

Joan Weinstein, *The End of Expressionism. Art and the November Revolution in Germany, 1918–19*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago etc. 1990, XIV + 332 S., geb., 45,95 \$.

The last few years have seen a renewed interest in German Expressionism and especially in its last phase during and after the first World War; described in the title of one of the relevant exhibitions as ›The Second Generation‹.¹ Professor Weinstein's book, published in 1990 and based on a doctoral dissertation of 1986, is an interesting addition to that literature. What is more, it is based in part on hitherto neglected if not completely ignored archival sources. The book is therefore also a contribution to the political history of the period. But in thus straddling the area where politics, including administration, and the visual arts overlap the analysis raises some problems for both disciplines.

Weinstein starts her book by recalling the close connection which had existed in the Wilhelmine State between the authoritarian government and one kind of art – traditional, academic and nationalist in sentiment. With the end of the war and the coming of the revolution this position was attacked by visual artists, poets and intellectuals. With the great political upheaval and the social transformation which took place in the wake of defeat many artists became greatly concerned about their relationship with the masses of the people, especially the proletariat, and no one group more so than the expressionist artists who had often attacked institutions of bourgeois society in their work.

Their concern for a new art and new art institutions, which would make art more open and more socially responsive, found expression in quasi-political organisations of artists which came into existence in many places in Germany. This story is well known in outline. Weinstein concentrates on the developments in three major centres of artistic activities and of political protest linked to them: Berlin, Dresden and Munich. The three lengthy chapters provide the fullest treatment yet of the interplay of visual arts, politics and ›Kunstpolitik‹ during that period which we have to date. The chapters on Dresden and Munich are especially valuable, breaking in part new ground.

The chapter on Berlin is naturally the longest. It also covers a wider range of subjects than the other chapters. Thus apart from the influence and activities of the two radical artists' associations, the Novembergruppe and the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, the chapter deals with developments affecting the arts over a whole range of institutions. There is a section which deals with the poster campaign of the Werbedienst in preparation of the election for the Nationalversammlung and its agitation against Bolshevism. Another section deals with the Genossenschaft sozialistischer Künstler which sought to disseminate modern art more widely and at the same time help the impoverished artists materially. In this connection the account of the attempts to show more modern, especially expressionist art, in the Berlin museums and the practices of some of the commercial galleries vis à vis expressionist art is illuminating.

The chapters on Dresden and Munich are correspondingly shorter and restrict themselves much more to the associations of radical artists and their struggle for political influence. Inevitably, the revolutionary period in Munich must have had a paralysing influence on the actual creation of art and on its being exhibited commercially or otherwise while in Dresden the discussion of political and artistic matters was liveliest and the art of a Felixmüller shows strong links to actual political events. Altogether, this is the most ›atmospheric‹ account of the artistic climate of the period which we are given in the book.

1 For example *Mathias Eberle*, *Der Weltkrieg und die Künstler der Weimarer Republik*, 1989; *Ida K. Rigby* (Hrsg.), *An alle Künstler. War – Revolution – Weimar*, 1983; *Stephanie Barron* (Hrsg.), *German Expressionism, 1915–1925. The second Generation*, 1988; *Iris Rogoff* (Hrsg.), *The Divided Heritage. Themes and Problems in German Modernism*, 1991.

The very title ›The End of Expressionism‹ naturally asks wider questions and it poses the problem of the appropriate methodology of this and similar studies, namely how to link ideological and institutional analyses and interpretations. Weinstein starts from two assertions and observations which relate to German Expressionism. Firstly that it was imbued with a general critique of bourgeois society and, based on it and on a widespread utopian sentiment, it showed a desire for radical social change. Secondly, that while we lack a discussion of the attitude of socialism to avant-garde art we know that there was little in the way of an institutional link between radical artists and Social Democracy.

Both suggestions demand qualifications. Recent writing has criticised the assumption about the utopian and progressivist aspects of Expressionism and Weinstein herself has cited examples of the negative reaction to the Revolution.² On the other hand it is worth pointing out that, while we have no coherent account of socialist theories in respect of the visual arts, this negative picture would change somewhat if we were to widen the field to include other arts and extend our discussion to views and practices of German Communism.

By directing her attention to events in only three places, however important as artistic centres, and by dealing only with the first year after the end of the war, Weinstein limits her analysis of political institutions and their effect on art. She argues that institutional changes had materially improved the position of expressionist artists but that they had failed to destroy the commercial basis of their art. Nor had expressionist artists succeeded in impressing their utopian sentiments on the political practice of the time.

Weinstein quotes approvingly views of disillusioned artists and art critics like Hausenstein and Paul Klee that with the decline of revolutionary politics and of community the decline of Expressionism was inevitable and she seems to agree with the Dadaist condemnation of Expressionism as a bourgeois plaything. Had the book included artistic developments in Düsseldorf and in Cologne and groups like »Das Junge Rheinland« and the »Politische Konstruktivisten« in its survey it would not have put the death of Expressionism quite so early and the author would have been able to point to examples of more positive links between avant-garde art and radical politics. Given the inevitable limitations of the research Weinstein has produced an interesting, well written and well illustrated book. For the German reader it is a particular boon that the quotations, which are translated in the text, are given in the original in the footnotes.

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Franz Müller, Ein »Rechtskatholik« zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz: Franz von Papen als Sonderbevollmächtigter Hitlers in Wien 1934–1938, Peter Lang Verlag, Frankfurt/Main etc. 1990, 403 S., brosch., 97 DM.

Franz Müller entkräftet die Legende »vom naiven, politisch unerfahrenen und fehlgeleiteten Hobbypolitiker« Franz von Papen (S. 374). Das Gegenteil trifft zu. Im Umfeld der Machtergreifung wirkte Papen als wichtige Integrationsfigur innerhalb des nationalkonservativen Lagers, vor allem zwischen protestantisch-großagrarischem Osten und katholisch-schwerindustriellem Westen. »Fränzchen«, wie Schleicher seinen alten Kameraden liebevoll und keineswegs abwertend nannte, hatte sich allmählich zu einem brauchbaren Politiker entwickelt«. (S.24) Über Hitler suchte er die Basis der Massen zu gewinnen. Dabei enttarnt die grundlegende Interessenidentität der Bündnispartner das vielzitierte »Zähmungskonzept« als »bis zum Paradigma verfestigt[e]« apologetische Legende der Nachkriegsme-

² See *Jill Lloyd's* essay »The painted city as nature and artifice«, in: *Rogoff, Divided Heritage*, S. 265–290.