, written by Breton and published in autumn 1924, only mentioned the plastic arts in a footnote and defined the movement as: "SURREALISM, noun, masc., Pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the true function of thought. Thought dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason, and outside

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[33] Green, *Art in France 1900-1940*, 121.

all aesthetic or moral preoccupations."[34] Breton's footnote grouped together the artists with

"Surrealist voice": Ernst, Masson, Man Ray, de Chirico, Duchamp, Picabia, and Klee with

Picasso, Matisse, Derain, Seurat, Moreau, and Paolo Uccello. The only mention of visual arts

appears as a footnote in which Breton states "were I a painter" and he discusses the act of blind

drawing.[35] The literary focus of Breton's definition and his lack of focus on the visual arts in

general posed a challenge for those who sought to extend Surrealism into the realm of painting or

other plastic arts.

Four months before the *First Surrealist Manifesto* was published, Max Morise had

published an essay titled, "Les Yeux enchantés" which postulated that only *plastique surréaliste*,

or Surrealist sculpture, not painting or photographs, could achieve for art what *l'écriture*

surréaliste, or Surrealist writing, already claimed to have contributed to literature.[36] The

following year, Pierre Naville contributed to the "Beaux-arts" section of the third issue of *La*

Révolution surréaliste (April 1925), in which he bluntly denied painting a place within the

Surrealist cause: "No one can any longer ignore that there is no such thing as *Surrealist*

painting."[37] In outright contradiction to Breton's earlier approval of the graphic automatism of

André Masson, Naville adds "Neither the pencil line given over to a chance gesture, nor the

copying of dream images, nor imaginative fantasies, it is well understood, can be so qualified."

Morise declared in his (April 1924) text that the "only precise representation today of the

idea of Surrealism" is epitomized by the mechanisms involved in the creation of the text of *Les*

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[34] André Breton. *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 26.
[35] Ibid., 21.
[36] Max Morise, "Les Yeux enchantés," *La Révolution surréaliste* 1 (April 1924): 26.
[37] Pierre Naville, "Beaux-Arts," *La Révolution surréaliste* 3 (April 1925): 27.

Champs magnétiques (1920), Breton and Phillipe Soupault's collaborative book. Morise once argued, "…what Surrealist writing is to literature, Surrealist plastic art should be to painting, to photography, to everything made to be seen. But where is the touchstone?"[38] Morise argued that when measured against Breton's definition of automatic writing, painterly options were missing one element or another. Even if the painter managed to place on the canvas successive scenes, similar to early medieval painters (to which he refers as 'primitives'), he believed that the process of painting tended in itself to interfere with the dictation of thought. The first manifesto declared psychic automatism to be "thought dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason, and therefore Morise argued that painting could never serve Surrealism.

Breton responded directly to this in his essay "Le surréalisme et la peinture," published in 1928 in which he aimed to lay to rest the arguments voiced against Surrealist painting.[39] Painting may be a "lamentable expedient," but it was an expedient nevertheless, according to Breton. However, this issue could not be solved singly by Breton's hopeful assertion. It would require painters to invent the new techniques.[40]

SURREALIST AUTOMATIC PAINTING

By 1927, Max Ernst had invented frottage and grattage, but he was not the first nor the only artist experimenting with automatic techniques for making art at this time.[41] Breton's call

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[38] Morise, "Les Yeux enchantés," 26.
[39] André Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1928), 62.
[40] Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage*, 64.
[41] Werner Spies, "Nightmare and Deliverance," in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, 12-3.

for unconscious art making, as discussed earlier, was achieved by improvisational means by other artists, including André Masson.

Masson invented his sand paintings as a way of translating his images onto canvas. In 1927, the sand paintings eliminated the continual dipping of a brush in paint: instead, Masson spilled glue on the raw canvas and spread it across the surface with his fingers. He then poured sand over the surface and tilted the stretcher about. The sand would adhere only to the areas with glue. Masson sometimes used differently colored sands in the same image, as in *Painting (Figure)* (1927) which produces a relief-like layering effect (Fig. 9). Responding to the patterns of sand, Masson then "drew" with paint directly from the tube as well as with charcoal lines, as in *Painting (Figure)*, where suggestions of birds and fish metamorphose into a figure. The patterns from within which Masson *found* his objects in this process parallels the stage of searching in Ernst's grattages. Masson, however, did not continue experimenting with automatism to the degree that Ernst did.

Ernst and Masson were apparently never particularly close, but Ernst and Miró collaborated on sets and costumes for the Ballets Russes in 1926 (Miró and Masson shared adjacent studios).[42] Ernst would have been aware of Miro's experiments with automatism, which included works such as *Birth of the World* (1925) (Fig. 10). This painting was made by pouring, brushing, and flicking paint on an unevenly primed canvas so that the paint soaked into some areas and rested on top in others. Miró then added carefully delineated lines and shapes over the more spontaneous underlayer. Yet Miro's painting technique never embraced automatic methods wholeheartedly and clearly defined forms dominate his execution, as Miro later explained of his

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[42] Lomas, *The Haunted Self*, 25.

technique. His works did not aim to "create that which he only vaguely feels and which he could never represent in a true manner without the contact with visible reality and with the life which surrounds him."[43] It was Ernst who most fully explored this through automatic painting by means of grattage.

GRATTAGE SERIES

Ernst's grattage works are sensual and tactile, with images of rubbed objects that appear as the ghostly traces of form and texture. The grattage paintings were almost always produced in a series centered on similar themes.[44] For example, the most extensive series focuses on the theme of the forest with various titles including the term, such as *Forest* (1926), *Forest and Dove* (1927), and *The Grey Forest* (1927). The compositions of the paintings are very similar and are certainly derivative of one another. Similarities are sometimes less evident in other works including *The Entire City* (1927) and *Bird in a Cage* (1926), in which the titles of several works are different but composition, texture, and mark making techniques are similar. There are other series that include very similar imagery to that of *The Horde*s, but bear different titles including *They Have Slept in The Forest Too Long* (1926), *Charming Wild Gestures* (1927), and *One Large Family* (1927). The Ernst catalogue raisonné lists six paintings that share the same title of

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[43] Peter Selz, *Theories of Modern Art*, 361.

The Horde and are all closely visually related (Fig. 11).[45] *The Horde* in the Stedelijk Museum can be included as a seventh.[46]

These works are a survey of the grattage process as Ernst strove to understand and utilize this automatic process through thematic explorations. The string is characteristic of all the *Horde* works as some qualities of a spiraling string are hidden in the works. A straight grain, like wood, is produced as an under texture in all of the works as well. Wood is an interesting choice since Ernst repeated the theme of the forest throughout his career. The compositions are very similar as the figures stand on an indefinite platform with a minimal background. Only one painting includes a horizon line, with a sun or moon rising above it. The number of figures varies, although some figures reappear from one painting to another, such as the horizontal figure at the forefront of each group. Perhaps the most prominent characteristics of these works is that all of the figures in each seem immobilized caught in a moment of morphing, as if in a snapshot of metamorphosis in progress. Metamorphosis was to be a key theme for Ernst and leads us now to a more detailed consideration of the content of his *Horde* series of grattage paintings.

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[45] There is thus a total of seven paintings titled *The Horde* by Ernst. For the catalog raisonné, see Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken, *Max Ernst: Oeuvre-katalog, 1906-1963. The Complete Paintings, Drawings, Sculpture, Frottages* (Houston, TX: Menil Foundation, 1975).

[46] The two paintings I focus on in the thesis are *The Horde* (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam) and *The Horde* (Private Collection) According to Spies (*Max Ernst: Oeuvre-katalog*, 168), the last known owner listed for the latter was "J.B. Urvater, Paris."

Chapter II

Metamorphosis

From whichever side one approaches Ernst's *The Horde* paintings, the analysis must rely on *distinction*: distinctions between the real and the imaginary, between inner and outer, between human and animal, etc. – all of which are rational divides that depend on consideration and evidence. The creatures in the Hordes, however, ultimately exist between easily made distinctions and therefore beyond rationality. Ernst combined forms of his imagination along with parts of identifiable plants, animals, and materials to inspire higher levels of mental activity, beyond rationalism, within himself and within his viewers.

Ernst's grattage paintings contain many simple implications though no singular classification, and thus metamorphosis served as an inexhaustible device for his portrayal of the fantastic as well as dream-like imagery. A Romantic might identify metamorphosis as an oneiric concept associated with imagination or visions.[47] An alchemist might associate metamorphosis with scientific phenomena of change that occurs in the natural world, and a troubled soldier after World War I might search for the spiritual or religious stories in critical moments of transition in life. As Joyce Cheng has argued, the Surrealists sought to create a world "in a constant process of metamorphosis."[48] Ernst's grattage paintings derange form, relation, and structure, creating a monstrous zoo which abolishes the normative function of form. Ernst's *Horde* paintings thus present a world of constant metamorphosis as a means of disrupting rational thought processes.

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[47] David Gallagher, *Metamorphosis: Transformations of the Body and the Influence of Ovid's Metamorphoses on Germanic Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009).

[48] Joyce Cheng, "Mask, Mimicry, Metamorphosis: Roger Caillois, Walter Benjamin and Surrealism in the 1930s," *Modernism/Modernity* 16, no. 1 (2006): 61-86.

HYBRID CREATURES

Ernst's *Horde* paintings are abstracted, although the viewer can still decipher components and an overall understanding of the scene. Left in a moment of transformation, the figures are outside of any single definition: their anthropomorphic forms are rock, wind, water, dancers, animals, humans, and monsters all at the same time. Essentially, these creatures are caught in a state of metamorphosis. The objects once used to create the textured canvas have also undergone a transformation as the artist transmuted their elements into beings.

The mutating and decaying effects in Ernst's imagery arise in large part from the textural and tactile qualities produced by his innovative methods of art making. As noted earlier, Ernst found inspiration in Leonardo's suggestion in his *Treatise on Painting* that "he who is disposed to gaze attentively at this spot" may thereby "compose battles of animals and of men, of landscapes or monsters, of devils and other fantastic things."[49] Ernst thus created images of "animals and of men" as well as "monsters, devils and other fantastic things" as he discovered images in the patterns created through the grattage process.

Though open to interpretation, *The Horde* figures have wings and claws, and to some viewers they appear to be dancing. Similar to a Rorschach test, the images perhaps reveal more about the viewer's psyche than the blots themselves. Dario Gamboni in his seminal work, *Potential Images*, documents the modern shift away from predetermined picture making toward images that are unresolved, open and fugitive. Gamboni documents the interest at the turn of the century in a "user-determined" nature of all visual perception. "He who is disposed to gaze attentively at

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[49] Ernst, *Beyond Painting*, 7 (quoting Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting*).

this spot" could thereby be the viewer. [50] Without defining the shapes completely, Ernst, just as

he had responded to his textures, now allowed his viewer to "discern therein" in order to hear

"the tinkling of the bell which makes one hear what one imagines." [51] Thus, the defamiliarization

of the forms forces both a slowing down and increased difficulty in processing, comprehending,

and awareness of the artistic procedures causing that result. [52]

    The figures Ernst found are anthropomorphic: they often have two legs, perhaps two arms,

and sometimes even suggestions of a face. [53] In *The Horde* (Stedelijk Museum) one figure has

clearly defined bicep muscles (Fig. 8). However, some also have horns, a few are sprouting

wings, and they hold other animal or nonhuman characteristics. Ernst understood the urgency of

making sense of the modern world, not through old strategies of truth-seeking, but in embracing

of the irrational, chaotic, unknowable, and otherworldly. Searching his textured canvas for

subjects, Ernst regularly found organisms. In his earlier frottage works, he had been inspired by

nature, as *Histoirie naturelle* documents. And within Surrealist art more generally animals and

hybrid creatures would become prevalent.

    Throughout his career, Ernst used the symbolic representation of the human aspect of

animals and the animal nature of man, or perhaps the vegetative commonality of all living

creatures, including plants. [54] There are multiple reasons for the Surrealist interest in animals, and

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[50] Dario Gamboni. *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art* (London: Reaktion, 2002).

[51] Ernst, *Beyond Painting*, 7 (quoting Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting*).

[52] The term "defamiliarization" was coined in by Russian literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky. See "Art, as Device," (1917) *Poetics Today* 36, no. 3 (2015), 151-74.

[53] Karin von Maur "Max Ernst and Romanticism." in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, ed. Spies, 347. Von Maur explores the botanical and zoomorphic creatures in relation to Ludwig Tieck's novel *Sternbalds Wanderungen* (Sternbald's Travels) of 1789.

[54] Warlick in *Max Ernst and Alchemy* discusses Ernst's "hybrids" as a combination of humans, animals, masks or machine parts in relation to alchemical imagery; Charlotte Stokes, in "Surrealist Persona: Max Ernst's 'Loplop, Superior of Birds,'" *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art,* 4th ser., 13, no. 3 (1983): 225-34,

for Ernst, I would suggest three primary ones. First, animal forms are readily discernable and allow a higher level of abstraction that falls between humanoid and animal characteristics throughout the *Horde* series. The creatures' features can be read as horns, fur or feathers, wings, or other traits just shy of common animals such as birds, horses, or insects. The simplicity of chosen animals (birds, horses, insects) implied in Ernst's work are easily recalled and thereby served as good tools for the artist's and viewer's searching.

Animals are related to humans but are also independent and thereby serve as reminders of the lack of basis for our own sense of superiority. Thereby, the second reason to mimic animals is a mockery of humans: by mixing these forms in his chaotic compositions, Ernst recalls ideas of group or crowd psychology (a topic to be discussed later), thus reducing human experience to a primitive, animalistic state. A last reason is the history and dynamic roles that animals have played in popular mythologies, including in the folklore of various cultures, and traditional hermetic imagery.

ERNST, MYTH, AND METAMORPHOSIS

In Germanic literature, one thinks of the transformation of Mephistopheles into a black poodle in Johann Wolfgang con Goethe's *Faust. Der Tragödie erster Teil* (1808), Alberich's and Fafner's transformations in Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1848-74), the magical metamorphoses of Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1857), and Gregor Samsa in Franz

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discusses the human and bird imagery that became his autobiographical artistic persona, which presented his interpretations of the world.

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Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* (1915).[55] In analyzing transformations of characters in these works, it becomes apparent that both mental and physical metamorphoses appear in Germanic literature. For example, Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* utilizes metamorphosis as an indicator of an existential crisis, relayed by describing in graphic detail how Gregor first tries to adapt to his new life as an invertebrate. Meanwhile, E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Der goldne Topf* (1814) does not follow a traditional physical transformation model set forth but instead metamorphoses are linked to Anselmus's mental state and exist only through his dream-like visions.[56]

Thus, the German-born Ernst had many sources for his interest in metamorphosis and monsters stemming from German culture. German Romantic literature offered many instances of metamorphosis and reference points for Ernst's inventions. Ludwig Tieck's *Der Runenberg* (1802), for example, construed underground crystals and geological formations as living.[57] The mandrake root also appears in this story as a living plant that, when pulled out of the ground leads, according to popular belief, to madness or death. The fantastic creatures created in German literature and folklore provided ample stimuli for Ernst's envisioning of his figures. Folk legends such as the *Hakenmann* and *Aufhocker* offered precedents for anthropomorphic figures. According to Teutonic legends of northern German coastal regions, a *Hakenmann* was a water monster with a giant fish body but the head of a man, which was known for being particularly

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[55] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust Der Tragödie erster Teil* (Tübingen: J.G. Cotta, 1808).; Richard Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Berlin: B. Schott's Söhne, 1874).; Franz Kafka, *Die Verwandlung* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1915).

[56] See Gallagher, *Metamorphosis*, 273-96 for Hoffmann; Gallagher, *Metamorphosis*, 117-57 for Kafka. See also E.T.A. Hoffmann, *E.T.A. Hoffmanns sämtliche werke: Fantasiestücke in Callots manier* (Leipzig: G. Müller, 1912).

[57] Ludwig Tieck, *Ludwig Tiecks Sämmtliche Werke* (Paris: Tétot, 1837). Originally published as Ludwig Tieck, "Der Runenberg," *Ludwig Tiek's Schriften* 4 (G. Reimer, 1828).

vicious: the predator would hunt down and destroy humans in its watery domain.[58] According to

the Grimm's *German Legends*, an *Aufhocker* was a large vampire dog "which walks upon its

hind legs" and was "said to have the ability of therianthropy allowing it to shape-shift into other

animals and on rare occasions it can assume human form." In legends, the creature could not be

killed but would "retreat with the rising of the sun."[59]

The Grimm brothers' preoccupation with nature metaphors in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*

indicates their awareness of a tendency in thinking that many poets and artists of the time tried to

capture. For example, one influential document of this tendency is to be found in Goethe's

Metamorphosen der Pflanzen (1790), in which he presented his teachings on morphology

through his botanical studies, an interest first kindled during his Italian journey between 1786

and 1788.[60] More importantly, Goethe transposed the notion of metamorphosis to animals and

humans, which appeared to have significant implications for the way in which the Grimms

viewed their *Märchen* (fairy tales).[61]

As David Gallagher has argued, the origins of instances of metamorphosis in Germanic

literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be traced to roots in

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[62] The *Metamorphoses* was particularly appealing to the desire for

transformation and existential experience before and after World War I. The Greek and Roman

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[58] Carol Rose, *Giants, Monsters and Dragons: An Encyclopedia of Folklore, Legend and Myth* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 167.

[59] Theresa Bane, *Encyclopedia of Beasts and Monsters in Myth, Legend and Folklore* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Publishers, 2016), 47.; See Grimm, *German Legends* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1816), 342, 359; For an English edition, see Jacob Grimm, *The German Legends of the Brothers Grimm*, ed. and trans. Donald Ward (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981).

[60] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären* (Gotha: Bey Carl Wilhelm Ettinger, 1790).

[61] Wolfgang Leppmann, *The German Image of Goethe* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961).

[62] For more on the relationship of German literature and Ovid see Gallagher's *Metamorphosis* (2009).

mythology in *The Metamorphoses* presented tales of men and women transforming into animals and other assorted things and provided the first set of myths from which transformation could be based.[63]

From the beginning, the Surrealists were deeply interested in the themes of metamorphosis and myth as inspired by these ancient tales. Like Freud, the Surrealists were fascinated by mythological themes such as Oedipus, Narcissus, among others. For Surrealist artists, myth became a way of organizing and synthesizing Surrealist beliefs within recognizable sets of symbols.[64] From their reading of Freud, the Surrealists realized that automatism, dream, and myth all shared common characteristics: condensation, a displacement of the sense of time and space, and a similar symbolism.[65] Freud had viewed dreams as the residue of daily activity and myth as the collective heritage of centuries. Thus, unconscious thought shared a symbolism that derived from a common origin, whether individual or cultural.[66]

Later, the Surrealist magazine *Minotaure* (1933–39) demonstrated how deep was the Surrealist fascination with mythological metamorphosis. The title of the magazine was based on the Minoan mythological half-man, half-bull monster. Each of the magazine covers would feature an interpretation of the creature made by a prominent artist: Pablo Picasso, Marcel

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[63] Theodore Ziolkowski, "Ovid in the Twentieth Century," in *A Companion to Ovid*, ed. Peter Knox (John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 455-65.

[64] See, for example, Whitney Chadwick, "Masson's Gradiva: The Metamorphosis of a Surrealist Myth." *The Art Bulletin* 52, no. 4 (1970): 415-22.

[65] Briony Fer, "Surrealism, Myth, and Psychoanalysis," in *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, vol. 3 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994): 170-248.

[66] Jacques Bouveresse, *Wittgenstein Reads Freud: The Myth of the Unconscious* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Duchamp, Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, René Magritte and André Derain, among others, created a

cover especially for the magazine.[67]

Surrealist concern with the theme of the Minotaur predated the journal. According to

Eddie Rentzou's essay, "The Minotaur's Revolution: On Animals and Politics," interest in the

Cretan mythological cycle was probably spurred by the publication of the excavation of Knossos

by Sir Arthur Evans between 1921 and 1936, which received considerable attention.[68] As Jeffrey

Schnapp, Michael Shanks, and Matthew Tiews have suggested, this interest occurred at a fertile

intersection between archaeology and modernism. Within the realm of the search for "an other

(and even *othering*) archaeology loosely affiliated both with Freud's tracking of subterranean

psychic and somatic intensities, and with an ongoing modern preoccupation [...] with tapping

into 'prehistoric' instinctualisms, violence, savagery, sacrifice and sacrality."[69]

The first issue of *Minotaur* reproduced a small, strange face that "would have been obscure

to most readers of the time"[70] (Figure 2). There are three schematic and strategically placed

orifices on what looks like a dark mass of wires or bristles. Non-gendered and neither creature

nor human, the undeveloped face emerging from hair or vegetation is an intermediary being that

hovers somewhere between the world of human beings and whatever lies outside of it. The

simple, flat form is eerily close to the face produced in *The Horde* (see Figure 1), with its texture

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[67] The artists and covers were: Pablo Picasso, issue one (1933); Gaston-Louis Roux, issue two (1933); André Derain, issues three and four (1933); Francisco Bores, issue five (1934); Marcel Duchamp, issue six (1935); Joan Mirci, issue seven (1935); Salvador Dali, issue eight (1936); Henri Matisse, issue nine (1936); René Magritte, issue ten (1937); Max Ernst, issue eleven (1938); André Masson, front and back covers of issues twelve and thirteen (1939).
[68] Effie Rentzou, "The Minotaur's Revolution: On Animals and Politics," *L'Esprit Créateur* 51, no. 4 (2011): 60.
[69] Jeffrey T. Schnapp, Michael Shanks, and Matthew Tiews, "Archaeology, Modernism, Modernity," *Modernism/Modernity* 11, no. 1 (2004): 1-16.
[70] Cheng, *Mask, Mimicry, Metamorphosis*, 62.

and simple three orifices. It is conceivable that Ernst may have seen such a mask, but there were many other stimuli for his interest in monsters and metamorphosis as well.

Ernst's metamorphic monsters suggest eroded rocks, forms sculpted from stone by natural elements. According the study *Found Sculpture and Photography from Surrealism to Contemporary Art* (2013) by Julia Kelly, "Breton collected examples of 'accidental' anthropomorphic" objects. These examples of stones, roots, and pieces of wood with 'accidental' properties may actually have been deliberately manipulated in the manner of the Chinese "scholar rock."[71]

Such rocks, with extraordinary formations, were believed for centuries to be natural occurrences, but in fact, were often enhanced by carving. Ernst traveled through East Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Southern China) a few years earlier and could have been exposed to the Chinese scholar rocks.[72] Pitted, hollowed out, and perforated, such rocks are often displayed on end and are seen as embodiments of the dynamic transformational processes of nature. According to Joyce Cheng "Especially prized are stones that have been sculpted naturally by processes of erosion or that appear to have been shaped by nature, even if they have been artfully enhanced by man."[73] Some rocks were appreciated for their resemblance to animals, birds, human figures, or mythical creatures (Figure 2).[74] The forms made with these rocks have a

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[71] Julia Kelly, "Surrealism, Objects, and Sculpture," in *Found Sculpture and Photography from Surrealism to Contemporary Art*, ed. Anna Dezeuze and Julia Kelly (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 47.
[72] According to Robert McNab, Ernst travelled in East Asia under several different names, making it difficult to track his travels for certain, especially after he left the Eluards and travelled alone. See Robert McNab, *Ghost Ships: A Surrealist Love Triangle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006): 121.
[73] Kelly, *Found Sculpture*, 48.
[74] The Metropolitan Museum of Art held an exhibition in 2000, "The World of Scholars' Rocks: Gardens, Studios and Paintings," with more than thirty scholars' rocks from the collection of the Richard Rosenblum family.

striking resemblance to the eroded spaces created in Ernst's *The Horde* series. Although we are

not sure of his exposure to these specific rocks, Ernst later owned own a "desert rose," a gift

from Roland Penrose, which he conserved in a box as an example of natural concretion that had

taken on a spectacular form.[75] Ernst wrote in *Beyond Painting* that "through a series of

suggestions and transmutations that offered themselves spontaneously – in the manner of that

which passes for hypnagogic visions – the character of the material interrogated (the wood, for

example) and took on the aspect of images of an unhoped-for precision."[76] These natural forms

helped to inspire forms in Ernst's grattages. The natural character of the beginning material

(wood and twine) could be manipulated like the sculpted rocks to take on new forms.

The forms in Ernst's *The Horde* paintings are haunting, reminiscent of the German medieval

art the artist admired.[77] Scenes such as Witches' Sabbath, *danse macabre*, and apocalyptic

imagery resonate with the tone of these works. In German art on the eve of the Reformation, the

cadaver ambushes, rapes, murders, and dances with the living.[78] Religious books, such as the

Nuremberg Chronicle (1493) included scenes of the wild carnival atmosphere emphasized in the

motif of the dance of death, or *danse macabre* (Fig. 12).[79] The imagery of the *danse macabre*

emerged in the late Middle Ages in conjunction with the plagues and pestilences that ravaged

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[75] Kelly, *Found Sculpture*, 47.

[76] Ernst, *Beyond Painting*, 8.

[77] Spies, *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, 62.

[78] The history and meaning of this imagery is extraordinarily varied, including traditions such as the *danse macabre*, the Triumph of Death, the Three Dead, the *anatomie moralisée*, and the Witches' Sabbath. For an introduction to such imagery, see Jan Białostocki, "Kunst und Vanitas" *Stil und Ikonographie: Studien zur Kunstwissenschaft* (Dresden: Verl. Der Kunst, 1966), 187-217.

[79] A 2017 print exhibition at the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas (*Dancing with Death,* curated by Elizabeth Welch) focused on the visual culture of the *danse macabre* from the fifteenth to twentieth centuries. This *danse macabre* image from the *Nuremberg Chronicle* was used in the exhibition and was an inspiration for this thesis.

Europe during this time. It was regarded as "the secular counterpart to the Last Judgement" that "play[ed] on themes of life as fleeting and the futility of all worldly concern…with an ironic and even humorous tone."[80] Such group scenes of creatures in motion resonate with Ernst's *The Horde* series' fluid figures who raise their arms in an expressive crowd dance or exclamation (see again Fig. 1)

Roger Caillois has cited Gustave Flaubert's discussion of the Temptation of St. Anthony, describing his physical tortures as hallucinations of a type of psychiatric mimesis.[81] The hermit could not distinguish plants from animals; he confused plants with stones, pebbles, the brain, stalactites with breasts, and iron crystals with tapestries ornamented with figures. The saint's visual transformations affected all three realms of the natural world – mineral, vegetable, and animal—transforming one into another. The hellish descent of the neurasthenic patient was a psychoanalytic process that, depending on the individual, could result in the reintegration of the original sensibility and the prenatal unconscious.[82] Caillois compared these kinds of visual hallucinations to popular Slovakian decoration and the early paintings of Dalí, but he could well have been discussing the grattage works of Max Ernst.

ERNST AND ALCHEMY

Metamorphosis can be understood as a transformation, just as alchemical philosophers understood alchemy's goal to be transmutation. Warlick discusses one of the objects selected for

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[80] Enrico De Pascale and Antony Shugaar, *Death and Resurrection in Art* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009), 232.
[81] Roger Caillois and John Shepley, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," MIT Press 31 (1984): 16-32.
[82] Warlick, *Max Ernst and Alchemy,* 197.

discussion in the Surrealist's interest in hermeticism: a medium's crystal ball.[83] Questions posed

about a medium's crystal ball in contemporary literature included several with alchemical

implications: "Is it capable of metamorphosis?... What happens if you plunge it into water? milk?

vinegar? urine? alcohol? mercury?"[84] This crystal ball discussion reveals an interest in

transformation and manipulation of nature. Alchemy was thus a natural source for the Surrealists

to discuss altering and transforming of materials. For Ernst, alchemy also became a metaphor for

the creative process of making art.

Ernst wanted to endow his forms and characters with multiple, shifting identities

including those of his materials. In investigating the metamorphic capabilities of *The Horde*

paintings and other grattage works, Ernst put his canvas into question. Under a wet canvas,

Ernst's objects found new form in the paint. From paint to wood, twine, or wire, Ernst

transformed his grattage canvases while the textures also transformed the paint to bear the

characteristics of the original object. Ernst's interest in transforming and manipulating the

natural world was in part inspired by his interest in alchemy.

Ernst's autobiographical writings in *Cahiers d'Art* (1937) and *View* (1942) clarify his

indebtedness to hermetic traditions; there he cites alchemy as a model for his working processes

and claims Cologne's occult past as his artistic heritage. [85] Several scholars, including Charlotte

Stokes, Elizabeth Legge, and especially David Hopkins and Warlick, have identified alchemical

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[83] Surrealist discussion about the crystal ball comes from the article "Recherches expérimentales. Sur la connaissance irrationnelle de l'objet oule de cristal des voyantes," *Le Surréalisme au service de la revolution* 6 (May 15, 1933): 10–12.

[84] Warlick, *Max Ernst and Alchemy*, 132.

[85] "Au delà de la peinture," in *Max Ernst: Oeuvres de 1919 à 1936, Cahiers d'Art* (1937): 13-46.; "Some Data on the Youth of M. E., As Told by Himself," *View* 2, no. 1, (April 1942): 28-30.

allusions in Ernst's paintings and collage novels.[86] Alchemical symbols and metaphors were of central interest not only to Ernst but also to his Surrealist colleagues. At the turn of the century, Paris was the center of the French occult revival, and hermetic writings inspired both artists and writers. André Breton wrote in the *Second Manifesto* that the goals of the Surrealists were not unlike those of the medieval alchemists in their search for the elusive Philosopher's Stone.

Ernst in his *Écritures* include remarks from Alain Bosquet in which he characterizes Ernst's images as a search for an alchemical formula. Bosquet also recognized that Ernst's interest in alchemy went beyond a random appropriation of arcane symbols to include the "very process of his art making." [87] As Warlick has documented, Ernst was aware of writings by Herbert Silberer and Albert Poisson that included illustrations and thorough explanations of alchemical symbolism and theory.[88] These texts explain that the alchemical quest, like metamorphosis, aims at the transmutation of the nature of the elements upon which they act. According to Silberer, a major goal of alchemy was the production of gold: "The idea of the production of gold was so dominant in alchemy that it was actually spoken of as the gold

[86] For the scholarship on Ernst and alchemy, see Warlick, *Max Ernst and Alchemy* (2001); M. E. Warlick, "Max Ernst's Alchemical Novel, Une Semaine de bonté" *Art Journal* 46, no. 1 (1987); also Elizabeth M. Legge*, Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989); David Hopkins, *Image and Structure in the Work of Max Ernst: Myth and Archetype in Surrealist Art,* (M.A. thesis, University of Essex, 1984); David Hopkins, "Max Ernst's La Toilette de la mariée" *Burlington Magazine* 133, no. 8 (April 1991): 237; and David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst: The Bride Shared* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 106. Evan Maurer views much of Ernst's bird/human imagery as being related to shamanic rites in so-called "primitive" societies involving the initiatory death and rebirth of the shaman; see Maurer, "Dada and Surrealism" in *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art,* ed. William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984): 567-75.; Maurer explains Ernst's self-identification as a shaman in his dissertation: Evan Maur, "In Quest of the Myth: An Investigation of the Relationship between Surrealism and Primitivism" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1974).; Patrick Waldberg published the first biography of Max Ernst in 1958, a study that includes memories that Ernst shared in their personal conversations; see Patrick Waldberg, *Max Ernst* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1958).
[87] Ibid.
[88] Albert Poisson *Théories et symbols des alchimistes* (1891) and Herbert Silberer, *Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik* (1914). For more information on these writers importance for Ernst, see Warlick "Max Ernst's Alchemical Novel," 61-73 as well as Warlick, *Max Ernst and Alchemy*, 25-8.

maker's art. It meant the ability to make gold out of baser material, particularly out of other

metals." He acknowledges a separation in the development of these ideas: "The belief in it and in

the transmutability of matter was by no means absurd, but rather it must be counted as a phase in

the development of human thought. As yet unacquainted with the modern doctrine of

unchangeable elements they [ancient alchemists] could draw no other conclusion from the

changes in matter which they daily witnessed."[89]

> Silberer continues to explain the main aspects of this process:
>
> Under philosophical influences the doctrine arose that metals, like human beings, had body and soul, the soul being regarded as a finer form of corporeality. They said that the soul or primitive stuff (prima materia) was common to all metals, and in order to transmute one metal into another they had to produce a tincture of its soul. …That problematic medium, which was to serve to tincture or transmute the baser metal or its mercury to silver or gold, was called the Philosopher's stone. …Alchemy desired indeed to produce in the Philosopher's Stone a panacea that should free mankind of all sufferings and make men young.[90]

Silberer states that "a very significant and ancient idea in alchemy is that of sprouting and

procreation. Metals grow like plants, and reproduce like animals. … Gold begets gold as the corn

does corn, and man, man."[91] In imprinting materials onto his canvas in the grattage process,

Ernst paralleled the alchemist as he created new forms that came alive as he shaped them into

being.

Just as transmutation in alchemy was considered a transformation of "one metal into

another,"[92] Ernst's *The Horde* paintings also involve transformation. Made with oil paint, the

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[89] Herbert Silberer, *Problems of Mysticism and Its Symbolism*, trans. Smith Ely Jelliffe (New York.: Moffat, Yard, and Company, 1917), 114. This text first appeared in German as Herbert Silberer, *Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik* (Vienna: Hugo Heller, 1914).
[90] Ibid, 114-16.
[91] Ibid, 116.
[92] Ibid, 114.

canvases take on the patterns of other materials that have produced textures, imprinting their likenesses on another plane. In fact, all of the grattage paintings transform oil to mimic wood, twine, and other materials on the canvas. Ernst's *The Horde* paintings at times even seem like carved wooden sculptures.

Warlick has studied Ernst's use of alchemical influences in his mixed media works, particularly his collages, and her analysis can be extended to grattage. Warlick argues, "Many parallels can be drawn between the alchemical work and the collage process. The alchemist must find Primal Matter to begin the work, as Ernst found preexisting images to make his collages." Ernst also found the elements to make his grattages by choosing natural or everyday objects with textures. As Warlick continues, "Then the Primal Matter was destroyed, as wood engravings or other found images were cut from their original context."[93] Ernst's grattage materials were separated from their original context by being placed under the canvas, which was then scrapped to reveal their presence. Removed from their context, their original form is completely lost in this process.

According to Warlick, the final stage in which "the separated parts were then recombined, fused by fire in the alchemical vessel" was paralleled by Ernst's pasting process in a collage.[94] In grattage, Ernst's scraping brings back their form, and he performs a search for forms to create new imagery. The patterns of the materials are again found and combined with Ernst's new metamorphic inventions.

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[93] Warlick, *Max Ernst and Alchemy*, 133-34.
[94] Ibid.

The goal of the alchemist was the production of gold through transmutation; for Ernst, it was a new image of transformation and discovery. These investigations were conducted like research experiments, thus leading to the several versions of *The Horde* paintings. Alchemy provided an archaic but historically neglected source from which Ernst could draw inspiration for his imaginative grattage paintings. Perhaps inspired in part by Ernst's 1927 grattage paintings, Breton wrote in the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* (1929), "I would appreciate your noting the remarkable analogy, insofar as their goals are concerned, between the Surrealist effort and those of the alchemists: the philosopher's stone is nothing more or less than that which was to enable man's imagination to take a stunning revenge on all things."[95] The Philosopher's Stone for the Ernst was the ability to open the imaginative mind and save mankind from the rational mind which led to "all sufferings."[96]

METAMORPHOSIS AND ERNST'S CONTEXT

Ernst's techniques embodied metamorphosis in alchemical terms. But the broader issue of metamorphosis suggests why that theme may have been particularly relevant to him. As Susanne Marschall has written,

> The word metamorphosis originates from the Greek language and can be translated as 'change in shape' or 'exchange of shape' (Prefix – meta – 'between, behind, after', - morphea – 'shape'). The á la mode current translation in the German language runs 'transformation'. Under the concept transformation can be listed instances of exchange, evolution, degradation, deceit and alienation.[97]

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[95] Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 117-94.
[96] Silberer, *Problem*, 116.
[97] Susanne Marschall, *Mythen der Metamorphose: Metamorphose des Mythos bei Peter Handke und Botho Staruß*, (Mainz: Gardez!, 1993), 45.

According to this definition, transformation occurs because of the need for change. Gallagher argues that "metamorphosis in German literature is situated in or arises out of moments of crisis…metamorphosis in German literature is frequently used as an index of social or cultural crisis: where society faces a particular threat to its moral, social or cultural values."[98] Ernst A. Schmidt has argued that Ovid's writings focus on the psychology of people in extreme situations, arguing that Ovid's real theme is that of the individual human being, living in moments of crisis.[99] Thus, we must examine the context in which Ernst was creating these images.

[98] Gallagher, *Metamorphosis*, 15.
[99] See ibid.

Chapter III

German History

Themes that appear in Max Ernst's grattages are full of inspiration from his German heritage along with his personal history. Forests and hordes are inherently tied together in the German past and must be considered when examining Ernst's paintings, especially in the wake of World War I. Though his *Horde* paintings may not directly reflect any particular scene or event, Ernst used them in a search for identity in himself as well as the viewer.

Ralph Ubl in *Prehistoric Future* (2013) has suggested that Ernst employed artistic techniques to simulate how a memory comes into the mind's view. Like avant-garde artists before and after him, Ernst at once foregrounded the technical and material bases of his art and referred the authority for his results to another productive source, higher or deeper than the finite self and by no means reducible to its conscious procedures. Ubl argues that Ernst was interested in the construction and phenomenology of both collective and individual modern history and memory.[100] Although Ubl addresses collage and frottage, he then skips to the 1940s decalcomania paintings, skimming over Ernst's significant grattage period. Yet these works suggest strong connections to German history and collective memory.

THE FOREST: A PERSONAL HISTORY

At least two leitmotifs of Ernst's creative work can be found based in the description of his childhood, and are deliberately singled out as such: the forest and the bird-superior.[101] In his

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[100] Ubl, *Prehistoric Future*, 131-159.
[101] For more on the "bird-superior" see Stokes, "Surrealist Persona: Max Ernst's 'Loplop, Superior of Birds.'"

Biographical Notes there are a number of paragraphs on the subject of the forest, which are closely linked to the memory of his father and growing up in Germany.[102] The importance that Ernst attached to his childhood memories is reflected in his reading of Freud, whose works were familiar to him from his university course and from his student friend Karl Otten.[103]

> Among the key events of his childhood was the observation of his father painting:
>
> Father Philipp at work on a watercolour. A forest, peaceful and yet somehow eerie, and in it, The Hermit. Every beech leaf depicted with well-nigh obsessive precision, each obstinately ensconced in its own aloneness; and yet all part of a greater whole: the beech tree, the forest. The monk absorbed in his book. So sucked up by it that he himself is hardly there at all.[104]

This memory is followed by a series of questions, ideas, and thought games, which revolve around the link with the figure of the father, with painting, and with the depiction of the forest: "What is a Forest? Mixed feelings the first time he entered a forest – delight and consternation [...] Who can solve the riddle? Father Philipp? The Monk of Heisterbach?"[105] In the "Notes", in which the forest is described with contradictory feelings, it can be interpreted as a metaphor for his confrontation with his father, and as a further step, also as a confrontation with painting as an art form.

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[102] Max Ernst, *Écritures*, 221, 223; On the theme of the forest in Emst's work see Helmut R. Leppien, *Max Ernst, Der Große Wald* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1967).

[103] After his return from Vienna, Ernst's student friend Karl Often introduced the artist to Freud's works *On the Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious*. See Stokes, "Surrealist persona," 225; Spies, *Max Ernst Collages*, 49; and Russell, *Max Ernst,* 188.

[104] Spies, *Max Ernst: A Retrospective,* 282. This quote from Ernst originally comes from his *Biographical Notes*. The first version of the *Biographical Notes* had already appeared in French in 1959 under the title *Notice biographique redigée par l'artiste* in the exhibition catalogue *Max Ernst* Paris: Musee d'art Modeme de la Ville de Paris, 1959). In 1961 they appeared in English in the catalogue accompanying the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Max Ernst*. The Museum of Modem Art, New York. A large selection of Ernst's writings was published in 1970 as Max Ernst, *Écritures* (Paris: NRF, 1970). The *Biographical Notes* were then continually reprinted in subsequent catalogues such as Spies, *Max Ernst: A Retrospective* (London: Tate Gallery, 1991; Munich: Prestel, 1991).

[105] Max Ernst, *Écritures* (Paris: NRF, 1970), 282.

The reflections on the forest are at the same time reflections on art; indeed, the forest

seems to become the personification of art:

> What do forests do? They never go to bed early. They wait for the woodcutters to come. What does summer mean to forests? The future; the season in which shadows become words and creatures with a way with words summon up enough courage to look for midnight at one hundred o'clock. All of this belongs to the past, it seems to me. Could be.[106]

It becomes quite clear that Father Philipp gave his son the impetus to take up painting. But

consistent with the Freudian spirit, the father-son conflict is transferred to the son's questioning

of the father's painting. "But he does remember (exactly) that he had a premonition at the time:

something must be wrong in the reciprocal relationship between the artist and his model! Oh,

little Max, will you ever be capable, with your humble means, of helping to put an end to this

nonsense?"[107]

Max Ernst's forest memories go well beyond childhood stories. They arose thirty years

later against the background of the career of an artist who had by then established himself, and

who, in rhetorically elegant fashion, claimed to "remember (exactly)" and constructed his

biography accordingly. The density of the forest, to his childish astonishment, transformed day

into night for Ernst.[108] Ernst retained a vivid impression of this memory and the subject of a

dense forest often appears throughout his career but especially in the late twenties and early

thirties.

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[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid, 283.
[108] Ernst, *Écritures*, 61–82.

Silberer describes the forest as a symbol for the mind: "The pictures for going to sleep are sinking, entering into a room, a garden or a dark forest."[109] He explains his personal interest in the theme: "Whether on sinking into sleep I have the sensation of going into a dark forest or whether the hero of the story goes into a forest (which to be sure has still other interpretations), or whether the wanderer in the parable gets into a tangle of underbrush, all amounts to the same thing; it is always the introduction into a life of phantasy, the entrance into the theater of the dream."[110] Hence, Ernst's passage through the forest is his connection to the unconscious mind, a stage on which his dreams can play out.

Grattage paintings of the forest, of which *Forest and Dove* (1927) and *The Forest* (1927) are examples, generally contain a wall of trees, a solar disk, and an apparition of a bird hovering amid the foliage (Fig. 13 and Fig. 14). These memories shaped his attitude toward the forest, like dreams, as the sublime embodiment of both enchantment and terror.[111] Ernst's essay "Les Mystères de la forêt," published in *Minotaure* in 1934, vividly conveyed his fascination with forests: "They are, it seems, savage and impenetrable, black and russet, extravagant, secular, swarming, diametrical, negligent, ferocious, fervent, and likeable, without yesterday or tomorrow. …Naked, they dress only in their majesty and their mystery."[112] This description could be applied to *The Horde* paintings as well.

The grainy texture of the figures' bodies in *The Horde* (Private Collection) resembles wood bark from which faces emerge (Fig. 15). A hallucinatory scene upon the trunk of a tree, it

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[109] Silberer, *Problem,* 39-40.
[110] Ibid, 40.
[111] Max Ernst, "Some Data on the Youth of M. E. as Told by Himself," in *Beyond Painting, and other Writings by the Artist and His Friends* (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1948), 27.
[112] Ibid.

appears as if Ernst carved sculptural wooden forms and displayed it before a contrasting bright

blue wall. "Shadows" made by the forest "become creatures," just as Ernst expressed his

childhood experiences of the forest in summer. These shadows of Ernst's summer forest seem to

manifest his psyche and his childhood forest memories.

THE ISSUE OF GERMAN IDENTITY AND THE ROLE OF HEINRICH HEINE

Forests have a particularly strong connection to German national identity. German

interest in the forest dates as far as the Reformation, when German Protestant scholars

encountered Tacitus' *Germania*.[113] For them, Tacitus' description of the Teutonic "noble

savages" waging war against a decadent and declining Rome mirrored their own situation against

Napoleon's France. Cultural historians have also often identified the forest as the quintessential

symbol of German identity, which influenced the early nineteenth-century literary and aesthetic

Romantics such as Caspar David Friedrich and Heinrich Heine.[114] Heine specifically wrote of the

Teutonic fight against Romans during the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in his epic poem,

Germany a Winter's Tale [Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen] (1844). Though Heine is not

included in Ernst's cited library, Ernst cited him in a published two-page list of poets, writers and

painters he particularly admired "Max Ernst's Favorites," in a 1941 issue of the journal *View*

(Fig. 16). [115] Representing Heine's answer to the bombastic political poetry of his

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[113] Jeffrey Wilson, *The German Forest: Nature, Identity and the Contestation of a National Symbol, 1871-1914,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 3.

[114] Thomas M. Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 9.; see also Wilson, *The German Forest,* 4, 30.

[115] Max Ernst, "Max Ernst Number," *View*, ser. 2, no.1 (April 1942): 14-15.; Ernst's library was donated by his wife, Dorothea Tanning, to Yale University. See Dorothea Tanning, "World in Miniature: Max Ernst and His Books" (Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 1985); The following scholars have noted Heine's relevance for Ernst: Spies, *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, 10, 70; Warlick, *Max Ernst and Alchemy*, 139.; H.J.

time, *Germany: A Winter's Tale* took an irreverent look at many German conditions and

attitudes, particularly symbols of German nationalism and conservatism. The poet attempted to

cast a new light on the German past in order to sweep away the Romantic fascination with an

idealized medievalism.[116]

That George Grosz, Ernst's former fellow German Dadaist, responded directly to Heine

is clear from his painting titled *Germany: A Winter's Tale* (1917-1919) (Fig. 17).[117] Grosz wrote

in *An Autobiography* (1946):

> My feelings [about Germany] were realized in a large, political painting which I called
> *Germany: A Winter's Tale* after an epic by Heinrich Heine. At the center sat the eternal
> German bourgeois, fat and frightened, at a slightly unsteady table with the morning paper
> and a cigar. Below, the three pillars of society: Army, Church and School (the
> schoolmaster carrying a cane painted in the national colors). The bourgeois holds tightly
> to his knife and fork, as the world sways about him. A sailor, symbolizing the revolution,
> and a prostitute completed my personal image of the times. In reality, the times were tired
> and not at all funny. Tired and not at all funny, the soldiers crept back into town,
> sometimes with a red cockade on their caps.[118]

Dennis Crockett presents Grosz as the "satirical historian of the Weimar Republic" with attacks

on mankind, Communism, and *Spiesser*-bourgeoisie.[119] His analysis of this painting is read

within the context of German post-war artists and sentiments. Grosz grew to hate the war

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Janse Van Rensburg, "Max Ernst: 'The Hundred Headless Woman' and the Eternal Return," *South African Journal of Art History*, 4th ser., 4, no. 3 (November 1989): 46.

[116] In Heine's times, his native country was still decades away from being united; in his time, Germany was an agglomeration of thirty-six principalities, each headed by a king, a duke, a bishop, or another kind of potentate. Heine excoriates the backward political and social structure, as well as the hidebound mentality of a land that was still under the spell of absolutism, feudalism, and nationalism. See George F. Peters. *The Poet as Provocateur: Heinrich Heine and His Critics* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000).

[117] For more on Grosz's interest in Heine, see Michael White, "The Grosz Case: Paranoia, Self-hatred and Anti-Semitism," *Oxford Art Journal* 30, no. 3 (2007): 433-453.

[118] George Grosz, *An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 114. Originally published as George Grosz and Lola Sachs Dorin, *A Little Yes and a Big No: The Autobiography of George Grosz* (New York: Dial Press, 1946).

[119] Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder, 1918-1924* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 37-42.

because "[he had] to live with the constant dread of being recalled." In 1916, he wrote in a letter

about loathing his German heritage and after being hospitalized immediately upon recall to

service in 1917, he asserted "My hatred of mankind has reached monstrous proportions."[120]

Grosz responded to contemporary Germany with satire, bitterness, and disillusionment with the

government.[121] Diplomat Harry Kessler, upon seeing the painting, wrote in his personal diary,

"[Grosz] wants to become the German Hogarth, deliberately realistic and didactic; to preach,

improve and reform…[he] wants to achieve something quite new or, more accurately, something

that it [art] used to have (through Hogarth or religious art), but which got lost in the nineteenth

century."[122]

Ernst shared Grosz's and other Dadaist's abhorrence for the German military after World

War I and their conflicted feelings towards Germany. A soldier in the war, Ernst returned deeply

traumatized and highly critical of western culture in general. Drafted into the German army,

Ernst had served as an artillery engineer in the war and was wounded twice. The disturbing

experience prompted Ernst to write in his autobiography, "Max Ernst died the 1st of August,

1914 […] You cannot save a man who has already been dead. And I had been dead since the first

World War."[123]

Heine resonated with Ernst and Grosz because he reflected a similar identity conflict

about Germany. In the poem, *Germany: A Winter's Tale,* Heine mocks modern Germany by

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[120] Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism*, 39.
[121] Beth Irwin Lewis, *George Grosz Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971).
[122] Charles W. E. Kessler, and Ian Buruma, eds., *Berlin in Lights: The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1918-1937)* (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 64.
[123] Ernst, *Écritures*, 9.

pointing out the unifying asset of early Germanic tribes – their blond hair. The categorization of

Germans as an Aryan race was a sensitive topic throughout the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries and a classification that Heine did not fit. Heine was born into a Jewish family,

although he converted to Christianity in 1825 because he felt "a baptismal certificate is a ticket

of admission to European culture."[124] By 1835, the German principalities and cities banned the

works Heine had already published, and also prohibited, in advance, any work the writer might

produce in the future. Heine responded to the failed liberal revolutions of 1830 and rising

nationalism and anti-Semitism in Germany by leaving for a long exile in Paris. When Heine

slipped back across the border from his exile in 1843 for a short trip, the result was this poem.

The Hamburg publisher Julius Campe published *Germany: A Winter's Tale* and kept copies

available under the counter so that the banned poet was read more widely than ever.[125]

Heine's satires against German militarism continued into the 1840s when he and Karl

Marx worked together on the revolutionary newspaper *Vorwärts*.[126] Efforts in the late nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries to erect monuments to Heine in various German cities touched off

riots and shook governments. According to George Peters' study of the critical reception of

Heine's works, for many decades Heine's literary reputation was stronger abroad, especially in

France, England, and America, where his wit and ambivalence were better appreciated, than at

home.[127] He was perhaps a living representation of the struggles of Germany at this time.

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[124] Heine, as quoted in Peter Chametzky, *Objects as History in Twentieth-century German Art: Beckmann to Beuys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 65.
[125] For a history of Heine, see Peters, *Poet as Provocateur*.
[126] Ernest Schonfield, "Satire and Laughter in Heine's Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen," *Oxford German Studies* 41, no. 2 (2012): 181-196. For Karl Marx's interpretation of the forest, see Wilson, *The German Forest*, 180.
[127] Peters, *Poet as Provocateur*, 58-60.

THE BATTLE OF THE TEUTOBURG FOREST

"Germania" (the name of a particular tribe along the Rhine which developed into the country's now known name) did not exist as a nation at the time of the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest to which Heine's poem references. Various Teutonic tribes were scattered across a widespread wilderness that reached from present-day Holland to Poland. At the turn of the century, the Romans knew little of this densely forested territory governed by fiercely independent chieftains.[128] However, this frontier held a deep allure for Emperor Augustus, who viewed the warring tribes east of the Rhine as "savages" ripe for conquest.[129] Roman accounts, such as Cornelius Tacitus' *Annals*, tell of a terrifying surprise attack that Germanic warriors launched on Roman soldiers who were attempting to expand control further east of the political boundary of the Rhine in 9 AD.[130]

Though few historical details are known about the battle, it was such a catastrophic defeat that the survival of Rome itself was threatened and halted the empire's conquest of Germany.[131] Scholars refer to it as "one of the most devastating defeats ever suffered by the Roman Army, and its consequences the most far-reaching. The battle led to the creation of a militarized frontier in the middle of Europe and "created a boundary between Germanic and Latin cultures" that

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[128] Adrian Murdoch, *Rome's Greatest Defeat: Massacre in the Teutoburg Forest* (Gloucestershire: History Press, 2008).

[129] The Germanic tribes are described as "barbarians" across several Roman accounts, including Tacitus' *Annals* and Suetonius' *De vita Caesarumi* (The Lives of the Twelve Caesars).

[130] Cornelius Tacitus, The *Histories*, trans. Clifford H. Moore and John Jackson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937). For a nineteenth-century version see Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus: The Oxford Translation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860). For this research, the following version was used: Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals of Tacitus, Books 1-6*, ed. F.R.D. Goodyear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

[131] Herwig Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2005).

lasted 2,000 years.[132] Three legions of Roman soldiers under the command of Publius Quinctilius

Varus were virtually wiped out as several German tribes put aside their traditional rivalries to

defeat the hated Romans. These efforts were secretly organized by a man of German origin,

Arminius, who had been given to the Romans as tribute when he was a child. He had been

educated in Rome and was trusted as an associate by Varus.[133] After Arminius secretly

negotiated alliances among the German tribes (the Cherusci, Marsi, Chatti, Bructeri, Chauci,

Sicambri, and Suebi), he invented stories of a rebellion of Germans in a nearby town and made

sure Varus heard of it. Varus took his army through unfamiliar territory to reach the area of the

supposed rebellion. His troops marched in a long, narrow line because of the nature of the

terrain: they had bogs on one side, hills on the other, and were flanked by deep forests. The

German forces in the forests had constructed defense works and waited for the hapless Romans

to come along. Hidden by the thick woods, the Germans rained down their javelins on the

Romans from behind their fortifications, and then, as they saw many Romans falling or fleeing,

ran in pursuit. Roman accounts of the event documented the first unification of Germanic

peoples. [134]

This battle was a critical stimulus for German pride of the forest. In the sixteenth century,

Arminius was given his German name Hermann by Martin Luther, who saw him as a symbol of

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[132] Peter S. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome: Emperor Augustus, Arminius, and the Slaughter of the Legions in the Teutoburg Forest* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 15.

[133] Wolfgang Schlitter, "The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest," *Roman Germany: Studies in Cultural Interaction*, in *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 32 (1999): 125-59.

[134] This history was recorded by the following Roman sources: Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 3; Velleius Paterculus, *Roman History* Book 2, chapters 117-120; Dio Cassius, *Roman History*. Book 56; Lucius Annaeus Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*. Adrian Murdoch outlines each of the sources in detail in Adrian Murdoch, "Introduction," *Rome's Greatest Defeat* (Gloucestershire: History Press, 2008).

the German people and their fight against Rome.[135] The poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock used

symbols from this ancient past to articulate what he regarded as the essence of the German

national character, in reaction to the universalizing tendencies of the French Enlightenment.[136]

Herman the German was the popular nickname ascribed to him in the nineteenth century, as

Arminius became manifestly popular as a revival of German nationalism fueled by the

Napoleonic Wars.[137] The writer Heinrich von Kleist, moved by the patriotic spirit of the times,

called for a national uprising against French occupation in his thinly-veiled play, *Hermann's

Battle* [Hermannsschlacht], recalling Arminius's victory.[138] The German painter Caspar David

Friedrich likewise mobilized the forest against the French invaders, depicting a French *Chasseur

Lost in the Woods* (Fig. 18).[139] Napoleon spoke a romance language and presented himself as a

Roman emperor, and thus it was easy to recall that the Germans had once before defeated the

welschen Erbfeind.[140] The Teutoburg Forest was thus the symbol of the eternal opposition

between the over-civilized and decadent Latin and the creative and vital Germanic people,

between old France and new Germany.

The reason that the forest became a popular German theme does not solely derive from

this history, as it was also grounded in the landscape, myths, and folklore as discussed earlier.

However, this history and mythologized origin story kept German national identity close to ideas

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[135] Herbert W. Benario, "Arminius into Hermann: History into Legend." *Greece & Rome* 51, no. 1 (2004): 83-94.
[136] Wilson, *The German Forest*, 177.
[137] W. Bradford Smith, "German Pagan Antiquity in Lutheran Historical Thought," *The Journal of the Historical Society* 4, no. 3 (2004): 351–374.
[138] Annemarie Hürlimann and Berna Weyergraf, "Die Eiche, heiliger Baum deutscher Nation," in *Waldungen* (Berlin: Bernd Weyergraf, 1987): 62-63.
[139] On the role of romanticism, see Raymond Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany: Prophets and Pioneers, 1871-1971* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 25.
[140] An expression that refers to the Latin speaking archenemies of Germany, as described in Tacitus' *Annals*.

of the forest. According to ethnographer Albrecht Lehmann, through the upheavals of the 20th

century, the origin myth of the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest remained a stable source of

German identity.[141] As discussed in Heine's writings, the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest was an

opportune and early example of German history that provided a source of nationality grounded in

the forest. It is with this history that Heine wrote in Section XI of *Germany, A Winter's Tale*,

introducing the theme of the horde as well.

HEINE'S GERMAN HORDES

This is the forest of Teutoburg,
You probably know it from Tacitus.
This is where Varus got himself stuck,
The classic boggy morass it was.

The Cheruscan prince defeated him here,
Arminius, alias Hermann;
The German principle won the day,
The muck was also German.

Just think, if Arminius's blond horde
Had lost to the foreign foeman,
Would German liberty be what it is?
We should have all been Roman.[142]

Heine's writing brings an understanding of the horde as a symbol of pride for the barbaric

that which Rome assigned to Germanic tribes in the early century. By the sixteenth century, the

term "horde" came to mean an army of nomadic warriors, a term certainly suiting the united

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[141] Silke Göttsch-Elten and Albrecht Lehmann, *Methoden Der Volkskunde: Positionen, Quellen, Arbeitsweisen Der Europäischen Ethnologie* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2007).

[142] Heinrich Heine, *Deutschland, ein Wintermährchen*, transl. T.J. Reed (Chester Springs, PA: Dufour Editions, 1986): 77-81. Originally published in 1844.

Germanic tribes fighting against the Romans. Heine's use of the word, however, also touches on

the derogatory aspect of the word. Tacitus' *Germania* is an anthropological description of the

German peoples rather than an account of Roman-German conflicts. In it, Tacitus references to

the Teutonic tribes as "savages" and "barbarians," nineteenth-century Germans made Hermann

the German a "noble savage" of antiquity. As the battle and its leader became symbols of

opposition to over-civilized Latin culture, the idea of the heroic "barbaric" German emerged.

Heine counteracts the derogatory Roman outlook by employing the term "horde." The word is

used ironically: despite their condescending attitude, the Roman attempts at conquering

Germania were crushed by the untamable "savages." Given Heine's personal struggle with his

German identity, the term "blonde horde" could also imply the crowd mindset of the German

peoples. A "horde" also refers to a crowd or group of families, perhaps the Aryan peoples in this

context.[143]

This interpretation is intriguing in light of the late nineteenth-century interest in crowd

psychology of which Ernst would have been aware. French researchers such as Henry Fournial

(1866-1932), Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904) and Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) delved into the study

of crowd psychology at the turn of the century.[144] Having studied psychology at the University of

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[143] Ernst's titles often directly played into the reading of his works. Dorothea Tanning's perspective brings clarity to this topic, as she wrote: "An artist who titled his pictures *Blind Swimmer*, *Euclid*, *Design in Nature*, *The Horde*—to name a few of his always surprising titles—leaves no doubt about his fundamental preoccupations." From Tanning. "Worlds in Miniature," 1-2.

[144] George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England*, 1730-1848 (London: Serif Books, 2014).

Bonn, Ernst had read Gustave Le Bon's 1895 publication, "The Crowd" and later became familiar with Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921).[145]

The interest triggered by collective demonstrations as well as the panic and the fear of crowd revolts paved the way for the birth of study of the crowd psychology (and will be discussed further in the next chapter). In this light, it is possible to affirm that the specific figurations – the socio-economic, political, and cultural "restrains and constraints of the social unconscious of persons, groups and Western societies" – at the end of the ninetieth century brought about the study of crowds as a psychological phenomenon.[146] The study of crowd psychology was revealing of innermost feelings, especially the fear of annihilation in a changing world that attributed to the crowd not only to crime but also to unexpected and incomprehensible psychological behavior.[147]

The new psychological interest in crowds may well have contributed to Ernst's decision to create not only *The Horde* paintings but also a series titled *One Big Family* (1927) which, as mentioned earlier, closely resembles *The Horde* paintings. The title of Ernst's works and their appearance suggest that he may also have been responding to a historical context that underlay the idea of a collective German psyche.

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[145] For more information on Ernst's knowledge of psychology, see Legge, *Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources*; Stokes, "Collage as Jokework,"; and Samantha Kavky, "Max Ernst in Arizona: Myth, Mimesis, and the Hysterical Landscape," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 57, no. 1 (2010): 209-228.

[146] Earl Hopper and H. Weinberg, *New International Library of Group Analysis. The Social Unconscious in Persons, Groups, and Societies* I, (London, England: Karnac Books, 2011), 7.

[147] Earl Hopper and Malcolm Pines, *Traumatic Experience in The Unconscious Life of Groups* (London: J. Kingsley, 2005).

A VIOLENT PAST

Despite widespread references to this battle and Hermann, few people knew of this monumental battle after World War II. So dark and brutal was this battle that Hermann was largely forgotten, or rather, selectively glossed over. The battle developed dark connotations in history as it was a brutal massacre that Germans wished to erase from their national identity after World War II. [148] According to one account, the battle lasted less than a day; according to another, it lasted three days with the Romans breaking out with heavy losses, establishing a camp, then fighting again with yet more losses, fleeing, and enduring casualties of nearly all of their numbers - estimated between 15,000 to 20,000 total.[149] The ones who survived were said to be enslaved or sacrificed, stories of Romans being cooked in pots or crucified on trees of the forest spread as well. Roman historian Velleius Paterculus wrote: "The body of Varus, partially burned, was mangled by the enemy in their barbarity."[150] Tacitus' account gives us the following description of Roman soldiers visiting the battle site six years later:

> The scene lived up to its horrible associations. Varus' extensive first camp, with its broad extent and headquarters marked out, testified to the whole army's labors. Then a half-ruined breastwork and shallow ditch showed where the last pathetic remnant had gathered. …On the open ground were whitening bones, scattered where men had fled, heaped up where they had stood and fought back. Fragments of spears and of horses' limbs lay there—also human heads, fastened to tree trunks. In groves nearby were the outlandish altars at which the Germans had massacred the Roman colonels and senior company commanders.[151]

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[148] Especially following World War II, Arminius was avoided in history lessons in schools due to its previous association with nationalism which was a sensitive subject. See Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Unity: Reconfiguring German Identities* (Providence, RI: Berghahn, 1997), 31.

[149] Wells, *The Battle*, 254.

[150] C. Velleius Paterculus, *Velleius Paterculus: Compendium of Roman History*; *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, trans. Frederick W. Shipley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 119.

[151] Tacitus, *Annals*, Book III: 1.61–62.

Max Ernst, also living in what he considered to be exile, may have revisited the theme of hordes many times because of his interest with this idea of a prideful, violent and victorious group which was part of the national identity and origins of German history. Tanning described his interest in German writing as "unbearably sad: having already survived the 1914-18 war as a hapless soldier, and having moved to France."[152]

In the wake of World War I, Ernst now sought to understand identity formation created through these stories as much as he sought to understand himself through his personal history. The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, as expressed through nineteenth-century German culture such as Heine's *Germany, A Winter's Tale*, presented a path for Ernst to analyze his contemporary culture and his place in it. *The Horde* paintings thereby may echo of this historical battle as a projection of the nation's collective memory – a prideful dance over a gruesome victory.

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[152] Tanning. "Worlds in Miniature," 3-4.

Chapter IV

Conclusion: After the War and Overview of
Ernst's *The Horde Series*

POST WAR GERMANY AND CROWD PSYCHOLOGY

The end of the First World War left Germany devastated and the population highly

uncertain about the future. New developments in warfare had produced unprecedented fatalities

and injuries on both sides, but especially Germany. Dadaist Richard Huelsenbeck recounted the

unsettled condition already present during the war when he returned to Berlin from Zurich:

> The situation, which hadn't been very good when I had left the city in 1916,
> had turned tragic. The war had done its work, many of my friends had been killed in
> action, the desperate problem of food occupied everyone, theoretically and practically.
> What would become of Germany?[153]

In the wake of the Armistice in November 1918 violence erupted in the streets as factions

from the left and the right battled for political control. Those violent struggles, often

characterized by gang activity (akin to that depicted in Max Beckmann's painting *The Night:*

Fig. 19), continued after the 1919 founding of the Weimar Republic.[154] This was the context in

which German Dada had emerged, and the movement, of which Ernst was an active member in

Cologne, was strongly opposed to the military and the strident nationalism they espoused.

As noted earlier, Ernst had served in the trenches in the war and had declared, "Max

Ernst died the 1st of August, 1914 …You cannot save a man who has already been dead. And I

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[153] Richard Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, ed. Hans Kleinschmidt, trans Joachim Neugroschel
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 53.
[154] John Willett, *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety, 1917-1933*. New York, NY: Pantheon
Books, 1978.

had been dead since the first 'World War.'"[155] After the war, Ernst and the Dadaists were among the young men who had returned disillusioned and dispossessed. Their goal was to turn the world upside down just as the devastation of war had turned their world around.[156] Ernst's experimental Dada works, including his collages, at times contained evidence of the destruction that he had witnessed as a soldier.[157] In *The Massacre of the Innocents* (1920), for example, an angel aircraft flies above a devastated city (Fig. 20).[158] In the years immediately following the war, machinelike forms and allusions to mechanization, destructive events of war, and other traumatic experiences appeared prominently in his works.[159]

After Ernst left Germany and moved to Paris, he would have been well aware of the continuing unrest in Weimar Germany.[160] These ongoing social, economic, and political problems would ultimately lead to the rise of Hitler and the Nazis during the later 1920s and early 1930s. *The Horde* paintings have at times been interpreted in those terms, but in 1927 it was much more likely that Ernst was exploring the issue of "hordes" and mobs in relation to events in Weimar culture as well as the developing field of crowd psychology.

Crowd behavior after World War I was viewed as strange, perhaps pathological, at the same time that it offered insights into the unconscious mind.[161] Such an attitude reflected the

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[155] Ernst, *Écriture*, 9; quoted fully on page 55.

[156] Sabine Rewald, "Introduction" in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, ed. Spies and Rewald, xiv-xvii. For an excellent discussion of Dada and World War I, see Michael White, *Generation Dada: The Berlin Avant-Garde and the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

[157] Werner Spies, "Nightmare and Deliverance," in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, 8.

[158] According to Matthew Gale, the city has been identified as Soissons, the destruction of which Ernst witnessed during his service. See Gale, *Dada & Surrealism* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 146.

[159] For an overview of Ernst's experience in the Dada group following the war, see *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, ed. Spies and Rewald, 8-9.

[160] Ludger Derenthal, "Max Ernst and Politics" in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, ed. Spies and Rewald, 23.

[161] See Everett Dean Martin, *The Behavior of Crowds* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1920). Freud also discussed crowds during the war, see Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," in *The Standard*

psychological research on crowds conducted at the turn of the century. As discussed earlier,

Gustave Le Bon's *Psychologie des foules* [The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind] from 1895

had been a pioneering contribution to this field, and Ernst is known to have read the book.[162]

And Freud's 1921 *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* had drawn on Le Bon, putting

a greater emphasis on the role of the unconscious mind.[163]

> Le Bon thinks that the particular acquirements of individuals become obliterated in a group, and that in this way their distinctiveness vanishes. […] As we should say, the mental superstructure, the development of which in individuals shows such dissimilarities, is removed, and the unconscious foundations, which are similar in everyone, stand exposed to view. In a group the individual is brought under conditions which allow him to throw off the repressions of his unconscious instinctual impulses. The apparently new characteristics which he then displays are in fact the manifestations of this unconscious, in which all that is evil in the human mind is contained as a predisposition.[164]

Le Bon's theory assumed that crowd engagement extinguished normal psychological

capacities and revealed a primal nature that was usually well hidden from view. According to Le

Bon, by being part of a crowd, "individuals lose all sense of self and responsibility; yet, at the

same time, they gain the sentiment of invincible power due to the numbers of the group."[165]

Once individual identity disappears, crowd members become subject to contagion. That is, they

are unable to resist any passing idea or, more specifically because the intellect is all but

obliterated, any passing emotion. The emotions that spread, unhindered, through the crowd are

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Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XIV (1914-1916): *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* (The Hogarth Press, 1957) 273-300.

[162] See again n.145 for Ernst's reading of Le Bon.

[163] See Sigmund Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1921), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XVIII (1920-1922): *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*, 65-144.

[164] Freud, *Group Psychology,* 33.

[165] Stephen Reicher, "The Psychology of Crowd Dynamics," in *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes*, ed. Michael Hogg and Scott Tindale (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 186.

said to derive from a 'primal' mind. Le Bon asserted, "isolated, he [the crowd member] may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian – that is, a creature acting by instinct."[166] Le Bon asserts that such barbarians "possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm of primitive beings."[167]

Whether alluding to the Roman-defeating barbarians of contemporary Germany, the monster-like figures of *The Horde* could thus have been both violent, ferocious, and enthusiastic. The groups seem to rejoice in a contagious communal excitement. Individuality is lost as the figures morph into one another, their details obscured, and the negative space often arbitrary. In discussing the impact of barbarian crowds upon civilization, Le Bon wrote that "it is always the masses that bring about its downfall."[168] The fear of crowds primarily emerged from the anxieties of European elites in regard to the social and political transformations and the birth of a new urban society in the later nineteenth century.[169] At the end of the nineteenth century, Le Bon had sought to alert conservative elites to the growth of socialist parties and movements and so he often resorted to this kind of apocalyptic language.

Over thirty years later, a number of scholars and intellectuals used crowd psychology to explain the origins and progression of World War I.[170] The most modern and cultured peoples had turned overnight into irrational and barbaric crowds, into criminal masses ready for war. The

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[166] Le Bon, *The Crowd,* 32.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid*.,* 18.
[169] See, e.g., S. Giner, *Sociedad masa: Crítica del pensamiento conservador* (Barcelona, Península. 1979), 132-138.
[170] Martin, *Behavior of Crowds*, 108-109.; For an American perspective, see I. W. Howerth, "The Great War and the Instinct of the Herd," *International Journal of Ethics* 29 (1919). 174-187. For an argument about crowd manipulation by fearful elites, see F.H. Allport, "The Psychology of Nationalism," *Harper's Monthly* 8, (August 1927): 291-301.

mental processes of a whole people were transformed, asserts the philosopher Everett Martin, and the whole nation became a homicidal crowd: "The classic example of the killing crowd is, of course, a nation at war."[171] Depicting a mob-like crowd or horde in a frenzy, Ernst may well have been responding to both German history of the past and of the present.

OVERVIEW OF ERNST'S *THE HORDE* SERIES

Who are these monster-like creatures who populate the 1927 series of grattage paintings Max Ernst titled *The Horde*? This thesis has examined both Ernst's invention of the grattage technique and the imagery he created using it, proposing a variety of possible sources for his subject matter. Ernst's grattage process was an innovative response to the Surrealist call for automatic art making that would draw upon the unconscious mind. Ernst provided one of the most successful painterly responses to the Surrealist call for such a technique, paralleling André Masson's sand paintings. The grattage technique, based on Ernst's scraping through layers of paint on a canvas laid over various objects, represented liberation from rational control and intention since it removed Ernst's preliminary choice-making process. Instead, he "attentively" gazed at the scratched "spots," combining an influx of both personal and external sources.[172] As Ernst stated in his 1961 BBC interview, he wanted to create art by having "one eye closed and look[ing] inside" while the other eye was "fixed on reality and what [was] going on around [him] in the world." The grattage process allowed him to synthesize these two important worlds and achieve "the synthesis of objective and subjective life." [173]

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[171] Martin, *Behavior of Crowds*, 108-109.
[172] Ernst, *Beyond Painting*, 4-7. See n. 24 and n. 47.
[173] See again n. 1.

Ernst's experiments with grattage produced suggestive textures to which he then responded, augmenting features and defining shapes by overpainting a "background," usually with blue paint. As this thesis has suggested, Ernst's responses to the indeterminate, woody textures grattage produced were grounded in a variety of personal interests, including natural forms and their metamorphosis, mythology, alchemy, history, and crowd psychology as well as his German heritage. While living illegally in France, Ernst struggled to come to terms with his German identity. As the Surrealists sought to better understand and utilize the unconscious mind, issues of identity became prominent in Ernst's grattages.

Unlocking the unconscious through grattage, Ernst worked towards destabilizing the rationality that he believed plagued society. The process of grattage was designed as a transformation of materials that confused, mimicked, and distorted forms. Thus, he transmuted the materials placed under his canvas into textures in oil paint. Like the alchemist, he further transformed these textures and patterns into other substances—most often wood. And his imagery transformed as well, reflecting the theme of metamorphosis so central to both Surrealism and to the German Romantic tradition he knew well.

A long history of metamorphosis in art served as a stimulus for Ernst's creative activity. With his avid curiosity for the history of images and history more generally, Ernst found inspiration in German Romanticism. Metamorphosis in literature (including Goethe's *Metamorphosen der Pflanzen* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) as well as mythology (including the Surrealist interest in the subject) provided sources from which Ernst could develop shape-shifting figures. In addition, he was well of the tradition of German printmaking, such as the

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established motifs as the *danse macabre.* While his monster-like forms may capture something of the spirit of such sources, they remain unique in their constantly changing forms.

Ernst's juxtaposition of forms in *The Horde* paintings can stymie viewers' ability to make rational sense of them, ideally stimulating their unconscious minds. A viewer can thus also take part in "gazing attentively at the spots," finding new forms, interpretations, and possibilities within or beyond the suggestions delineated by Ernst.[174] If one of his inspirations for an interest in metamorphic forms in nature had been Chinese scholar rocks, Ernst's grattages, like a Philosopher's Stone, may function as a disruption of the rationalism that led to "all sufferings."[175]

Ernst's German sources included his childhood memories of the forest in the summer where he saw creatures in the shadows of the thick German woods. Given the central role that forests have in German culture and myth, Ernst's paintings of forests and his woody, almost tree-like figures in his *Horde* series are surely tied this aspect of German identity. Thinking of forests in this context, *The Horde* paintings may reflect even more specifically the world around Ernst.

Ernst may well have viewed contemporary Germany in relation to his reading of Heine's *Germany, A Winter's Tale*. Once part of a history related to the heroic "barbarian" Germans who defeated Rome in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, the designation "barbarian" was warped by Heine's writing about the "blonde hordes."[176] Heine set a precedent for Ernst and for George Grosz, who struggled with their German identity in their contemporary context. Depicting a crowd or horde, Ernst may have been responding to both Germany's history as well as its present

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[174] See n. 24.
[175] See n. 95.
[176] See n. 142.

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situation in the 1920s. Le Bon and Freud had postulated that crowd engagement extinguished normal psychological capacities and revealed a primal nature in humankind. Thus, Ernst's focus on the actions of a horde in the late 1920's could be a response to the violent actions of political factions in the Weimar Republic. More generally, *The Horde* series may reflect Ernst's awareness of writers on crowd psychology, such as Le Bon, who talked of a 'barbarian' tendency inherent in people *en masse*.

Dario Gamboni concludes his book *Potential Images* by questioning the wider social and political implications of ambiguous and indeterminate art, pointing out that previous critics have noted a correlation between the closed unity of authoritarian art and the essentially progressive attitudes associated with art that leaves meaning open to the viewer. He has asserted, "By aiming at equality, symmetry or even interchangeability in the positions of artist and spectator, the practice and theory of potential images correspond to the democratic ideal in the political order."[177] The interchangeability of the positions of artist and spectator in Ernst's *The Horde* paintings is remarkably fluid, allowing each of us to garner something extra in our experience of Ernst's *Hordes*. Stimulating our eyes and minds, Ernst's *Hordes* open us to mutating and flexible readings, fulfilling the goal of Surrealist automatic art making.

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[177] Gamboni, *Potential Images*, 243.

Figure 1. Max Ernst, *The Horde*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 115 x 146 cm, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.
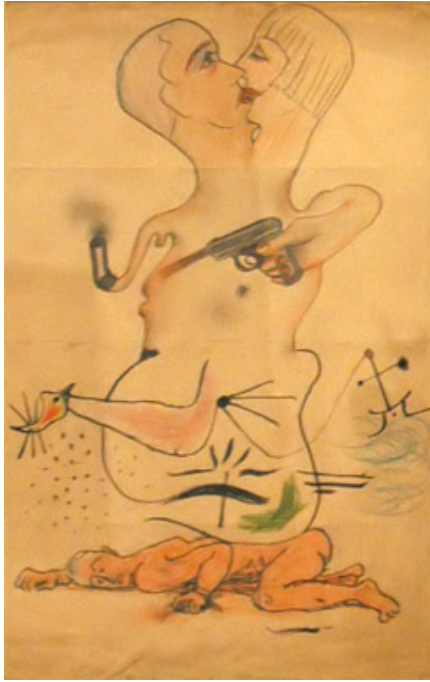
Figure 2. André Masson (French, 1896-1987), Max Ernst (born Germany, 1891-1976), Max Morise (French, 1900-1973), *Exquisite Corpse*, March 18, 1927. Graphite and colored crayons on ivory wove paper, 200 x 155 mm, The Art Institute of Chicago.
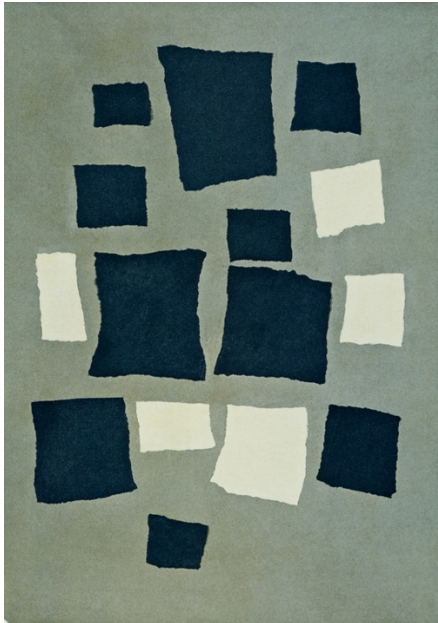

Figure 3. Jean (Hans) Arp, *Rectangles Arranged According to the Laws of Chance*, 1916-17. Collage, 48.5 x 34.6 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 4. André Masson. *Automatic Drawing*, 1924. Ink on paper, 23.5 × 20.6 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.
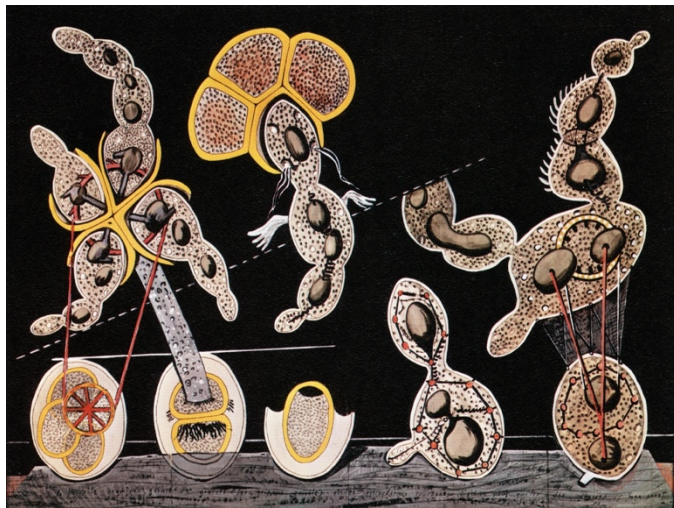
Figure 5. Max Ernst, *Stratified Rocks, Nature's Gift of Gneiss Lava Iceland Moss 2 kinds of lungwort 2 kinds of ruptures of the perinaeum growths of the heart b) the same thing in a well-polished little box somewhat more expensive*, 1920. Gouache and pencil on printed paper on cardstock. 19.1 x 24.1 cm.
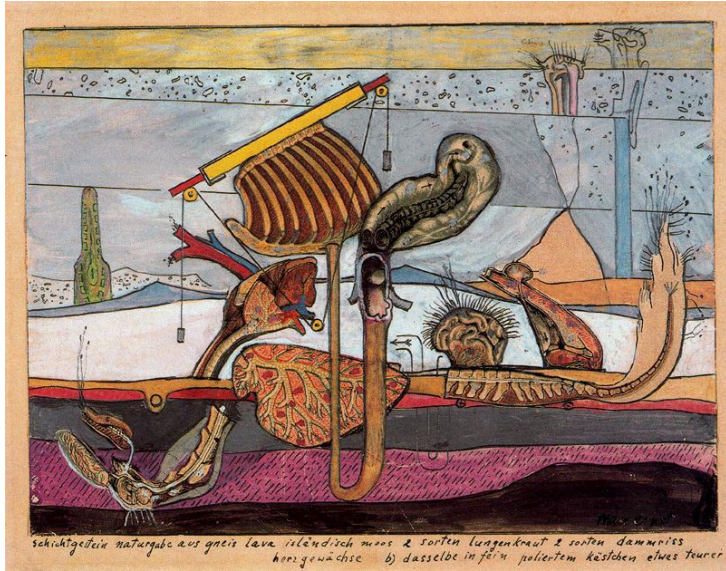
Figure 6. Max Ernst, *The Gramineous Bicycle,* 1921. Gouache, ink, and pencil on printed paper on paperboard. 74.3 x 99.7 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York

Figure 7. Max Ernst, *The Chestnut Trees Take-Off* (from *Histoire naturelle,* c. 1925). One from a portfolio of 34 collotypes after frottage. 25.6 × 42.8 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 8. Detail (Max Ernst, *The Horde,* 1927, oil on canvas, 115 x 146 cm, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam)
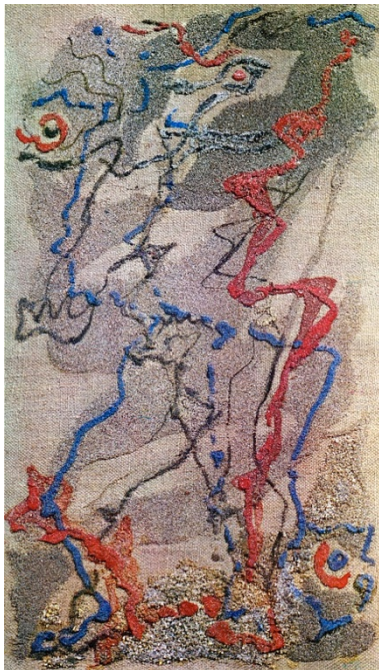

Figure 9. André Masson*, Painting (Figure),* 1927. Oil and sand on canvas, 46.1 x 26.9 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 10. Joan Miró, *Birth of the World,* 1925. Oil on canvas, 250.8 x 200 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.
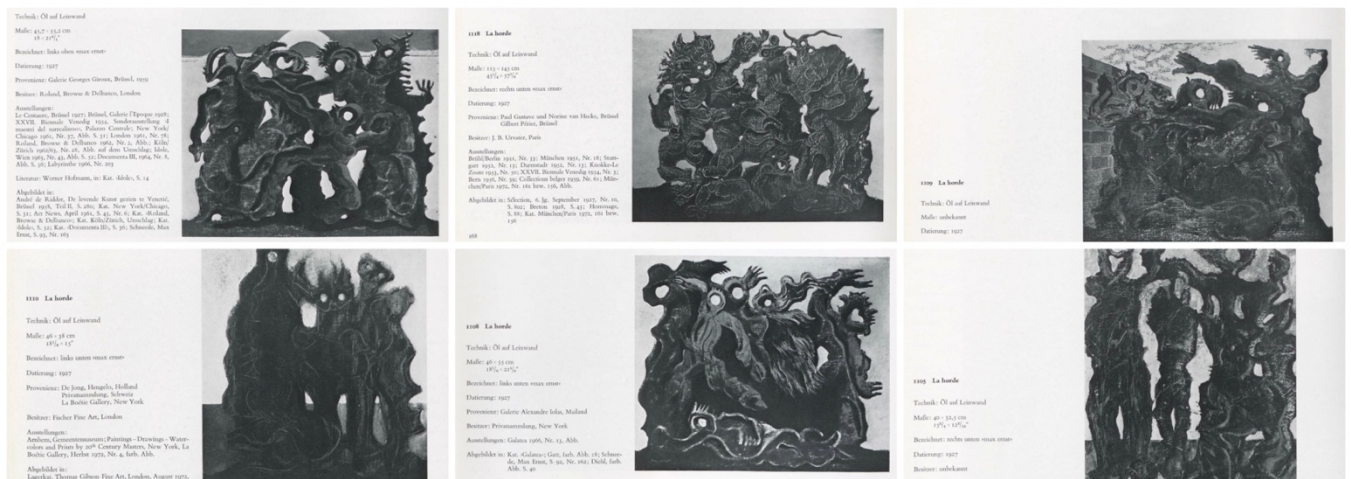

Figure 11. All images of *The Horde* paintings from *Max Ernst, Oeuvre-Katalog.* Houston, Tex.: Menil Foundation, 1975-; Cologne: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1975-.

Figure 12. Michael Wolgemut, *Image of Death* (detail), from the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, 1493. Woodcut with watercolor (hand coloring) Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas.

Figure 13. Max Ernst, *The Forest,* 1927. Oil on canvas, 96.3 x 129.5 cm. The Soloman R. Guggenheim Foundation, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.

Figure 14. Max Ernst, *Forest and Dove*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 100 x 82 cm. Tate Modern, London.

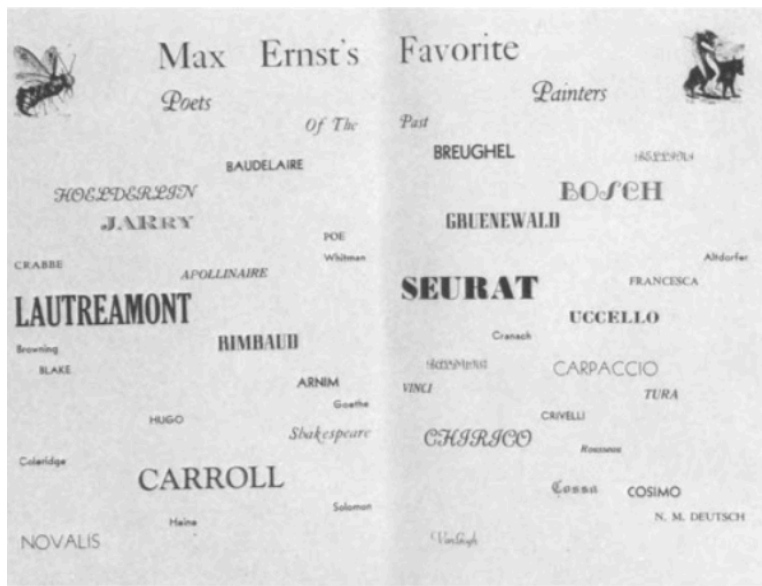Figure 15. Max Ernst, *The Horde*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 115 x 145 cm. Private collection.

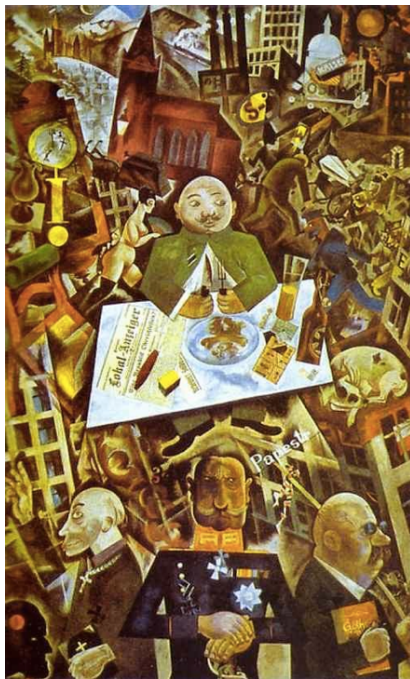Figure 16. Max Ernst, "Max Ernst Number," *View*, ser. 2, no.1 (April 1942): 14-15.

Figure 17. George Grosz, *Germany*, *A Winter's Tale,* c. 1917-19. Oil on canvas. Present whereabouts unknown.

Figure 18. Caspar David Friedrich, *The Chasseur in the Forest*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 66 x 47 cm. Private Collection.

Figure 19. Max Beckmann, *Die Nacht* (The Night), 1919. Oil on canvas. 133 x 153 cm. Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

Figure 20. Max Ernst, *The Massacre of the Innocents,* 1920. Black-and-white photograph with hand-coloring in watercolor, gouache, and black ink, laid down on tan wove wood-pulp paper, 215 x 289 mm. The Art Institute of Chicago.

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